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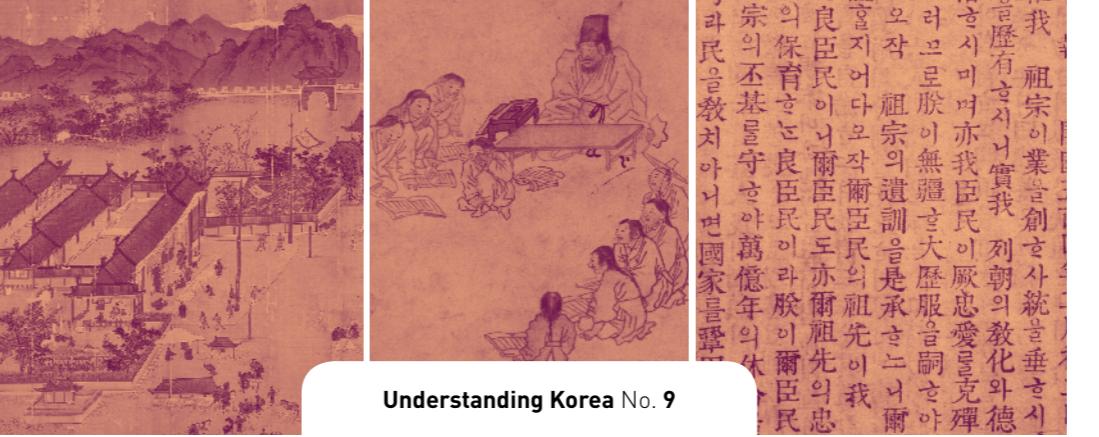
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### No. 9 Korean Education: Educational Thought, Systems and Content

Written by Jeong Mee-Ryang and Lee Woojin



The history of education in Korea is a very important blueprint with which to understand the nation's culture and history. Education in Korea has been set by the national culture, but at the same time it has exerted an influence on that culture. This book, therefore, examines the diverse aspects of education in Korea and the contributions of education to the development of the nation from the perspective of its long history. This book focuses not so much on the vast amount of information related to education in Korea; rather, it selects a number of major facts and explains them in greater depth from a historical context of education in Korea.



Understanding Korea No. 9

# KOREAN EDUCATION

## Educational Thought, Systems and Content



### About the series

The Understanding Korea Series aims to share a variety of original and fascinating aspects of Korea with those overseas who are engaged in education or are deeply interested in Korean culture.

Korean Education:  
Educational Thought,  
Systems and Content

Understanding Korea No. 9

# KOREAN EDUCATION

Educational Thought,  
Systems and Content

Written by **Jeong Mee-Ryang**  
**Lee Woojin**

Translated by **Sohn Tae-soo**

Understanding Korea Series No. 9

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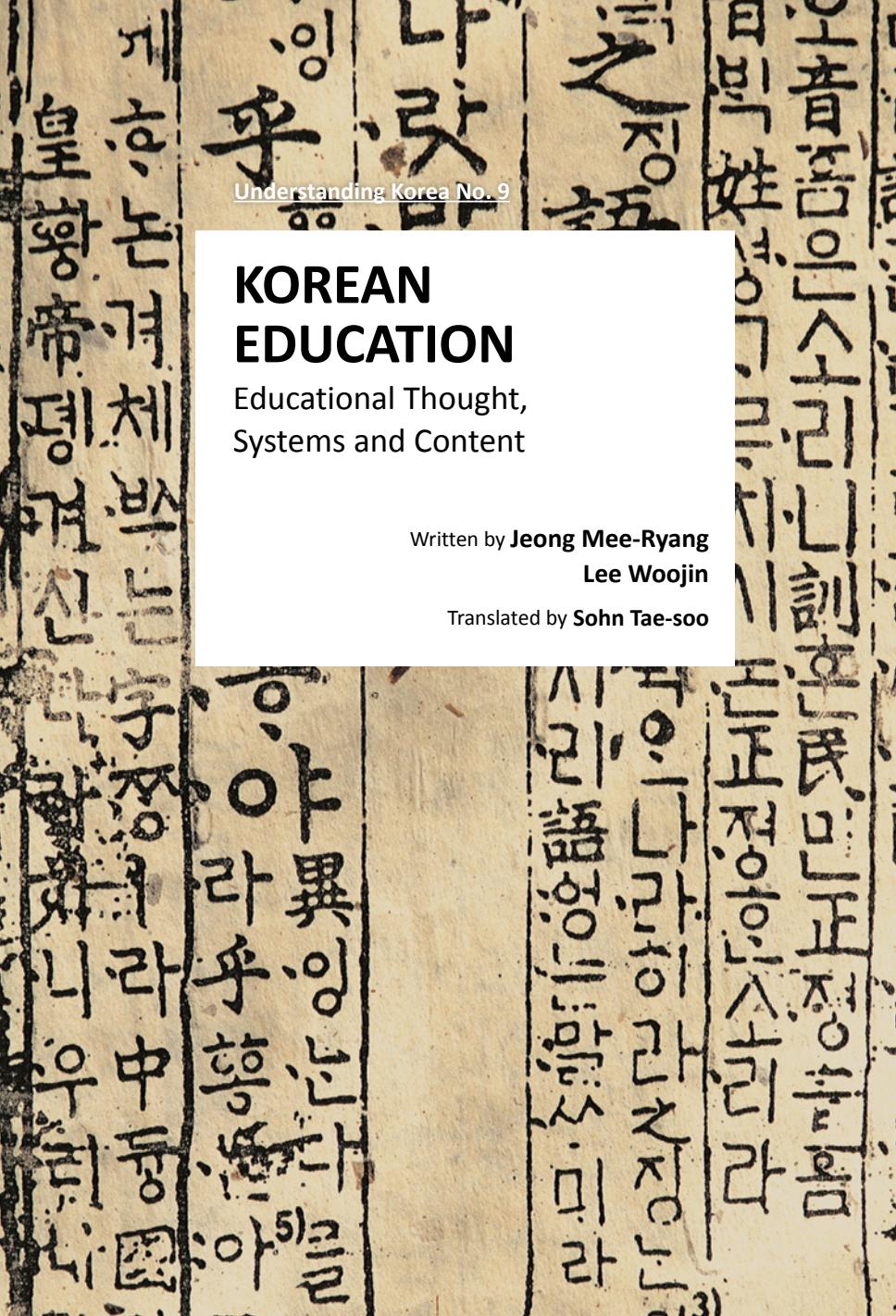
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## FOREWORD

The Academy of Korean Studies has helped scholars and students research the history and culture of Korea internationally for the past four decades. This in turn has contributed to Korea gaining increasing attention overseas. However, as there are not many Korean Studies resources suitable for foreigners, we have recognized the necessity of publishing books that contain extensive and accurate knowledge about Korea. We hope to provide various institutions abroad with suitable materials in order to nurture future generations of Korean Studies scholars.

The Center for International Affairs (CEFIA) at AKS undertakes the task of promoting better understanding of Korea through development of materials on Korean history and culture and supporting activities related to making sure that textbooks around the world are correctly presenting Korea. With this objective in mind, CEFIA has published the Understanding Korea Series. It offers in-depth knowledge for foreigners who are interested in Korean studies and who wish to gain a clear understanding of the field. The series covers a variety of Korea-related subjects, and we hope that it will be put into wide use around the world.

This ninth book in the Understanding Korea Series, *Korean Education: Educational Thought, Systems and Content*, provides extensive information on Korea's education. This book maintains the traditional history of education and modern and contemporary education. As an introduction of Korean education of the past and today in a concise but thoughtful manner, this book is not only for international Korean studies researchers, Korea related textbook writers, and Korean studies students but also general readers interested in Korea.

Many people helped to make this publication possible. We greatly appreciate the solid efforts of the authors, Senior Researcher Jeong Mee-Ryang of AKS and Professor Lee Woojin of Gongju National University of Education and the translator, Adjunct Professor Sohn Tae-soo of Department of Translation at Graduate School of Translation and TESOL, Sungkyunkwan University. We also would like to express our gratitude to the staff members for their efforts in publishing this book.

**Center for International Affairs  
Academy of Korean Studies**

## INTRODUCTION

Education, as a major socio-historical phenomenon in human life, is an independent cultural system that frames culture in a manner similar to that of politics, economics, history, and religion. Education and contemporary culture shape and constantly interact with one another. In this respect, the history of education in Korea is a very important blueprint with which to understand the nation's culture and history. Education in Korea has been set by the national culture, but at the same time it has exerted an influence on that culture. This book, therefore, examines the diverse aspects of education in Korea and the contributions of education to the development of the nation from the perspective of its long history.

This book focuses not so much on the vast amount of information related to education in Korea; rather, it selects a number of major facts and explains them in greater depth from a historical context of education in Korea. This book is composed of two parts. Part 1 deals with the traditional history of education prior to the Gabo Reform of 1894, while Part 2 examines modern and contemporary education in Korea after the Reform. This was because education in Korea experienced a profound transformation in terms of structure and content in the wake of the Gabo Reform. Part 1 titled "Traditional Education" explains the traditional education of the ancient royal dynastic period from the education of the Three Kingdoms Period to that of the Joseon Dynasty. The old royal dynastic period again breaks down into the Three Kingdoms, Unified Silla, the Goryeo Dynasty, and the Joseon Dynasty. Each section deals with the educational thought and systems of the respective dynasties. The top priority was to illustrate Confucian education and its importance as the major educational principle both for hierarchical state rule and for the cultivation of individual morality. The first chapter also precisely de-

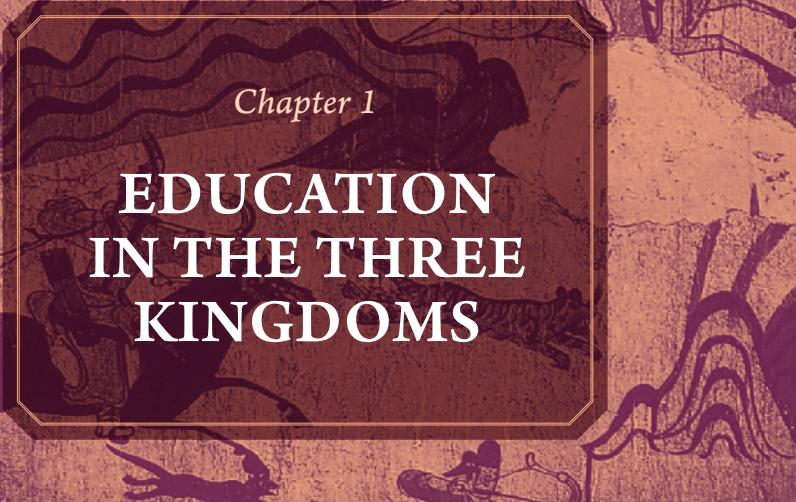
scribes the various educational institutions based on Confucian philosophy and the state-run civil service examination aimed at selecting the talents of government officials who were well versed in Confucianism. The second part, "Modern and Contemporary Education," deals with the history of modern and contemporary education from the Reform of 1894 to the present. The section titled "Education in the Modern Period" is devoted to the educational reform carried out for the formation of the modern nation-state and the cultivation of modern people and to the Japanese colonial education policy thereafter. The section titled "Education in Contemporary Korea" is divided into three parts: the establishment of the basic foundation for education (from 1945 to the late 1950s); the expansion of education (from the 1960s to the early 1990s); and the qualitative growth (from the mid 1990s to the present). Other events of historical importance related to education in Korea are also briefly introduced.

This book is a comprehensive examination of the process of major developments of education in Korea from a historical perspective. One of the aims of this book is to clearly explain the influence of education—as one of the most important drivers of national development—on the process of historical change. I hope this book will help those who want to systematically understand the changes in education in Korea, the characteristics of education in each period, and the current situation of education in the nation.

Part I

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION





## Chapter 1

# EDUCATION IN THE THREE KINGDOMS

### Education before the Three Kingdoms Period

It is highly probable that the earliest Korean ancestors might have migrated from Siberia and North Manchuria to the eastern region. They developed their own style of living even before the Chinese Han Dynasty had exerted an influence on the Korean Peninsula. However, there still remain few historical records that can help us figure out the educational activities prior to the Three Kingdoms period. The remaining historical sources mention the existence of the title of “a scholar of broad learning” (or “a savant,” the modern term for an academic doctor) who was the teacher of the Chinese classics during the Gojoseon (Old Joseon) period. We can only confirm that they were engaged in the educational activity of teaching letters in Buyeo and Jinhan during the Proto-Three Kingdom Period.

### Education in the Three Kingdoms: An Overview

Since 1 BCE, many nations were established by powerful regional rulers in Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula. Of them, the most powerful and the longest-lasting nations were the three kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje, and Silla. Though the three nations shared the same language and cultural background, they frequently fought with each other, or sometimes with China. After annexing the tribe nations, the three kingdoms established the system of an ancient kingdom of their own. They promulgated a code of administrative law, compiled history books, and imported Buddhism as state religion. They also established the state educational system based on Confucianism. Interestingly, the three kingdoms relied on Confucianism when it came to the educational system, even though they had adopted Buddhism as the state religion. This was because Confucianism was more suited to the policy of cultivating government officials who were capable of consolidating a centralized bureaucratic structure due to the cardinal Confucian tenet “to build the mind and govern the nation.” The three nations also established youth organizations and carried out both literary and martial arts education in order to prepare its members for emergencies. This was because war could break out at any time amid the escalating tension between the three rival forces.

### Education in the Goguryeo Kingdom

Of the three kingdoms, Goguryeo was the first nation that set up the system of an ancient state and established an educational institution.

This was because the nation, being located in the northernmost area of the Korean Peninsula, made exchanges with—and imported cultures from—China in previous generations.

Goguryeo Kingdom established the National Confucian Academy (Taehak), the oldest and the first educational institution in Korea, during the second year of King Sosurim in 372. The Academy was established under the influence of the Chinese Eastern Jin Dynasty, which had maintained close relations with Goguryeo. Modelled after the institution of the same title in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, the National Confucian Academy in Goguryeo functioned as an institution built for cultivating high-level government officials and only accepted the children of the aristocrats as students. Confucian texts, history books, and reference books for Chinese language teaching were used as the main textbooks. A teacher at the Academy was called a “savant” (scholar of broad learning) of the National Confucian Academy. Goguryeo also established provincial educational institutions known as private village schools (Gyeongdang) across the nation to differentiate them from the National Confucian Academy established in the capital. Private village schools assembled the unmarried youth of the provincial aristocratic and commoner families and taught students Confucian texts and history as well as archery. In short, the private village school was an educational institution where it offered youth both a literary and martial education to help prepare them for a future national crisis.

