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BALANCING EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY: SOUTH KOREAN EDUCATION ISSUES AND POLICY

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
COLLEGE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

BY

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Finally, to my parents, thank you for your infinite love and support. You have always encouraged me to do my best academically, both through your words and your own actions. You are my role models.

Abstract

South Korea is often renowned in the comparative education field for its students' high scores on international assessments, regarded as a success story and a role model. Despite this, the Korean education system has multiple issues: high rates of mental health issues among students, differences in educational opportunities determined by socioeconomic disparities, and a large shadow education industry. Since the beginning of the modern Korean education system in the 1950s, policymakers have utilized varying types of reforms in order to mitigate these issues by attempting to find a balance between educational equity and quality. This paper analyzes the patterns of these reforms from multiple perspectives and assesses their success to generate insight about the complexity of the issues as well as possible alternative approaches to policy reform. It details the history of Korean education reform and the responses of scholars to this history to demonstrate that neither the Korean government nor academic experts have been able to reach a consensus about the most effective form of policy for providing quality education for all students. It also explores other countries' responses to similar problems to provide further insight and explore alternative policy approaches. The findings in this paper suggest that South Korea may be unable to achieve further success in balancing educational equity and quality without making significant changes to the high stakes exam-oriented structure of the education system itself.

Keywords: South Korean education policy; access and quality in education; private tutoring; shadow education

I. Introduction

In the comparative education field, South Korea (hereafter referred to as Korea for brevity) is often looked to as a model country. Its education system is widely regarded as a success, and this is no surprise given its enrollment rates and international testing scores. During the second half of the twentieth century, government efforts to expand access to education have resulted in enrollment rates that have been high for decades. For example, in 2016 net enrollment rates for primary and secondary education were both above 96%.[1] Furthermore, Korean students score consistently high on international tests like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has remarked that "ever since the PISA assessment was launched in 2000, Korea has remained at or near the top of international assessments of student learning".[2] In the 2015 PISA, Korean 15-year-olds ranked eleventh place in the science section and seventh place in the reading and mathematics sections out of the 72 participating countries.[3] It had a 25.6% share of top performers in at least one subject and a 7.7% share of low achievers in all three subjects, compared to the OECD averages of 15.3% and 13.0% respectively.[4] In the 2015 TIMSS, Korean eighth grade students ranked second place in the mathematics section and fourth place in the science section out of the 57 participating countries. Fourth grade students ranked third place in the mathematics section and second place in the science section.[5] With scores like these, it makes sense that other countries would use Korea and its educational policy as a role model in hopes of emulating its success on

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[1] "Republic of Korea," UNESCO Institute of Statistics, n.d.

[2] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea" (OECD Publishing, 2014), 32.

[2] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea" (OECD Publishing, 2014), 32.
[3] "PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education," *OECD Publishing* (Paris: OECD, 2016).

[3] "PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education," *OECD Publishing* (Paris: OECD, 2016).

[4] "PISA 2015 Results in Focus," 2018.

[5] "TIMSS 2015 International Results in Mathematics," TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2016; "TIMSS 2015 International Results in Science," TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2016, http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss2015/international-results/timss-2015/science/student-achievement/.

international assessments.

However, there are some growing issues beneath the surface of Korea's education system that suggest that there may still be room for policy improvement. These issues are rooted in the extremely competitive nature of the Korean education system, often called "education fever", which has been discussed at length in the literature.[6] Although the more structural origins of education fever are debatable, it is clear that it stems from a perception that educational attainment is the primary mechanism for upward socioeconomic mobility. However, the effects of Korea's education system on student wellbeing must be seriously questioned as many students exhibit depressive symptoms, sometimes as extreme as suicidal ideation or attempt, as a result of academic stress. Furthermore, socioeconomic inequalities in educational access and academic performance are increasing, and these inequalities often manifest in terms of access to private tutoring, an already common and increasingly popular service in Korea. The following chapter will go into further depth on the topics of education fever, poor student wellbeing, socioeconomic disparities in education, and the role of private tutoring.

This paper asks two central questions. First, how has the Korean government attempted to mitigate these problems of socioeconomic disparity in educational achievement and opportunity, and poor educational quality in terms of student wellbeing? In other words, how has the Korean government tried to achieve both educational equity and quality through policy? During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Korean government has implemented different types of education policies, some placing a priority on improving equitable access to education, others prioritizing quality in education. Using these different approaches, the government has attempted to respond to some of the prevailing problems in the education system that will be discussed in the next chapter. Despite these efforts, students and their families still face these problems today. This leads into the second central question this paper asks: what explains the persistence of these problems? In attempting to answer this, I begin to address a third and related question: what are the root causes of the problems the Korean government is attempting to improve? To answer these questions, I will analyze the Korean government's past and current education policies from different perspectives in order to assess how successful they were in terms of improving equal access, quality, and student wellbeing. I will explore the history of the actual policies, and then review the literature's response to them, before using a comparative approach with other countries' policies. I will also turn particular attention to regulation policy of private tutoring because it is a major piece of the Korean education experience and the Korean government has expressed an interest in reducing its prevalence for decades. Thus, I will also ask if the regulation of private tutoring is a worthwhile policy goal and if so, what forms of regulation might be most effective.

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[6] For more information on education fever and its origins, see Jeong-kyu Lee, "Educational Fever and South Korean Higher Education," *Revista Electronica de Investigacion Educativa* 8, no. 1 (2006): 1–14; Nam-Hwa Kang and Miyoung Hong, "Achieving Excellence in Teacher Workforce and Equity in Learning Opportunities in South Korea," *Educational Researcher* 37, no. 4 (2008): 200–207; Sunwoo Shin and Myung-sook Koh, "Korean Education in Cultural Context," *Essays in Education* 14, no. June (2005); Jung Cheol Shin, "Higher Education Development in Korea: Western University Ideas, Confucian Tradition, and Economic Development," *Higher Education* 64 (2012): 59–72; Clark W. Sorensen, "Success and Education in South Korea," *Comparative Education Review* 38, no. 1 (1994): 10–35; So Jin Park, "Education Manager Mothers: South Korea's Neoliberal Transformation," *Korea Journal* 47, no. 3 (2007): 186–213.

Asking these questions and looking for their answers may provide important insight that can improve the lives of Korean students. Although Korean students score very well on exams, they express frustration and dissatisfaction with their education. The English teachers who run the website *Korean Students Speak* share images of students who hold up pieces of paper with whatever they choose to write in English.[7] Among the professions of love for pop singers and the "Never give up!" lines, there are many images of students holding up signs that say things like "We are school's slaves!", "Student is not [sic] studying machine", and "Korean education kills students”. There are countless signs of students expressing their desire to sleep, some wanting to sleep “at 10 P.M.”, or “at least 7 hours every day.” In a 2016 interview about preparing for college admissions, high school student Yu Si-yeol said his experience “really brought home that all the talk about ‘equality of opportunity’ in South Korea is just empty sloganeering.”[8] These are just a few examples of Korean students sharing their opinions about their education system.

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[7] "Korean Students Speak," accessed May 5, 2019, https://koreanstudentsspeak.tumblr.com/.

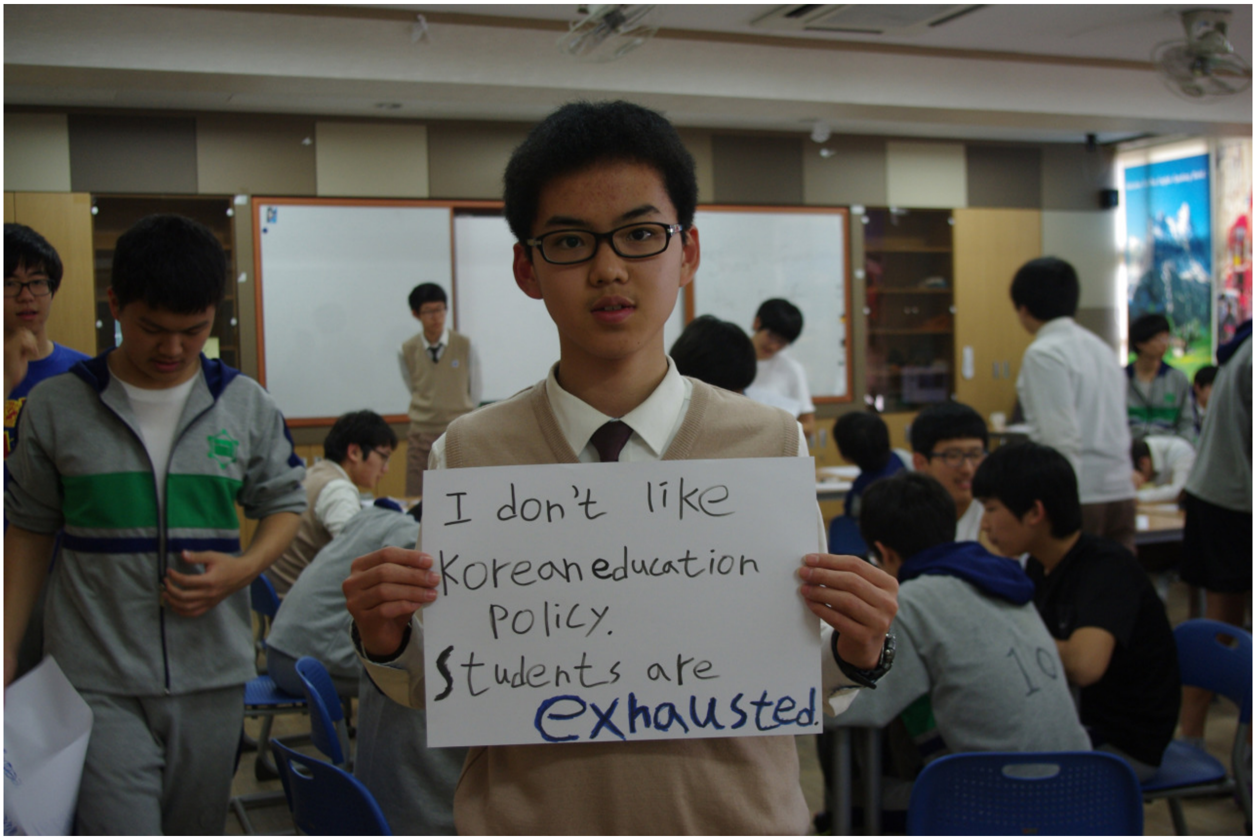

Figure 1: A student holding a self-made sign that reads “I don’t like Korean education policy. Students are exhausted.” (Image by “Korean Students Speak”, accessed May 5, 2019, https://koreanstudentsspeak.tumblr.com/.)

From a scholarly perspective, better understanding Korean education reforms can extend our knowledge about education reform. Understanding both the successes and the shortcomings of particular reforms can generate insight into what works and what does not for achieving equity and quality. This paper in particular adds to the existing literature on this topic by placing particular emphasis on how policy tries to improve student wellbeing, which has often not been addressed. It will draw attention to the role that student wellbeing has in discussions of equity and quality and demonstrate the relative inattention to it in much of the policy in Korea and some other countries.

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[8] Myeong-seon Jin, “For Prestigious University Admission, S. Korean Students and Parents in a War for Information,” *Hankyoreh*, March 21, 2016.

Due to a lack of time and resources, I could not conduct primary research for this paper. Most appropriate Korean language sources on the topic were also unavailable. Due to the scope of this paper, I was also unable to address every education policy implemented by the Korean government. Nevertheless, I provide an extensive history of reform related to issues of access and quality. I am thus able to produce relevant findings about Korean education policy by analyzing the existing English language literature's responses to it and reviewing other countries' responses to similar problems.

I. A. Access and Quality in Education

To have a discussion about Korean education policy, it is necessary to have first a discussion about access and quality in education. These two issues and their interaction are relevant to all education systems and a frequent topic in the field of education development. The rest of this introduction will be devoted to discussing this education policy issue on a broad scale before delving into the specifics of the Korean education system.

The most basic definition of access in terms of education refers to the number and location of schools, the number of grade levels, and the availability of opportunity to advance to higher grade levels. In other words, level of access indicates how many desks are available for students, for how many years, and where these desks are located.[9] However, this definition of access does not adequately address some issues of inequality in education. Daniel Sifuna provides a more complex understanding of access that takes into account equality—or lack thereof—in terms of “supply, demand, and the learning process.”[10] Supply refers to the availability and quality of schools and the accompanying facilities and resources. Demand refers to “parental decisions based on the opportunity cost of schooling”, which can be based on cultural or family-specific factors.[11] The learning process refers to students’ experience in school, such as the curriculum or relationships with teachers and classmates. Inequality of access can exist in any of these aspects of education and disadvantage certain groups of students. Education policymakers with the intention of improving access need to keep in mind the various places that inequality can emerge in the system.

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[9] Helen Geissinger, "Girls' Access to Education in a Developing Country," *Compare* 27, no. 3 (1997): 289, https://doi.org/10.1080/0305792970270305.

In contrast to access, quality of education is much more subjective. According to UNESCO, there are two common strands that appear in most attempts to define quality. The first strand states that a system’s quality is determined by its students’ cognitive development as this is considered a central objective of all education systems. This type of quality is easier to measure quantitatively. Under this school of thought, education systems are often evaluated by indicators such as students’ literacy and numeracy rates. The second strand “emphasizes education’s role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development” of students.[12] These values tend to include things like peace and equality as well as more culturally specific values and traditions. This type of quality is much harder to measure and evaluate quantitatively. In an attempt to combine these two common strands, UNESCO has adopted a conceptualization of education—and thus, educational quality—based on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, and learning to be. These pillars address building knowledge, applying that knowledge practically, coexisting with equal opportunity and without discrimination, and developing individual skills to reach one's full potential, respectively.[13] An education system that facilitates the achievement of these four pillars is considered high quality.

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[10] Daniel N. Sifuna, “The Challenge of Increasing Access and Improving Quality: An Analysis of Universal Primary Education Interventions in Kenya and Tanzania since the 1970s,” *International Review of Education* 53 (2007): 688, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-007-9062-z.

[11] Sifuna, 688–89.

[12] “2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report Education for All: The Quality Imperative,” 2004, 17.

UNESCO's conceptualization of educational quality is a good attempt to integrate two common definitions of quality. However, I argue that its definition of educational quality is partially lacking because of its overemphasis on the outcomes of an education. In order to fully evaluate the quality of an education system, it is necessary to examine its effects on students both during and after their time within the system. The definition of educational quality should emphasize, or at the very least include, student wellbeing. Wellbeing, like quality, is a difficult concept to define due to its subjectivity. However, most understandings of wellbeing are holistic and "include personal, cognitive, affective, social, physical, psychological, moral, and spiritual dimensions."[14] A student's school life plays a significant role in his or her wellbeing. A range of factors including school facilities, relevance of the curriculum, teacher support, and student agency influences student wellbeing. For example, research has indicated that learning-oriented academic goals increase students' perceptions of wellbeing, as opposed to achievement-oriented goals.[15] Students in a high quality education system should enjoy learning and their education should contribute to their wellbeing, not detract from it. The system should not harm students' physical or mental health; furthermore, it should provide resources for students who suffer from health problems.

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[13] "2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report Education for All: The Quality Imperative," 30.

[14] Neville Clement, "Student Wellbeing at School: The Actualization of Values in Education," in *International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing*, ed. Terence Lovat, Ron Toomey, and Neville Clement (Berlin: Springer, 2010), 38.

[15] Nadine Engels et al., "Factors Which Influence the Well-Being of Pupils in Flemish Secondary Schools," *Educational Studies* 30, no. 2 (2004): 139, https://doi.org/10.1080/0305569032000159787.

High levels of access and quality are undoubtedly both essential features of an education system that benefits its students. However, the relationship between the two varies depending on one's approach. From the perspective of government budgeting, access and quality often appear at odds with one another. Particularly in developing countries, decreased quality of school facilities and resources such as teachers and textbooks may be seen as an inevitable consequence to achieving wider access to education due to limited funding. In contrast, others view access and quality as two features of an education system that often overlap. For example, a low teacher-to-student ratio is both a matter of access and quality, as it relates to students' access to educators, as well as the quality of attention educators can give any one student. In addition, equitable access is often subsumed under the definition of quality. UNESCO argues that an education system cannot improve qualitatively without expanding its access.[16] A system that cannot provide equitable access to all students is not a high-quality system because it is a discriminatory system. Ideally, policymakers should design education policies that can improve access and quality simultaneously.

The following chapters will situate the Korean educational system within the discussion of balancing access and quality. In Chapter II, I discuss in more detail the general structure of the Korean education system as it fits into Korean society, as well as the issues in the system that need to be addressed. In Chapter III, I provide a history of past and current Korean education policy beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, noting general trends in the goals and methods of these policies. Chapter IV is a review of how scholars in the literature on Korean education policy analyze and evaluate the different types of policy the Korean government has employed, with a focus on the division between scholars who support neoliberal education policies and those who oppose them. In Chapter V, I review other countries' attempts at policies that balance educational equity and excellence. Chapter VI concludes the paper and provides some tentative policy recommendations.

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[16] "2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report Education for All: The Quality Imperative," 16.

II. Background on the Korean Education System and its Issues

II. A. The Education System within Korean Society

Korea's current education system and its function in Korean society is the result of a unique set of circumstances that Korea experienced during the twentieth century. Up until the Japanese occupation of Korea in 1910, Korean society was governed by a strict class structure that restricted access to education to the uppermost classes.[17] After Japanese colonization and the Korean War, the old class structure was destroyed. By rendering much of the population of Korea equally poor, these events created an essentially leveled society, except for a group of elites that surrounded authoritarian dictator Syngman Rhee, the president put in place by the U.S. in 1948 after the end of Japanese colonization. During the 1960s, education became the primary method by which those who were not in this group of elites could achieve upward social mobility. Government policies developed and expanded education that stemmed from a "practical need to train an efficient workforce."[18] This provided opportunities for Koreans to educate themselves and become employed. Hagen Koo describes the majority of the Korean people during this time as "a society with an exceptional degree of egalitarian ethic and intense desire for social mobility."[19]

As the Korean population became more educated, the government pushed policies for industrialization. This led to urbanization and the rise of an urban middle class made up of educated Koreans who were able to accumulate wealth.[20] Around this time, as the middle class began to use their new resources to provide more educational opportunities for their children, access to educational resources became increasingly competitive. Secondary schools implemented entrance exams and were ranked by their scores, creating uneven demand as parents tried to send their children to the most prestigious primary and secondary schools. During this time, private tutoring began to see increased demand for the first time.[21]

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[17] Japan's occupation of Korea began in 1910, but Japanese attempts to exercise control over Korea during this time period had already begun in the late nineteenth century. Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 before becoming a colony in 1910.

[18] Sorensen, "Success and Education in South Korea," 14; Hagen Koo, "The Changing Faces of Inequality in South Korea in the Age of Globalization," *Korean Studies* 31 (2007): 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1353/ks.2008.0018.

[19] Hagen Koo, "The South Korean Stratification System: Continuity and Change," in *Modern South Korean Society: Its Development and Prospect*, ed. Hyuk-Rae Kim and Bok Song (Berkeley: University of California Center for South Korean Studies, 2007), 41 in Doo Hwan Kim and Yool Choi, "The Irony of the Unchecked Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Crystallization of Class Cleavages and Intensifying Status Competition," *Development and Society* 44, no. 3 (2015): 439.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, as competition and inequality in the education system heightened, the Korean government attempted to use policy to balance "between the social mobility desire of the South Korean population and both state and popular equalitarian ideologies."[22] The authoritarian governments of Park Chunghee (1961-1979) and Chun Doohwan (1980-1988) put equalization policies in place to maintain a broad social base by appealing to the general public and checking the affluent classes.[23] This implies that the middle and upper classes, although growing, did not hold enough power to sway the state and influence its policies during this period. This dynamic began to change in 1987 with the democratization of Korea, when class divisions deepened and exacerbated the conflict between social mobility desire and equalitarian ideologies. Democratization simultaneously empowered the working class's demands for socioeconomic equality and the new middle class's lobbying for policies that allowed them to solidify and further advance their high socioeconomic standing.[24] This would come to affect education policy in ways that will be addressed in the next chapter.

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[20] Kim and Choi, "The Irony of the Unchecked Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Crystallization of Class Cleavages and Intensifying Status Competition."

[21] Sunwoong Kim and Ju-Ho Lee, "Changing Facets of Korean Higher Education: Market Competition and the Role of the State," *Higher Education* 52 (2006): 557–87, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-005-1044-0; Sunwoong Kim and Ju-Ho Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 58, no. 2 (2010): 259–96, https://doi.org/10.1086/648186.