## Education in the Baekje Kingdom

No official record remains with regard to the establishment of a school of any kind in the Baekje Kingdom. However it is known that the kingdom adopted the “savant” (scholar of broad learning) position—a post in charge of education—and established a system of the Ministry of Education (Sadobu) and the education minister (*naebeopjwapyeong*). Thus, it is assumed that educational institutions existed in Baekje. Over the course of many years Baekje dispatched three types of scholars of broad learning to Japan: “the savant in the Five Classics” (*ogyeongbaksa*); “the savant in medicine” (*uibaksa*); and “the savant in calendrical science” (*yeokbaksa*). It therefore is presumed that they taught various academic subjects including Confucian texts in Baekje.

## Education in the Silla Kingdom

Of the three kingdoms, Silla was the last to establish a system of the ancient state. Nevertheless, it established a unique educational system called the Hwarangdo (Flowering Knights)—an elite warrior corps of male youth—to cultivate its political and military leaders. The Hwarang corps originated from a volunteer private youth group but was later developed into a state organization. *Hwarang* literally referred to the “flower of male youth.” It must be noted that a group of women led by a female leader called *wonhwa* (literally meaning “original flowers”) preceded the *hwarang*. It is said that two female warriors, Nammo and Junjeong, fought each other for the top position and the former was killed by the latter.

After this incident, Silla reorganized the system into the *hwarang* group led by a young male leader.

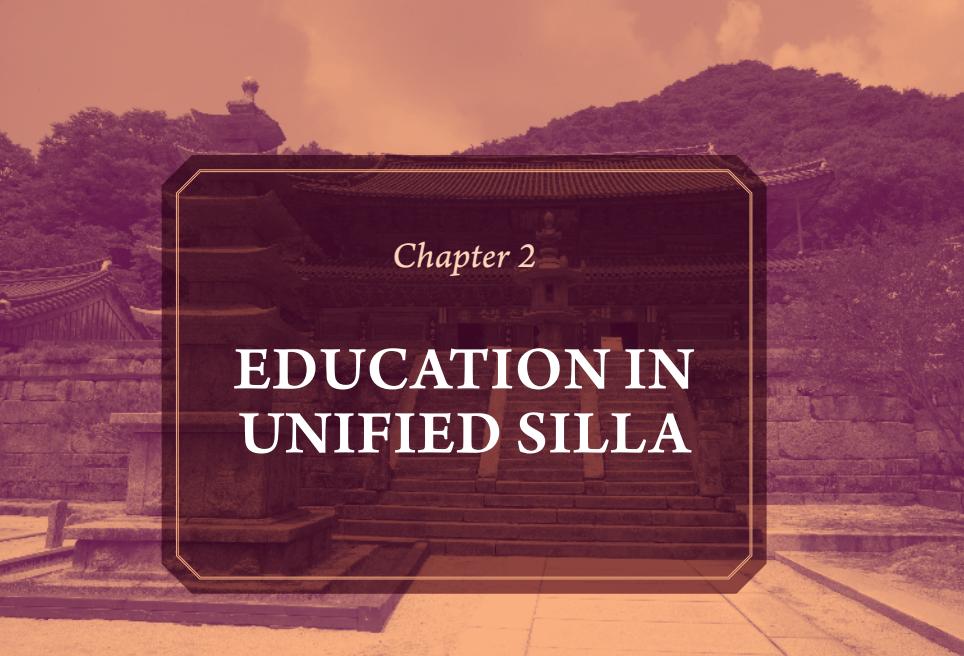
The Hwarang warrior corps was directed by a state-appointed grand master (*gukseon*). Youths from aristocratic families who were deemed to be virtuous and of splendid appearance were selected for the Hwarang, under whom were hundreds or thousands of junior members called *nangdo*. Although the grand master and *hwarang* warriors were chosen from aristocratic families, the junior warriors were selected from various social classes. The *hwarang* warriors learned social norms while living in a group and practiced basic martial arts, including swordsmanship and archery. They also took part in a cross-country trip in order to hone their patriotism. The *hwarang* warriors received a comprehensive education including moral, physical, social, and military training.

The origin of the *hwarang* philosophy was “the traditional Korean culture of enjoying elegant arts (*pungnyu*)”, which had incorporated the teachings of three East Asian schools of thought: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. It was well manifested in a commentary of the epitaph written in memory of Nannang, a deceased *hwarang* member.

This nation has a mysterious tradition of enjoying elegant arts, called *pungnyu*. This teaching, whose source has been precisely mentioned in the history of supernatural wizards, incorporates Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism and has succeeded in reforming the public by communicating with them. According to the lesson of Confucius, they serve

their parents devotedly at home and pledge their loyalty to the nation. According to the instruction of Laozi, they deal with and accomplish anything without reserve or artificiality. According to the teaching of Sakyamuni Buddha, they refrain from doing all evil things and instead have faith in good deeds.

Grand Master Wongwang (542–640), a Buddhist priest, proposed the five guidelines that were later called the Five Precepts for Secular Life as a golden list of ethics that the *hwarang* should embrace. They were: 1) Show allegiance to one’s sovereign; 2) Treat one’s parents with respect and devotion; 3) Exhibit trust and sincerity among friends; 4) Never retreat in battle; and 5) Exercise discretion when taking a life. In regular sequence, the first three principles represent the Confucian virtues of loyalty to the nation, filial piety, and faith among friends, which are followed by the virtue of courage needed by the military warriors and, finally, the virtue of mercy found in Buddhism.



## Chapter 2

# EDUCATION IN UNIFIED SILLA

After having unified the three kingdoms, Silla started to reform various state systems, including the educational institutions, in order to effectively rule the vast territories and the larger population. The raison d'être of the *hwarang* had virtually lost its meaning once the unification of the Three Kingdoms lessened the necessity for preparations for war. However, Unified Silla was in dire need of an educational institution that could cultivate the professional talents of those who could then rule the vast territory. Unified Silla thus established the National Confucian College, which was wholly responsible for the education of Confucianism.

### National Confucian College

The National Confucian College (Gukhak) was established in 682, right after the unification of the Three Kingdoms. It was an educational institution tasked with cultivating government officials who were well versed in Confucian thought. In 717, Unified Silla acquired the portraits of Confucius and his seventy-two disciples from the Tang Dynasty, enshrined them at National Confucian College, and regularly held memorial services for these Confucian worthies. This was a true reminder that the National Confucian College was an educational institution centering on Confucianism.

The supervisor of the college was the high minister (*gyeong*), under whom were the savant (*baksa*), the assistant professor (*jogyo*), the general manager (*daesa*), and the manager (*sa*). The savants taught students Confucian texts and the assistant professors aided the savant. The general manager and the manager were in charge of school administration.

Those who had the title of general manager (the twelfth rank official of the seventeen post ranks in Silla) and the below, including those with no rank title—aged between fifteen and thirty—were eligible to study at the National Confucian College. In actuality, however, successful entrants to the National Confucian College were mostly the children of officials holding the highest head-rank.<sup>1</sup> The government designated a student stipend to help students pay their tuition in order to encourage the activities of the National Confucian College.

It took nine years to complete a course of study, which was mostly composed of learning Confucian texts. The curriculums were divided into three courses, with the *Analects of Confucius* (the *Analects*

The Curriculum of Confucian studies at the National Confucian College

Course 1	<i>Analects, Classics of Filial Piety, Book of Rites, Book of Changes</i>
Course 2	<i>Analects, Classics of Filial Piety, Zuo Zhuan, Classics of Songs, Spring and Autumn Annals</i>
Course 3	<i>Analects, Classics of Filial Piety, Book of History, Literary Selections</i>

hereafter) and *Classics of Filial Piety* as mandatory. Students could graduate from the college once they chose and completed one of the three courses. Additionally, the College taught students arithmetic alongside the Confucian texts.

Unified Silla adopted a kind of civil service examination system for the selection of government officials in three grades: upper, middle, and lower. The candidates who took this examination—called *dokseosampungwa* (the examination in the readings of texts in three gradations)—were graded according to the three levels of proficiency in reading Chinese texts. The examination is presumed to be the predecessor of the civil service examination in the later period. It is known that those who passed the special grade examination were

*Dokseosampungwa* (the examination in the readings of texts in three gradations) and Grade

Special Grade	Students well versed in <i>Five Classics, Three Histories</i> , <sup>2</sup> and the Hundred Schools of Thought.
Upper Grade	Students well versed in <i>Zuo Zhuan on the Spring and Autumn Annals, Book of Rites, Literary Selections, Analects, Classics of Filial Piety</i>
Middle Grade	Students well versed in "Gu Li" in <i>Book of Rites, Analects, Classics of Filial Piety</i>
Lower Grade	Students well versed in "Gu Li" in <i>Book of Rites, Classics of Filial Piety</i>

given exceptional priority in becoming government officials. But no record has been found with regard to actual appointed figures.

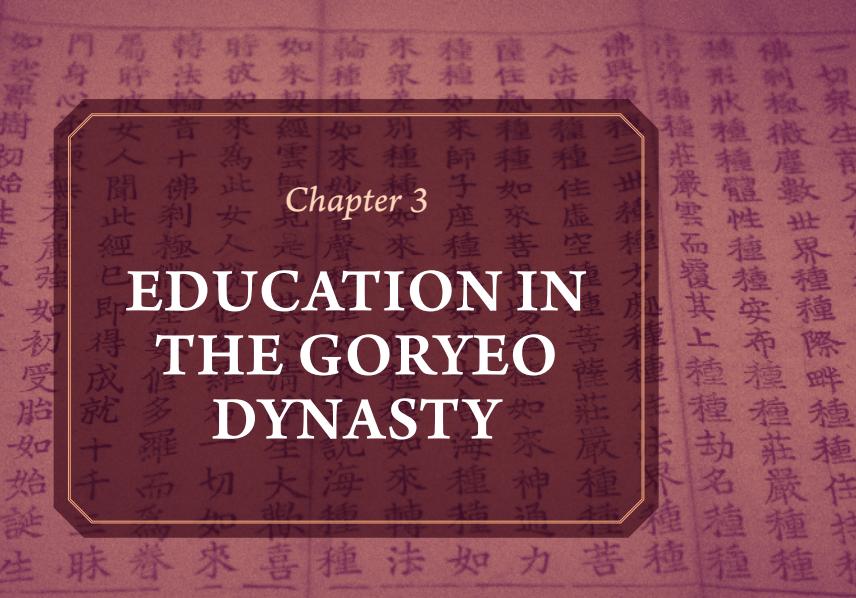
## Dispatch of Students to the Tang Dynasty

Students of the National Confucian College in Unified Silla were given various privileges including scholarships and government posts upon graduation. The increase in the number of students who went to China to study, however, overwhelmed the number of the National Confucian College graduates. Even before it unified the Three Kingdoms, Silla had dispatched students to China in order to better understand the developments taking place in the Tang Dynasty and to import Chinese culture. The government offered to pay for students' books while the Tang Dynasty provided them with room and board, as well as money for clothing. It took ten years to complete a course of study in China, during which they learnt Yin and Yang Studies, astronomy, and Confucianism. A majority of the Silla students passed the civil service examination for foreigners held in the Tang Dynasty.

During the early period of Unified Silla, students who went to China were the children of the ruling class from the royal family to the posts of the head-rank six. As the generations changed, an increasing number of students came from families below the post of head-rank six. The new generation of students criticized the bone-rank institution of Silla and stood together against the ruling class of Silla in collaboration with the powerful local families. This played a pivotal role in the launch of a new dynasty called Goryeo.

# EDUCATION IN THE GORYEO DYNASTY

*Chapter 3*



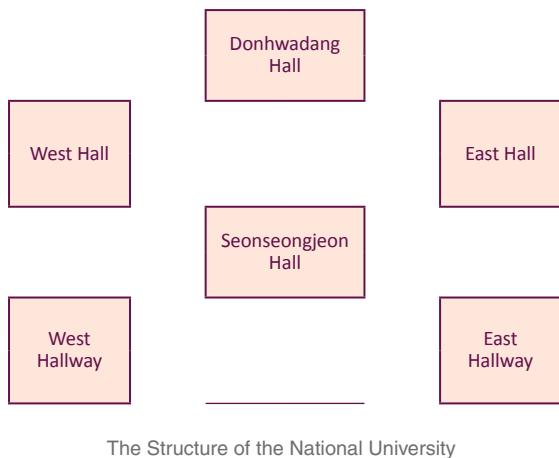
King Taejo of the Goryeo Dynasty carried out a policy of occupying the northern territories and worshipping Buddhism. When it came to the principle of state ruling and education, however, he emphasized Confucianism. Based on the principle of Confucianism, the first monarch of Goryeo established a variety of state-run institutions including the National University (Gukjagam). The government also held the civil service examination in order to select talented government officials well versed in Confucianism, thus emphasizing Confucian education.

The school system of the Goryeo Dynasty played a role in cultivating future government officials through the state-run examination. With regard to educational institutions, the nation established the National University (Gukjagam), Learning Hall (Hakdang) and

Twelve Assemblies (Sibigongdo) in the capital and county schools (Hyanggyo) and village study halls (Seodang) in the provincial areas. This section will deal with the first four educational institutions excluding village schools, whose records are sparse.

## National University

Having succeeded the tradition of the National Confucian College (Gukhak) of the Silla Kingdom, the National University (Gukjagam) served as the representative state-run school and top educational institution of Goryeo. National University was established as a comprehensive educational institution in 992 by reorganizing the National Confucian College based on the educational system of the Tang and Song dynasties. During the late Goryeo Dynasty, the National University title was changed to Seonggyungwan, which lasted until the Joseon Dynasty. Although it succeeded the tradition of National Confucian College—the top educational system of Silla—the National University differentiated itself from its preceding institution in that it adopted a dual system of operating a Confucian shrine (Munmyo) and an academy separately. Previously, the National Confucian College of Unified Silla had a Confucian shrine—where they held a worship ceremony for Confucius and the Confucian worthies—inside the academy for teaching students. However the National University maintained a dual system of operating a Confucian shrine and an academy, and the tradition was later transmitted to Seonggyungwan in Joseon. The Confucian shrine of the National University—composed of the



Seonseongjeon Hall, East Hallway, and West Hallway—was a place where they held memorial services for Confucius and his disciples, as well as other Confucian worthies. The academy was composed of a classroom named Donhwadang Hall and two dormitories—East Hall and West Hall—on both sides.