[22] So Jin Park and Nancy Abelmann, "Class and Cosmopolitan Striving: Mothers' Management of English Education in South Korea," *Anthropological Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (2004): 648, https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2004.0063.

[23] Sang Young Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," *Pacific Review* 23, no. 5 (2010): 579–601, https://doi.org/10.1080/09512748.2010.522247.

An overarching problem with Korean education is that it is still seen as the primary mechanism for socioeconomic mobility in a meritocratic Korean society. “Education fever”, a term often used to describe the apparent obsession with education in Korea, stems from this idea that education is the golden ticket to success. Families continue to devote large chunks of their income to giving their children the best education that they can afford, in the hopes that they will be better off than their parents. This causes extremely high pressure for students to perform and has created an intense atmosphere of competition. For middle and high school students, the ultimate goal used to be to score well on the college entrance exam and gain admission to a high-ranking university. More recently, only two out of ten students enter university based on their college entrance exam score, and rural and private universities almost never accept students by their entrance exam score.[25] Most universities now use comprehensive student record screening in the admissions process, with “extracurricular activities like clubs, volunteering, career building, and outside reading counted as major factors.”[26] Although the admissions process varies widely by university, the three main factors are students’ school records, letters of recommendation, and the college entrance exam score.[27] As a result, students are stretched thin trying to compete in all of these categories used in the admissions process. Although the importance of the entrance exam has much decreased, students still feel pressure to perform well on the entrance exam and school exams, along with extracurricular activities, as everything will be considered during the admissions process.

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[24] Kim and Choi, “The Irony of the Unchecked Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Crystallization of Class Cleavages and Intensifying Status Competition.”

[25] Hyun-bin Kim, “Public to Decide on College Admissions Reform,” *Korea Times*, May 23, 2018.

[26] Jin, “For Prestigious University Admission, S. Korean Students and Parents in a War for Information.”

[27] Se-hwan Bak, “Teacher Letters Become a Headache for All,” *Korea Herald*, February 26, 2017.

All Korean universities are ranked according to many factors, including the average minimum score of applicants on the college entrance examination, the employment rate of graduates, staff and facilities, and curricula.[28] Only 2% of students are admitted to the top three universities.[29] The strict hierarchy creates large disparities, as those who attended top-ranking universities have much more social capital than others. College graduates' social prestige is tied to the ranking of their alma mater for the rest of their lives.[30] Academic attainment often determines occupation, social position, income, and marriage. A survey conducted by the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) found that "41.7% of the [lower school level] graduates responded that they did not receive a desirable treatment in South Korea society."[31] A diploma from a university, particularly a high-ranking university, is much more important than individual ability when seeking employment. Regardless of skill, pay will be higher for university graduates than for high school graduates.[32] "Academic cliquism" based on one's alma mater has "become a major type of social stratification in South Korean society", particularly in business settings.[33] Lee and Brinton's analysis of the 1992 Survey on Employment Experiences of University Graduates reveals that the combination of academic cliquism and the highly stratified tertiary education system creates a job market where university-specific "institutional social capital" is much more effective for gaining employment if one has attended a prestigious university.

But the Korea of today is not the same country as the Korea of the 1960s and 1970s, and it is certainly not some kind of meritocratic utopia where the brightest and most determined always succeed. Economic and social inequalities exist based on gender, age, geography, income, and wages. Most relevant to this paper are disparities in geography, income and wages, as well as the role of large business groups called *chaebols*.

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[28] Sunhwa Lee and Mary C Brinton, "Elite Education and Social Capital: The Case of South Korea," *Sociology of Education* 69, no. 3 (1996): 177–92; Min-sik Yoon, "College Evaluations to Focus on Quality," *Korea Herald*, September 30, 2014.

[29] Crystal Tai, "Why South Koreans Are Trapped in a Lifetime of Study," *South China Morning Post*, November 15, 2018.

[30] Sorensen, "Success and Education in South Korea."

[31] Lee, "Educational Fever and South Korean Higher Education," 9.

[32] Lee, 8.

[33] Lee and Brinton, "Elite Education and Social Capital: The Case of South Korea," 182.

The Korean War destroyed much of the wealth of the affluent in Korean society, leaving Korean society poor but somewhat equal. Then, during the first few decades of its rapid economic growth, Korea managed to keep income inequality at a minimum as the labor market shifted from mostly low-paying agricultural work to mostly higher-paying industrial work. It was not until the late 1990s that the distribution of income began to widen as the labor market again shifted to a post-industrial economy with lower-paying service jobs. Since then, the Gini coefficient and the relative poverty rate have risen (See Figure 1). According to the OECD, the Gini coefficient for market income has risen from 0.266 in 1990 to 0.313 in 2011, and the Gini coefficient for disposable income has risen from 0.256 in 1990 to 0.289 in 2011. The relative poverty rate for market income rose from 7.8% in 1990 to 15% in 2011, and the rate for disposable income rose from 7.1% in 1990 to 12.4% in 2011.[34] According to Statistics Korea, the Gini coefficient had risen to 0.353 for market income and 0.304 for disposable income in 2016 (See Figure 2). The relative poverty rate had risen to 19.5% for market income and 14.7% for disposable income in 2016 (See Figure 3).[35]

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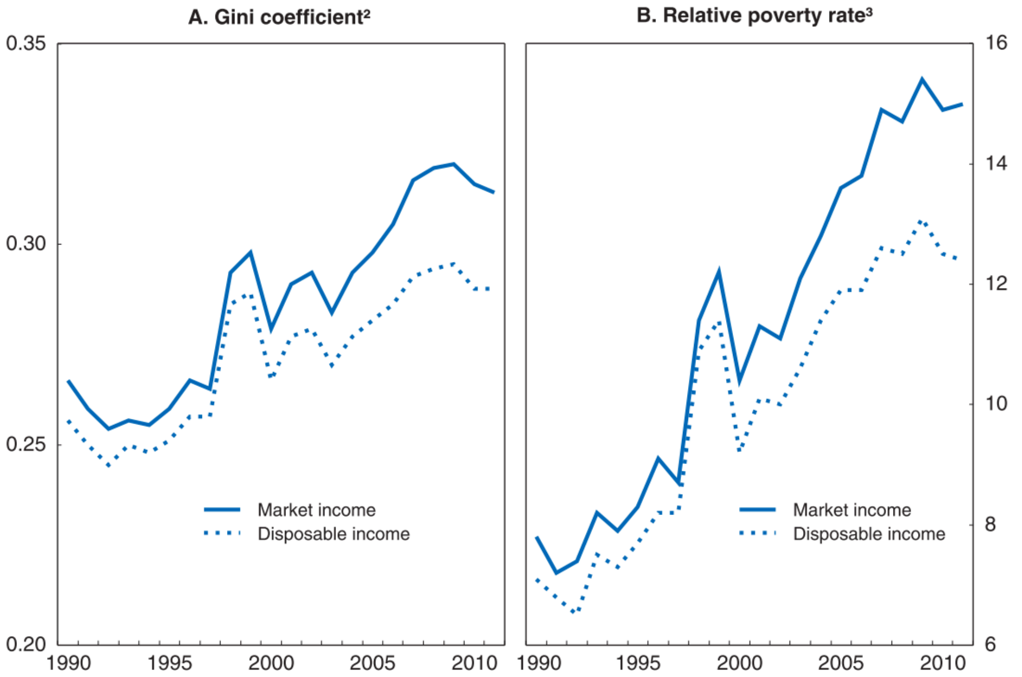
[34] OECD, “Promoting Social Cohesion in Korea,” in *OECD Economic Surveys: Korea 2012* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012), 112, https://doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-kor-2012-en.

[35] Statistics Korea, “Income Distribution Indicators in 2016,” 2017.



1. For urban households with at least two persons.
2. The Gini coefficient can range from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (perfect inequality).
3. Relative poverty is defined as the share of the population that lives on less than half of the median income.

Source: Statistics Korea.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932592945

Figure 2: Korean Gini coefficient and relative poverty rate 1990-2011. (Graph by OECD. In "Promoting Social Cohesion in Korea." In *OECD Economic Surveys: Korea 2012*, 111-45. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012, 112. https://doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-kor-2012-en.)

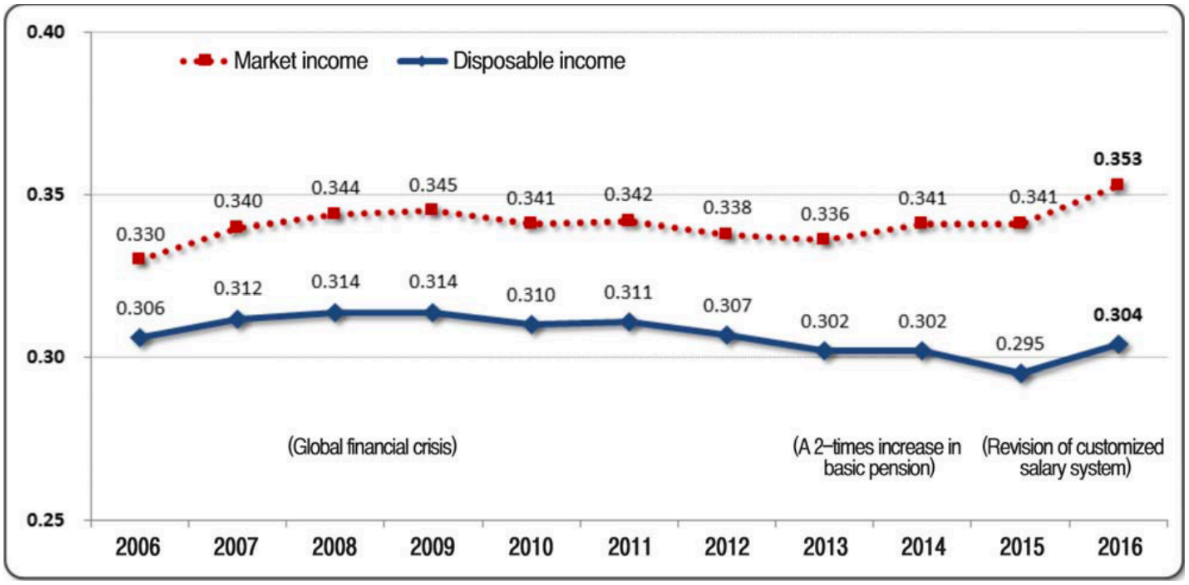


Figure 3: Korean Gini coefficient 2006-2016. (Graph by Statistics Korea in "Income Distribution Indicators in 2016," 2017.)

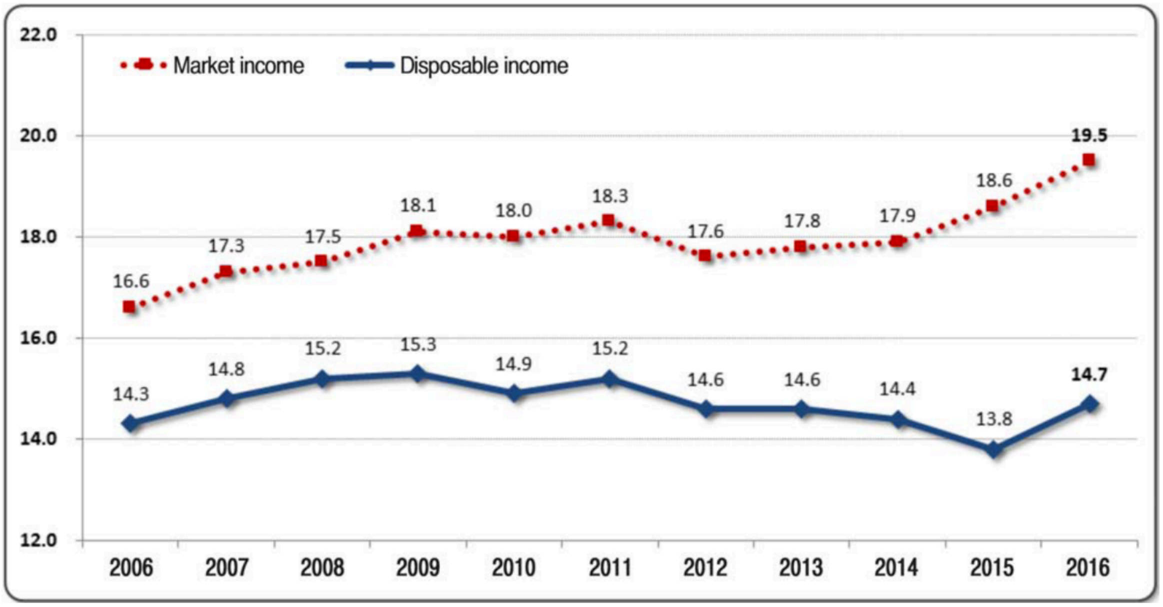


Figure 4: Korean relative poverty rate 2006-2016. (Graph by Statistics Korea in "Income Distribution Indicators in 2016," 2017.)

Another significant causal factor of the inequality is labor market dualism, which has resulted in a large wage gap between regular and non-regular workers. In general, wage inequality is high and increasing, as "workers in the bottom 10% of the income distribution have seen virtually no wage growth during the past two decades," but the labor market dualism has exacerbated the issue (See Figure 4).[36] As competition has intensified among companies in Korea, companies increasingly hire "fixed-term, part-time and atypical workers", generally referred to as non-regular workers, in an attempt to reduce costs.[37] In 2010, temporary workers accounted for 24.8% of total employment in Korea, the fourth highest percentage in the OECD; more than one-third of non-regular workers in Korea are temporary workers.[38] Non-regular workers usually receive low wages and lack stable employment and job security. They also usually do not benefit from social welfare or labor policies. In 2010, "non-regular workers were paid only 53% as much as regular workers per hour."[39] The poverty rate is also higher for non-regular workers: 13.5% for temporary workers and 26.3% for day labors in 2009, in comparison to 1.5% for regular workers.[40] The inequality between regular and non-regular workers is compounded by the difficulty of transitioning from non-regular to regular employment.

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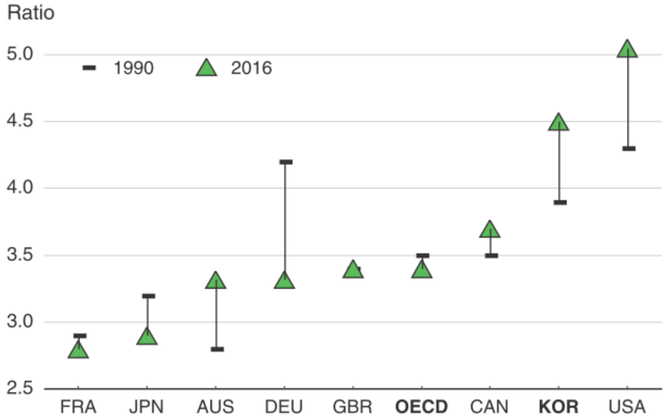
[36] OECD, *OECD Economic Surveys: Korea 2018* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018), 13, www.oecd.org/eco/surveys.
[37] OECD, "Promoting Social Cohesion in Korea," 121.
[38] OECD, 121–22.



Source: OECD Earnings Distribution (database).
StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933740060

Figure 5: Wage inequality is high and increasing in Korea, ratio of the 90th percentile to the 10th percentile. (Graph by OECD in *OECD Economic Surveys: Korea 2018.* Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018, 13. www.oecd.org/eco/surveys.)

In addition to a post-industrial economy and labor market dualism, *chaebols* also play a role in income and wage disparities. *Chaebols* are large family-owned business groups that were given preferential treatment by the government during Korea's development during the twentieth century. These conglomerates were essential to Korea's rapid economic growth, but also created an oligopolistic market in which small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) find it difficult to survive. Although their share of total national sales has lessened slightly, *chaebols* still represented 32% of total national sales in 2018. They account for significant portions of the manufacturing, mining, and service industries. According to the OECD, "the largest groups, Samsung, Hyundai Motor, SK and LG, had an average of 70 companies in 2017 and accounted for nearly half of stock market capitalization."[41]

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[39] OECD, 121.
[40] OECD, 125.

Not only do *chaebols* make it more difficult for SMEs to survive in the market, their wealth has been shared less and less by the rest of Korean society. As the *chaebol* have internationalized and transitioned increasingly to capital and technology-intensive industries, they employ fewer people and require higher-level skills. In 2017, the top 30 *chaebols* "accounted for only 2.7% of employment".[42] Most Korean people vie for a job at one of these *chaebols*, considered better paid, more secure, and more prestigious, but few manage it because of the increasingly limited positions available.

Little English language academic literature is available that addresses the direct relationship between socioeconomic differences and urban-rural disparities in Korea. It seems to be taken for granted that "urbanicity tends to be positively correlated with socioeconomic status".[43] However, there are two related variables that suggest rural areas are socioeconomically disadvantaged relative to cities: regionalism and elderly poverty.

Regionalism is an influential factor in the disparities between urban, industrial areas and rural, agricultural areas. Regionalism has been a factor in Korean politics and development since Park Chunghee's developmental state in the 1960s. The capitol city of Seoul and the southeast region of Korea have been the most industrialized areas since Japanese colonization. Park's economic growth plans favored further development in areas that had already begun to industrialize, thus favoring Seoul and the southeast. These areas became more prosperous than the rest of Korea, in particular the southwest region, which remained the most rural agricultural.[44]

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[41] OECD, *OECD Economic Surveys: Korea 2018*, 74.

[42] OECD, 74.

[43] Soojeong Lee and Roger C. Shouse, "The Impact of Prestige Orientation on Shadow Education in South Korea," *Sociology of Education* 84, no. 3 (2011): 215, https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040711411278.

After democratization, regionalism in politics, including in economic and distributive policy-making, continued. A 2008 study found that incumbent presidents grant financial benefits to regions where they have widespread support and regions where their rivals have support. Swing areas where the vote is more evenly divided tend to receive less benefits. The study found this to be true for the Kim Youngsam (1993-1997) and the Kim Daejung (1998-2002) administrations, supported by the southeast region and the southwest region respectively.[45] Although more recent presidencies have not been tested to see if they exhibit the same patterns, the effects of past regionalism are still apparent today. In 2017, "gross regional domestic product (GRDP) per capita, gross regional income per capita, private consumption per capita, and personal income per capita were all higher than the average for the nation" in Seoul and Ulsan.[46] Ulsan is an industrial powerhouse city in the southeast region.

In addition to regionalism, the aging population of rural areas implies a socioeconomic disadvantage. This is because elderly poverty is a well-documented phenomenon in Korea. As of 2011, 50% of the Korean population aged 65 and over live in relative poverty, the highest percentage in the OECD.[47] Urban flight has resulted in a sparsely populated countryside, with only 18.5% of the total population living in rural areas as of 2017, in comparison to 72.3% of the population in 1960.[48] As young people moved to work in the cities, the elderly often remained in rural areas. From 1960 to 2000, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over increased from

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[44] Bae-Gyoon Park, "Territorialized Party Politics and the Politics of Local Ecomomic Development: State-Led Industrialization and Political Regionalism in South Korea," *Political Geography* 22 (2003): 811–39, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(03)00102-1.

[45] Yusaku Horiuchi and Seungjoo Lee, "The Presidency, Regionalism, and Distributive Politics in South Korea," *Comparative Political Studies* 41, no. 6 (2008): 861–82, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006298900.

[46] Statistics Korea, "Regional Income in 2017 (Preliminary)," 2018, http://kostat.go.kr/portal/eng/pressReleases/1/index.board?bmode=read&aSeq=366943.

[47] Randall S. Jones and Satoshi Urasawa, "Reducing the High Rate of Poverty Among the Elderly in Korea," OECD Economics Department Working Papers (Paris, 2014).

[48] World Bank, "South Korea Rural Population (% of Total Population)" (World Bank, 2018).

4.2% in rural areas to 14.7%, in comparison to an increase of only 2.5% to 5.4% in urban areas. This indicates that the rate of increase of the elderly population in rural areas is higher.[49] In 2017, Jeonnam and Jeonbuk, two provinces of the southwest region, accounted for the highest proportions of the elderly population, at 22.0% and 19.0% respectively. This suggests that rural communities, with aging populations, face economic disadvantages.

Today, education increasingly acts to reinforce existing socioeconomic disparities, instead of minimizing them. Socioeconomic disparity influences the amount of and quality of education available to lower-income and rural families, and in turn one's education significantly impacts one's job prospects. How this increasing socioeconomic inequality interacts with the education system will be addressed in more detail in the following section.