At the National University, they originally taught Confucianism and technological studies. The three departments devoted to the studies of Confucianism at the National University were: Gukjahak, Taehak, and Samunhak. Education in the three departments was given to the children of the highest-ranking officials above the post of rank seven.

The three departments for technological studies were open to the children of the officials—civil and military—of the eighth government rank and below: *yulhak* (law), *sanhak* (arithmetic), and *seonhak*

(secretarial training). In short, the National University held a total of six departments and qualification for entry to the university was categorized into four criteria according the ranks of the applicants' fathers or ancestors. In this respect, the "six departments and four ranks" (see the table below for precise details) became the key concepts with regard to the National University system.

The entrance quota for each of the three departments of Confucian studies was set at three hundred students, respectively, but the maximum numbers for the three technological departments were not fixed. Each of the Confucian departments took nine years to complete, but the three technological departments required only six years. Because students entered the university in order to prepare for the civil service examination, they could stop once they passed the examination. The following are the curriculum set at the National University.

#### The curriculum at the National University

Division	Depart- ment	The qualification for entry	Quota	Term of study	Contents of education
Confucian Studies (3 depts.)	Gukjahak	Children of officials above the 3 <sup>rd</sup> rank	300 each	9 years	Confucian texts
	Taehak	Children of officials above the 5 <sup>th</sup> rank			
	Samunhak	Children of officials above the 7 <sup>th</sup> rank			
Technologi- cal Studies (3 depts.)	Yulhak Sanhak Seohak	Children of officials of the 8 <sup>th</sup> rank and below including the commoners	Not fixed	6 years	Technolo- gies

The *Analects* and *Classics of Filial Piety* were prerequisite subjects in the departments of Gukjahak, Taehak, and Samunhak. The other texts were categorized into three sections. Students were required to choose one from each category and study them accordingly. The following table is the subjects at the National University.

**The Subjects at the National University**

Subjects	Term of study	Others
<i>Analects, Classics of Filial Piety</i>	1 year	Prerequisite subjects
<i>Book of History, Gongyangzhuan, Guliangzhuan</i>	1 year and a half	
<i>Book of Changes, Classics of Songs, Rites of Zhou, Rites of Ceremony</i>	2 years	Elective subjects
<i>Book of Rites, Zuo Zhuan on The Spring and Autumn Annals</i>	3 years	

Students in the technological departments of *yulhak* (law), *seonhak* (secretarial training), and *sanhak* (arithmetic) studied law, the eight styles of calligraphy,<sup>3</sup> and arithmetic.

The influence of the National University began to decline in the wake of the Military Officers Revolt in 1170 and the Mongol Invasion of Goryeo. The Mongol Invasion, in particular, destroyed part of the National University campus and threw the land system into chaos, resulting in financial difficulties for the school. After the importation of Neo-Confucianism from the Yuan Dynasty, however, the National University's influence was revived. Meanwhile, An Hyang (1243–1308) tried to reinvigorate the operation of the National University in order to widely propagate Neo-Confucianism. At

the suggestion of An Hyang, the university established a scholarship fund to help the National University secure financing. In the fourteenth century, the National University was renamed Seonggyungwan and became an educational institution which was solely devoted to the education of Neo-Confucianism. Thus it was devoid of curriculums related to technological studies. The National University began to be transformed into a core educational institution aimed at propagating the new thought of Neo-Confucianism.

## Learning Hall

Goryeo established an educational institution called the Learning Hall (Hakdang) in the capital of Gaegyeong in order to promote the study of Confucianism. Because there were Learning Halls located in the east and the west of the capital, the two were called East Learning Hall and West Learning Hall. Although it was an education institution built in the capital, in contrast to the county schools in provincial towns, it did not adopt the dual system of operating a Confucian shrine and an academy separately, while county schools in provincial towns maintained the system. In fact, the Learning Hall was not required to own a shrine because the National University in the capital of Gaegyeong already had a Confucian shrine. During the late Goryeo Dynasty, the East and West Learning Halls were expanded into the Five Learning Halls: five halls in the five directions of east, west, south, north and center. The Joseon Dynasty inherited the tradition but after abolishing the hall in the north only operated four halls.

## County Schools

County schools (Hyanggyo) were built as the counterparts to the East and West Learning Halls in the capital. The provincial educational institutions were established to propagate Confucianism to the public in local areas. Unlike the case of the East and West Learning Halls, county schools adopted a dual system of operating a separate Confucian shrine and academy. The government of the Goryeo Dynasty dispatched two scholars—a savant in Confucian classics and a savant in medical science—to each of the twelve provinces (*mok*) and let them teach their knowledge at county schools. In terms of quality, however, the educational standard of county schools in Goryeo was extremely poor compared with their coun-



Daeseongjeon, Gangneung Hyanggyo  
(Source: Cultural Heritage Administration)

terparts in the Joseon Dynasty. County schools could perform their role properly after the start of the Joseon Dynasty.

## Twelve Assemblies

The Twelve Assemblies (Sibigongdo) refer to the twelve private academic assemblies located in Gaegyeong in the Goryeo Dynasty. The Confucian scholar Choe Chung personally established a private school at his guesthouse and gave lectures to cultivate a younger generation of scholars. That assembly became the precursor of a dozen such private academies that sprang up at that time, and which had the participation of another eleven noted Confucian scholars. This was later called the Twelve Assemblies.

The success of the Twelve Assemblies was attributed to two factors: the stagnant activities of the National University and, at the same time, the popularity of education undertaken with the sole purpose of passing the civil service examination. First, the National University had lost its authority due to internal and external troubles. As a result, teachers' skills atrophied and they lost their enthusiasm for pedagogy. Students, too, became negligent and were unmotivated. An increasing number of young students, therefore, flocked to the Twelve Assemblies, where noted and competent scholars trained future generations of scholars. Second, when compared to other educational institutions, the Twelve Assemblies offered an education that was advantageous for students who were aiming to pass the civil service examination. The twelve founders of the Assemblies, including Choe Chung, had been the authoritative leaders who had passed the civil service examination, officiated the

civil service examination process, and selected the top candidates. Therefore, it was natural for students aspiring to pass the civil service examination to flock to the Assemblies. In actual fact, the Twelve Assemblies prospered more because it had produced a vast number of students who successfully passed the civil service examination.

The Twelve Assemblies set its educational objectives at cultivating the noble character of students and preparing them for the civil service examination. The curriculums prepared at the Twelve Assemblies were the Nine Classics,<sup>4</sup> the Three History Books, and “Prose and Verse Writing.” The latter was a particularly strategic course for students aiming to pass the civil service examination.

The Twelve Assemblies were established in the mid-Goryeo Dynasty when the activities of the county schools were still stagnant and the Learning Hall had yet to appear. The Twelve Assemblies contributed a great deal to the development of Confucian education until they ceased to exist in the late Goryeo.

### The Civil Service Examination of the Goryeo Dynasty

In 958, King Gwangjong adopted the civil service examination for the first time in the nation in order to find and appoint qualified government officials. The civil service examination originated from “the examination in the readings of texts in three gradations (*dokseosampungwa*)” of the Silla Kingdom. It is important to note that the civil service examination system was performed in earnest during the Goryeo Dynasty. King Gwangjong carried out the civil service examination in order to strengthen royal power and establish a cen-

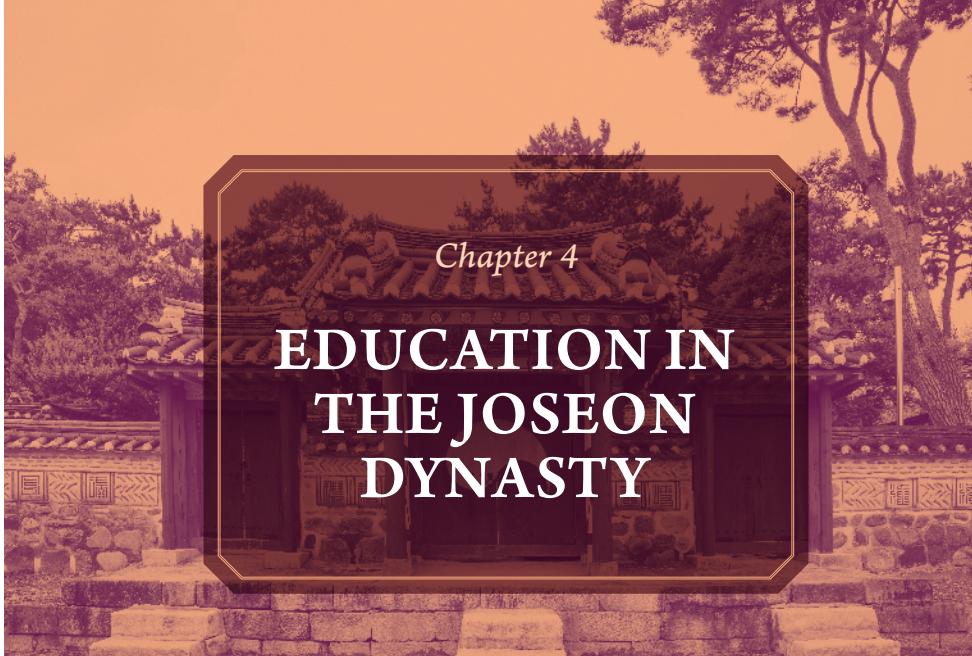
tralized bureaucratic structure. The civil service examination was a system that could help form a new, elite power structure composed of civil officials who could replace the previous meritorious retainers and influential families.

The civil service examination that served as a basis for the appointment of officials in the Goryeo Dynasty was composed of three basic types: the “composition examination course” (*jesulgwa*); the “classics examination course” (*myeonggyeonggw*a); and the “miscellaneous examination course” (*japgwa*). Because the first two examinations were categorized as the civil examination course (*mungwa*) of the Joseon Dynasty, however, the whole examination was roughly categorized as two: the civil examination course (*mungwa*) and the miscellaneous examination course (*japgwa*). Because the civil examination course was aimed at selecting talented civil servants, the “composition examination course” test selected candidates on the basis of their ability to write essays in Chinese literary forms, and the “classics examination course” test examined the memorized knowledge of Confucian canonical works. The “miscellaneous examination course” test was aimed at appointing professional technician officials. Originally, they only tested medical science and divination in the “miscellaneous examination course,” but other examinations for law, mathematics, calligraphy, and geography were added later.

In the Goryeo Dynasty, every commoner, except for a few restricted classes, was eligible to take the civil service examination. However, those who committed the crime of being undutiful to their parents, being disloyal to the country, and the children of the low-born class of people were disqualified from taking the examination.

Also at this time, the qualification for taking the “final examination of the civil service examination” (*dongdangggamsi*) was given to: 1) students who had passed the primary and the second-level test; 2) students who had studied at the National University for more than three years; and 3) those who had taken up a public office for more than three hundred days.

The Goryeo civil service examination had a particular tradition of personal relationships between “an official in charge of the civil service examination” (*jwaju*) and “a successful applicant” (*munsaeng*). The combined term *jwaju-munsaeng*, therefore, refers to the devout master-disciple relationship between the two, interacting much like father and son. The seemingly familial custom, however, resulted in a negative side-effect where a powerful group of civil elites could exert influence on society and promote their own power and reach.



**W**hen China changed from Yuan to Ming during the late Goryeo Dynasty, Goryeo mapped out a policy of guarding against Yuan externally. Internally, too, the burgeoning pro-Ming faction literati class carried out reforms by driving out the pro-Yuan influential families. With the launch of the Joseon Dynasty, the new literati adopted Neo-Confucianism as the ruling ideology and carried out the policy of promoting Neo-Confucianism while oppressing Buddhism. The educational system of the Joseon Dynasty was also reformed based on the teachings of Neo-Confucianism. This suggests that, unlike the case of the Goryeo Dynasty, Neo-Confucianism not only was adopted as a ruling ideology, but was also deeply rooted in society as a principle of life.

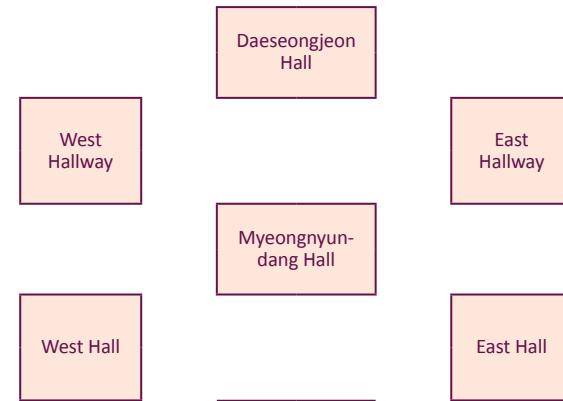
The educational institutions of Joseon focused a great deal on imprinting knowledge and the norms of Neo-Confucianism on the

minds of the public. The Joseon Dynasty thought that it should definitely pursue education as a requisite for accomplishing the ideal Neo-Confucian state. Joseon was equipped with both public and private educational institutions: Seonggyungwan, the Four Schools, and county schools in the former category, and the Private Academy and village study halls in the latter.

## Seonggyungwan

Seonggyungwan was built in the capital in 1398. It was the Joseon Dynasty's foremost state-run Neo-Confucian educational institution for cultivating its talented leaders. Seonggyungwan proclaimed itself the highest institution of learning to succeed the National Confucian College of Silla and the National University of Goryeo Dynasty. Unlike the National University, however, it was solely dedicated to teaching Neo-Confucianism.

The main characteristics of Seonggyungwan are well manifested in the structure of its buildings. Like the National University of the Goryeo Dynasty, Seonggyungwan adopted a dual system of operating a Confucian shrine for memorial services for Confucius and the worthies, and a separate academy for learning. The main buildings of the Confucian shrine are composed of Daeseongjeon Hall (Great Achievement Hall) and the East Hallway and West Hallway on the eastern and the western side of the Confucian shrine. The academy is composed of Myeongnyundang Hall (Hall of Enlightenment) flanked by the East Hall and West Hall. The three halls of Daeseongjeon Hall, the East Hallway and the West Hallway



The Structure of Seonggyungwan

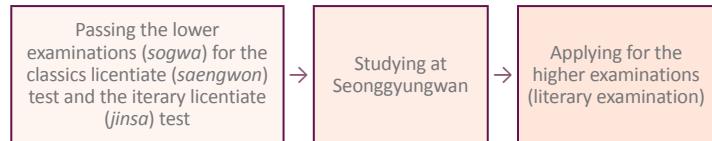
house the spirit tablets of notable Confucian scholars from Korea and China and are used as halls for performing memorial services. Myeongnyundang Hall was mostly used for lectures, while the East Hall and the West Hall were student dormitories. The ceremonial rite of Seokjeon Daeje is performed every spring and autumn at the Confucian shrine to honor Confucius and the Confucian sages of Korea and China. On the first day of every month, every student of Seonggyungwan was dressed formally and was obliged to pay their respects at the Confucian shrine.