II. B. Issues of the Korean Education System

The growing socioeconomic divide in the realm of educational access and academic performance is an increasing cause for concern. Students from lower income families tend to have less access to private education and to perform worse academically. Soo-young Byun and Kyung-keun Kim's statistical analysis of data on Korean eighth graders in 1999, 2003, and 2007 from the TIMSS database provide evidence of this divide.[50] Their results reveal that "the influence of SES [socioeconomic status] explained approximately 13% of the variance in math performance in 1999, whereas it explained approximately 17% in 2003 and 2007".[51] This inequality disadvantages students of lower socioeconomic status doubly: not only are they denied their right to equal opportunity for education, their low socioeconomic status is reinforced for themselves and for future generations because in Korean society, education is considered the primary means to upward socioeconomic mobility. This demonstrates that education has become not just a visible example of existing socioeconomic inequality in Korean society, but a compounding factor for exacerbating it.

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[49] Patricia Ann Bell, "The Impact of Rapid Urbanization on South Korean Family Composition and the Elderly Population in South Korea," *Population Review* 43, no. 1 (2004): 53, https://doi.org/10.1353/prv.2004.0006.

[50] Soo-yong Byun and Kyung-keun Kim, "Educational Inequality in South Korea: The Widening Socioeconomic Gap in Student Achievement," *Research in Sociology of Education* 17 (2010): 155–82, https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3539(2010)0000017008.

[51] Byun and Kim, 174.

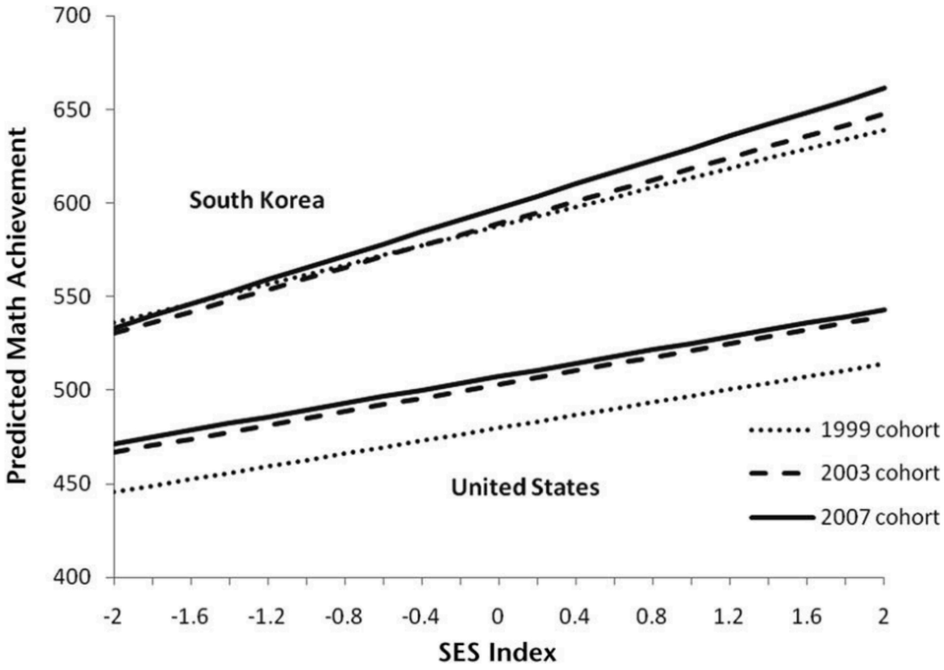

Figure 6: Trends in the Relationship between Socioeconomic Background and Student Achievement in South Korea and the United States. Sources: TIMSS 1999, 2003, and 2007. (Graph by Soo-yong Byun and Kyung-keun Kim in "Educational Inequality in South Korea: The Widening Socioeconomic Gap in Student Achievement." ***Research in Sociology of Education*** **17 (2010), 176. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-3539(2010)0000017008.)**

This problem of the Korean education system may often be overlooked because of its students' relatively high scores when compared on an international scale. Figure 5 from Byun and Kim's study demonstrates this phenomenon. When compared to other countries like the U.S., Korean students in general score very well; even Korean students at the bottom of the socioeconomic status (SES) distribution score about the same as U.S. students at the top of the SES distribution. However, the increasing slope of the Korean math achievement line of the 2007 cohort as compared to the 1999 and 2003 cohorts demonstrates a "widening socioeconomic gap in student achievement", whereas the slope of the U.S. achievement line is relatively stable across cohorts.[52]

In this discussion of socioeconomic difference, the relevance of private education must be noted. Private education and government policy in reaction to it will be discussed at length in this paper because they are such a significant part of the Korean education system and contribute to its overall effect on student wellbeing. Private education in Korea primarily takes the form of private tutoring, as opposed to private schooling. To avoid confusion while discussing the Korean education system, the term formal schooling is used to refer to both public and private schools in this paper unless otherwise specified. Public and private schools operate very similarly; the government regulates curricula, textbooks, teachers, and so on, for both systems.[53] Except for a small group of private high schools called autonomous schools, private schools receive public funding. The primary difference of private schools is that their teachers are not required to rotate among schools, as public school teachers are required to do. Around 13% of primary and secondary schools in Korea are private, most at the secondary school level.[54] The terms private tutoring or shadow education refers to for-profit supplementary education outside of school. The three most common types of private tutoring in order of relative cost from most expensive to least are one-on-one or group tutoring, private after-school academies, and worksheets delivered to the home.

Private tutoring has been gaining popularity in Korea since the 1960s and is now an immense industry, used primarily for enrichment rather than remedial education.[55] Students spend a great deal of their time outside of school receiving private tutoring, often attending multiple private academies at a time, to the point that leisure time is neglected and sleep is sacrificed.[56] Previously, a great deal of time in academies was spent preparing for the entrance exam, as well as school exams. Nowadays, students attend private academies not only to prepare for these exams, but also to receive consulting services for the comprehensive student record screening. Some of these academies offer "student record programs" that help with reading, study skills, and extracurriculars. These programs "include everything from drafting student records to preparing for intramural competitions and writing short research papers," as well as preparing statements of purpose.[57] Some students pay counselors at these academies to ghostwrite recommendations. These recommendations are supposed to be written by teachers, but the teachers often allow students to write their own letters. Too busy studying for school exams and the entrance exam, students pay the private academies instead.[58] Wealthy parents with the time and resources trade information and work together to draft "curricula" of private academies their children should attend.[59]

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[52] Byun and Kim, 175.

[53] Byun and Kim, "Educational Inequality in South Korea: The Widening Socioeconomic Gap in Student Achievement"; Seog Hun Jo, "The Track of Policies for Educational Equality and Its Implications in Korea," *Journal of Educational Change* 14 (2013): 73–94, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-012-9190-5; Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea."

[54] NCEE, "South Korea: Governance and Accountability," National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE), 2019, http://ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/south-korea-overview/south-korea-system-and-school-organization/.

[55] Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea."

The Korea Statistics report on private education expenditures for 2017 demonstrates increases across the board in terms of total expenditures on private education, participation rates, and participation time.[60] In these reports, the Korean government classifies the types of private education as one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring, taking lessons at private academic institutes, textbooks with tutor's visit, and Internet and correspondence lectures. 70.5% of students, almost three-quarters of the Korean student population, participated in private education in 2017, which increased 2.7% from 67.8% in 2016. The total private education expenditures for primary and secondary school students in 2017 reached ₩18.6 trillion (Korean won) [US$16.6 billion], an increase of 3.1% from 2016. Expenditures have dropped from a range of ₩20 to 22 trillion [US$17.8 to 19.6 billion] between 2007 and 2011, to a range of ₩18 to 19 trillion [US$16 to 16.9 billion] between 2012 and 2017, but the number of students has continuously decreased from 7.73 million in 2007 to 5.73 million in 2017, indicating that expenditures per student has increased overall. Average expenditures on private education per month per student increased by 5.9% from ₩256 thousand [US$228] in 2016 to ₩271 thousand [US$241] in 2017. At 18.4%, the largest share of students receiving private education was paying ₩500 thousand [US$445] or more per month. From 2013 to 2017, the average number of hours per week participating in private education per student has hovered around 6 hours, peaking at 6.1 hours in 2017. Private education expenditures also consume a large portion of education spending as a whole, accounting for 1.8% of GDP in 2010, "representing 7.9% of average household disposable income".[61]

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[56] Randall S. Jones, "Education Reform in Korea," *OECD Economics Department Working Papers, No. 1067* (Paris, 2013), 18, https://doi.org/10.1787/5k43nxs1t9vh-en; Sonam Yang and Chang Sik Shin, "Parental Attitudes towards Education: What Matters for Children's Well-Being?," *Children and Youth Services Review* 30, no. 11 (2008): 1328–35, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2008.03.015.

[57] Jin, "For Prestigious University Admission, S. Korean Students and Parents in a War for Information."

[58] Bak, "Teacher Letters Become a Headache for All."

[59] Jin, "For Prestigious University Admission, S. Korean Students and Parents in a War for Information."

[60] Statistics Korea, "Private Education Expenditures Survey in 2017," 2018.

Furthermore, access to private education in Korea is not equitable. Studies have shown that higher income families participate more in and spend more on private education, which indicates that the private tutoring industry is a significant medium of socioeconomic inequalities in the education system. Analysis of data from the 1997 Survey on Private Tutoring by the Korea Institute for Consumer Protection and the 1998 Urban Household Expenditure Survey by the National Statistical Office of Korea reveal that higher income households participate in higher levels of private education.[62] More recently, Statistics Korea reported that in 2017, households in the highest income bracket participated the most in private education at 83.6%, in comparison to a 43.1% participation rate of the lowest income bracket. The highest income households (₩7 million and up per month/US$6229) also spent the most on private education, a monthly average of ₩455 thousand [US$405], in comparison to ₩93 thousand [US$83] a month by the lowest income households (less than ₩2 million per month/US$1780).[63] These patterns reinforce the educational opportunity gap between high-income and low-income students. In addition, while higher income households are more likely to spend more on private education, Kim and Lee's study also estimates the income elasticity of private tutoring to be about 0.5, "which implies that lower-income households spend a higher percentage of their income on private tutoring than do high-income households".[64] This inelasticity of private education indicates a compounding factor of increasing socioeconomic inequalities in Korea. The public's continued perception of education as a tool for social mobility despite its decreasing utility has further exacerbated financial strains on families of low socioeconomic status. Because these families still desire upward class mobility, they continue to utilize private education, albeit not of the quality or quantity that wealthier families can afford. This results in the majority of the student population participating in private tutoring and lower-income families spending a larger piece of their income on their children's education than upper-income families, putting significant financial strains on those lower-income families and students.[65]

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[61] Jones, "Education Reform in Korea," 18.
[62] Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea."

Rural students are at a disadvantage in terms of educational access, both as a result of socioeconomic disparities and the smaller presence of private academies in rural areas.[66] Rural students participate in shadow education at lower rates, and also spend less on it. In 2017, the participation rate in private education in towns and townships was the lowest among classifications at 61.7%, in comparison to 70.9% in metropolitan cities, 71.1% in cities, and 76.7% in Seoul. Similarly, towns and townships had the lowest average monthly expenditures per student on private education (₩177 thousand or US$156), compared to the highest average expenditures of ₩390 thousand (US$343) in Seoul.[67] Rural students have poor access to many educational opportunities because their communities lack the resources. These communities often do not have the funds to provide educational resources, and the dwindling youth population in rural areas means they often lack significant demand for them as well. Differences in shadow education participation may also be because more educational opportunities are available and academic competition is more intense in cities. Urban citizens may feel more pressure to participate, and rural families concerned about their child's education may move to the city to have better educational access.[68]

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[63] Statistics Korea, "Private Education Expenditures Survey in 2017."

[64] Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea," 289.

[65] Hagen Koo, "The Changing Faces of Inequality in South Korea in the Age of Globalization," *Korean Studies* 31 (2007): 1–18.

[66] Jones, "Education Reform in Korea," 41.

In addition to socioeconomic inequality, high stress caused by the intense competition in education is perhaps the most well known problem Korean students face. Rates of dissatisfaction with school life, high stress levels, depression and depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation and suicide are distressingly high among Korean students. Numerous surveys have demonstrated that school and academics are a major source of stress for students. In a 2016 study of children's subjective quality of life conducted by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, Korean children scored very poorly on educational wellbeing, "a standardized measure of both satisfaction with school life and academic stress…with a score of 84.92, ranking only above Greece" among 30 countries surveyed.[69] This study reported that academic stress was the most significant factor on children's subjective wellbeing, having a negative influence.[70] A 2013 study found that the average sleep time of a Korean high school student is five hours and 27 minutes, which is an hour less than it was four years before in 2009. It also found that academic problems were reported to be the cause of 69.3% of students' stress, and most worryingly, 36.9% of middle and high school students reported contemplating suicide in the past year and 40.4% of those students attributed this to their grades.[71] In 2017, Statistics Korea, the country's national statistics office, reported that suicide has been the leading cause of death for Korean youth ages 9 to 24 since 2007.[72] A 2002 survey of 922 adolescents reported that ages 17 to 18, around the age when students take the all-important college entrance exam, is a peak time for suicide attempts, with 16.9% of respondents in that age group reporting an attempt.[73] The data from these surveys suggests that the mental health and wellbeing of many Korean students is in jeopardy, and is often related to academic concerns.

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[67] Statistics Korea, "Private Education Expenditures Survey in 2017."

[68] Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea," 278–79.

[69] Meesook Kim, "Children's Subjective Quality of Life" (Sejong, 2016), 29.

[70] Kim, 42.

Student wellbeing and mental health issues, socioeconomic inequality and educational opportunity gap, and the role that the private tutoring industry plays in reinforcing these problems are the focus of this thesis. In order to understand viable solutions, it is important to bear in mind what the Korean government has already tried. The Korean government has attempted to address these issues utilizing various policies during the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The next chapter will detail the history of these policies.

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[71] "고교생 평균 수면 시간, 학업 스트레스 때문에 자살 생각까지 (High Schoolers' Average Sleep Time, Thoughts of Suicide Because of Academic Stress)," *OSEN*, February 17, 2014, http://osen.mt.co.kr/article/G1109785999.

[72] Statistics Korea, "2017 Statistics on the Youth," 2017.

[73] H. S. Kim, "Correlation between Personality, Family Dynamic Environment and Suicidal Attempt among Korean Adolescent Population," *Journal of Korean Academy of Nursing* 32 (2002): 231–42. Kim's study included both delinquents and students.

III. A History of Korean Education Policy

This chapter will provide a history of Korean education policy since the mid to late 1940s with the goal of understanding how policymakers have attempted to balance excellence and equity in the Korean school system. In general, most of the policies implemented by the Korean government over the years can be classified as either equity-oriented or neoliberal policy. Equity-oriented policies aim to provide all students with the same educational opportunities regardless of social class, economic status, ability level, or other factors. Education is seen as a public good that should be both provided and dictated by the government. Neoliberal policy refers to policies that encourage privatization of goods and services formerly provided by the public sector as well as the deregulation of private producers' behavior.[74] Neoliberal policy does not consider "redistribution based on nonmarket criteria" a priority, because the market is considered the "most democratic and efficient solution".[75] Neoliberal education reforms commonly deregulate and marketize the education sector, encouraging student-as-consumer choice and interschool competition. In other words, it introduces a "competitive market approach to the allocation of [educational] resources" with the aim of achieving higher levels of efficiency and equality in education by requiring schools to compete for high-performing students.[76] Ultimately, the policies of the Korean government seem to reflect a push-and-pull mechanism in the education system: those trying to alleviate student stress, financial burden, and socioeconomic disparities seek to limit shadow education and equalize schools. In response, proponents of consumer choice and enriching, differentiated education push for fewer limitations on private tutoring and more autonomy for schools and students.

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[74] William K. Tabb, *Unequal Partners: A Primer on Globalization* (New York: New Press, 2002), 7.

[75] Tabb, 7; David Hursh, "Neo-Liberalism, Markets and Accountability: Transforming Education and Undermining Democracy in the United States and England," *Policy Futures in Education* 3, no. 1 (2005): 4, https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2005.3.1.6.

[76] Hursh, 4.

Figure 7: Summary table of policy reforms

Policy	**Year**	**Function(s)**
Education Law	1949	• Established a single-track education system with 6 years of primary school, 3 years of middle school, and three years of high school • Established the right to education • Established free and compulsory primary education
Middle School Equalization Policy (MSEP)	1968	• Abolished middle school entrance exam and randomized middle school assignments within districts • Converted elite middle schools to general high schools
High School Equalization Policy (HSEP)	1974	• Abolished high school entrance exam and randomized high school assignments within districts • Reduced college autonomy • Banned tracking of students and schools • Set up inter-district teacher rotation system • Subsidized private schools
7.30 Educational Reform Measure	1980	• Abolished individual college entrance exam • Established a standardized national college entrance exam • Accredited more private tertiary schools and increased college admissions quotas • Banned private tutoring • Created Education Broadcast System (EBS)
5.31 Education Reform Proposal	1995-1997	• Created the Seventh Curriculum which encouraged more student autonomy • Allowed parents and teachers to have larger roles in decision-making at schools • Allowed colleges to consider students' extended high school records in the admissions process • Reinstated tracking in math and English • Expanded the Special Purpose High School (SPHS) Program
Educational Plans for the Reduction of Shadow Education Cost through the Normalization of Public Education	2004	• Provided public after-school and online learning programs for low-income and rural students • Limited high school choice • Introduced a special admissions process that relies on various evaluation criteria and did not require an entrance exam score • Allowed college more autonomy in deciding admissions criteria

		• Introduced an admissions officer system
School Liberation Plan	2009	• Privatized some national universities • Deregulated the admissions process of colleges and elite schools and reduced the weight of entrance exam scores in the admissions process • Expanded the admissions officer system • Reinforced tracking of students in math and English • Increased school diversity by opening specialized schools • Expanded public after-school and online learning programs
300 Project for Diversified High Schools	2009	• Opened 300 specialized high schools, including 88 public boarding schools and 100 Independent Private High Schools
Revised National Curriculum	2015	• Revised the national curriculum to encourage creative thinking and student autonomy • Established the Free Semester Program (FSP)

III. A. 1940s and 1950s: Rebuilding the Education System

The Korean education system, like many other aspects of Korean society, was in ruins after Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula ended in 1945. With the Koreas split into two at this time, South Korea had to rebuild its own education system essentially from the ground up. The Ministry of Education (MOE) was founded in 1948 to govern the national education system. The MOE put forth the 1949 Education Law that established a single-track education system with six years of primary education, three years of middle school and three years of high school, and four years of tertiary education. This law declared that every Korean citizen "shall have a right to learn through life and to receive an education according to his/her abilities and aptitudes."[77] In addition, primary education became free and compulsory under this law. To enter secondary school, applicants had to take standard national admission tests and pay tuition and fees.[78]

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[77] Ministry of Education, "Framework Act on Education," Pub. L. No. 14601 (2017). In 1997, the 1949 Education Law was split into three separate pieces of legislation. Article 3 of one of these pieces, the Framework Act on Education, retains the declaration of the right to education originally held in the 1949 Education Law. This citation is taken from the Framework Act on Education because access to an English translation of the original Education Law is not available.

The government used funds from an education tax and foreign aid first to build schools in the early stages of expansion in the 1950s, and then later to renovate existing schools and provide textbooks while continuing to build new schools.[79] As a result of the Korean government's "low-cost approach" that prioritized educational expansion and affordability over school quality, universal elementary education was achieved by 1959. However, this approach also resulted in "overcrowded classrooms, double or even triple shifts in classrooms, and low teacher pay".[80] Focusing primarily on universal enrollment is reasonable within the context of a newly rebuilt education system, but it also resulted in significant variance in the quality of schools, which subsequent education policy tried to remedy.