The organization of Seonggyungwan was composed of thirty-eight officials, from those titled *jigwansa* (the senior grade of the second court rank) to those titled *hagyu* (the junior grade of the ninth court rank). The quota of students at Seonggyungwan was set at 150 after the start of the Joseon Dynasty, but rose to two hundred

from the year 1429. The students were composed of: 1) the *sangje-saeng* students: the regular students who entered Seonggyungwan as either literary degree-holders (*saengwon*) or classics degree-holders (*jinsa*), and 2) the *hajaesaeng* students, who, in case of a vacancy, were recruited from those junior students who had not held government positions and had not passed the civil service examination.

The basic curriculums at Seonggyungwan were the reading of Confucian classics and literary composition. At Seonggyungwan, they read the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*, however they were prohibited from reading Daoist philosophy texts written by Laozi and Zhuangzi or Buddhist canons. The academic grades for the respective courses were given in four divisions. Students received the grade of *daetong* (excellent) when they precisely read a text with pauses between phrases, interpreted a text thoroughly, and deeply understood a certain text by comparing it with others. The grade of *tong* (very good) was given to those who had completely mastered a scripture, while those who understood a chapter of a scripture were given *yaktong* (good). Those students who understood the gist of a chapter but could not clearly explain what they knew were given *jotong* (unsatisfactory). The grade below *jotong* was given to those who could not even explain a chapter. The skills of literary composition were tested in three stages every month. During the first ten days of the month, students were instructed to “read the texts and write an explanatory essay.” During the next ten days, they “composed sentences in various patterns in different genres.” And for the last ten days of the month, they “wrote a paper on state policies.”

The education of Seonggyungwan during the Joseon Dynasty was



largely influenced by the civil service examinations. With regard to the formalities of taking the civil service examination during the Joseon, applicants had to go through the following channels.

After passing the lower examinations (*sogwa*), successful applicants were required to study at Seonggyungwan for a certain period of time. The successful applicants for the Lower Examinations had to cope with the so-called “*wonjeom* (dot) acquisition system” during their time at Seonggyungwan, totaling for more or less a year.



Seonggyungwan Myeongnyundang  
(Source: Cultural Heritage Administration)

According to the regulations, the students of Seonggyungwan were obliged to put a dot at the attendance book set up in the student dining hall every morning and evening. Students received one point when they recorded a dot twice a day as a basis of this unique grade calculation system. Those who acquired three hundred points were then eligible to apply for the Level One test for higher examination.

Those decisions made at *jaehoe*—an independent autonomous council of the Confucian students at Seonggyungwan—were observed as public opinion. The Confucian students sometimes appealed to the school authorities in the form of a joint signature as a means of impeachment. When their opinions were not accepted, the students collectively boycotted eating at the dining halls, withdrew from the dormitories altogether, or moved out of Seonggyungwan as a sign of resistance.

## Four Schools

The Four Schools (*Sahak*) were the state-funded educational institutions built at the four major government agencies during the Joseon Dynasty. They succeeded the Five Learning Halls of the Goryeo Dynasty. Joseon maintained the Four Schools, after abolishing the North Learning Hall, in consideration of the current circumstances. Whereas Seonggyungwan was in charge of college-level learning, the Four Schools taught children elementary learning. As a matter of fact, the Four Schools functioned as secondary education institutions affiliated with Seonggyungwan. They were purely educational institutions, devoid of a Confucian

shrine. Those with superior grades at the Four Schools were given a chance to enter Seonggyungwan after passing the promotional examination (*seungbosi*). The education given at the Four Schools was not all that different from that of Seonggyungwan in terms of pedagogy and content.

## County Schools

The county school (*Hyanggyo*) refers to a Neo-Confucianism educational institution that was smaller in scale than Seonggyungwan. It was established in the major administrative units of *ju*, *bu*, *mok*, *gun*, and *hyeon* in the provincial areas. The county school functioned not only as a provincial educational institution, but also as a center for the regional culture and for enlightening the people by propagating Confucian thought. In other words, the county school was an academy for social education, enlightening the people, and promoting regional folk culture. The structure of the county school was basically similar to that of Seonggyungwan.

As with Seonggyungwan, the county school had a significant role to play with regard to the civil service examination. Whereas students in urban areas had to enter the Four Schools in order to prepare for the civil service examination, provincial students had to study at the county school. The children of aristocrats, however, were reluctant to enter the county school because the government was less concerned with the county school and because the quality of the school facilities and the teachers were comparatively poor. The children of aristocrats, therefore, prepared for the civil service exam-

ination at private facilities like the village study halls. Ultimately the government allowed those students who studied at private schools to take the primary test for literary degree-holders (*saengwon*) or classics degree-holders (*jinsa*). Previously, only students at the Four Schools or the county schools were given this opportunity.

The privileges being conferred on students at county schools included: free education; exemption from taking the primary test for literary degree-holders or classics degree-holders; and exemption from military service. Of these, an exemption from military service was the top privilege. An exemption from military service was given only to students of Seonggyungwan, the Four Schools, and to students of the county schools. Since the government was exempted from the duty of military service, the same preferential exemption was given to students preparing to become government officials.



Daeseongjeon, Gangneung Hyanggyo  
(Source: Cultural Heritage Administration)

## Private Academy

The private academy (Seowon) of the Joseon Dynasty was a private institution built in provincial towns, and combined the functions of a Confucian shrine and an academy. They held a sacrificial rite in memory of the ancient sages and deceased teachers or martyrs at the shrine, and taught students Confucian thought. Built by noted scholar Ju Se-bung in 1534, during the thirty-eighth year of King Jungjong, Baegundong Private Academy became the precursor of the academy that combined a shrine and a school.

The requirements for admission to the Private Academy were not strictly defined. In case of Baegundong Private Academy, they first received literary degree-holders or classics degree-holders as students. Second, they received those who passed the primary tests for literary degree-holders or classics degree-holders. Third, even those who failed to pass the primary examination for the two posts were admitted to the Private Academy when they showed a very strong enthusiasm for learning, were well-behaved, and received a recommendation by the administrative officer at the Private Academy. The entrance qualifications for these students were similar to those for Seonggyungwan in the capital.

The chief purpose of the private academy was to cultivate future classical scholars. Producing successful applicants for the civil service examination was secondary. The curriculums at the private academy were: *Small Learning* (*Xiao Xue*) and the *Master Zhu Xi's Family Rituals* as introductory courses, and *The Four Books* and *The Five Classics* as the authorized texts. At the private academy, they taught Confucianism not only by training students how to read the

texts, but also through the memorial services held for the ancestors. The sacrificial rite was highly cherished because respecting the sages and revering their virtue was one of the cardinal tenets of the Private Academy. In the late Joseon Dynasty, the Private Academy gradually over time focused more on the sacrificial rite than the educational activities. Moreover, the private academy propagated the village code to the public in order to promote the folk culture of the respective village. As time went on, however, the private academy deviated from its original purpose and acquired stronger political motivations. As party strife intensified, the Private Academy devolved into a place where political party members gathered to raise their status and strengthen their own solidarity. In order to bring a stop to this, Prince Regent Heungseon Daewongun, the father of King Gojong,



Sosu Seowon, Yeongju (Source: Cultural Heritage Administration)

closed all private academies except for forty-seven that could serve as examples to the other schools.

### Village Study Hall

The village study hall (*Seodang*)—composed of a private school for Chinese classics, a library, or a reading room—was a private educational institution established in the *myeon*, *dong*, and *ri* areas of provincial villages. With regard to the origin of the village study hall, opinions differ among scholars, however it is widely accepted that it originated from the village private schools (*Gyeongdang*) of the Goguryeo Kingdom. It was not until the reign of King Seongjong in the late-fifteenth century that the name *seodang* appeared for the first time in the nation.

In the sixteenth century, the village study hall was established mostly by influential families in the district village community. The main purpose of establishing the village study hall was to inculcate Confucian rules and ethics in the district village community. At that time, the establishment of the village study hall was financed by private funds collected from the community, as opposed to government support.

From the seventeenth century, these influential families attempted to collude with government officials and other literati classes while using the village study hall as a base for such activities. They established the village study hall in collaboration with government officials. In some cases, district leaders were invited to the village study hall where they gave lectures and dispensed rewards and punish-

ments. With the social disorder that was rife in the aftermath of the Japanese Invasion of Korea and the subsequent Manchu Invasion, the government was deeply aware of its limitations in controlling the district village community through the county schools and the village study halls. The government supported the establishment and operation of the village study halls in earnest, so as to effectively control the district villages through these village study halls.

In the eighteenth century, members of the middle class such as rich farmers, merchants, and artisans began to establish village study halls, as a result of which the characteristics of the schools changed. The newly established village study halls differentiated themselves from the preceding schools in that they used texts that contained not only ethical teachings, but also practical knowledge that would serve the people in their everyday lives. It was at this time that professional teachers were hired. Having flourished thanks to the efforts of the private sector, the village study hall developed into a nationalistic educational institution, like Wonsan Academy (Wonsan Haksa) which was established in 1883. Commoners could operate the village study hall with small budgets by using the so-called “the village study hall-gye,” a kind of traditional private fund in which members chip in a modest amount of money and take turns receiving a lump sum share for the operation of the village study hall. Moreover, the eighteenth century saw a profound transformation in the educational map of the village study hall with the appearance of professional salaried teachers who introduced textbooks catering to the needs of the people.

The operation of the village study hall was centered around the



"Seodang" drawn by Kim Hongdo  
(Source: National Museum of Korea)

master teacher (*hunjang*), teaching assistants (*jeopjang*), and the students (*hakdo*). Students entered the village study hall at age seven or eight and usually finished their education at fifteen or sixteen. Occasionally a student would finish over the age of twenty.

The curriculums at the village study hall were composed of three sections: 1) basic readings for child students; 2) poems and sayings; and 3) studying Chinese characters.

The three major characteristics of education at the village study hall were: lectures, seasonal learning, and leisure-based learning. First, the lectures were made up of tradition-bound conventional pedagogy. They entailed reading aloud what had been taught and practiced, and holding a question-and-answer session. Second, the seasonal learning session harmonized the educational contents and teaching methods with the characteristics of the four respective seasons. In winter, for example, they studied difficult texts such as Confucian writings and history. In summer, they learned interesting subjects such as the rhythms and meters of poetry. Third, they enjoyed leisure-based learning or recreational activities. Because the students were young enough to enjoy plays, the school made the best use of this and taught them how to study through plays.

## The Civil Service Examination in the Joseon Dynasty

The civil service examination of this time was composed of three sections: 1) the civil examination for selecting civil servants (*mungwa*); 2) the military examinations for selecting military officials (*mugwa*); and 3) the miscellaneous examination for selecting technical specialists (*japgwa*).

The qualifying examinations for appointing civil servants were conducted at two levels according to the test courses: the licentiate or lower level test (*sogwa*) and the erudite or higher level test (*daegwa*). There were the four sections of miscellaneous examinations for the selection of technical specialists: interpretation of foreign languages, medicine, astronomy (including meteorology and geomancy), and law.

The licentiate or lower level test—also called the examination for selecting literary degree-holders or the examination for classics degree-holders—was a type of preparatory examination held for the erudite or higher level test; only the successful applicants for the licentiate or lower level test were given a chance to enter Seonggyungwan, to be employed at the lower-level government post, and to apply for the erudite or higher level test. The erudite or higher level test, also called the civil examination for selecting civil servants, was the civil examination for selecting high-level civil servants. The applicants to the erudite or higher level test were required to pass through a three-stage testing process: the preliminary stage (*chosi*) and the second examination stage (*boksi*) and, finally, the palace examination in the presence of the king (*jeonsi*).

The tables for the licentiate or lower level and the erudite or

higher level the civil examination for selecting civil servants were as follows.

The Licentiate or lower level (*sogwa*) and the erudite or higher level (*daegwa*) for the civil examination

Stages	Types	Examination Stages	Tests	Characteristics
Qualifications for the licentiate or lower level test ( <i>sogwa</i> ): Students from the county school or the Four Schools				
1	<i>Sogwa</i> (Tests for <i>saengwon</i> or <i>jinsa</i> )	The preliminary examination stages ( <i>chosi</i> )	<i>Sogwa</i> First Test	Excellent students at the County School or the Four Schools exempted from the test
		The second examination stage ( <i>boksi</i> )	<i>Sogwa</i> Final Test	
Qualifications for the erudite or higher level ( <i>daegwa</i> ): Students who acquired 300 dot points at Seonggyungwan				
3	<i>Daegwa</i> (The civil examination for selecting civil servants)	The preliminary examination stage ( <i>chosi</i> )	<i>Daegwa</i> First Test	Excellent students at Seonggyungwan exempted from the test. 240 examinees selected
		The second examination stage ( <i>boksi</i> )	<i>Daegwa</i> Second Test	33 examinees selected
5	Palace examination ( <i>jeonsi</i> )		<i>Daegwa</i> Final Test	33 examinees selected
Passing the examination				

Commoners were eligible to apply for the civil service examination. The Great Code for Administering the Country (*Gyeongukdaejeon*) in the Joseon Dynasty stipulated that commoners—excluding the low-born class and servants—were in principle allowed to take the

examinations. But of these, people who committed a serious crime, the children of corrupt officials found to have received bribes, the children and grandchildren of housewives who either remarried or committed adultery, and concubines' sons and their off-spring were prohibited from applying for either the civil examination for selecting civil servants or the licentiate or lower level test. In fact, it was virtually impossible for commoners to pass the civil service examination due to their burdensome daily lives. Therefore, only a few successful applicants were produced from this class. The majority of those who passed the examinations were the children of upper class aristocrats.

Besides these tests, there were a variety of examinations for technical specialists that were intended for children of the

middle class. Commoners and the low-born could not apply for the test. There were four sections of miscellaneous examinations for the selection of technical specialists: interpretation of foreign languages, medicine, astronomy (including meteorology and geomancy), and law. Unlike the case of the erudite or higher level test, the examinations were held in four stages. These were reciting the texts of the authorized classics, transcriptions of foreign texts, translation, and arithmetic.