III. B. 1960s and 1970s: Expanding Access and Equalization Efforts

Following the universalization of primary education, demand for secondary education in the 1960s began to rise faster than government expansion of school facilities. This marks the point at which Korea's education system began to become increasingly competitive. As mentioned previously, quality of education varied from school to school and access to secondary education was limited by entrance exams. These conditions contributed to a "well-established ranking system among secondary schools and colleges" that caused the heated competition in Korean society to gain admission to the highest-ranking schools.[81] A school was ranked based on the average minimum score of its applicants on the entrance exam.[82] Entrance into a higher-ranked middle school almost guaranteed entrance into a higher-ranked high school, which would allow the student social mobility and success in employment.[83] Thus competition was heightened not only by a shortage of secondary schools, but also because of this ranking system. Because of this competition and desire to perform well on exams, use of private tutoring increased in tandem with demand for secondary and tertiary education. The *Chosun Ilbo*, a major newspaper in Korea, reported in 1967 that about 90% of Seoul sixth grade (the last year of primary school) students were receiving private tutoring.[84] Although this statistic demonstrates that most families were participating in the shadow education market regardless of economic standing, more affluent families had access to more and higher-quality options.[85]

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[78] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea," 26; Gwang-Jo Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea," *Secondary Education in Africa: Strategies for Renewal*, 2001.

[79] Kim, 31.

[80] Chong Jae Lee, Yong Kim, and Soo-yong Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," *Prospects* 42 (2012): 304, 305, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-012-9239-5.

[81] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 582.

Intense competition and financial strain to provide the best-possible educational opportunities resulted in high levels of stress among students and their families. This situation was referred to as "examination hell", because it centered on the entrance exams for secondary school. To combat this issue, the MOE would enact policies throughout the 1960s and 1970s that aimed to level the playing field for students of lower socioeconomic status and reduce competition. The first of these policies was the 1968 Middle School Equalization Policy (MSEP). This policy abolished the entrance exam for middle school and randomized assignments to middle schools within districts. The elite highest-rank middle schools were converted to general high schools, essentially removing the existence of elite middle schools.[86]

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[82] Sunhwa Lee and Mary C. Brinton, "Elite Education and Social Capital: The Case of South Korea," *Sociology of Education* 69, no. 3 (1996): 181–82.

[83] Lee and Brinton.

[84] Lee and Brinton, 582.

[85] Lee and Brinton, 582.

[86] Chong Jae Lee, Heesook Lee, and Hyo Min Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 11, no. 1 (2010): 97–108, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-009-9064-6; Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea."

This policy was enacted first in large cities and then nationwide by 1971, and raised to 90% the number of primary school graduates who advanced to middle school.[87] For comparison, the advancement rate for primary school students in 1965 was 54.3%.[88]

Although the MSEP successfully reduced competition surrounding middle school admissions, education fever simply redirected to high school admissions. The problem was replicated at the next stage of education. Like with the previous universalization of primary education, which led to increased demand for middle school education, the increased and equalized access to middle school led to higher demand for high school education. The inability of the supply side to meet this demand due to insufficient school facilities, in combination with variations in school quality, further facilitated the hierarchical ranking of high schools. In the 1960s and early 1970s, "only 40% of middle school graduates were able to enter high schools due to a lack of school facilities".[89] The shadow education industry continued to thrive as a result of the competition surrounding high school admissions. In response, the MOE created the 1974 High School Equalization Policy (HSEP). Most importantly, this policy removed the entrance exams for high school. It also "included such measures as randomizing high school assignments; reducing the autonomy of colleges; and…banning the tracking of students and schools".[90] Furthermore, it set up a rotation of teachers within school districts and subsidies for private schools.[91] These features of the policy were designated to "equalize or level school inputs—such as operating expenditures, student intake, class size, and education facilities—across schools."[92] The HSEP was the policy that made private schools functionally similar to public schools, prohibiting private schools from selecting their students and equalizing public and private tuitions.[93]

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[87] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 100; Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 305.

[88] South Korea Ministry of Education, "Statistics: Primary and Secondary Education," South Korean Ministry of Education, accessed April 18, 2019, http://english.moe.go.kr/sub/info.do?m=050102&page=050102&num=2&s=english. Data from 1965 was used because it was the most recent available prior to 1971.

[89] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 100.

[90] Hyera Byean, "English, Tracking, and Neoliberalization of Education in South Korea," *TESOL Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (2015): 871, https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.257.

III. C. 1980s and 1990s: Policy Directly Targeting Private Tutoring and a Turn toward Neoliberal Policy

Although the MSEP and HSEP did reduce competition surrounding secondary education, the continued existence of individual college entrance exams and the hierarchical ranking system of universities fueled education fever and the shadow education industry. Previously, the MOE had enacted policy shaping the formal education system in an effort to control the shadow education system. Beginning in the 1980s, the MOE not only altered the formal education system to control shadow education, but also began to directly target the private tutoring industry itself.

In 1980, the MOE established the July 30th or 7.30 Educational Reform Measure, also known as the "Measures for Educational Normalization and the Elimination of Excessive Private Tutoring". This policy abolished individual college entrance exams, replacing them with a standardized national exam, accredited more private tertiary institutions, and increased college admissions quotas by allowing "universities to accept 30% more students than their graduation quota".[94] This caused college enrollment to grow by more than 2.5 times from 1980 to 1990.[95]

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[91] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 306.

[92] Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea," 32.

[93] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 584.

[94] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 306; Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses"; Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea."

The 7.30 Educational Reform Measure also placed an outright ban of private tutoring. Throughout the early 1980s, revisions of the legislation behind the ban made it even stricter. Although people did break this law to illegally provide and receive private tutoring, they risked harsh punishment: "The students who were caught…were subject to severe disciplinary measures including suspension and disadvantages in grading at school; their parents were raided by the National Tax Service and were given disadvantages in promotion at work; illegal private instructors and tutors were either arrested or fired".[96] These punishments may sound unusually severe; at the time, this was not unusual because the authoritarian dictator Chun Doohwan governed Korea. In addition, the television channel the Education Broadcast System (EBS) was created and began to provide "low-cost supplementary TV-based tutoring programmes" as an alternative to shadow education.[97]

By the 1990s, Korea had transitioned to a democratic regime and it also began to shift its policy toward neoliberalism and globalization in many sectors. This shift included education policy, and was framed as an attempt to improve the quality and diversity of schools. Firstly, the private tutoring ban was "gradually relaxed throughout the 1990s".[98] Rather than continuing to rigorously control the shadow education market, the Korean government again turned primarily to improving formal education in the hopes of diverting demand from private tutoring. However, with neoliberal ideology providing a guiding set of values for policy, the government did not prioritize stemming competition. Instead, the discourse around policy focused on consumer

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[95] Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea," 33.

[96] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 587.

[97] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 307.

[98] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 593.

choice, diversity, and school and student autonomy.[99]

From 1995 to 1997, the newly launched Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER) created the New Education System, also referred to as the May 31st or 5.31 Education Reform Proposal.[100] Firstly, the policy reform tried to introduce more differentiation and autonomy in multiple areas. It included the Seventh Curriculum (the seventh revisal of the national curriculum), which instated a more differentiated curriculum and encouraged more student choice and autonomy. The 5.31 reform also allowed parents and teachers to have larger roles in "decision-making process on school matters," providing more interschool differentiation.[101] It also diversified criteria for student evaluation in secondary school as well as for student selection in the college admissions process.[102] Colleges could now use a combination of the entrance exam, students' high school grade point average (GPA), as well as a test administered by the college, and they had some flexibility over the assigned weight of each item in the admissions process. Beginning in 1997, colleges were allowed to look at extended high school records, "including personal information, academic records, attendance records, and award-winning records."[103] However, at this time "colleges relied heavily on the [entrance exam] score for screening."[104]

Two more controversial aspects of the New Education System were the reinstatement of tracking and the diversification of school type through the expansion and decentralization of the

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[99] Jeong Won Kim, "Education Reform Policies and Classroom Teaching in South Korea," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 14, no. 2 (2004): 127, https://doi.org/10.1080/09620210400200122.

[100] The PCER was originally the Presidential Council for Education Reform and had been founded in 1985 in an attempt to more systematically establish education reform. The PCER was reformed as the Commission in the 1990s as part of the government's globalization-driven (*segyehwa)* policy project. Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses."

[101] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 308.

[102] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 101.

[103] Hee Jun Choi and Ji-Hye Park, "Historical Analysis of the Policy on the College Entrance System in South Korea," *International Education Studies* 6, no. 11 (2013): 112, https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v6n11p106.

[104] Choi and Park, 112.

Special Purpose High School (SPHS) Program. The Seventh Curriculum implemented tracking of students in mathematics and English based on skill level and focus of study.[105] For example, students in their last two years of high school were placed into Mathematics I, Mathematics I or II, and Practical Mathematics according to whether they were on the Literary Track, Science Track, or Vocational Track, respectively.[106] The SPHS Program was intended to counteract what critics of the HSEP claimed were "downward leveling effects" of the MOE's equalization policies by allowing for specialized schools in science, foreign languages, arts, and sports, as well as independent private schools and international schools.[107] The HSEP did not apply to SPHS, so these schools were able to control their operations and student selection. As a result, SPHS could be very selective in their admissions process and came to be seen as elite schools, essentially replacing the elite schools of the 1960s and 1970s that the HSEP had eliminated. Furthermore, the number of SPHS grew markedly when the program was decentralized from MOE authority, permitting local education authorities to open a SPHS. From 1990 to 2000, the number of SPHS rose from 25 to 68. By 2008 there were 102, and in 2018 there were 157 SPHS.[108]

Also as a part of the general move toward neoliberal values of consumer choice and competitiveness, various regions and large cities began to abolish or loosen the HSEP. This trend would continue into the twenty-first century. For example, in 1996 students in Seoul were allowed to apply to specific schools they chose in a "common catchment area", although "beginning in 2010, they were further permitted to apply to schools outside their designed catchment area".[109] In addition, the HSEP is no longer applied in most smaller cities and rural areas.[110] As of 2006, around half of students were in school districts under the HSEP.[111]

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[105] South Korea Ministry of Education, "The School Curriculum of the Republic of Korea" (South Korean Ministry of Education, 1997).

[106] Kyung Mee Park, "School Mathematics Curriculum in Korea," *Journal of the Korea Society of Mathematical Education* 1, no. 1 (1997): 45.

[107] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 590.

[108] Park, 591; "2018 Yearly Number of Schools," Education Statistics (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2018), http://cesi.kedi.re.kr/index.

In 1997, the MOE created the "Educational Plans for Alleviating Overheated Private Tutoring and Reducing Household Spending on Shadow Education" in response to complaints in society about the financial strains private tutoring placed on families. This move implied that the Korean government increasingly viewed shadow education not as something that could be entirely stamped out, but instead something that the government should try to manage by improving the formal schooling system.[112]

III. D. 2000s and 2010s: Education Policy Reflects Push-and-Pull Nature of the Education Debate

In the twenty-first century, Korean education policy has continued in a neoliberal direction for the most part. However, some policies have resisted this neoliberal trend in an effort to improve student wellbeing or to control shadow education. That being said, policy concentrated on student wellbeing or control of shadow education does not necessarily contradict neoliberal values. In particular, supporters of neoliberal education policy have emphasized the importance of differentiated curricula and educational choice that can better provide individual students with the kind of education most suitable for them.

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[109] Soo-yong Byun, Kyung-keun Kim, and Hyunjoon Park, "School Choice and Educational Inequality in South Korea," *Journal of School Choice* 6, no. 2 (2012): 5.

[110] Byun, Kim, and Park, "School Choice and Educational Inequality in South Korea"; Sunwoong Kim and Ju Ho Lee, "Changing Facets of Korean Higher Education: Market Competition and the Role of the State," *Higher Education* 52 (2006): 557–87; Soo-yong Byun, "Does Policy Matter in Shadow Education Spending? Revisiting the Effects of the High School Equalization Policy in South Korea," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 11 (2010): 83–96.

[111] Kim and Lee, "Changing Facets of Korean Higher Education: Market Competition and the Role of the State," 563.

[112] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 101. More detailed information in English about the features of the Educational Plans for Alleviating Overheated Private Tutoring and Reducing Household Spending on Shadow Education could not be found.

For example, in 2002, the Constitutional Court ruled the private tutoring ban unconstitutional for violating families' and students' right to learn as guaranteed to them in the Framework Act on Education. Although the private tutoring ban was removed, the government has since placed limitations on the price of private after-school academies (*hagwon*) and a 10 PM curfew on *hagwon* in five regions in Korea beginning in 2006.[113] Then, in 2010, as a result of backlash when some local governments refused to enforce the curfew, the central government decided that each city and provincial education office should set its own curfew. This resulted in differing regional curfews that lack any legal force, some running as late as 12 AM.[114]

Presidents Roh Moohyun (2002-2007) and Lee Myungbak (2008-2013) both attempted to reduce demand for—and thus the financial burden of—private tutoring by improving the formal school system, although their approaches were somewhat different. The differences in their approaches can be summed up by comparing the titles of the educational plans they released: the Roh administration published in 2004 the "Educational Plans for the Reduction of Shadow Education Cost through the Normalization of Public Education", while the Lee administration published in 2009 the "Educational Policies for the Reduction of Shadow Education through the Enhancement of the Competitiveness of Public Education".[115] Roh's educational policy included goals of providing alternatives to private tutoring for students from families of lower socioeconomic status or living in rural areas, such as public after-school programs or online learning programs.[116] Certain after-school programs had participation rates rise from 43% after their introduction in 2006 to 65% in 2011, with higher rates for low-income and rural students.[117] Roh also expanded the EBS, creating supplementary programs connected to the Internet.[118]

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[113] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea," 28; Hoon Choi and Álvaro Choi, "When One Door Closes: The Impact of the Hagwon Curfew on the Consumption of Private Tutoring in the Republic of Korea," *IREA Working Papers*, 2015, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2689777.

[114] Shin-who Kang, "Hagwon Curfew Backsliding," *Korea Times*, April 1, 2010, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/04/113_63489.html. These curfews have been difficult to enforce. For example, a Korean university student told me that one of the academies she attended during high school would not conduct classes in rooms on the outer walls of the building after the curfew, so that the lights in the room could not be seen from outside. To anyone outside, the building appeared dark and empty.

[115] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 102.

Roh's educational policy also allowed only limited high school choice, and made the college admissions process more holistic, with more importance given to high school records and somewhat less importance given to the entrance exam.[119] Moreover, a "special" admissions process that did not require an entrance exam score was introduced at this time and instead utilized items like a recommendation from the high school principal, an essay exam, an interview, or a university-conducted test.[120] Colleges could no longer administer their own tests of students' cognitive abilities, but they could determine how they used and weighted students' comprehensive high school record in admissions. They could also require a statement of purpose, an interview, an essay, or an aptitude test. Roh also introduced an admissions officer system in 2004, in which admissions officers who know the high school curricula and rankings select students according to their grades, potential, skills, and background.[121] However, at this time many colleges still "relied heavily on the [entrance exam] score because it was a common measure and an easy one," and because many high schools sometimes exaggerated students' records to improve their chances of admission.[122] Along with supporting the continued use of the HSEP, Roh also suppressed the expansion of the SPHS beginning in 2007 by requiring that

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[116] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 313; Jo, "The Track of Policies for Educational Equality and Its Implications in Korea," 84.

[117] Jones, "Education Reform in Korea," 41.

[118] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 307.

[119] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 102.

[120] Choi and Park, "Historical Analysis of the Policy on the College Entrance System in South Korea," 113; Soojeong Lee, "Relationship among Education Fever, the College-admission Policy, and Shadow Education in South Korea," *KEDI Journal of Educational Policy* 15, no. 2 (2018): 124.

[121] Choi and Park, "Historical Analysis of the Policy on the College Entrance System in South Korea," 114.

[122] Choi and Park, 113.

"local education authorities should begin to 'consult' with the government regarding the establishment of new SPHS in their regions."[123] Roh even considered entirely eliminating the SPHS, but eventually chose not to as a result of backlash from SPHS program supporters.

In contrast, Lee Myungbak's administration led to a renewed focus on neoliberal development of the formal education system. These neoliberal policies were attempts to lessen expenditures on shadow education by diversifying and improving schools and regaining the favor of middle-class parents who had "deemed public education insufficient" for their children's needs and turned instead to private tutoring.[124] Lee's policies also deregulated primary and secondary education, handing over much of the authority to local education offices. Lee's School Liberation Plan and the 300 Project for Diversified High Schools "are associated with the following policies: privatizing national universities, expanding the number of elite high schools, deregulating the admission procedures of colleges and elite schools, and reinforcing the tracking of students in math and English" after determining student performance in a national student achievement test that had previously been abolished.[125] For example, at this time, the MOE encouraged splitting classes into three groups based on their English language ability. As a result, in 2009, 77.2% of middle schools and 79.6% of high schools were tracking students.[126] More specifically, the 300 Project for Diversified High Schools was a plan to open 300 specialized high schools, "including 88 public boarding schools and 100 Independent Private High Schools."[127] The Lee administration also increased school diversity by creating autonomous schools, international middle schools, vocational magnet schools, and Meister schools, a type of vocational school that prepares students for the industrial sector.[128] Like the Roh administration, Lee's education policy expanded public after-school and online learning programs, and encouraged assigning less weight to exam scores and more to school records and GPA for SPHS, independent private high schools, and college admissions processes.[129] Lee also expanded the admissions officers program introduced by Roh and "actively encouraged" colleges to use this method.[130] In 2010, the government announced that the EBS's preparation materials for the college entrance exam would have a 70% linkage rate with the actual exam questions, so that students could theoretically study only with low-cost EBS materials, instead of shadow education.[131] Research suggests that although EBS TV lectures are not very effective at improving entrance exam scores, they have reduced shadow education expenditures, especially for low-income or rural students.[132]

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[123] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 594.
[124] Byean, "English, Tracking, and Neoliberalization of Education in South Korea," 870.
[125] Byean, 870.
[126] Byean, 873.
[127] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 595.

After the election of Park Geunhye in 2013, the MOE put forth a Revised National Curriculum in 2015, which is to be fully implemented by 2020. The primary goal of this curriculum is to "cultivate a 'creative and integrative learner,'" moving away from teaching methods that encourage rote memorization and toward those that encourage flexible and creative thinking and class participation.[133] Notably, the 2015 Revised National Curriculum places more emphasis not only on student autonomy through the implementation of "creative experiential activities", but also more directly acknowledges the high stress levels of students as a result of academic pressures.[134] It does so primarily by way of the Exam-free Semester, also known as the Free Semester Program (FSP). The FSP is a semester during middle school in which students do not take any standardized, paper and pencil exams. During this semester, students also have more flexibility to choose their own studies, and can participate in more self-directed, experiential learning. The MOE indicates in the 2015 Revised Curriculum that "schools should collaborate with local communities to offer experience-based activities such as career-exploration activities, selective theme activities, club activities, arts/physical activities, and so forth" for students.[135] The FSP is intended to improve student wellbeing by reducing student stress and providing for more enjoyment in the learning process.

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[128] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 313.
[129] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 103.
[130] Choi and Park, "Historical Analysis of the Policy on the College Entrance System in South Korea," 114.
[131] Suh Keong Kwon, Moonbok Lee, and Dongkwang Shin, "Educational Assessment in the Republic of Korea: Lights and Shadows of High-Stake Exam-Based Education System," *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice* 24, no. 1 (2017): 12. Although there appears to have been linkage between the college entrance exam and EBS preparation materials prior to 2010, the literature does not make clear when this practice began.
[132] Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 13.
[133] Jimin Cho and Jin Huh, "New Education Policies and Practices in South Korea" (Bangkok, 2017), https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/new-education-policies-and-practices-south-korea.

The MOE also announced in 2015 the development of a student suicide prevention phone application that monitors students' social media posts for content related to suicide and alerts the parents if it finds anything. The use of this app is completely optional.[136]

With the election of Moon Jae-in in 2017, the future of education policy in Korea remains uncertain. Moon has made promises to expand education policy that alleviates academic stress for students, as well as promises to break from the current neoliberal policy trend and return to the trend of school equalization that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s. Whether or not Moon will be able to make good on all of his promises without receiving significant backlash is as yet unclear; however, if he is successful the Korean education system will undergo considerable changes. The Moon administration has already started to set deadlines for policy changes. In 2018, the MOE announced that universities will be required to admit a minimum of 30% of their new students based on their entrance exam scores by 2022. This will primarily affect schools in Seoul, where there is a high concentration of the highest-ranked schools, as many schools outside of Seoul already meet this requirement. The MOE stated that "the policy, however, will not apply to specialized universities like Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology or two-year colleges."[137] At the same time, the MOE also announced that more subjects on the entrance exam will be graded absolutely instead of on a curve by 2022 to lower the stakes: a second foreign language and Chinese characters, along with English and national history, which have been graded absolutely since 2017. Moon wants to re-expand "regular admissions" that primarily use the entrance exam scores, as opposed to the special admissions that rely on students' GPA and school reports.[138] He has pledged to "simplify college admissions to reflect the students' school transcripts, grades, and test scores" because he believes that the numerous ways to apply and get admitted to university are increasing demands for private tutoring.[139] Following the government's plan for the 2022 college admissions reform, a workshop of parents, teachers, and education experts will determine four or five reform models that will then be voted on by a 400-member civic participation group. However, the head of the Presidential Committee on National Education has said that "it is nearly impossible to select a reform standard that suits all universities in the nation as they all have different procedures in admitting students."[140]

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[134] The MOE writes that creative experiential activities are "designed to develop students' talents and potential, and to nurture a sense of community", and include "discretionary activities, club activities, community services, and career-related activities". "The National Curriculum for the Primary and Secondary Schools" (Republic of Korea Ministry of Education, 2015), 7, 19.