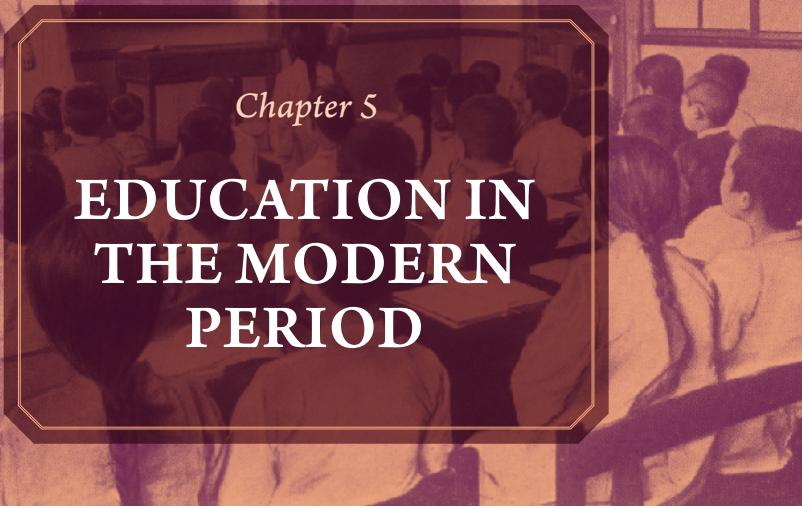


Painting of State Examination in Hamgyeong Province (Source: National Museum of Korea)



## Part II

### MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION



## Chapter 5

# EDUCATION IN THE MODERN PERIOD

The modern period in Korea refers to the era between the enlightenment period to the end of the Japanese occupation, or more specifically between 1876 and 1945. During this period, traditional education was replaced by modern education; the traditional education of Confucianism was abolished and instead the nation laid the cornerstone for its rejuvenating modern education. Generally, modern education refers to the education that resisted the discriminatory education of feudal society and cultivated the people of the modern nation state. When Korea opened its port and became a member of the international community in 1876, the nation was tasked with establishing a modern nation state. It was from this time on that Korea began to devote itself to cultivating its citizens through education.

### The Enlightenment and the Launch of Modern Educational Institutions

Over the course of some thirty or forty years after the 1780s, Joseon society pushed ahead with the enlightenment movement based on progressive reform-minded thought in all sectors of politics, economy, and culture. The enlightenment here refers to the philosophy with which the nation tried to achieve independence and self-reliance by actively importing modern Western civilization. Based on the ideas of the enlightenment, the government from the 1880s onwards began to adopt new education principles in order to learn Western technology and scientific knowledge. In practice, Korea's newly established modern schools incorporated traditional liberal education and curriculums centered on Western education. At that time, traditional Confucianism-oriented education still dominated society and exercised power in the name of morally enlightening the people. Meanwhile, modern schools taught practical knowledge that was effective for state management and daily life, as well as Confucianism-oriented liberal education in their curriculums.

Modern education that appeared in the 1880s, however, differed from traditional education on two grounds. First, the government was very hands-on in education. Traditionally, families had been primarily responsible for education. Modern schools, however, cultivated government officials who could deal with pending state politics. In order to help cultivate future talent and those with special expertise, the government assumed full responsibility for student

recruitment, educational facilities, the employment of teachers, and education expenditures. Afterwards, modern schools gradually expanded the scope of their target students from would-be government officials who would learn technology or practical knowledge to the general public. In other words, the time-honored education for cultivating future state officials and the ruling class was transformed into one for educating the general public. Even though it was virtually impossible to implement education programs for the entire population at that time, the government nevertheless pushed ahead with the establishment of an institutional system to accomplish its self-proclaimed mission of popularizing education. Next, when it came to the reason for selecting the curriculums, modern education differed from traditional education. Although traditional curriculums, such as the study of Confucian texts, were aimed at promoting morality among students, the curriculums set up at modern schools had no direct concern with character building; rather, they dealt with the national need or social utility. Therefore, the concept and function of the nation's schools changed a great deal in modern times. Traditionally, a school was a place where learned scholars were cultivated through Confucian education. Previously, foreign languages and technical skills were taught at the related government offices—not at schools. After 1883, however, those schools that had hitherto not been included in the category of schools—including schools of education, foreign-language schools, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, commerce and industry schools, and military schools—became categorized as schools. The concept of a school had changed to “an institution where teachers continuously

offer education to students based on a certain purpose, facilities, systems, and regulations.”

## The Establishment of Modern Educational Institutions

### State-run Schools

It was not until 1881 that the government of the Joseon Dynasty began in earnest to make efforts to establish a modern educational system. In 1881, the Joseon government sent a group of the Korean Envoys to Tianjin to the Qing Dynasty and the Gentlemen Observation Mission (Sinsa Yuramdan) to Japan in order to import state-of-the-art technology from the two nations. The former group of students who went to China returned with methods of weapon production and foreign languages. The latter group inspected government ministries, the Army, the customs office, weapons factories, industrial facilities, libraries, and museums in Japan. They played a pivotal role in propagating the ideas of the enlightenment to Joseon society. Afterwards, the government established the nation's first modern-style state-run schools that were necessary for training the experts equipped with skills to interpret foreign languages and for establishing a modern army. In 1894, it actively carried out the Gabo Reform in order to push for modern educational reforms. After the Gabo Reform, the government's blue-prints for promoting modern education were implemented in two areas. One was to provide modern elementary school education to the general public. The other was to urgently cultivate a highly skilled workforce needed for

the modern reforms of the nation. With regard to the first goal, the government established state-run schools of education and 1,090 government-funded elementary schools across the nation. With the regard to the latter mission, it set up six foreign-language schools, military officer schools, medical schools, commerce and industry schools, mining industry schools, and schools for training judges. The nation thus laid the cornerstone for establishing its modern educational system. The nation established modern state-run schools in the following respective periods:

#### **THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE GABO REFORM (1881–1893)**

In 1882, the government established the Common Script Learning Academy (Dongmunhak), the nation's first state-run modern school and an institution devoted to teaching foreign languages, in order to train experts who could facilitate interactions with foreign nations

#### **COMMON SCRIPT LEARNING ACADEMY & ROYAL ELITE ACADEMY**

After opening its doors to the West in the wake of the signing of the Treaty of Ganghwa in 1876, the Joseon government was in dire need of competent foreign language speakers who could cope with the active exchanges of Western traders. The Joseon government requested cooperation from the Qing Dynasty with regard to the invitation of foreign officials and invited the aid of Paul Georg von Möllendorff (1847–1901, 穆麟德). In 1883, Möllendorff established the Common Script Learning Academy, the nation's first state-run school that taught English, and published books and newspapers. It functioned as a specialized educational institution that was devoted to cultivating English

and the businesses of maritime trade. The Common Script Learning Academy recruited forty students and taught English and Japanese, as well as arithmetic. The government also established the Military Training School (Yeonmu Gongwon) in 1888 and the Naval Academy in 1893 as a modern military officer training institution. Before the Gabo Reform, the government had not yet proclaimed modern education-related laws. Nevertheless, thanks to the efforts of the government the nation's first modern state-run schools devoted to training interpreters and cultivating the modern army were established. From this time on, the nation began to gradually import modern science and technology from other nations.

#### **THE PERIOD OF THE GABO REFORM (1894–1896)**

The style of modern education was gradually popularized thanks to the efforts of the government, private organizations, and mis-

interpreters and was in charge of diplomatic negotiations and the state affairs of the new government. After the government found it difficult to fulfill the state's goal of cultivating the interpreters of English with Common Script Learning Academy alone, it expanded the school and reestablished the Royal Elite Academy (Yugyeong Gongwon) in 1886.

The establishment of the Royal Elite Academy was aimed at cultivating mid-level officials who could perform their jobs of importing Western civilization and handle both domestic and diplomatic affairs. Only the children of high-ranking officials were qualified to enter the academy. The students first learned English and then Western subjects in various fields. In 1894, the Royal Elite Academy was succeeded by a foreign language school where they taught English.

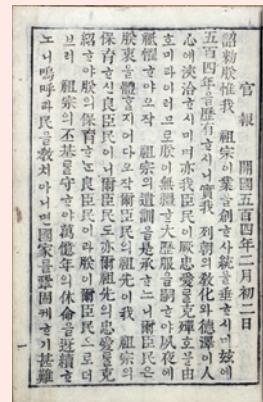
sionaries. Nevertheless, it was difficult to reform the conventional system of education that was deep-rooted in Korean society. It was not possible to change a tradition-bound educational system in a short period of time. In the 1880s, the government established educational institutions with a hope of cultivating a small number of gifted leaders. Afterwards, the government attempted to drastically reform the conventional system and traditional education in earnest as part of efforts to help establish a modern nation. The work bore fruit in the form of the Gabo Reform in 1894.

As one of the reform plans for modernization, the government abolished the traditional social status system and the civil service examination. In February 1895, King Gojong issued the Decree of Nation Building through Education—a royal message declaring an education-first policy—in order to emphasize modern education. The government promised that it would wipe out the class consciousness of the previous education system and open colleges and professional schools to cultivate talented individuals regardless of status—aristocrats and commoners alike. Afterwards, the government announced an ordinance to open elementary schools and schools of education to cultivate modern teachers. The schools of education only received male students regardless of social class. The main curriculums for these schools used modern Western texts. The time required to complete a course of study at schools of education and elementary schools was two years and three years, respectively. Both schools used a system of two semesters a year. The government also established French and Russian schools in addition to the existing schools of Japanese and English. The government also set up

two modern schools, Military Officer Training School and Military Schools, devoted to training military officers. It built not only a new Judicial Officer Training School and Smallpox-Treating Medical Doctor Training School, but also middle schools, medical schools, and commerce and industry schools. In addition, two hundred students were dispatched to Japan for overseas study at government expense. Thus, the traditional educational system that had hitherto been maintained in traditional Korean society virtually disappeared.

#### DECREE OF NATION BUILDING THROUGH EDUCATION

As part of the Gabo Reform in 1894, the government announced it would abolish the social status system and the civil service examination system.



The Decree of Nation Building through Education  
(Source: The Academy of Korean Studies)

In the following year, it proclaimed the Decree of Nation Building through Education to herald the start of the modern school system. King Gojong made it clear in the decree that the focus of education would change from the time-honored Confucian education devoted to reading its texts to modern education based on new knowledge. The Decree was aimed at cultivating future leaders by promoting three doctrines: moral education, physical education, and education of knowledge. The Decree of Nation Building through Education, however, was originally intended to maintain the security of the royal family and the state by cultivating educated elites.

### THE PERIOD OF THE GWANGMU REFORM (1897–1904)

On October 12, 1897, King Gojong announced the establishment of the Korean Empire and proclaimed himself Emperor. The government carried out independent reform measures amid harsh competition among foreign powers. The government built its Army School in order to cultivate military officers who would be the foundation for national prosperity and military power, and built vocational schools and medical schools in order to promote medical science as well as commerce and industry. Meanwhile, with a view to expand the accomplishments of the Gabo Reform, the government increased the number of elementary schools and schools of education, as well as building middle schools to promote secondary education. In addition to existing schools for teaching Japanese, English, French, and Russian, the government also established schools to teach Chinese and German in order to diversify the process of modernized educational standards and content.

At the time, students who entered these new schools studied according to the academic calendar. In most cases, the new semester started in September and students took classes for more or less five hours a day. The curriculums were composed of six sections: training of mind and body; language (Korean, Chinese characters, and Japanese); mathematics; social studies (history, geography); science (physics, chemistry, general knowledge, and natural sciences); and arts and gymnastics education (fine art, music, and gymnastics). In the process, a total of 106 types of modern textbooks were published between 1895 and 1905. These textbooks were mostly published by the government until 1905. Most of the

textbooks published by the government—*Korean, History, and Geography*, among others—used the style of mixing Korean with Chinese characters. Meanwhile, the government had an attitude of gender discrimination by restricting the status of applicants for schools of education to male students only and banning the establishment of a girls' middle school.

While the government built modern schools during the enlightenment period, the civilian sector and Christian missionaries also established modern schools. The government categorized those schools as private educational institutions under the umbrella of the state-run educational system.

### Private Missionary Schools

During the early enlightenment period, Christianity was suppressed on the grounds of “damaging traditional ethics and customs” and challenging the political systems. The government, however, allowed these missionaries to enter the country because they were believed to promote a program of national self-reliance that had been pushed for since its conclusion of diplomatic relations with the United States in 1884. In the process of the Christian community’s arrival, Korea saw the advent of new types of schools. The government banned the propagation of Christianity by missionaries from the 1880s, but allowed them to conduct educational activities and offer medical services.

A variety of modern missionary schools, which sprouted up during these periods, prospered after the Gabo Reform. Based on their strong financial support, missionary schools could offer regular

educational courses from early on. Of these, Paichai School signed a contract with the Joseon government in 1895 and recruited a large number of gifted students. Until 1902, the government offered to pay from state coffers the cost of school supplies for these students and the salaries of some teachers. Paichai School was known for teaching advanced level subjects, mostly in English. The student body at Paichai School played a leading role during the enlightenment movement.

The establishment of girls' schools has a special meaning in the history of missionary schools. Korean women, having been oppressed in the conservative patriarchal system, became conscious of the idea of human dignity after they studied Christian teachings and found their future direction through education directed at them. At a time when the government had not allowed the establishment of an educational institution for girls—reflecting the nation's deep-rooted gender discrimination in society—missionaries established Ewha Girls' School in 1885 as the nation's first modern educational institution for women. The missionaries also established many girls' schools including Jeongui Girls' School, Ilsin Girls' School, and Baehwa Girls' School, thereby leading the way for education of women in Korea. The establishment of educational institutions for women by missionaries has a special meaning in the history of missionary schools in Korea, considering that it was not until 1905 that private educational institutions for women and the state-run educational institutions were built.