[135] "The National Curriculum for the Primary and Secondary Schools," 16.

[136] Daniel Costa-Roberts, "South Korea Announces App to Combat Student Suicide," *PBS News Hour*, 2015.

In addition, Moon has shown intentions to do away with any form of hierarchy in high schools, universities, and the job market. He plans to convert all SPHS to regular high schools. He also has announced intentions to integrate all state universities in order to eliminate the strict hierarchy of school rankings. Universities will act as a network in recruiting and graduating students, and students and professors will be able to take and teach courses at any school. This network will also eventually collaborate with private universities. Moon also submitted a bill to the National Assembly for a law that will ban putting academic background on resumes. Finally, Moon has stated that he plans to uphold current education policies that encourage student autonomy in the learning process by expanding the FSP in middle schools and "enabling [high school] students to select the classes they wish to take, as university students do."[141]

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[137] Si-Yoon Sung and Esther Chung, "Gov't Expands CSAT Admissions," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, August 20, 2018, http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3052104.
[138] Kim, "Public to Decide on College Admissions Reform."
[139] "What Moon Jae-in Pledged to Do as President," *Korea Herald*, May 10, 2017.
[140] Kim, "Public to Decide on College Admissions Reform."

III. E. Discussion

The timeline of education policy in Korea has revealed a back-and-forth progression of policy direction between equity-oriented and neoliberal policy. After a few decades of focus on equitable expansion of access, concerns about the quality of education were addressed by neoliberal policies beginning in the 1990s. One casual factor of this neoliberal shift appears to be the rising influence of the upper and middle classes, as well as neoliberal politicians, after the democratization of Korea in the early 1990s. Although Roh Moohyun made a significant return toward equity-oriented policy during his presidency, his efforts were partially curtailed by opponents of his plan to end the SPHS program, which he abandoned as a result of the backlash. The current state of the education system is predominantly characterized by neoliberal features, such as a significant degree of school choice and the existence of SPHS. Path dependencies in policy can reduce the efficacy of a change in policy approach. They also make it difficult to determine to what degree the education system can be classified as neoliberal or equity-oriented. The new president Moon Jae-in has expressed intentions to return to an equity-oriented policy approach, which would be in accordance with the back-and-forth pattern exhibited by Korean education policy historically. However, sociopolitical shifts related to higher socioeconomic disparity and the increased influence of the upper and middle classes on politics might affect Moon's ability to create change.

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[141] Bo-eun Kim, "Moon's Education Pledges under Scrutiny," *Korea Times*, May 10, 2017, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/10/181_229082.html.

Since the 1990s, the college admissions process has become progressively more similar to the U.S. process of admissions. Both administrations characterized as neoliberal and those characterized as equity-oriented enacted reforms that made the screening process more holistic. However, the rest of the education system is heavily exam-oriented. Competition to enter high-ranking colleges is still fierce, and the wealthy still use their greater economic means to gain advantage. Furthermore, they do so using the same tools they used when admissions were primarily decided by the entrance exam: private tutoring and academies, as well as sending their students to elite high schools. Moon Jae-in's plans to raise the significance of the entrance exam in admissions again indicates that the comprehensive screening process was not effective in deescalating competition or reducing socioeconomic disparities.

Efforts to restrict private tutoring through policy have also been characterized by back-and-forth attempts to control tutoring either directly or indirectly. In the twenty-first century, the government has primarily tried to restrict private tutoring through improving the formal schooling system. This approach reflects neoliberal shifts in policy, as it forgoes direct government controls on the private sector. This neoliberal approach has, however, been mediated by semi-successful attempts to establish curfews. These curfews are one of the few reforms made to address the issue of student wellbeing and health. The other major example of policy focused on student wellbeing is the Free Semester Program, another reform enacted during the twenty-first century. In fact, it appears that student wellbeing and health is a latecomer to policy goals, and has generally been ignored in policy discussions until more recently. The discourse around educational quality in Korea has revolved primarily around producing students that score well on exams, and more recently on producing students with creative thinking skills. Student wellbeing has not been included as an important indicator of school quality, seeming more like an afterthought.

The back-and-forth nature of policy suggests that neither approach has accomplished the goals that the policymakers set out to achieve. The continued existence of the problems these policies have tried to address corroborates this theory. That being said, other explanations of policy shifts may need to be investigated in future research. For example, a general transition to neoliberal policies across government sectors in the 1990s also played a role in the neoliberal shift in education policy. Ultimately, it is necessary to look at the education policy from other perspectives to gain a better understanding of why both policy approaches have been somewhat unsuccessful. In the next chapter, I will review scholars' analyses of and opinions about past and current Korean education policies, delving into the divide between those scholars who support the equalization policies and those who support the neoliberal policies.

IV. The Academic Literature on Korean Education Policy

The alternation between equalization policies and neoliberal policies implemented by the Korean government has met an equally divided literature. Although there are scholars who argue for a balance of the two, they sometimes do not explain how their policy recommendations will work together to create this balance, or offer few concrete suggestions for how to create this needed balance at all.[142] Both sides claim to be encouraging policies that are best for students, with student wellbeing and educational enrichment being common goals.

However, scholars may at times appear to be talking past each other because their understandings of what is best for students is different. No scholar or politician will argue that national educational performance, school quality, families' right to educational choice, socioeconomic disparities, students' mental and physical health, or their enjoyment of learning is not an important aspect of an education system worth trying to improve through policy. Nevertheless, many have a primary focus that leads them to emphasize certain policies over others. For example, as the conductor of the PISA, the OECD tends to provide policy suggestions for improving student performance and school quality, with some recommendations for reducing socioeconomic inequality in the education system.

While many scholars express their opinions on Korean government policy by criticizing or approving of past policy, some scholars express their opinions on Korean government policy primarily through offering suggestions on how to improve current policy by moving in a more neoliberal or equity-oriented direction. I suggest that scholars who suggest moving in a more neoliberal direction without providing any specific critiques of past neoliberal policies are generally supportive of these past policies, and vice versa for those who oppose a neoliberal policy direction.

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[142] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea" (OECD Publishing, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264190672-en for the former; Chong Jae Lee, Yong Kim, and Soo-yong Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," *Prospects* 42 (2012): 303–18, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-012-9239-5 for the latter.

In terms of shadow education, most scholars agree that a) education fever and parental pressures and b) the Korean government's equalization policies of the 1960s and 1970s contributed to high demand for private education. However, the narrative about the causal relationship between the equalization policies and shadow education differ somewhat. The neoliberal scholars argue that these policies lowered the quality of formal schooling, requiring families to utilize private tutoring to provide their students with a good education. The equity-oriented scholars argue that the policies did not lower the quality of schools in reality, but that affluent families thought they would. For these scholars, it was the inaccurate assumptions of these wealthy families that led them to turn to private tutoring.

The existing literature about the Korean education system appears to hold an implicit consensus that the level of shadow education in Korea is problematic. In fact, this assertion seems to be so accepted that many scholars spend few to no words justifying it. If reasons are given, they are usually that private tutoring reinforces and increases socioeconomic disparities, and that it adds to the long hours students spend in class, depriving them of sleep and leisure time and being a detriment to their health. The only scholar who strays from this assertion is Seog Hun Jo, who asserts that shadow education is negatively coded primarily as a result of a "moral war" rhetoric that the government has used at times. This rhetoric places the "good" public education system in contradistinction with the "bad" private tutoring despite the fact that "cram schools and formal schools are identical in the provisions of teaching and learning for students".[143]

IV. A. Scholars who Support Neoliberal Policies

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[143] Jo, "The Track of Policies for Educational Equality and Its Implications in Korea," 82.

One group of scholars blames equalization policies for low-quality public education and a lack of diversity in schools, and favors neoliberal and deregulatory policy. The central idea behind this school of thought is that neoliberalization and deregulation will allow for freedom of choice on both the supply side and the demand side. School officials will have more autonomy in how schools are run, which will improve the quality of schools. Students will have the freedom to tailor their education to their individual needs, both in terms of school choice and curriculum. This will not only improve students' individual education, but will encourage schools to improve through competition. For these scholars, students' right to education is centered on freedom of choice.

Gwang-jo Kim's 2001 contribution to World Bank presentations for educational development in Africa, a summary and analysis of Korean education policy and reform, is perhaps the best example of the way supporters of neoliberal education policy frame their argument.[144] He describes the shift from a more government-controlled education system to a more market-controlled system as a natural transition in accordance with the democratization of Korea in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The new education policy emphasized "quality, relevance, and excellence of education" and the new curriculum respected "individual difference."[145] Chong Jae Lee, Yong Kim, and Soo-yong Byun frame this shift in policy as a movement from "a focus on control to one on autonomy and accountability" and argue that students, parents, teachers, schools, and education boards should have more freedom of choice in the education system. [146] They specifically argue that private schools should have autonomy as well.

But under current Korean education policy, despite neoliberal policy shifts particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s, the formal education system is too centralized and regulated to be effective according to neoliberal values: efficiency and competitiveness. Many of these scholars acknowledge that equalization policies did serve an important purpose when they were established.[147] Gwang-jo Kim points out that the equalization policies were very effective at expanding access to education in an equitable fashion. However, these scholars argue that the equalization policies, along with a national curriculum, had multiple problems. They prevented school autonomy and diversity, insulating schools "from competitive forces and local parents' demands" and giving them little incentive to improve.[148] Seeing schools as businesses, they blame policies like the HSEP for making it difficult for schools to adjust the curricula to "meet the needs of different stakeholders, including students, parents, and business firms," which in turn encouraged the use of private tutoring.[149] They also viewed the policies as violating students' and schools' rights, criticizing them for depriving students of "the right to choose the schools they wanted" and school administrators of "the opportunity to manage schools autonomously"[150].

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[144] Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea."
[145] Kim, 31.
[146] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 314.

According to these scholars, the high demand for private tutoring is a market response to society's demands for educational resources that could not be satisfied by this ineffective and overregulated formal education system that resulted from equalization.[151] Taejong Kim's analysis of demand determinants for private tutoring indicates that demand for private tutoring is significantly affected by poor school quality, more so than high stakes exams.[152] He comes to this conclusion by analyzing National Assessment of Educational Achievement data from 2001 in combination with standardized test scores as a measure of school productivity. He finds that private tutoring demand is significantly higher among students attending schools with lower productivity and lower scores, and blames this poor quality on "underprovided and overregulated formal schooling in Korea."[153]

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[147] Jones, "Education Reform in Korea"; Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea"; Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War."

[148] Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea," 36; Jones, "Education Reform in Korea"; Randall S. Jones and Masahiko Tsutsumi, "Sustaining Growth in Korea by Reforming the Labour Market and Improving the Education System," *OECD Economics Department Working Papers* (Paris, 2009); Kang and Hong, "Achieving Excellence in Teacher Workforce and Equity in Learning Opportunities in South Korea"; Taejong Kim, "Shadow Education: School Quality and Demand for Private Tutoring in Korea," *KDI School of Pub Policy & Management Paper No. 04-21*, 2004, 1–22, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.635864; Jo, "The Track of Policies for Educational Equality and Its Implications in Korea"; Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea."

[149] Kim, "Education Policies and Reform in South Korea," 36.

[150] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 314.

[151] Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea," 262.

Trying to find a more direct relationship between equalization policies and increased demand for private tutoring, Sunwoong Kim and Ju-Ho Lee analyzed data from the 1997 Survey on Private Tutoring (SOPT) conducted by the Korea Institute for Consumer Protection and the 1998 Urban Household Expenditure Survey (UHES) by the National Statistical Office of Korea.[154] They argue that their analysis indicates that students who lived in areas where the equalization policies were in effect spent more on private tutoring, contrary to the hopes of policy makers. Most of their results were not statistically significant, although they point out the policies certainly did not decrease expenditures on private tutoring. In light of these results, they recommend that tracking based on ability should be utilized in classes and that "the system should allow for more diverse types of schools, including high-cost private schools that provide a high quality of education with selective admission, in order to meet a diverse educational demand." [155]

Some of these scholars argue that a balance between "excellence and equity" or "meritocracy and affirmative action" needs to be found in education policy.[156] However, they still support the neoliberal narrative that the equalization policies prevented schools from improving in quality because they forced homogeneity among schools and students. One of these scholars, Seog Hun Jo, does not think trying to reduce the usage of private education is still viable. He believes that attempts to control private tutoring through government policy have been unsuccessful because policy is not effective at altering parents' perceptions about the need for private tutoring. He argues that "schools have to reluctantly surrender exclusive sovereignty over education and instead share it with private academies" because the line between public and private education has begun to blur.[157] Because these kinds of statements tend to be made as concluding remarks, it is unclear how these scholars propose to achieve a balance of excellence and equity within a system where shadow education gains increasing presence.

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[152] Kim, "Shadow Education: School Quality and Demand for Private Tutoring in Korea."
[153] Kim, 13.
[154] Kim and Lee, "Private Tutoring and Demand for Education in South Korea."
[155] Kim and Lee, 290.
[156] Jo, "The Track of Policies for Educational Equality and Its Implications in Korea," 90; Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War," 316.

IV. B. Scholars who Oppose Neoliberal Policies

Another group of scholars supports the government's equalization policies, or at least does not blame these policies for creating an ineffective public education system.[158] Rather, they reframe the issue as a problem of wealthier families' and conservative government officials' subjective perception of degraded school quality under the equalization policies. In particular, Hyera Byean, Sang Young Park, and Doohwan Kim and Yool Choi are most adamant in expressing that the MOE's equalization policies like the MSEP and the HSEP were opposed primarily by the affluent, as opposed to the general public.[159] Byean writes that the policies were

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[157] Jo, "The Track of Policies for Educational Equality and Its Implications in Korea," 87.

[158] These scholars are more commonly described as opposing neoliberal policies than supporting equalization policies. This is because usually their work is written in response to neoliberal policy. This may be because they were written in the 21st century and felt that responding to the government policy of the 1990s and early 2000s would be more relevant than engaging deeply with older policy. Or perhaps it is because scholars are more likely to analyze and respond to problems than successes. While most of these authors do also express support for equalization policies, their main priority appears to be criticizing the MOE's neoliberal policies.

[159] Byean, "English, Tracking, and Neoliberalization of Education in South Korea"; Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea"; Kim and Choi, "The

"denounced for stifling students' excellence and competitiveness, mostly by middle-class parents, conservative media, politicians, and university authorities…"[160]

Kim and Choi and Park argue that the equalization policies of the 1960s and 1970s were the result of an authoritarian Korean development state trying to connect with the general public.[161] To do so, the government had to keep the upper-middle classes in check. As a result, the elite classes had little influence over the creation of education policy. Instead, education policy was made with the common public's desires in mind. Park refers to the transition to neoliberal government policy in the 1990s as a "dismantling of the egalitarian social contract".[162] Neoliberal conservative politicians began to break the egalitarian social contract of the Korean developmental state as they moved towards neoliberal policy in all facets of society, including education. Local politicians furthered this trend to gain the votes of the middle class, which had grown in strength.[163] Similarly to Byean, Park makes it clear that the movement away from equalization policies was due in part to neoliberal conservative politicians pursuing national economic competitiveness, and in part to the increasingly powerful affluent classes who, "aided by the ascending neoliberal ideology, [had] become far more effective in persuading policy makers in their favor, or bypassing the state's policy goals".[164] He supports his assertions by pointing out surveys that indicated that around two-thirds of the population supported the HSEP as recently as the early 2000s, although parents with more education and higher incomes more often opposed the policy.

Irony of the Unchecked Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Crystallization of Class Cleavages and Intensifying Status Competition."

[160] Byean, "English, Tracking, and Neoliberalization of Education in South Korea," 871.

[161] Kim and Choi, "The Irony of the Unchecked Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Crystallization of Class Cleavages and Intensifying Status Competition"; Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea."

[162] Park, "Crafting and Dismantling the Egalitarian Social Contract: The Changing State-Society Relations in Globalizing Korea," 590.

[163] Park, 592.

[164] Park, 596.

These scholars also criticize neoliberal education reform for creating or heightening inequality in the Korean education system, and encouraging the increased usage of shadow education. For example, Kim and Choi blame neoliberal deregulation policy for excessive spending on private education by upper-middle class families trying to send their children to elite schools. These policies moved education to the market-based sphere of society, where those with more social and economic capital have the advantage and "competitive individualism [dismantles] the egalitarian social contract".[165] In another study, Soo-yong Byun and Kyung-keun Kim analyze the TIMSS scores of Korean eighth-grade students from the 1999, 2003, and 2007 exams. They find that students' socioeconomic background has had an increasing influence over performance on the exam over the first ten years of the 21st century. Byun and Kim point to neoliberal educational policies that allow for more school choice and reinstate tracking as causal factors for this growing educational inequality. They call for further policy to mitigate this problem. They, like other scholars in this school, believe that under the illusion of providing all students with educational choice, the MOE has actually provided only those who can afford it with the freedom to choose. Students who cannot afford a higher quality education from the very beginning lose their opportunities to receive a better education and better jobs later on. For these scholars, students' right to education is centered on a right to an equal education regardless of socioeconomic status.

Byun and Kim also cite studies that suggest that randomized school assignment policies "would not lead to a decline in student achievement", in contrast to the beliefs of the upper-middle classes in Korea.[166] Although these studies are not available in English, Jaesung Choi and

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[165] Kim and Choi, "The Irony of the Unchecked Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Crystallization of Class Cleavages and Intensifying Status Competition," 449.

[166] Byun and Kim, "Educational Inequality in South Korea: The Widening Socioeconomic Gap in Student Achievement," 166.

Jisoo Hwang's 2017 study supports a similar idea: that allowing for more school choice may create disadvantages for lower SES students because of the change in educational environment.[167] Choi and Hwang analyzed 2010-2012 data from the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) administered to second year high school students, which included students affected by a new Seoul policy of increased school choice. Their analysis found a small increase in high-performing students' relative achievement, but "the drop in low-ability students' relative test scores [was] more prominent and [was] observed across a wider range of the test score distribution, particularly in math."[168]

Like Byun and Kim, other scholars also oppose neoliberal tracking policies. Byean argues that tracking widens the achievement gap, encourages segregation, and in general exacerbates inequalities. She cites research that demonstrates that tracking in Korea is ineffective: it "has not contributed to reducing the high cost of private education, let alone narrowed the achievement gap among students" as proponents argued it would.[169] Both Byean and Kim and Choi view tracking policies as a method for the privileged classes to maintain and reinforce their status by segregating their children from others, while conveniently disguising class-based inequalities under the guise of separation by performance levels.[170]

IV. C. A Third Group?

There appear to be somewhat fewer scholars who oppose neoliberal education policy. However, the picture may appear somewhat more balanced if one argues that some scholars reside in a middle ground. Some scholars, like Chong Jae Lee, Heesook Lee, and Hyo Min Jang take a neutral stance on past educational policy, refraining from expressing clear support for one type of policy or the other.[171] They do, however, point out that equalization policies were essentially ineffective for reducing demand for private tutoring because tutoring rates continued to rise during that time period. In the same way, the ban on tutoring may have prevented a certain amount of private tutoring, but it also led to illegal instances of shadow education as people continued tutoring practices. As for the more neoliberal policies that focus on school and student autonomy in the hopes of lessening shadow education, Lee, Lee, and Jang say the impact of these policies is still unclear. Like Jo, they also argue that government policy is unable to "reduce the demand mechanism for shadow education".[172] Thus they suggest that policy should be focused primarily on improving the public school system rather than controlling the shadow education industry directly.

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[167] Jaesung Choi and Jisoo Hwang, "The Effect of School Choice on Student's Academic Performance," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics* 58, no. 1 (2017): 1–19.

[168] Choi and Hwang, 2.

[169] Byean, "English, Tracking, and Neoliberalization of Education in South Korea," 871.