### EWHA GIRLS' SCHOOL

Established in 1885, Ewha Girls' School (Ewha Hakdang) was the nation's first modern educational institution for women. At first, Ewha Girls' School had difficulties in recruiting students because traditionally women had been mostly prohibited from going out of the house and were not sent to other institutions to study. Most of the students who entered its dormitory school were so poor that they barely had enough to eat at home or had been abandoned in the streets. Mary Scranton, the founder of Ewha Girls' School, made efforts to teach the girls according to the Korean tradition rather than introducing an exclusively Western style of living. As a result, the number of students rose from three poor or orphaned girls in 1886 to thirty-five—the maximum accommodation figure—in 1893. In 1896, Scranton built a new school building and the number of students rose to 174 by 1909. From 1890, Korean teachers educated Korean and missionaries taught English, hymns, and basic Bible stories, as well as sewing and embroidery. From 1918, Ewha Girls' School was operated separately as Ewha Girls' Higher Common School and Ewha Girls' Common School. In 1925, Ewha Girls' Higher Common School was renamed as Ewha Women's Professional

School. As it gained support among the women who had been educationally abandoned in the Confucian educational system, Ewha Girls' School played a trailblazing role in enlightening Korean women in modern times as a representative missionary girls' school.



Ewha Girls' School (Source: Ewha Womans University Ewha Archives)

## Civilian Schools

Meanwhile, the private sector had been boosted by the establishment of missionary schools and the period of the enlightenment, during which advanced Western technology was imported to enrich and civilize the people of the nation. Amid this trend, a series of modern civilian elementary and middle schools were established. The establishment of civilian schools in the enlightenment period was the brainchild of journalists and pioneering leaders who hoped to eradicate the contradictory old education and adopt a modern educational system in the wake of the government's enlightenment policy after opening the nation's ports. Wonsan Academy (Wonsan Haks), the nation's first civilian school, was built by civilian groups from the open port of Deogwon-bu in Hamgyeongnam-do in 1883—with the financial support of an enlightenment faction group. The founders of the school were deeply aware of the necessity of defending the nation from the challenge of foreign nations and the necessity of coping with the ever-changing situations of the global stage. When it was launched, Wonsan Academy recruited fifty students for the operation of the literary class and two hundred students for the military class, where they studied old texts and books on military strategies, respectively. The students in the two classes studied common curriculums: arithmetic, physics, agriculture, sericulture, mining, and equipment management in the technology sector, and Japanese, law and international law, and geology. Other newly founded academies were: Ragyeong Academy and Heunghwa Academy in 1895; Junggyeo Academy in 1896; Jeongseon Girls' School in 1897; Gaeseong School, Gwangheung

School, and Sunseong Girls' School in 1898; and Jeomjin School and Simu School in 1899. Afterwards, civilian schools prospered with the efforts of the nationalist leaders, academic associations, and educational organizations from 1905 when the Protectorate Treaty was signed in the year 1908.

## Educational Policies of the Japanese Residency-General (1905–1910)

After the signing of the Protectorate Treaty of 1905 with Japan, Korea became an annexed state in 1910. In February of the following year, Japan established the Residency-General under which Japanese government ministers wielded all the powers in diplomacy, internal affairs, the military, and the police. In 1907, Japan concluded the New Treaty of Korea and Japan, and then disbanded its Korean troops and grasped the administrative power of education in Korea.

While it intervened in all areas of domestic politics, Japan degraded the status of education to that of a colonized nation under the notion that Japan was a civilized nation and Joseon merely a barbarian state. Japan established an editorial bureau at the Ministry of Education and published textbooks and dispatched Japanese teachers to schools. The portion of Japanese courses training body and mind rose at school curriculums, while the number of Korean geography and Korean history classes gradually declined as part of the colonial education policy. Meanwhile, Japan proclaimed an education law that would transform the existing school system to one fitting the pattern of colonial education. Japan enacted a law

guaranteeing the right to censor school administrations in 1906 and censorship of school textbooks in 1907, thus completely controlling and supervising the operation of schools and textbooks. In 1906, Japan reduced the course of study at elementary schools from the previous five to six years to four years and suppressed higher education. In 1910, the number of elementary schools stood at 125, while that of the higher educational institution remained only at seven or eight. Japan promoted the status of existing middle schools to high schools, thus transforming middle schools into the highest learning institution in the nation. In addition, it expanded the number of vocational schools to accelerate the cultivation of low-level workers.

#### GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

During the period of the Residency-General, Japan established a number of educational institutions for women. Built in 1908, Hanseong Girls' High School (now Kyunggi Girls' High School) was the first government-established educational institution under the Girls' High School Act. Girls' high schools taught higher primary education and handicrafts to women. Academic subjects were limited to three years but could be extended for one more year according to the situation. The courses were divided into three sections: a three-year main course; a maximum two-year preparatory course; and a more than two year handicrafts-learning course. At the preparatory course, they recruited girls aged ten or older among those who had finished at least two years of study at primary school and offered elementary education. The handicrafts course accepted girls aged fifteen and older and taught practical education, including housework.

#### The Save-the-Nation Movement through Education

Being unable to endure colonial education after the signing of the Protectorate Treaty of 1905, the nationalist leaders of Korea actively participated in a campaign to save the nation through modern education. The nationalist leaders thought that the nation's future and survival would depend on education and, therefore, education was the only way to defy the aggression of foreign forces. Inspiring a patriotic public spirit through education was the main aim of the save-the-nation movement. The nationalists established private schools at academic institutions scattered across the nation with a view to promote nationalism among the public.

During this time, the Korean people distrusted the Japanese-controlled government and refrained from attending government-run schools. There was a widespread belief that state-run schools offered an education suited to the interests of the Japanese, while private schools pursued the interests of the Korean people. It was at this time that private schools built by the nationalist leaders prospered across the nation. Of a total of 5,727 private schools at the end of 1909, some three thousand were established by Koreans.

Two of the representative domestically funded private schools were Osan School built by Yi Seung-hun, and Daeseong School built by An Chang-ho. Both schools were in operation under the umbrella of the New People's Society (Sinminhoe)—a secret underground organization devoted to the independence movement. Osan School was established to implement the scheme of the New People's Society and to cultivate leaders who would work to recover

the sovereignty of the nation. Daeseong School also had a mission of training talented leaders who would work for the nationalist movement. The nationalist private schools actively published textbooks and taught the Korean language, Korean history, and Korean geography, all of which had been ignored in the curriculums of government-run schools. The nationalism-minded private schools displayed the power of the Korean people and promoted the resistance power of the nation. In 1908, Japan proclaimed the Private School Act to control these nationalist private schools. Japan ordered private schools to use only the textbooks edited by the Ministry of Education or those approved by the education minister. Japan gave the education minister the sole power to decide the fate of private schools. After all, due to the oppression by Japan and a poor financial base, most nationalist private schools were unable to keep their doors open for a sustained period.

### Educational Policies during the Japanese Occupation (1910–1945)

During the Japanese occupation, Korea was deprived of all sovereign power. After colonizing Korea forcefully in 1910, Japan established the Government-General, replacing the former Residency-General. The Japanese governor-general controlled the legislation, jurisdiction, administration, military, and education of Korea under the direct supervision of the Japanese emperor. The educational policies during the Japanese occupation are divided into three in connection with Japanese colonial policies: 1) The Period of Forced Rule from

1910 to 1919 when the March First Movement occurred; 2) The Period of Cultural Governance from March 1919 to 1938; and 3) The Period of Assimilating Koreans into Imperial Subjects of Japan from 1939 to 1945, when Korea was liberated from the Japanese colonial yoke. The educational policies during the respective periods of the Japanese occupation are as follows:

#### The Period of Forced Rule (1910–1919, the First Educational Ordinance for Joseon)

Having completely annexed Joseon on August 29, 1910, Japan started ruling the nation by force of arms after reinforcing the military police and the police system. Japan ordered ordinary government officials and teachers to wear uniforms and carry a sword at their side, even though they were civilians. Japan proclaimed the first Educational Ordinance for Joseon (November 1, 1911–March 31, 1922) in 1911. The aim of the First Educational Ordinance for Joseon was to train the Korean people to be submissive to Japan; to degrade the Korean people into ignorant and unlettered masses; and to teach Japanese language as the native tongue of Koreans. The ultimate purpose of the Ordinance was to promote a sense of loyalty among the Koreans to the Japanese by obliterating their sense of nationalism; to deter the growth of their social consciousness by depriving them of the opportunity to receive higher education; and to train the colonized Koreans to be obedient to Japanese rule by limiting them to primary education or technical education.

As part of its colonial educational policy, Japan changed the

school system to focus more on elementary school education, doing so under the pretext of offering education suitable for the standards of the Korean people. Japan reduced the school years to four years for elementary schools, four years for higher primary schools, three years for girls' higher primary schools; two to three years for vocational schools; and three to four years for technical schools. In terms of the number of years spent in school, the number was well below that of Japan: six years for elementary schools; four years for secondary schools; and six years for colleges. While Japan carried out its oppressive policies toward higher education for the Koreans, the Government-General also withdrew its approval of the college division at Soongsil School and Ewha Girls' School. It did so under the guise that the Educational Ordinance for Joseon did not regulate colleges. The Government-General did not approve civilian colleges established by Koreans and closed the doors of foreign language schools and Hansung Normal School under the pretext of financial and educational problems. Instead, as a way of cultivating elementary school teachers, it allowed public boys' and girls' higher primary school to have a short course to train teachers. It also established a temporary training school for teachers and brought in many teachers from Japan. Additionally, Japan increased the portion of the Japanese language course in the curriculums. Japan combined the education of Korean and Chinese characters into one subject, established Japanese as the native language course, and used Japanese as the standard language. As a result, they could no longer teach the history and the geography of Korea at public schools and the three-fifths of the total curriculums was devoted to language courses cen-

tering on Japanese. Meanwhile, Japan converted private schools—a hotbed of nationalism—into public primary schools.

### The Period of the Cultural Governance (1919–1938, The Second Educational Ordinance for Joseon)

On March 1, 1919, the thirty-three leaders of Korea announced the Korean Declaration of Independence, where they proclaimed to the entire world that Korea is an independent country. The declaration was immediately followed by street demonstrations across the nation where the people shouted "Long Live the Independence of Korea!" Japan realized that the March First Movement symbolized the failure of its forced rule and thus, as a policy of appeasement, modified its former hard-line policy into a more flexible cultural governance. Japan loosened its hitherto-blant forced control and instead allowed a degree of freedom of the press and publication that would not interrupt the process of its colonial rule. Meanwhile, Japan adroitly assimilated a select number of Koreans into the Japanese ruling system in order to divide Koreans among themselves.

Japanese cultural governance was also applied to its educational policy in Korea. As part of its cultural governance, Japan eased regulations on private schools in March 1920 and proclaimed the Second Educational Ordinance for Joseon (April 1, 1922–March 31, 1938) in 1922. The school system of Korea, which had been degraded into a low-standard system by the First Educational Ordinance for Joseon, recovered to a level closer to the Japanese one. Such a change was based on a new principle that the school system of Joseon, as a colonized nation, should be established in conformity with that of

Japan. Japan reduced the gap between Korea and Japan by raising the number of school years: from four years to six ones for elementary schools; from four to five for secondary schools, and from two-to-three to three-to-five for vocational schools. At the same time, Japan allowed Koreans to enter colleges under the principle of reestablishing professional education and college education in conformity with Japanese standards. Japan also decided to make Korean into a required subject and established Seoul Normal School as an independent training center cultivating elementary school teachers in 1921. Between 1920 and 1935 in particular, Japan greatly increased the number of elementary schools. After Japan carried out a policy of establishing three elementary schools in a unit of *myeon*, the number of schools and students rose from 85,000 students at 500 girls' schools in 1919 to some 680,000 students at some 2,300 girls' schools in 1935. Japan, however, still discriminated against Koreans in carrying out its educational policy by establishing separate educational facilities for the Japanese in Korea and those for Koreans. Japan doubled or tripled the hours for learning Japanese at elementary and secondary schools and at elementary schools set newly established curriculums of Japanese history and geography in order to inculcate Koreans in Japanese culture. It also opened technical classes to offer extensive low-class vocational education.

The educational policies of Japan for colonized Korea reinforced the nationalist consciousness among Koreans. In 1923, the nationalist leaders of Korea established a preparatory association for building a civilian college and conducted a fund-raising campaign to resist the discriminatory policies of Japan. The campaign, how-

ever, was unsuccessful due to Japanese intervention and financial problems. Being embarrassed by the movement to establish a civilian college, however, Japan established its own civilian college named Keijo Imperial University (Gyeongseong Jeguk Daehak) in 1924 and educated only a few Korean students. Meanwhile, the nationalist leaders of Korea established night schools that were relatively free of Japanese control. They established night schools in the agricultural districts in order to enlighten Koreans who had not been given an equal chance to receive education. Between the 1920s and the 1930s, a total of 2,345 night schools were newly established. Japan began to crack down on the night schools from the late 1920s. The Japanese authorities adopted a new system that required approval for operating private lesson classes from 1931, disallowing the operation of night schools without their permission. The Japanese military engineered the Manchurian Incident in 1931 in order to invade China and began to educate Koreans in order to make Korea a Japanese logistics base during the war. Japan mobilized Korean students to produce war materials and the construction of national defense facilities. It let them join the Japanese army after the war began.

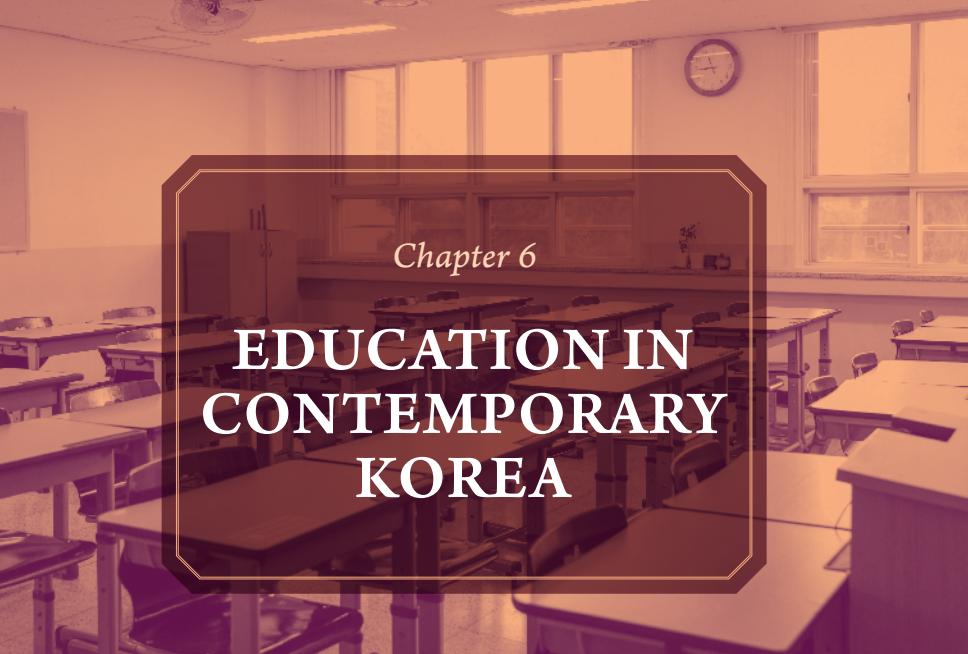
### The Period of Assimilating Koreans into Imperial Subjects of Japan (1938–1945, The Third and the Fourth Educational Ordinance for Joseon)

Japan started the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the Pacific War in 1941. In order to change the educational content of colonized Korea into that which conformed with wartime policies, Japan

proclaimed the Third Educational Ordinance for Joseon (April 1, 1938–March 31, 1943) and the Fourth Educational Ordinance for Joseon (April 1, 1943–August 15, 1945). First of all, Japan obliterated the tradition-bound national culture of Joseon and emphasized the worship of the Japanese emperor. Japan staged a campaign to change Korean names to the Japanese system by depriving them of their last names and prohibited teachers from teaching Korean at school. Japan replaced Korean teachers with Japanese ones and forced even those attending missionary schools to worship at the Japanese Shinto shrine and shut the doors of many schools that resisted the idea. Japan sent Korean students to construction sites for military facilities under the guise of “labor mobilization.” Japan created a regulation for collectively mobilizing Korean students for forced labor in 1941. In 1943, Japan proclaimed “the War-time Emergency Measure for Education” and reorganized colleges and special colleges on a war-time basis and, as a result, carried out a system of mobilizing student volunteer soldiers, sending some 4,500 Korean students to the battlefield.