[170] Byean, "English, Tracking, and Neoliberalization of Education in South Korea"; Kim and Choi, "The Irony of the Unchecked Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Crystallization of Class Cleavages and Intensifying Status Competition."

Some scholars argue that schools need more autonomy to improve formal school quality, which falls in line with the rhetoric of Korea's past neoliberal policies. However, they also argue these policies need to include controls to prevent socioeconomic disparity as a result.[173] Scholars such as these may justify creating a new school of scholarship in the literature, to group those who encourage a balanced education policy. However, some of these scholars suggest some kind of balance is necessary in response to growing socioeconomic disparities in the education system, but fail to provide any concrete suggestions for how to create this balance.[174] Thus, it is questionable whether some of these scholars are serious about finding this balance or are simply trying to signal awareness of these growing disparities while still ultimately supporting neoliberal policy.

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[171] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses."
[172] Lee, Lee, and Jang, 105.
[173] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War"; Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses."
[174] Lee, Kim, and Byun, "The Rise of Korean Education from the Ashes of the Korean War."

IV. D. Institutional and Disciplinary Divisions among Scholars

It is worth noting that scholars like Randall Jones, Masahiko Tsutsumi, and Gwang-jo Kim, who write for or in association with traditionally Western liberal capitalist organizations such as the OECD and the World Bank nearly always support neoliberal education policy and find fault with equalization policies, associating them with low quality education.[175] These organizations have an impact in determining national education policies; in particular, the OECD as the founder of the PISA plays a large role simply by determining the measured indicators and priorities of the PISA. Education policy and policy recommendations based on PISA results focus foremost on improving student performance, with socioeconomic factors being somewhat important, and student mental health issues rather marginalized in the discourse.[176]

Furthermore, several scholars among those who support neoliberal policies have worked for the Korean government. Gwang-jo Kim became Director-General of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development in 2004, and was Deputy Minister of Education and Human Resources Development from 2005 to 2008. Ju-Ho Lee was a member of the National Assembly from 2004 to 2008, was the Senior Secretary to the President for Education, Science, and Culture until 2009, and served as the Minister of Education, Science, and Technology from 2010 to 2013. In addition, he is a professor at the Korean Development Institute (KDI) School of Public Policy and Management. The KDI is a government-run economic think tank. Taejong Kim is also a professor and the managing director of the Development Research and Learning Network at the KDI School. In contrast, none of the scholars supporting equity-based policies were affiliated with the Korean government in a similar fashion, except perhaps for Doohwan Kim and Yool Choi, whose research was funded by the government through the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant. Furthermore, the relationship between scholars' government affiliation and their support for neoliberal policies is unclear because their terms in office do not necessarily align with executive administrations that supported neoliberal education policies.

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[175] Jones and Tsutsumi, “Sustaining Growth in Korea by Reforming the Labour Market and Improving the Education System”; Jones, “Education Reform in Korea”; Kim, “Education Policies and Reform in South Korea.”

[176] An example of this type of performance-focused policy recommendation can be found in OECD, “Lessons from PISA for Korea.”

Most of the scholars publishing on the topic of Korean education policy are from the fields of economics, education, and policy. However, there are a few scholars from the fields of sociology and social and political studies contributing to the literature: Sang Young Park, Doohwan Kim, and Yool Choi. Furthermore, Sang Young Park and Hyera Byean take a critical perspective to their respective fields: social and political change, and English education and pedagogies. All of the scholars in these disciplines support equity-oriented policies. In contrast, none of the scholars supporting neoliberal policies came from these fields. This suggests that social sciences and critical studies scholars tend to agree with an equity-oriented approach to education as a result of their academic background.

IV. E. Discussion

The neoliberal scholars emphasize the importance of allowing for autonomy and student choice, and they argue that equalization policies lead to poor school quality and lack of diversity. They blame equalization policies and the restriction of tracking for downward leveling of students. However, most neoliberal scholars do not address how students without sufficient financial means are supposed to gain access to high quality schooling in a neoliberal system. In an education system that allows access to high quality education to be controlled by the market, prices will inevitably rise and place financial strains on low-income families trying to participate. Although high quality education may exist in a neoliberal system, only a select group of people has access to it. It is thus doubtful whether such a system can be classified as high quality, because not all of its students actually receive that quality education. Students who lack the economic resources in fact have little to no choice in where they receive their education. There are some neoliberal scholars who propose affirmative action policies to mitigate the issues of the neoliberal education system. However, they do not acknowledge that a system that necessitates affirmative action policies may not be ideal.

In contrast to the arguments of the neoliberal scholars, it is possible to have an equity-oriented system that still produces high quality schools and allows for autonomy and diversity. However, equity-oriented scholars in the field of Korean education policy do not address how this can be achieved. In other words, equity-oriented scholars have not sufficiently discussed the issue of equitable or horizontal diversity and its incorporation into policy.

In regards to shadow education, both schools of scholars blame the opposing policy approach and its proponents for instigating growth in private tutoring. It is difficult to conclude whether either school is correct because the shadow education industry has grown continually over time regardless of policy approach, except perhaps during the 1980 ban of private tutoring. Based on the data, it is simply apparent that neither form of policy has been able to significantly reduce the use of shadow education. However, in a rare moment of consensus, neither school argues for extensive direct controls on shadow education. Neoliberal scholars tend to explicitly argue for allowing the market to regulate the shadow education industry. Equity-oriented scholars do not explicitly argue this, but they also do not argue for direct government controls on private tutoring. Rather, both schools of thought argue that improving formal schooling will reduce the prevalence of private tutoring.

This is where the consensus between schools ends, because their concepts of what improvement of the formal schooling system looks like are very different. Like the Korean government over time, scholars cannot reach an agreement about which type of policy is most effective. It appears that the same divisions present in the government also limit the scholars to two schools because the scholars are trying to engage directly with the reality of government policy. Furthermore, like policymakers, scholars have not paid significant attention to policies that focus on student wellbeing. There has been almost no attempt to analyze the effectiveness of wellbeing-oriented policies like the Free Semester Program.

Instead of exploring new pathways for policy direction, most of the scholars continue to work within the existing pathways the Korean government has followed. Because most scholars are trying to analyze and evaluate past and current policy, it is perhaps unsurprising that scholars find themselves split along the same lines by which government policy has been divided. Nevertheless, it is difficult for scholars to bring new material to the discussion as a result, and topics such as student wellbeing to which the government does not attend are also left unaddressed by scholars. In order to depart from these traditional divisions in Korean policy and the literature discussing it, the next chapter will review some policies from other countries.

V. Education Policies Addressing Quality and Equity in Other Countries

The previous chapters have indicated that neither the Korean government nor the academic literature on Korean education have been able to reach a consensus on an education policy scheme that effectively achieves both quality and equity. Student wellbeing as a factor of educational quality has only recently become more acknowledged as an important policy goal, and as a result policy that attempts to address it has only been implemented more recently. Scholars responding to policy have thus often not addressed student wellbeing either. In this chapter, I will examine other countries that have attempted to address the balance of educational quality and equity through policy, in the hopes that this may generate some useful insights for Korean education policy.

I will discuss China and Japan's policies because they share similar cultural backgrounds and exam-based educational systems with Korea. Their international test scores are also relatively analogous. In the 2015 PISA results, Japan ranked 2nd in science, 5th in math, and 8th in reading, in comparison to Korea's scores of 11th in science, 7th in math, and 7th in reading. China ranked 10th in science, 6th in math, and 27th in reading. The 2015 PISA scores for China only included the scores of students from Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Guangdong.[177] In the 2012 PISA results, Shanghai, which I will discuss as an individual case of policy reform later in the chapter, scored first in all three subjects as an individual entity.[178] Despite China and Korea's similarities, the comparison of the two countries is somewhat limited by their different levels of development. In contrast to Korea and Japan's 2017 Human Development Index (HDI) rankings of 22nd at 0.903 and 19th at 0.909 respectively, China's ranking was 86th with a value of 0.752. Korea and Japan's 2017 Gini coefficient values were 31.6 and 32.1 respectively (with 0.0 being perfect equality and 100.0 being perfect inequality), in contrast to China's value of 42.2.[179] Furthermore, China is geographically much larger than Korea and disparities between rural and urban populations are larger. Finland, although culturally very different from Korea, is closer in terms of size, wealth, and income distribution. Finland's 2017 HDI ranking was 15th with a value of 0.920, and its Gini coefficient value for the same year was 27.1.[180] It is also useful to look at Finland because it has been widely revered for an education system that is simultaneously equitable and produces high-achieving students. On the 2015 PISA, Finnish students ranked 5th in science, 13th in math, and 4th in reading.[181]

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[177] "PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education."

[178] OECD, "PISA 2012 Results in Focus" (Paris, 2012), https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf.

One can learn valuable lessons from observing other countries' policy successes and failures. Though the causal factors and intervening variables are different, many countries face similar problems with balancing educational quality and equity and have responded to these problems in various ways. Therefore this chapter will present some other countries' policy responses to educational inequity and shadow education to investigate whether particular types of policy have been more effective at addressing these issues. Modeling one country's education policy after another country is recognizably problematic. Each country's policy is shaped and limited by its particular educational, economic, political, cultural, geographic, and social conditions. When comparing policy, one must keep in mind that a successful policy in one country may not be appropriate or feasible in another. There are some concerns in the comparative education field that as countries copy the policy reforms of model countries, the world will move toward a singular international model of education that disregards cultural context and serves poorly the needs of some countries. However, scholars like Gita Steiner-

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[179] "Table 3: Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index," United Nations Development Programme Human Development Reports, 2017, http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/IHDI#e.
[180] "Table 3: Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index."
[181] "PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education."

Khamsi argue that this is not the case.[182] Globalization has certainly allowed for countries to learn from others' experiences, but policymakers do not simply copy other countries' reforms. Although policymakers may refer to an international model of education to justify domestically derived reforms to the public, in reality there is no such international consensus on a universally correct education model. Borrowed policies go through "processes of local adaptation, modification, and resistance to global forces in education" as policymakers adjust them to suit their country's conditions and needs.[183] It cannot be assumed that borrowing policy will result in identical or even mostly similar reforms.

Unfortunately, the scope of this paper does not permit an in-depth review of many different countries' policies or a full description of various countries' education systems. Consequently, I have selected a few experiences, giving preference to broad policies that make large-scale changes because these generally have more noticeable effects. I have chosen to preference policies that prioritize student wellbeing in their goals. These policies, like Korea's, have had varying levels of success. I will also discuss policies that regulate shadow education implemented in several East Asian countries. However, most governments' lack of restrictive regulation on shadow education limits the provision of examples of governments successfully minimizing this industry. Rather, most governments regulate shadow education as they might any other product or service, and do not attempt to limit its prevalence.

A survey of the literature suggests that the general trend in many countries around the world has been towards neoliberal, decentralizing, and marketizing education policies.[184] In particular, much of the more recent research on the Nordic education systems has documented a neoliberal trend in Nordic policy. While these policies may arguably improve the quality of some schools, scholars are concerned that they will detract from the equitable distribution of this quality education. Some of the equity-based policies discussed in the following pages may no longer be in use, or may be functioning at reduced capacity due to these newer policies. They are not necessarily representative of the wider education policy landscape in that country at the current moment.

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[182] Gita Steiner-Khamsi, "Globalization in Education: Real or Imagined?," in *The Global Politics of Educational Borrowing and Lending*, ed. Gita Steiner-Khamsi (New York: Teachers College Press, 2004), 1–6.

[183] Steiner-Khamsi, 5.

[184] For examples, see Anne-Lise Arnesen and Lisbeth Lundahl, "Still Social and Democratic? Inclusive Education Policies in the Nordic Welfare States," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 50, no. 3 (2006): 285–300, https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830600743316; Lisbeth Lundahl et al., "Educational Marketization the Swedish Way," *Education Inquiry* 4, no. 3 (2013): 497–517, https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v4i3.22620; Kristín Dýrfjörð and Berglind

V. A. Policy for Quality and Equity, with a Focus on Student Wellbeing

Japan

Like Korea, the Japanese education system is very competitive and exam-driven. In order to prepare for upper secondary and university entrance exams, the curriculum has often contained large amounts of material and stressed rote memorization. Beginning in the late 1970s, many people became increasingly dissatisfied with the Japanese education system, arguing that it placed too much pressure on students, did not encourage enjoyment of learning, and did not teach creative thinking or independent learning skills.[185]

Rós Magnúsdóttir, “Privatization of Early Childhood Education in Iceland,” *Research in Comparative and International Education* 11, no. 1 (2016): 80–97, https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499916631062; Marianne Dovemark et al., “Deregulation, Privatisation and Marketisation of Nordic Comprehensive Education: Social Changes Reflected in Schooling,” *Education Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (2018): 122–41, https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2018.1429768; Gunn Imsen, Ulf Blossing, and Lejf Moos, “Reshaping the Nordic Education Model in an Era of Efficiency. Changes in the Comprehensive School Project in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden since the Millennium,” *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 61, no. 5 (2017): 568–83, https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1194602; Lisbeth Lundahl, “Equality, Inclusion and Marketization of Nordic Education: Introductory Notes,” *Research in Comparative and International Education* 11, no. 1 (2016): 3–12, https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499916631059; Wei Zhang and Mark Bray, “Micro-Neoliberalism in China: Public-Private Interactions at the Confluence of Mainstream and Shadow Education,” *Journal of Education Policy* 32, no. 1 (2017): 63–81, https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2016.1219769; Kinglun Ngok, “Chinese Education Policy in the Context of Decentralization and Marketization: Evolution and Implications,” *Asia Pacific Education Review* 8, no. 1 (2007): 142–57, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ768972.pdf.

[185] Christopher Bjork and Ryoko Tsuneyoshi, “Education Reform in Japan: Competing Visions for the Future,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 86, no. 8 (2005): 619–26, https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170508600812; Ryoko Tsuneyoshi, “The

From the late 1970s up until the early twenty-first century, Japanese education policy underwent the *yutori* reform, or the "relaxed education" or "low-pressure education" reform to improve student wellbeing by decreasing the academic burden on students. Many sources provide details about what this reform entailed.[186] Several times over the recent decades, the primary and secondary school curricula were increasingly relaxed to allow students more free time and more flexibility in the subjects they learned. Class hours were shortened multiple times and the number of holidays was increased, until finally in 2002 public schools shifted from the six-day to the five-day school week. The teaching of certain concepts was pushed until later in the schooling process, and in that same year, the Japanese government had reduced its curriculum by thirty percent.[187]

Beginning in third grade, 15 to 20% of the hours previously spent on basic academic subjects like science and social studies were required to be spent instead on "integrated study". Integrated study was supposed to encourage cross-disciplinary and student-initiated learning, and the development of thinking skills. Themes of integrated study included international exchange and information technology, to help prepare students for a globalized world.[188] Schools often conducted "activities such as hands-on experience, going out into the community and

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New Japanese Educational Reforms and the Achievement 'Crisis' Debate," *Educational Policy* 18, no. 2 (2004): 364–94, https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904803262147; Joseph Strong, "The Grass Is Always Greener: A Look at Educational Reform in the United States and Japan," *Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems* 21 (2012): 277–302, https://doi.org/10.3868/s050-004-015-0003-8.

[186] Strong, "The Grass Is Always Greener: A Look at Educational Reform in the United States and Japan"; Tsuneyoshi, "The New Japanese Educational Reforms and the Achievement 'Crisis' Debate"; Bjork and Tsuneyoshi, "Education Reform in Japan: Competing Visions for the Future"; Mikiko Nishimura, "Considering Equity in Basic Education Reform in Japan from the Perspective of Private Costs of Education," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 7, no. 2 (2006): 205–17, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03031544; Masato Wada and Bruce M. Burnett, "Yutori Kyoiku and the Uncertainty of Recent Neo-Liberal Reforms in Japanese Higher Education," *Bulletin of Center for the Research and Support of Educational Practice* 7 (2011): 69–78; OECD, "OECD Economic Surveys: Japan 2011," 2011, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eco_surveys-jpn-2011-7-en.

[187] Bjork and Tsuneyoshi, "Education Reform in Japan: Competing Visions for the Future"; Tsuneyoshi, "The New Japanese Educational Reforms and the Achievement 'Crisis' Debate"; OECD, "OECD Economic Surveys: Japan 2011"; Strong, "The Grass Is Always Greener: A Look at Educational Reform in the United States and Japan."

[188] Nishimura, "Considering Equity in Basic Education Reform in Japan from the Perspective of Private Costs of Education," 206.

interviewing, self-evaluation, and small group presentations that were aimed at developing communication skills."[189] Grading practices were also relaxed; assessments that previously tested relative performance were to evaluate absolute achievement.[190] The *yutori* reform was supposed to improve student wellbeing by allowing for a more individualized and enjoyable learning experience that encouraged a "zest for living".[191]

Unfortunately, it is difficult to assess the success of the *yutori* reform on improving student wellbeing because the backlash against the 2002 reform resulted in the Japanese government beginning to reverse some of its features. Opponents of the reform feared that it would lower the academic achievement of Japanese students, "undermine Japan's international competitiveness and turn it into 'a nation at risk'".[192] The PISA results that the OECD released in 2001 and 2004, along with TIMSS results, further heightened this controversy, as they revealed that Japanese students' performance had worsened slightly. Opponents of the *yutori* reform blamed it for the lower scores. The literature is still divided as to whether the *yutori* reform was actually to blame for lower scores.[193] Keita Takayama points out that most of the score differences in the PISA were statistically insignificant.[194]

Some of the literature does argue that the *yutori* reform, despite its attempt to improve school quality and student wellbeing, worsened socioeconomic disparities in education and "eroded the egalitarian foundation of Japanese education".[195] The government did not provide schools and teachers with the financial and educational resources to properly implement the

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[189] Tsuneyoshi, "The New Japanese Educational Reforms and the Achievement 'Crisis' Debate," 370.

[190] Wada and Burnett, "Yutori Kyoiku and the Uncertainty of Recent Neo-Liberal Reforms in Japanese Higher Education," 6.

[191] Bjork and Tsuneyoshi, "Education Reform in Japan: Competing Visions for the Future," 621.

[192] Keita Takayama, "The Politics of International League Tables: PISA in Japan's Achievement Crisis Debate," *Comparative Education* 44, no. 4 (2008): 388, https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060802481413.

[193] Tsuneyoshi, "The New Japanese Educational Reforms and the Achievement 'Crisis' Debate"; Strong, "The Grass Is Always Greener: A Look at Educational Reform in the United States and Japan."

[194] Takayama, "The Politics of International League Tables: PISA in Japan's Achievement Crisis Debate."

[195] Takayama, 392.

yutori reform.[196] Furthermore, the reform did not change the competitive nature or difficulty levels of entrance exams. Thus parents who could afford it felt the need to turn to private schools or private academies, where the *yutori* reform was less stringent or did not apply, for their children's education. Thus the reform was blamed for making public schools less competitive. Students from lower-income families who did not receive support to perform well at home or students in rural areas without access to private schools and tutoring centers suffered the most from the reform.[197] Some scholars have demonstrated that the *yutori* reform increased private tutoring center attendance, raised education expenditures, and increased the gap between lower and higher SES groups in the classroom.[198] In addition, the socioeconomic disparities supposedly created by the *yutori* reform were exacerbated by other reforms implemented simultaneously by neoliberal politicians. Along with the shortened class hours and minimized curriculum of the *yutori* reform, these other reforms allowed for more school choice and tracking practices.[199]

In 2007, the Japanese government decided to abolish the *yutori* policy.[200] The government continues to move toward more neoliberal policies, and has increased school hours and curriculum content.

China

China does not appear to have put in place many large-scale policies that improve educational equity, instead implementing reforms for quality education that disproportionately benefit the wealthy, urban students, and high-performing students.[201] Although China's central government still has the power to implement national education reforms, it has increasingly decentralized the process of policymaking and implementation since the end of the Cultural Revolution, allowing policy reform at the local level.[202] Thus, while affirmative action programs have been at times put in place to give preferential treatment in university admissions for low-income or rural students, they have generally been at a smaller, local scale. For example, this kind of reform was implemented in 1992 in Shanghai, but only by six higher education institutions, and it applied only to students from twenty-two peripheral rural regions.[203] In an attempt to decrease the exam-oriented nature of the education system that encourages rote memorization over critical thinking, China has enacted various reforms that modify the curriculum and grant universities more autonomy over the student selection process.

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[196] Nishimura, "Considering Equity in Basic Education Reform in Japan from the Perspective of Private Costs of Education."