During the Japanese occupation, Japan reinforced a system that discriminated against people according to their level of education and strengthened this self-contradictory social structure by means of access to educational opportunities. Theoretically, Japan opened educational opportunities to all social classes. In actuality, however, it restricted opportunities for higher education by controlling the establishment of schools. The colonial education policies of Japan during the Japanese occupation left a big scar on education in Korea. First, education in Korea could not result an enlightened

people—a project that the nation had made during the enlightenment period. During the Japanese occupation, Japan thoroughly restricted higher education for Koreans and, as a result, only a few Koreans received higher education. Second, Japanese educational policy abruptly curtailed the cultural traditions of Korea, thus making it difficult for Korea to continuously develop its national culture. The national culture of Korea suffered a great setback because Japan prohibited teachers from teaching Korean culture and history at schools and banned the speaking of Korean in daily life. Third, although Japan expanded the opportunities for Koreans to receive elementary school education, it offered the chance to receive higher education to only a few select people. As a result, only a small number of educated people could climb up the social ladder, which resulted in social disruption among the Korean population.



## Chapter 6

# EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY KOREA

Contemporary education in Korea refers to the education that has been carried out from 1945 when the nation was liberated from Japan to the present day. Contemporary education in Korea is largely divided into three phases which are framed in terms of quantitative expansion and qualitative changes. The first phase refers to the period between 1945 and the late 1950s. During this time, the nation reestablished the legal and institutional basis of its educational system after the abrogation and the rearrangement of colonial education. The second phase refers to the period between the 1960s and the early 1990s. The fervor for education spread to all social strata because school education was rearranged by the authoritarian government to focus on nationalism with a view to promote economic growth and national reconciliation. It was at this time that compulsory education for elementary schools and

the chance for everyone to enter school were realized, as was the opportunity for secondary education and higher education for the general public. The third phase refers to the period between the mid-1990s to present day. During this period, the system and the content of school education was democratized and decentralized on one hand, and globalized and informationized on the other hand, after authoritarian political systems lost their power in the wake of the democratization movement.

### The Period of Establishing the Foundation: From 1945 to the Late 1950s

Right after Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, one of the most urgent tasks was to get school education back on track. The educational authorities had to seek out and hire teachers and officials who would replace their colonial predecessors. Moreover, they had to publish and distribute new textbooks to replace the previous ones released during the Japanese occupation. They established new schools and expanded the number of classrooms in order to cope with the great demand for public education. Accordingly, the nation rearranged the institutional settings needed for the establishment of the nation's educational system following the launch of its new government in 1948.

#### Refurbishment of Educational Thought and Systems

##### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The government in 1948 started to rearrange the institutional set-

tings needed for reestablishing the nation's educational system by enacting a new education law and refurbishing the administrative organizations and budgets for education. First of all, it enacted the education law in late 1949. Based on this new education law, education was carried out by the centralized education administration with an emphasis on building a nationalistic spirit and the state-first ideology. The new education law stipulated that the school system be based on a 6-3-3-4 single-track ladder system composed of the four school groups of learning: elementary schools (six years), middle schools (three years), high schools (three years), and universities (four years). They adopted a coeducational, two-semester a year system. Thus, in order to better open and expand educational opportunities, the educational authorities established a single-track ladder system. This was a great improvement over the double-track system of the Japanese occupation and its systematic discrimination against Koreans. The single-track system, however, fell short in that it divided the system of entering high schools, or the post-middle school course, into two—academic courses and vocational courses—after it had already established a system of general education that covered elementary school and middle school education. In short, the nation adopted a single-track educational system in elementary schools and middle schools although they allowed two courses—academic and vocational—for entering high schools. The single-track educational system for middle schools had not been carried out in many European nations due to strong resistance from tradition-bound private schools and powerful, elite groups who supported the existing school system. Korea, however, could adopt a single-track educational system after the nation's liberation

from Japan without facing the resistance from, or conflicts with, any particular interest groups. The 1949 educational law guaranteed as a basic principle equal opportunity for education and free and compulsory education at elementary schools.

The Park Chung-hee government, which was newly inaugurated in 1961, started to refurbish the system of university management as a supplementary reform of the school system. From 1962 the government promoted the status of the high school-level "school of education" (a school for training teachers elementary school teachers)—which students entered after finishing a three-year middle school course—to the two-year college of education. In addition, the existing two-year college of education (a college for training secondary school teachers) was promoted to a four-year university of education. In a move to compensate for the defects of the five-year vocational high schools, the nation in 1970 legalized the creation of a three-year junior college of technology that students could enter after graduating from a three-year vocational high school. From then on, the nation was equipped with two types of higher educational institutions: the four-year university and the two-year short-term higher educational institution.

#### **ESTABLISHMENT OF FINANCING FOR EDUCATION AND THE AUTONOMOUS SYSTEM FOR EDUCATION**

With regard to financing education in Korea, different principles had been applied to schools according to their levels. The government financed the educational institutions of compulsory education so that they could offer free education. With regard to the institutions of secondary education—i.e., middle and high schools—the gov-

ernment maintained a balance between state funding and student tuition. With regard to the institutions of higher education, the government applied the dual principle of imposing financial burdens on both the students and the schools. In case of the institutions of higher education, the basic principle was that each university would raise operation expenses from tuition. In order to come up with any possible shortfalls, the government provided national universities with additional funding while it let private universities finance themselves. Such a principle of financial burden originated from the 1949 law of education that stipulated that the government would be in charge of the total salaries of elementary school teachers and half of the wages for teachers of secondary education institutions. In 1958, when the six-year plan for the compulsory elementary education (1954–1959) was carried out, the government enacted the Education Tax Act in order to secure financial resources needed for compulsory elementary education. After the success of the six-year plan of the 1950s for compulsory elementary education, the government in the 1960s made the development of secondary education a top priority in educational policy. However, it could no longer rely on the principle of balance between state funding and student tuition with regard to the demands for human resources in society. The government thus enacted the Local Education Subsidy Act in 1963 in order to cope with the rise in expenditures for secondary education resulting from two factors: 1) the state-wide run “no entrance examination” system for middle schools between 1968 and 1971 and 2) the policy on standardization of high schools in 1974. Although the government had partially supported secondary

education institutions financially, it had to add to this total. This was because tuition for standardized schools had to be evenly balanced between public secondary schools and private secondary schools. For this reason, financial support for private institutions of secondary education, which started in 1971, rose continuously.

Having the financial resources to supply and allocate education resources is very important in determining the extent and the quality of education. Up until that point, the educational authorities had pushed for educational reforms by solving the problem of over-crowded classrooms, upgrading educational facilities, and hiring talented teachers, while at the same time endeavoring to acquire new educational expenditures needed for ensuring the autonomy of local education. In order to cope with the demands of the educational world, the government drastically changed the education finance system. First, it transformed the aim of collecting education taxes from the original purpose of “acquiring resources needed for enhancing education environment and the improvement of working conditions on the side of the teachers” into one of “acquiring resources needed for improving the quality of education.” Second, it changed a temporary tax collecting system to a permanent and regular taxation system and expanded the scope of the target taxpayers.

Meanwhile, the system of local education autonomy functioned as an educational system that could not only promote participation among residents through the decentralization of the educational administration, but also encourage the provincial authorities to map out educational policies suitable for the situations of the respective regions, thereby guaranteeing independence, professionalism, and

political neutrality of education. The system of local education autonomy began in 1945 and took concrete shape with the enactment of the education law in 1949. Having been delayed during the Korean War (1950–1953), the system of local education autonomy began to be carried out in cities and counties in 1952. The system, however, was abolished in the wake of the May 16, 1961, military coup d'état. After the military coup, educational administration was again centralized, with members of the board of education being appointed by the minister of education and the superintendents of education being appointed by the President with the education minister's recommendations. In 1990, the Local Government Act was revised and the Local Education Autonomy Act was newly enacted. Based on the new act, the nation began implementing a system of local education autonomy in earnest with the establishment of a Board of Education in September 1991 in provinces and cities nationwide. The Board of Education established in provinces and cities functioned as a legislative organ, while the superintendents of education functioned as the head of an executive organization. Since 2010, the superintendents of education have been elected in a direct vote and are in charge of dealing with not only the general issues of education and liberal arts in each province and city but also the education- and liberal arts-related administrative affairs entrusted to the a local autonomous entity by the central government.

### Establishment of a System for Cultivating Teachers

With regard to the establishment of the educational system in Korea, the cultivation of teachers has been one of the most difficult

and daunting tasks. After Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, as many as twenty-five thousand Japanese teachers returned home altogether, making it difficult for the nation to operate schools. One of the urgent tasks was to cultivate teachers in a short period of time in order to get school education back on track. It was not until the government proclaimed the education law in 1949 that the contemporary teacher training system of Korea was established. This section will examine the system of cultivating teachers in two parts: the cultivation of teachers for elementary schools and for institutions of secondary education.

First of all, with regard to elementary school teachers, according to the education law of the 1950s, the government allowed the three-year school of education, where middle school graduates could enter, to be wholly responsible for training elementary school teachers. In order to overcome the shortage of elementary school teachers after the Korean War, the government urgently established at the school of education a temporary one-year teacher training course and gave a teaching certificate to those who completed a course in teacher training at high schools. In 1961, the government enacted the Temporary Special Education Act according to which the status of the institution for teaching elementary school teachers was promoted to the second year college of education and established ten colleges of education. Afterwards, six more colleges of education were additionally set up. The college of education built a temporary affiliated training center for teaching elementary school teachers. As a result of the large increase in elementary school teachers in the 1960s, however, the nation faced an oversupply of

elementary school teachers in the 1970s. In 1973, the government abolished all temporary training centers for teaching elementary school—affiliated with the colleges of education—and reduced the quota of students for the colleges of education, while turning five of the sixteen colleges of education into the general universities. The government established Korea National Open University in 1972 and gave an elementary school teaching certificate to those who completed a two-year course at Department of Elementary Education. After the July 30 Educational Reform in 1980, there had been opinions calling for the extension of school years for colleges of education from the present two to four years. Between 1981 and 1984, the government reorganized eleven colleges of education to the four-year colleges of education on an annual basis.

Next, with regard to the cultivation of teachers for institutions of secondary education, the government established regular teacher training schools for the first time since Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945. In 1946, under the catchphrase of cultivating middle and high school teachers at a professional college of education, the government incorporated Seoul School of Education and Seoul Girls' School of Education and established the College of Education affiliated with Seoul National University. Moreover, it established thirty temporary schools for training teachers for the institutions of secondary education in each province and city. In 1955, the government established a teaching course at general universities so that those qualified students who completed the course during their college studies could receive a certificate to teach at secondary schools. The government also established training institutions, temporary schools

for training secondary school teachers, and graduate schools of education so that teachers for the institutions of secondary education could be cultivated by various means and channels. Meanwhile, the government established a system to cultivate the teachers in charge of specialized subjects, those who could not be trained at colleges of education. In order to professionally cultivate teachers for vocational secondary schools, the government in 1963 established the Department of Vocational Education at vocational colleges so that they could cultivate teachers of engineering, agriculture, and maritime affairs at a secondary education level. Accordingly, the government began setting up the Department of Vocational Education at national and private universities. In 1966, the government set up the Department of Teacher Training and Department of Curriculum Education at general universities in order to cope with the shortage of secondary school teachers in the areas where there were no national colleges of education, as well as the shortage of teachers of special subjects who could not be cultivated at regional colleges of education. In 1985, the nation built Korea National University of Education to systematically implement the three major functions of education: cultivation of teachers, training of teachers, and educational research.

### Establishment of National Universities

The government has made consistent efforts to promote higher public education. It was between 1945 and 1960 that the number of universities in Korea greatly increased. The basic structure of higher education in Korea was established during the three-year

period of the U.S. military government between 1945 and 1948. The Education Bureau of the U.S. Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) and its successor, the Ministry of Education did not set a particular limit on permitting the establishment of institutions of higher education. Before 1945, Japan had controlled the number of schools for higher education as part of its colonial policy. The opportunities for higher education were rarely given to Koreans and the curriculums had been mostly restricted to law or literature. After Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, the government was in dire need of a highly educated workforce that would then become social and economic leaders and therefore carried out an open policy for higher education. Because higher education had been comparatively one of the most closed or veiled areas, many people placed a great deal of hope in the establishment of universities. Accordingly, Keijo Imperial University (Gyeongseong Jeguk Daehak), the only university during the Japanese colonial period, was renamed as Gyeongseong University (Gyeongseong Daehak) right after Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945. The university was again renamed as Seoul National University after incorporating nine state-run professional colleges and a private dental technical college. In order to meet the demands of the times to cleanse the nation of Japanese influence, Seoul National University followed the model of American universities and has now become the model institution of higher education. In addition, some nationalistic-minded private technical schools were subsequently promoted to universities. The government opened night universities and established various universities and colleges of education for cultivating teachers of

secondary schools. Even during the Korean War, it operated a wartime combined university and established national universities in each province. After the Korean War, the number of people who received higher education continued to greatly increase. The doors of universities, which had been an elite institution during the Japanese occupation, opened to the people of all classes and the types of universities diversified into four-year general universities, colleges, and two-year junior colleges. As of 1950, most of the fifty-five institutions of higher education were centered in Seoul and private universities outnumbered national or public universities by a ratio of sixty-eight to thirty-two. In order to narrow the regional gap and correct the imbalance between the number of the public and the private universities, the government mapped out the policy of "one national university per province" and established a total of seven universities in Gyeongsangbuk-do, Jeollabuk-do, Jeollanam-do, Jeju Island, Chungcheongnam-do, Busan, and Chungcheongbuk-do between 1951 and 1955. In 1953, the government set up a principle for the qualification of university teachers in order to build a foundation for promoting the standard of university teachers. In 1955, it proclaimed the Decree on Standards for the Establishment of Universities and Colleges and decided on the five standards for establishment of universities and colleges: land, buildings, schoolyards, textbooks, and teachers. Between 1945 and 1960, the number of universities rose from nineteen to eighty-five and the number of students increased from 8,000 to 100,000.