[197] Tsuneyoshi, "The New Japanese Educational Reforms and the Achievement 'Crisis' Debate."

[198] Tsuneyoshi; Nishimura, "Considering Equity in Basic Education Reform in Japan from the Perspective of Private Costs of Education"; Takehiko Kariya, "Japanese Solutions to the Equity and Efficiency Dilemma? Secondary Schools, Inequity and the Arrival of 'universal' Higher Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 37, no. 2 (2011): 241–66, https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2011.559388.

[199] Takayama, "The Politics of International League Tables: PISA in Japan's Achievement Crisis Debate"; Hidenori Fujita, "Education Reform and Education Politics in Japan," *The American Sociologist* 31, no. 3 (2000): 42–57, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12108-000-1033-9.

[200] Wada and Burnett, "Yutori Kyoiku and the Uncertainty of Recent Neo-Liberal Reforms in Japanese Higher Education," 8.

Much of the literature focuses on the above kind of reforms as they took place in Shanghai.[204] This is because Shanghai is considered the leader and a "pioneer" in Chinese education reform.[205] Shanghai has often been an innovator of policy and has frequently been one of the first cities in China to implement national education reforms. Its education system is regarded as high quality. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, Shanghai reformed its curriculum to emphasize creativity and practical application.[206] In addition to the "foundational subjects" that are compulsory for all students and include math, language, and the natural and social sciences, the Shanghai curriculum also includes expanded subjects and inquiry/research subjects. Expanded subjects include real-life applications of foundational subjects as well as non-compulsory subjects like sports and arts. The inquiry/research subjects, similar to the Japanese *yutori* reform's integrated study, are intended to encourage student-initiated learning, real-life application, and independent thinking. They may involve independent research on a theme of the student's interest, whether that interest is multi-disciplinary or falls under the foundational subjects.[207] Related to this curriculum reform, the Shanghai government has required randomized primary and lower secondary school admissions since 1997, prohibited ability-tracking in classes, and reduced homework and class hours.[208] In addition, Shanghai was one of the first cities of China to grant universities more autonomy in admissions, allowing them to consider students' other exam scores, grades, awards and achievements, and other indicators of secondary school performance along with the entrance exam score.[209]

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[201] Leslie N. K. Lo, "Quality and Equality in the Educational Development of Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland," *Educational Research Journal* 14, no. 1 (1999): 19, http://hkier.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/journal/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/erj_v14n1_13-48.pdf.

[202] King-Lun Ngok and David Kin Keung Chan, "Towards Centralization and Decentralization in Educational Development in China: The Case of Shanghai," in *Centralization and Decentralization: Educational Reforms and Changing Goverance in Chinese Societies*, ed. Mok Ka-Ho (Springer, 2004), 81–98, https://doi.org/10.7459/es/19.3.04.

[203] Lifeng Li, "A Narrative Study of Thirty Years of Entrance Exam Reform in Shanghai," *Chinese Education & Society* 46, no. 1 (2013): 26, https://doi.org/10.2753/ced1061-1932460102.

[204] Minxuan Zhang and Lingshuai Kong, "An Exploration of Reasons for Shanghai's Success in the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009," *Frontiers of Education in China* 7, no. 1 (2012): 124–62, https://doi.org/10.3868/s110-001-012-0007-3; Li, "A Narrative Study of Thirty Years of Entrance Exam Reform in Shanghai"; Charlene Tan, "The Culture of Education Policy-Making: Curriculum Reform in Shanghai," *Critical Studies in Education* 53, no. 2 (2012): 153–67; Zhang and Bray, "Micro-Neoliberalism in China: Public-Private Interactions at the Confluence of Mainstream and Shadow Education."

[205] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea," 107.

While these reforms may shift university admissions from a more exam-oriented system to a more ability-oriented system, they do little to address the socioeconomic and regional disparities in students' academic performance at the primary and secondary levels. Moreover, because the university entrance exam remains extremely important for most students despite reforms, schools and teachers who feel pressured by parents to prepare students for the exam often ignore curriculum reform that deemphasizes teaching to the test. Like the cases of Korea and Japan, Chinese parents who feel that formal schooling is not preparing their children for the exam will send their children to private cram schools.[210] Key schools (schools considered elite based on their quality and resources) in Shanghai usually enjoy a great deal of leeway in ignoring reforms and focusing on exam-oriented content and maintain longer class hours, enhancing their competitiveness over normal schools.[211] Opponents also worry that reforms will exacerbate corruption in the admissions process, as universities with increased autonomy over the admissions process can let in more students with personal connections or financial resources.[212]

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[206] Zhang and Kong, "An Exploration of Reasons for Shanghai's Success in the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009."

[207] Tan, "The Culture of Education Policy-Making: Curriculum Reform in Shanghai."

[208] Zhang and Bray, "Micro-Neoliberalism in China: Public-Private Interactions at the Confluence of Mainstream and Shadow Education."

[209] Li, "A Narrative Study of Thirty Years of Entrance Exam Reform in Shanghai."

In addition to these quality-oriented reforms in Shanghai, the national Chinese government's 2000 *jianfu* or "burden reduction" policy should be noted for its similarity to Japan's *yutori* reform. This policy was also supposed to improve student creativity and reduce the pressures surrounding entrance exams. The reform required "reducing or eliminating homework, reducing the number of books students had to purchase, and abolishing school-based extracurricular study and cramming sessions."[213] The policy was connected to some policies that limited tracking and increased randomized placement in secondary schools. It also encouraged students to use their increased free time and vacations to engage in creative and active-learning activities, although polls in Beijing found that "without any homework to do, the majority of children polled spent their vacations at home alone, watching television."[214] In 2018, parents were outspoken against the *jianfu* policy, arguing that it disadvantages lower-income students. Universities still prioritize test scores in the admissions process, so the *jianfu* policy pushes parents toward expensive private education options.[215] It should also be noted that the *jianfu* policy was framed not in terms of improving student wellbeing, but in terms of producing innovative citizens that would increase China's competitiveness in the global economy.[216]

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[210] Tan, "The Culture of Education Policy-Making: Curriculum Reform in Shanghai," 10.

[211] Zhang and Bray, "Micro-Neoliberalism in China: Public-Private Interactions at the Confluence of Mainstream and Shadow Education."

[212] Heidi Ross and Yimin Wang, "Reforming the College Entrance Examination: Epicenter of Tension, Change, and Resistance," in *The Impact and Transformation of Education Policy in China*, ed. Tiedan Huang and Alexander W. Wiseman (Bingley: Emerald Group, 2011), 216.

[213] T. E. Woronov, "Raising Quality, Fostering 'Creativity': Ideologies and Practices of Education Reform in Beijing," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2008): 413, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.l548-1492.2008.00030.x.401.

[214] Woronov, 415.

Finland

The Nordic model of education is well known in the world of comparative education for its success at balancing equitable and quality education through a comprehensive school system.[217] In particular, Finland is marked as the epitome or most successful execution of the Nordic model. Not only does it sit at the top of PISA assessments, but also there is minimal difference in the scores of the highest-performing and lowest-performing students. Schools are funded almost entirely through public funds, and the Finnish government does not spend significantly more on education than other countries; expenditures are at the OECD average of approximately 6% of GDP. Students do not spend long hours studying: on average, Finnish students study mathematics for 4.4 hours per week, in comparison with the Korean average of over 10 hours. The shadow education industry is minimal to nonexistent.[218] Furthermore, Finnish students have reported less anxiety about studying than other countries: for example, in the 2004 PISA report, 7% of Finnish students (compared to 52% Japanese students) reported experiencing anxiety when working on mathematics tasks at home.[219] As a result of Finland's success, a number of studies and articles have been written on the topic of Finland's education system and why it is so successful.[220]

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[215] Jingnan Cheng, "Parents Plead With Government to Give Kids More Homework," *Sixth Tone*, April 12, 2018, http://www.sixthtone.com/news/1002084/parents-plead-with-government-to-give-kids-more-homework.

[216] Woronov, "Raising Quality, Fostering 'Creativity': Ideologies and Practices of Education Reform in Beijing."

[217] Ari Antikainen, "In Search of the Nordic Model in Education," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 50, no. 3 (2006): 229–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830600743258.

[218] Irmeli Halinen and Ritva Järvinen, "Towards Inclusive Education: The Case of Finland," *Prospects* 38 (2008): 78, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-008-9061-2.

[219] Pasi Sahlberg, "Education Policies for Raising Student Learning: The Finnish Approach," *Journal of Education Policy* 22, no. 2 (2007): 156, https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930601158919.

Firstly, Finland does not have a culture of competitive exam-oriented schooling. There are no external high-stakes exams during or at the end of primary and secondary school in Finland. Its assessment of student learning is instead based on teacher-made tests or other forms of evaluation decided on and conducted by teachers, such as portfolio evaluations. Starting in fifth grade, giving numerical grades is legally prohibited, "only descriptive assessments and feedback are employed."[221] The lack of pressure to prepare students for exams in Finnish schools allows teachers more freedom and exploration in curriculum and teaching techniques. There is an entrance examination for tertiary education where competition is fierce. However, this exam does not appear to create a significant amount of washback; in other words, the secondary school curriculum is not significantly changed by attempts to prepare students for the exam. In addition, Finland encourages self-assessment of school and teacher performance and discourages inter-school competition; for example, it does not publicly rank schools based on student achievement data. "National, sample-based evaluations of student achievement and of students' health and welfare, and by thematic evaluations" of, for example, special needs education, influences the self-assessment of educational administration at the national and municipal levels.[222]

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[220] Pasi Salhberg, "Raising the Bar: How Finland Responds to the Twin Challenge of Secondary Education?," *Revista de Currículum y Formación Del Profesorado* 10, no. 1 (2006): 1–26; Sahlberg, "Education Policies for Raising Student Learning: The Finnish Approach"; Pasi Sahlberg, "Rethinking Accountability in a Knowledge Society," *Journal of Educational Change* 11 (2010): 45–61, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-008-9098-2; Halinen and Järvinen, "Towards Inclusive Education: The Case of Finland"; Irmeli Halinen and Arja-Sisko Holappa, "Curricular Balance Based on Dialogue, Cooperation and Trust – The Case of Finland," in *Balancing Curriculum Regulation and Freedom across Europe*, ed. Wilmad Kuiper and Jan Berkvens (Enschede: Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe, 2013), 39–62; Minkee Kim, Jari Lavonen, and Masakata Ogawa, "Experts' Opinions on the High Achievement of Scientific Literacy in PISA 2003: A Comparative Study in Finland and Korea," *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education* 5, no. 4 (2009): 379–93, https://doi.org/10.12973/ejmste/75288; Hannu Savolainen, "Responding to Diversity and Striving for Excellence: The Case of Finland," *Prospects* 39 (2009): 281–92, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-009-9125-y; Tuomas Pekkarinen, Roope Uusitalo, and Sari Kerr, "School Tracking and Intergenerational Income Mobility: Evidence from the Finnish Comprehensive School Reform," *Journal of Public Economics* 93 (2009): 965–73, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2009.04.006; Jouni Valijarvi, "The System and How Does It Work: Some Curriculum and Pedagogical Characteristics of the Finnish Comprehensive School," in *PISA International Conference: WHAT Do the PISA Results Tell Us About the Education Quality and Equality in the Pacific Rim* (Hong Kong: PISA International Conference, 2003).

[221] Sahlberg, "Education Policies for Raising Student Learning: The Finnish Approach," 155.

In addition to these accountability techniques, there appear to be two principles of the Finnish education system that work together: equitable, diverse schools and classrooms equipped with educators who have been well-educated and well-trained to teach heterogeneous classrooms. Finnish preschool and basic education is free and students receive "free instructional materials, warm school meals, health and dental care and, if necessary, transport and accommodation at the primary and lower secondary level."[223] Until the 1970s, Finland had a selective school system that split students into an academic and a vocational track at age 11. In a gradual transition throughout the 1970s, Finland implemented a comprehensive school system in which students received the same education for the first nine years; academic and vocational tracking was delayed until age 16. Admissions to these tracks were based on comprehensive grades, not an exam.[224] A study by Pekkarinen, Uusitalo, and Kerr found that this policy reform reduced intergenerational income elasticity by 23%, effectively improving intergenerational economic mobility.[225] It should be noted that Korea also uses a comprehensive school system. However, Korea has increasingly used ability tracking in classrooms whereas Finland does not, as Finnish policies are meant to encourage classroom diversity.

Furthermore, the Finnish government has granted teachers the pedagogical flexibility necessary to handle classrooms with students of diverse abilities and interests since its decentralizing curriculum reform in the 1980s and 1990s. Parents also trust teachers "as professionals who know what is best for their children."[226] Until 1985, the education system and curriculum were very centralized. The new policy reform developed what is often referred to as a "culture of trust".[227] The national curriculum provides a more general guideline that schools and teachers can tailor to their classrooms. The option to add additional subjects to the compulsory ones is available. In addition to strong teacher education, each basic school (primary and lower secondary) has a "student welfare team" to ensure the wellbeing of all students, including those that may require special education.[228] The student welfare team is required to meet at least twice monthly for two hours and includes "the principal, the special education teacher, the school nurse, the school psychologist, a social worker, and the teachers whose students are being discussed."[229]

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[222] Halinen and Järvinen, "Towards Inclusive Education: The Case of Finland," 87.

[223] Valijarvi, "The System and How Does It Work: Some Curriculum and Pedagogical Characteristics of the Finnish Comprehensive School," 6.

[224] Pekkarinen, Uusitalo, and Kerr, "School Tracking and Intergenerational Income Mobility: Evidence from the Finnish Comprehensive School Reform."

[225] Pekkarinen, Uusitalo, and Kerr.

[226] Sahlberg, "Education Policies for Raising Student Learning: The Finnish Approach," 155.

There is one other policy that was temporarily enacted in a Nordic state that deserves mention. In the 1960s, Sweden completely eliminated its secondary school and university entrance exam system after widespread criticism that the system facilitated socioeconomic inequalities and competition, impaired teaching, and harmed student wellbeing.[230] The university admissions process became entirely reliant on high school grades and regular, internal school exam scores. While this improved equality in the admissions process, it necessitated a convoluted system of "equivalences, inspection, and control of internal high school grading, accompanied by teacher training and exchange of information on grading standards."[231] Despite these efforts made by the Swedish government, the system was ultimately not clear or effective. As a result, Sweden has returned to an admissions process that includes a standardized test similar to the U.S.'s SAT.

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[227] Kim, Lavonen, and Ogawa, "Experts' Opinions on the High Achievement of Scientific Literacy in PISA 2003: A Comparative Study in Finland and Korea," 389.

[228] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea," 173.

[229] OECD, 173.

[230] Max A. Eckstein and Harold J. Noah, "Forms and Functions of Secondary-School-Leaving Examinations," *Comparative Education Review* 33, no. 3 (1989): 314.

[231] Eckstein and Noah, 315.

V. B. Controls on Private Tutoring (or Lack Thereof) in East Asia

The literature on government regulation of shadow education is scant, primarily because "Korea has been the most prominent exception to a worldwide pattern of a laissez-faire approach to supplementary education."[232] There appear to be very few government limitations on shadow education anywhere the industry exists.[233] Instead, governments tend to regulate private tutoring as a commodity; in other words, regulations are focused primarily on safety regulations, quality assurance, financial and administrative issues, and the minimization of corruption. Otherwise, the shadow education industry is allowed to develop according to market forces. Policy makers in East Asia, where the prevalence of private tutoring is most well known, often regard shadow education as a useful or even necessary part of the education system that covers for the shortcomings of formal education.[234] A senior policymaker from the Thai government's Office of Private Education Commission (OPEC) even said, "The state does not have the policy to control. Rather OPEC is responsible for supporting private education according to the Private School Act."[235] The official position in Thailand is that private tutoring "does not reduce the social welfare" and that "the state should maximize the benefits of private tutoring in order to create a successful knowledge economy".[236]

In 1978, the Taiwanese Department of Education banned tutoring classes from taking in primary school students, and from providing tutoring to lower secondary school students during school hours. From 1961 to 1991, the Thai Ministry of Education limited the expansion of private tutoring centers in Bangkok and Metropolitan areas, but did not require the shutdown of existing centers nor prevent the opening of new centers in other regions.[237] Korea appears to be the only example of a government banning private tutoring in its entirety at any point in time.

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[232] OECD, "Lessons from PISA for Korea," 95.

[233] It should be noted that there are no clear government policies on home tutoring, as opposed to tutoring centers, due to the difficulty of monitoring the industry.

[234] The prevalence of shadow education is more commonly known and well documented in East Asia, but it is a growing industry in countries such as Turkey and India.

[235] Rattana Lao, "Analyzing the Thai State Policy on Private Tutoring: The Prevalence of the Market Discourse," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34, no. 4 (2014): 484, https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2014.960799.

[236] Lao, 486.

The governments of Mainland China, Taiwan, Macao, Thailand, and Japan have sanctioned private tutoring by regulating it as a regular industry without serious attempts to limit its occurrence, and in some cases blurring the lines between public and private education.[238] Although these are also issues in Korea, the official discourse on shadow education is more negative than other places; policy goals still include minimizing its existence.

There are a few common features of private tutoring regulations in the systems mentioned above. Sometimes a special office within the government is created to regulate and monitor the private tutoring industry and tutoring centers, such as the Office of Private Education Commission in Thailand or the supplementary private tutoring section under the life-long learning division in the Taipei Education Bureau in Taiwan.[239] Tutoring centers usually need to be licensed or registered with the government, although sometimes small providers are not required to be licensed, as is the case in Macao.[240] The buildings where tutoring centers are held must meet hygiene and safety codes and are subject to inspections. There is often some form of regulation about the minimum education level of tutors, although the level varies based on country. Regulation assuring the quality of the actual content taught in private tutoring centers tends to be less developed.[241] However, in the case of Thailand, the government so highly regulates private tutoring centers that it has identified a 45 student to 1 tutor class ratio and designed a curriculum tutoring centers are required to follow.[242]

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[237] Lao, 481.

[238] The sovereignty of Taiwan is contentious, and Macao is a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. However, for the purposes of this paper, they will be considered individual and separate entities because they have independent education systems.

[239] Shengli Zhan, "The Private Tutoring Industry in Taiwan: Government Policies and Their Implementation," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34, no. 4 (2014): 499, https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2014.960796; Lao, "Analyzing the Thai State Policy on Private Tutoring: The Prevalence of the Market Discourse."

[240] Titus Siu Pang Li and Ben Cheong Choi, "Private Supplementary Tutoring in Macao: Past, Present and the Future," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 34, no. 4 (2014): 512, https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2014.978743.

In order to prevent corruption, governments like those of China and Taiwan prohibit schoolteachers from providing private tutoring; however, research in Mainland China indicates this law has not always been well enforced, with schoolteachers still tutoring during school vacations. The government of Macao does not strictly regulate schoolteachers providing private tutoring.[243] Governments may also provide guidance to students and their families about selecting reputable and law-abiding private tutoring centers, as Macao and Taiwan have done through the form of websites. The Taipei Education Bureau has also set up a hotline for consumer complaints about private tutoring issues.[244]

Japan's formal education system and its tutoring institution industry have had an unusually intertwined relationship, blurring the boundary between public and private education sectors. When tutoring centers initially became popular in the 1960s, the government strongly criticized the centers but did not try to control the industry. During the 1980s and 1990s, the government began to regulate the industry and eventually recognized the centers as a valid form of education. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the relationship between the government, formal schools, and tutoring centers has grown increasingly close. National and local government and schools have entered into partnerships with tutoring centers to provide tutoring on school grounds after school hours to "improve public provision of formal schooling" and make individual schools more competitive.[245] As the relationship between formal schooling and tutoring centers became more cooperative, the Ministry of Education recognized tutoring centers as "an alternative educational platform for extra-curricular activities".[246] During the *yutori* reform discussed in the previous section, the Japanese government asked tutoring centers to provide free activities for children during weekends and holidays to provide educational opportunities they could not get in the classroom.[247] More recently, curriculum reforms have even encouraged partnerships to provide low-cost classes in schools provided by tutoring centers, and special tutoring centers run by "public-private partnerships initiated and monitored by local governments" that provide free tutoring for children of low-income families or who were victims of natural disasters.[248] While this public-private blending may reduce the negative effect the private tutoring industry has on economic disparities, it is questionable how sustainable "working with the public sector for hardly any monetary gain" will be for the private tutoring industry.[249]

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[241] Percy Lai Yin Kwok, "Demand Intensity, Market Parameters and Policy Responses towards Demand and Supply of Private Supplementary Tutoring in China," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 11, no. 1 (2010): 54, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-009-9060-x.

[242] Lao, "Analyzing the Thai State Policy on Private Tutoring: The Prevalence of the Market Discourse," 484.

[243] Kwok, "Demand Intensity, Market Parameters and Policy Responses towards Demand and Supply of Private Supplementary Tutoring in China."

[244] Zhan, "The Private Tutoring Industry in Taiwan: Government Policies and Their Implementation"; Li and Choi, "Private Supplementary Tutoring in Macao: Past, Present and the Future."

Like Korea, some governments have implemented free alternatives to private tutoring to try to lessen the financial burden on families. For example, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau of Macao created a program called the "Phoning service of homework guidance", which trained volunteers to give homework help to primary and secondary school students.[250] In Thailand, there has been a proposal to offer "educational vouchers" to make private tutoring more affordable for lower-income students, but it is not clear whether this has been put into practice.[251] In Shanghai, the local government encourages schools to arrange free tutoring for struggling students outside of class hours, but this encouragement is generally ignored.[252]

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[245] Yoko Yamato and Wei Zhang, "Changing Schooling, Changing Shadow: Shapes and Functions of Juku in Japan," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 37, no. 3 (2017): 330, https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2017.1345719.
[246] Yamato and Zhang, 334.
[247] Yamato and Zhang, 335.
[248] Yamato and Zhang, 331.
[249] Yamato and Zhang, 338.
[250] Li and Choi, "Private Supplementary Tutoring in Macao: Past, Present and the Future," 512.

V. C. Discussion

Among the examples discussed, Finland has been the most successful in creating an equitable and high quality education system that maintains a high level of student wellbeing. Its low-pressure and non-exam-oriented model, along with its culture of trust in teachers, produces little exam washback even though it has a competitive college entrance exam. The Finnish school system has also achieved horizontal diversity within an equitable system by allowing teachers control over their curricula. Giving teachers this level of control might not be possible if parents and policymakers did not trust teachers to know what is best for students.

In contrast, countries with competitive exam-oriented systems like Japan and China face complaints from low-income families when they enact “relaxed education” reforms that are intended to reduce academic pressure. Countries like these that have high educational competition and large private tutoring industries struggle to enact reforms on the formal school system because demand can shift to the private sector and private tutors if it is not satisfied in the public sector. In other words, relaxed education reforms usually encourage high-income families to spend more on shadow education, which in turn frustrates families of lesser means who cannot afford the same levels of private tutoring to give their children the same advantage. This evidence suggests that relaxed education reforms are not effective in countries like Japan, China, and Korea because they are not targeting the root of the problem: educational competition. Because the educational competition that drives families to spend so much money on private tutoring is still intense despite the reforms, families' finances and students' wellbeing continue to suffer under heavy academic pressures. Private tutoring picks up the slack where formal schooling relaxed. Furthermore, China and Japan, similarly to Korea, seem to have largely ignored the importance of student wellbeing in educational quality. Japan's *yutori* reform was a significant attempt to make student wellbeing and relieving academic pressure a central goal of policy, but it was met with such extensive backlash that it was short-lived.

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[251] Lao, “Analyzing the Thai State Policy on Private Tutoring: The Prevalence of the Market Discourse,” 487.

[252] Zhang and Bray, “Micro-Neoliberalism in China: Public-Private Interactions at the Confluence of Mainstream and Shadow Education,” 11.

This discussion of other countries' reforms has also indicated that complete removal of entrance exams is not a viable policy option. Although entrance exams have their own host of problems, abolishing them creates an admissions process rife with inconsistencies and inefficiencies. It is difficult to ensure fairness in an admissions process entirely reliant on high school records because each school is different. Furthermore, Finland serves as evidence that an education system can be both equitable and high quality while still utilizing a competitive college entrance exam. This suggests that removing a high-stakes entrance exam is not necessary to achieve an equitable and high quality education system. Rather, building an education model with a culture of trust that does not overemphasize exams throughout the schooling process appears to be more effective.

Finally, this chapter found that Korea was the leading example in attempts to restrict shadow education. In other East Asian countries, governments' perceptions of shadow education are more positive than inside Korea. Shadow education is seen as something that can compensate for the shortcomings of the formal school system. Thus, it is regulated as a product and governments do not try to reduce the use of private tutoring through policy. Japan has even gone as far as allowing significant blurring between the public and private sectors through collaborations between schools and tutoring centers. It appears that East Asian governments have essentially decided that there is no point in trying to restrict private tutoring. In the twenty-first century, Korea also seems to subscribe to this approach, suggesting that restricting shadow education through policy may be infeasible.

VI. Conclusion

VI. A. Summary

This paper has attempted to provide some insight into the Korean government's policy attempts to achieve a balance between educational excellence and equity. At the beginning of this paper, I identified some of the prominent issues in Korea's education system. Disparities in academic achievement are increasingly related to families' socioeconomic differences, a problem that is compounded by the extensive shadow education industry in Korea. In addition, intense pressure to succeed academically and long hours of studying have resulted in worrisome levels of poor mental health among Korean students.

In the following two chapters, I reviewed how the Korean government and the academic literature on Korean education policy have addressed these issues of quality (including student wellbeing) and equity. Since the 1950s, Korean education policy has swung back and forth from policies that emphasized equalization to policies that emphasized student choice as a consumer. Meanwhile, despite the reduction of shadow education indicated as a policy goal, the usage of private tutoring has remained widespread no matter where the policy pendulum swung. Korean scholars are divided primarily into two groups, one that supports the Korean government's equalization policies, and one that supports neoliberal policies that enable students' choices as consumers. There is a smaller third group of scholars that suggests searching for an even mix of these two kinds of policy.

In an attempt to bring a new perspective into the story, I turned to examining education policy in other countries in Chapter V. Countries like China and Japan have similar education systems to Korea, and as a result they also have similar problems. I looked at how China and Japan have tried to address these problems through policy reform. Curriculum reform in

Shanghai to move away from practices of teaching to the test, and the Japanese *yutori* reform present some plausible policy model options for decreasing economic disparities and improving student mental health by reducing the competitive nature of the system. However, these have not been perfect solutions in their countries of origin and in the case of the *yutori* reform, were unpopular domestically. I also looked at the Nordic model, with Finland as the primary example, because it has been often idolized as a highly equitable and high quality education system model. This model demonstrated the effectiveness of comprehensive schools, excellent teaching, and less significance assigned to examinations. Nevertheless, because of the wider cultural gap between the Nordic countries and Korea, it is less clear how appropriate this model might be for a Korean setting.

International policy literature related to the shadow education industry is lacking useful models for reducing the industry's prevalence. In fact, Korea appears to be the leading example for national restrictions on private tutoring. While Korea has been the leading country in attempting to limit private tutoring, other countries have accepted it as a given in the education system and focus on regulating the commercial aspects of the industry.

VI. B. Findings and Discussion

This paper conducted a wide scan of the issue by approaching it from multiple perspectives. This approach led to a better understanding of the complexity of the debate surrounding education policy on quality and access in Korea. It is a complicated issue that has no easy answers. Neither the Korean government nor the researchers of Korean education have been able to reach a consensus about what kind of policy is most effective for achieving an education system that benefits all students equally. I argue that this is likely because neither neoliberal nor equity-oriented reforms have been sufficiently successful in accomplishing their policy goals of equity and quality, as the problems identified in Chapter II still exist.

Furthermore, this is a common problem among countries with similar exam-oriented education systems and large shadow education industries. China and Japan also are struggling to find an overwhelmingly successful policy to address inequalities in their systems while maintaining quality. In Korea, Japan, and China, when the government tries to change formal schooling in order to decrease socioeconomic gaps or deescalate pressure on students, families turn from formal schooling to private tutoring to gain a competitive edge for university admissions. Thus the mechanism of educational inequality shifts further from the public sector into the private sector, where it is more difficult for the government to control. Low-income families, lacking the means to provide their children with the same quality and amount of private tutoring as high-income families, protest these kinds of reforms because they have further disadvantaged them. Essentially, these reforms can have a backfiring effect by inadvertently encouraging the use of private tutoring. They often end up giving students and their families a heavier burden, both financially and in terms of academic stress, as students may end up spending more time receiving private tutoring to compensate for the relaxed formal schooling.

In contrast, Finland has been comparatively successful at achieving both an equal and high quality education for its students. Notably, Finland has a very different educational system structure than Korea, Japan, and China that deemphasizes exam-based assessment, maintains a strong culture of trust, trains high-performing teachers, and does not utilize tracking. It should be noted that Finland, like the Northeast Asian states, has a college entrance exam around which the competition is fierce. However, Finland has successfully prevented the entire schooling process from becoming centered on this exam. This is because the primary and secondary school systems are not structured around exam-based assessment, and because policymakers and parents trust teachers to educate students properly. These features of the Finnish system discourage competition and high-pressure learning.

It is perhaps telling that similarly competitive education systems face similar problems of inequality and student stress, while a system that deemphasizes competition has experienced these problems much less. I argue that countries like Japan, China, and Korea often find equity-oriented or burden reduction reforms unsuccessful because the reforms have done little to reduce or eliminate the cultures of competition and education fever inherent in the structure of the system. It may be difficult for Korea and other countries with similar issues to effect change without making significant alterations to the actual structure of the education system itself. Korean education reform has likely not been entirely successful because it has failed to address the systemic roots of the problems in its education. Student mental health issues, socioeconomic disparities in educational opportunity, and high levels of private tutoring are symptoms of the high level of competition and education fever built into its high-staked exam-based system. More minor policy changes may be met with some success, but will likely not consequentially reduce targeted issues. This may be one reason as to why there has been a lack of consensus and a binary division among policymakers and scholars as to the correct policy approach. Because neither neoliberal nor equity-based policies have successfully targeted the underlying causes of the problems, neither type of policy has shown to be clearly more successful than the other.

Neoliberal policy has not been effective at achieving equitable or high quality education, and it is likely unable to do so in Korea because it encourages competition, rather than discouraging it. Although the neoliberal approach is framed around the discourse of student choice, it in fact limits choice for many students. Students without the financial means to pay for it are unable to choose what kind of education they receive, and tend to receive a lower quality education than wealthier students. These students are still expected to compete in college admissions at the same level as wealthier students who have had more opportunity to better prepare for the admissions process. An education system cannot be characterized as high quality if many of its students do not have access to the parts of it that are high quality. Furthermore, neoliberal policy cannot successfully address student wellbeing because it encourages competition, both among schools and among students. As has been discussed above, competition is a major factor in contributing to Korean students' academic stress and often pushes students to sacrifice sleep and leisure time for studying.

As discussed above, the equity-oriented policy that the Korean government has implemented has also not been successful because it has failed to sufficiently curtail competition and education fever in Korea. However, the equity-oriented policy approach is a more viable option for achieving educational equity and quality than the neoliberal approach. As is demonstrated by the Finnish school system, an equity-oriented approach can create a system that provides equitable and high quality education for all of its students. This kind of approach that discourages competition and vertical diversity allows students to enjoy learning rather than feeling pressured to spend a great deal of time and money trying to gain the slightest advantage. Critics of equity-oriented policy have accused it of promoting downward leveling and lowering school quality by preventing interschool and curricular diversity. In reality, allowing for interschool diversity tends to encourage the development of elite schools and promotes educational competition, rather than increasing the quality of all schools equally. However, there is a place in equity-oriented policy for diversity. In Finnish schools, student diversity within classes is encouraged and there is a great deal of curricular diversity because teachers are trusted to develop their own curriculum based on the national guidelines. This kind of horizontal diversity allows students to learn and develop in accordance with their own particular needs and abilities, without allowing socioeconomic factors to determine one's educational opportunities.

One of the most significant findings of this paper was the negligence of student wellbeing in Korean policy goals. In more recent years, some policy reforms have finally begun to address the extremely high levels of stress among Korean students. However, this issue had been widely ignored for decades. It appears that policymakers have either been paying insufficient attention to student wellbeing, or they have assumed this issue would be resolved through reforms that targeted other problems, such as socioeconomic disparities. I argue that student wellbeing deserves explicit attention as an indicator of educational quality and an important policy goal for education policymakers. Students' mental and physical health is affected by their learning, and it is also affects their ability to learn effectively and happily. Korean students' wellbeing is clearly being hurt by intense competition and education fever. As the head of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, Superintendent Cho Hee-yeon, has expressed: "Good PISA scores are not something that South Korea should feel proud of, when they come largely by forcing children against their will into never-ending competition."[253]

It is important not to diminish the progress that past Korean education reform has achieved by making partial changes to the formal school system in order to improve equality and indirectly control shadow education. Students who had poorer access to private tutoring have been able to use publicly funded after school programs. Students have increased choice and minimized pressure in their education, at least during their free semester. That being said, expenditures on private education remain extremely high. Students still experience high stress levels, in particular during the all-important final year of high school, as they prepare for the entrance exam and college admissions. While the quality of school curriculum may have improved somewhat, the existence of the college entrance exam prevents the curriculum from straying too far from the material that appears on the exam. Furthermore, the amount of time students spend studying, whether in formal school or private education, has changed little. Both the quality and quantity of learning is important for student health.

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[253] Se-hwan Bak, "[Eye Interview] Education Reformer Aims to Tackle Elitism in Schools," *Korea Herald*, August 4, 2017.

VI. C. Tentative Policy Suggestions

Based on this paper's findings, it may be useful for the Korean government to consider a reform that alters the structure of the education system to minimize the culture of competition and education fever. As has been indicated by the history of college admissions reform in Korea, increasing or decreasing the weight of the entrance exam score in college admissions seems to be mostly ineffective for reducing the culture of competition. Whether students are trying to improve their entrance exam score or their GPA for college admissions, those with the means continue to attend elite schools and utilize shadow education. However, reforms that deemphasize exam-based assessment in primary and secondary schools may be helpful for reducing student stress, socioeconomic inequities, and the prevalence of private tutoring in the Korean education system. This kind of reform may decrease the influence that the entrance exam has on the curricula, reducing the prevalence of teaching to the test. It may also lessen competition-based student stress. This type of reform would likely require significant resources to rework the curriculum and methods of student assessment in primary and secondary schools. It would also likely require guidelines and training for schools and teachers to readjust to the new system, as most educators are only familiar with test-based assessment and teaching. The government would also need to monitor schools to ensure that the new system is not being manipulated. The new system may make teachers more susceptible to pressure or bribery to improve students grades, as methods of assessment that do not utilize exams are often more subjective than test-based assessment.

It may also be beneficial to return to equalization policies that reduce interschool diversity among middle and high schools. Programs like the SPHS that allow school choice encourage the ranking of schools and limit access to high-ranking schools based on socioeconomic status. Instead of interschool diversity, student diversity in classes and curricular diversity should be encouraged. In other words, policy reforms that encourage horizontal diversity might effectively improve school quality without exacerbating inequities. Student tracking policies should be eliminated to allow for more classroom diversity and teachers should be allowed more flexibility in tailoring the national curriculum to students' particular needs and abilities.

Entirely eliminating the entrance exam is likely not a viable policy reform. As evidenced by the experience of Sweden, doing so tends to create new problems for a fair admissions process. Furthermore, removing the entrance exam would require substantial resources to redesign the admissions process and would undoubtedly be met with significant backlash from the public, as the exam is seen as a necessary evil and the most objective way to determine university admissions. It is notable that even Finland, the example of a low-competition and low-stress education system, has a college entrance exam. This suggests that such a dramatic reform may not be ideal.

The findings of this paper also suggest that direct government control of private tutoring is an unsuccessful form of policy. The total ban under an authoritarian government minimized the industry but still produced a black market of private tutoring. A renewed total ban under South Korea's current democratic regime would undoubtedly not be supported, as indicated by the ban's ruling as unconstitutional in 2000. Current attempts to control private academies through curfews have met backlash and have proved difficult to enforce. It is unlikely that Korea would return to an outright ban on private tutoring, and doing so would likely not be effective at mitigating the problems within Korean education. If the education system moves away from exam-based assessment and a culture of competition, demand for private tutoring should decrease and the shadow education industry should contract as a result. That being said, maintaining tutoring center curfew policies until any future policy reforms, despite the difficulty of enforcing the curfew, is in the interest of student wellbeing.

Another way of reducing the competition focused around the entrance exam may be to create policy that facilitates a culture of trust between educators, families, and the government. In Finland, despite the existence of a competitive college entrance exam, shadow education is not a problem and student stress is low. The curricula taught in schools is perceived as good quality, and teachers are able to maintain integrity in their teaching without being pressured to prepare students only for the entrance exam. This is because parents and the government trust that educators know what is best for their students. If the Korean government was able to develop and implement policy that encourages a similar culture of trust for educators, that may also minimize competition and student stress in the education system without changing the structure of the entrance exam and university admissions process. In addition, reforms that facilitated teacher trust would supplement reforms that deemphasize exam-based assessment in schools by discouraging parental doubt of teachers' evaluations of their children. This kind of reform may also play an important role in discouraging families from turning to shadow education because they find formal schooling insufficient.

Policy reforms that reduce competition and education fever would likely improve student wellbeing by decreasing students’ academic pressures and allowing more sleep and leisure time. However, even if these policy reforms are not enacted, it may be beneficial to develop policy reforms specifically targeting student mental and physical health. Creating guidelines for the development of more extensive counseling services or student welfare teams in school, similar to the practices found in Finland, may help address students who are struggling. Developing programs to present in schools that educate students on how to handle academic stress may also be helpful. In addition, existing policies that temporarily reduce academic pressures on students, such as the Free Semester Program, may be expanded to give students more time in school free of stress to prevent burnout.

VI. D. Avenues for Further Research

There are two topics in particular that fell outside of the scope of this paper that would be illuminating subjects for further research. The first is the role teacher training and education has to play in creating classrooms free from stress and inequality. The standard of education for teachers in Finland is high, and as a result Finnish teachers are well equipped to teach students of varying abilities and backgrounds. Finnish teachers are trusted both by policymakers and parents to produce their own curriculum based on the national guidelines. Further research might examine the situation of teacher training, as well as teacher motivation, in Korea to see whether it plays a role in their preparedness to teach the curriculum no matter the student’s skill level. It might also provide some insight into the public’s perception of teachers in formal schools and why so many parents feel it necessary to send their children to private tutoring.

This relates to the second topic in need of further research, the role of parental perceptions and the societal norms of competitive academics and private tutoring in Korea. Although some research has been done on these topics, it may prove useful to investigate the relationship between these issues and education policy.[254] Parents' perceptions about the need for private tutoring may stem from their perceptions of the quality of teachers and teaching in formal schools. Their perceptions may also be influenced by societal norms about the necessity or universality of receiving private tutoring. These factors could influence the effectiveness of education reform intended to improve formal schooling or reduce the shadow education industry. Some scholars say that the government will be unable to minimize shadow education because education fever "seems to be a constant rather than a variable that is subject to the effects of policy responses."[255] However, this narrative should be questioned. Further studying the relationship between education policy and public perceptions in Korea may reveal possible ways for the government to reshape the culture of competition and education fever. Creating policy that facilitates a trust of teachers may be one pathway toward this reshaping. The Korean government will need to explore many options to reach a consensus about what type of policy is most successful at achieving a balance of excellence and equity in education and producing high-performing, healthy, happy students.

This summer I will be moving to Korea to teach English as a second language with the Fulbright program. This paper has generated insight that will help me better understand the education system in which I will work, as well as the students I will teach. This insight will enable me to be a more thoughtful teacher and coworker. While in Korea, I hope to expand on this paper by exploring the opinions of students, parents, and teachers regarding their educational experiences as well as their preferences regarding education policy. This would supplement the research done in this paper by giving a voice not only to scholars, but also to the individuals who are directly affected by current changes in policy.

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[254] Hongjoo Woo and Nancy N. Hodges, "Education Fever: Exploring Private Education Consumption Motivations Among Korean Parents of Preschool Children," *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* 44, no. 2 (2015): 127–42, https://doi.org/10.1111/fcsr.12131; Park, "Education Manager Mothers: South Korea's Neoliberal Transformation"; Yang and Shin, "Parental Attitudes towards Education: What Matters for Children's Well-Being?"; Lee and Shouse, "The Impact of Prestige Orientation on Shadow Education in South Korea."

[255] Lee, Lee, and Jang, "The History of Policy Responses to Shadow Education in South Korea: Implications for the next Cycle of Policy Responses," 105.

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