## The Period of Openness and Popularization of Education: From the 1960s to the Early 1990s

### Compulsory Education for Primary and Middle Schools and Standardization of High Schools

Right after Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, secondary and higher education in Korea was regarded as an elite education for only a select few who passed fiercely competitive admission tests. In that respect, the school system could not fully guarantee equal opportunities for all. In the 1960s, however, the government sharply liberalized the scope of school grades through a series of educational reforms and carried out full-scale secondary education and promoted higher education. Accordingly, the development of education in Korea was characterized by the process of quantitative growth. The number of educational institution and students according to schools is as follows.

The percentage of school attendance is the most widely used indicator of assessing the educational standard of a nation's citizenry. It shows the ratio between the population of the school-age children in each school grade and the number of actual students in each school grade. The school ages are: six to eleven for elementary education; twelve to seventeen for secondary education; and eighteen to twenty-one for higher education. According to the school grade, the percentage of school attendance for elementary schools reached 100 percent in 1970. The percentage of school attendance for the institutions of secondary education had risen rapidly since the late 1960s in the wake of the adoption of the "no entrance examination" system for middle schools in 1968. The percentage of school at-

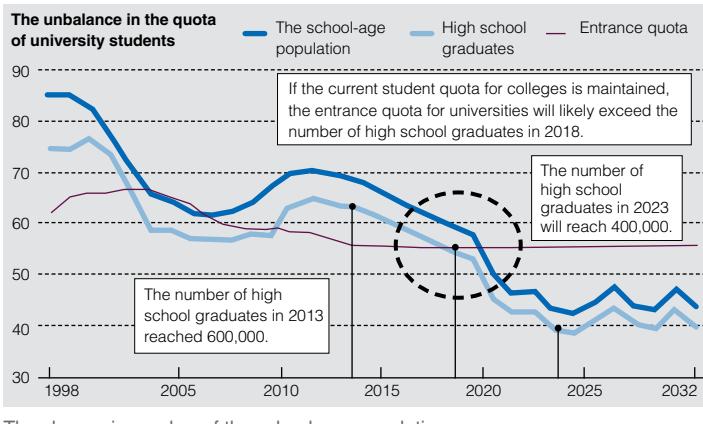
The statistics of schools between 1945 and 2013

Year	Elementary schools		
	Number of schools	Number of students	Percentage of school attendance (%)
1945	3,037	1,372,883	45.2
1970	5,961	5,749,301	100.7
1985	6,519	4,798,323	99.9
2001	5,322	4,089,429	98.5
2007	5,756	3,825,043	100.8
2013	5,913	2,784,000	99.9

Year	Secondary education institutions		
	Number of schools	Number of students	Percentage of school attendance (%)
1945	394	79,846	-
1970	2,497	1,909,190	40.8
1985	3,972	4,934,975	89.9
2001	4,739	3,742,325	96.6
2007	5,159	3,904,533	95.5
2013	5,495	3,697,492	98.1

Year	Higher education institutions		
	Number of schools	Number of students	Percentage of school attendance (%)
1945	21	2,382	-
1970	142	163,511	7.4
1985	255	1,492,066	44.0
2001	374	3,243,464	100
2007	408	3,183,482	126.6
2013	433	3,217,151	114.7

tendance for the institutions of higher education had risen rapidly since 1979 in the wake of the expansion of university student quotas in 1980 and reached 100 percent in 2000. More recently, the percentage of school attendance for the institutions of higher education generally hits 100 percent. This is because the percentage of school attendance includes the students attending schools regardless of age, meaning many students who were below school age attended universities. Meanwhile, after the baby boom period (1955–1964), the government strongly enforced a system of population control, resulting in a decline in the birthrate. Accordingly, the number of elementary school students has been on the verge of decline since 1971. The number of students receiving secondary education and those receiving higher education had been on the verge of decline since 1986 and 2002, respectively. If the current student quota for colleges is maintained, the entrance quota for universities will likely



exceed the number of high school graduates in 2018.

### COMPULSORY EDUCATION FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Compulsory education refers to a system of offering every citizen the minimum amount of required education in order to raise their quality of living, regardless of their social status or economic standard. This is based on the principle of equal opportunity. To this end, the government is responsible for ensuring that children attend schools of basic education and to offer them the opportunity to receive an equal education by means of establishing more schools.

Since Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, offering compulsory education at elementary schools had been the top priority of the government. At the time, the number of school-year children who were not actually attending school stood at 3.2 million, making it an urgent task of the government to establish an institutional system to offer them education. In 1946, the National Committee on Educational Planning decided to implement a system of compulsory education for elementary schools and in 1948 abolished tuition fees for elementary schools. The government of the First Republic (1948–1960), which was inaugurated in 1948, enacted and promulgated education law in late 1949 whose fundamental principles included the equal opportunity for education and free and compulsory education for elementary schools. In 1952, the government came up with a six-year plan for compulsory education (1954–1959) and started the project in earnest. Some of the major plans for the project were: raising the percentage of school attendance for school-age children to 96.1 percent by 1959; building new

classrooms to address shortages; and acquiring necessary financial resources. The expansion of compulsory education facilities was also included in the Five-year Economic Development Plan (1962–1967). In 1967, the government enacted the Island and Remote Rural Area Education Promotion Act and pursued the balanced development of education among the regions. This helped increase the number of schools and build classrooms across the nation. As a result, the percentage of school attendance at elementary schools rose from 64 percent in 1945 to 74.8 percent by 1948, and again to 96.4 percent by 1959. The government began to increase the portion of free textbooks from the early 1970s and to support schools with state funds. The government ultimately accomplished its goal of offering free education for elementary schools in 1979.

The explosive rise in the percentage of school attendance at elementary schools, however, resulted in excessive competition for middle school entrance exams. Elementary school children had to endure grueling preparation and study schedules for their middle school entrance examinations. This was because middle schools were graded in terms of the first class or the second class. The excessive competition to enter middle schools hampered the development of students' minds and bodies, and prevented them from enjoying a well-rounded education. In order to solve this problem and expand their opportunities for secondary education, in 1968 the government adopted a "no entrance examination" system for middle schools. Following the adoption of the admission-without-examination scheme, the annual rate of those entering middle schools rose sharply, reaching 56 percent in 1968 and 96 percent

by 1979. With this rise in the middle school entrance rate, many expressed the opinion that middle school education should be compulsory. In 1984, the government laid out a plan for compulsory education in the education law. Thus, compulsory education for middle schools started from Korea's islands and remote areas in 1985 and gradually expanded nationwide. The nation could finally offer free education for middle schools and helped expand the opportunities for secondary education.

#### THE STANDARDIZATION POLICY FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

The opportunity for secondary education rose quantitatively after the announcement of the examination-free scheme for middle schools on July 15, 1968. This, however, resulted in discussions regarding the necessity to readjust the system for entering high school. There had been a widespread opinion that the excessive competition to enter high school had become a major source of social and economic problems. Accordingly, from 1973 the government pushed for a policy of standardizing high schools to reform the entrance exam system and narrow the severe gap in facilities and quality of teachers. According to the high school standardization policy, the educational authorities established so-called "high school zones" which included public and private high schools, and held a nationwide examination. Students who were qualified to enter high schools after the test were entered into a lottery for each school district according to their residence and were dispatched to the allotted schools. This high school entrance system—based on the standardization of high schools—presupposed the equaliza-

tion of educational conditions among schools. In order to narrow the gap among schools in terms of facilities, teachers, and funding, the government from 1972 began to take measures such as school closures, reducing the number of classrooms, and the conditional allotment of students to unviable schools based on the appraisal of school facilities. The government raised tuition for public schools to the level of private schools and used the additional income to support other schools in need of new facilities. In a move to standardize the quality of teachers, the government carried out short-term training for all high school teachers, fired unqualified teachers, adopted a teacher employment examination system, and carried out a rotational teaching system for public high school teachers according to schools and regions. Such a standardization policy for high schools was carried out first in Seoul and Busan in 1974 and was expanded to twenty regions across the nation by 1980. After the President was elected through a direct vote and the call for democratization grew louder in the late 1980s, there was an increasing demand for autonomy of education, schools' right to recruit students, and students' right to choose their school. With the execution of a local autonomy system, there came a call to oppose government control and for letting the residents decide whether to continue or discontinue the high school standardization program. As a result, in 1990 the government relieved six cities from the duty of following the high school standardization scheme.

Despite some side-effects and criticisms, however, the high school standardization system was deemed to be successful for the following reasons. First, it resolved the problem of excessive compe-

tition for entering top-class high schools. Second, it helped enhance the educational standards among high schools. Third, it allowed the vocational high schools choose students based on a free competition before the academic high schools chose them. Fourth, it resolved the social problem of private extracurricular tutoring among middle school students. The expansion of high schools, however,

### THE JULY 30 EDUCATIONAL REFORM

In 1980, the government announced the July 30 Educational Reform. This centered around the so-called graduation quota system under which universities raise the quota of the students by 30 percent and disqualify and drop the same portion of students step by step through a relative evaluation before their graduation. The government promoted the two-year College of Education, which cultivates elementary school teachers, to the status of a four-year university. It also enhanced the status of Korea National Open University into a four-year university. It abolished the final examination for college admission tests performed by each university and forcefully banned private extracurricular tutoring. The July 30 Educational Reform, however, produced a series of controversies and side-effects. Carried out as a reform plan for fostering the atmosphere of the sound pursuit of knowledge, the plan only let universities resort to relative evaluations, rather than absolute and objective evaluations. This resulted in a waste of educational resources. Moreover, it degraded the quality of college education by simply increasing the student quota without having any plan in place for recruiting additional professors or expanding facilities. Because it abolished private extracurricular tutoring without suggesting any measure for fundamentally resolving the heated college entrance examination system, the reform temporarily succeeded in cracking down on private lessons but soon resulted in the growth and pervasiveness of illegal and costly private tutoring. In less than seven years, the July 30 Educational Reform was abolished, along with the ban on the private tutoring.

again aggravated the competition for college entrance. In 1980, the government announced the July 30 Educational Reform—the gist of which was an increase in the student quota by 30 percent.

As was mentioned above, Korea sharply expanded opportunities for public education through a variety of measures: 1) the “no entrance examination” system for middle schools in 1968; 2) the standardization policy for high schools in 1974; and 3) the July 30 Educational Reform in 1980.

### Expansion of College Education

The government made a concerted effort to promote higher education in the nation. It has actively carried out policies to help cultivate high-quality human resources and talent in the sectors of science and technology which was needed for the economic development of the nation. Since 1961, the government changed direction from the previous mode of pursuing quantitative expansion and focused on qualitative growth. In order to cope with the problem of the increase in the high class unemployment rate resulting from the oversupply of highly qualified human resources and the problem of operating private, for-profit universities, the government merged or abolished several universities, reduced the number of departments, and cut down the number of students to 2,500 at each university. Meanwhile, it devised a plan to promote a college education that could cover the side-effects of government control. In order to foster an atmosphere of academic research, it adopted a system of hiring research professors and at the same time offered subsidies for academic research among professors. It also expanded scholarships for

qualified students and established a system of academic-industrial collaboration between universities and businesses. It abolished a ceiling for the tuition of private universities to help them overcome the financial difficulties resulting from the control of student quotas and the reduced number of schools.

Between 1971 and 1987, the government carried out a reform of higher education in earnest. During that period, the nation enjoyed high economic development due to the success of the First Five-Year Economic Development Plan and the Second Five-Year Economic Development Plan which were implemented in 1962 and 1967, respectively. There was a widespread opinion that the expansion of education had become a driver of rapid economic development. This situation again called for the necessity of mapping out a long-term plan for educational development. In order to accomplish a high and sustainable economic growth and reach the standard of advanced nations, the government had to promote productivity through an increase in the labor force and to map out educational policies through the improvement of global competitiveness in the education sector. In order to cope with the demands of the times, the government carried out many education projects with the long-term comprehensive education plan (1972–1986) as the starting point. It established Korea National Open University and other open universities in addition to existing universities. To be more practical, the government launched a reform plan for enhancing higher education in the 1970s. First, it let universities reduce the minimum credits required for graduation from the existing 160 points to 140, in order to promote the substantial growth

of universities. Second, it refrained from relying on the time-honored method of admitting students to a particular department and instead let the universities recruit them into a college or a combined form of related departments. This meant that students could choose their preferred major after their entry to university. Third, it adopted a system of a minors in order to help students widen their skill sets and improve their chances of finding employment after graduation, as well as broadening their academic perspectives.

The year the nation hosted the 1988 Seoul Olympics was a turning point because the issues of democratization and autonomy came to the fore in every sector of politics, economy, society, and education from that time on. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education carried out an Action Plan for the Autonomy of Universities in order to help promote the democratization of university administrations and the autonomy of universities. The purpose of the plan to allow universities to manage their schools free from government control regarding issues such as student quotas, tuition amounts, liberal arts curriculums, the selection of the university president, student autonomy, and school regulations. Although the government had intervened in the control of student quotas, it now left the decision to the discretion of the individual universities in order to dynamically cope with the demand for manpower in the wake of the rapid changes experienced in industrial structures. Afterwards, the government mapped out educational programs—such as “Brain Korea 21” and “University Working for Regional Development”—to extensively improve graduate schools to international levels by sharply expanding research funding. The ultimate purpose was

to promote the research capabilities of universities and establish a system of supporting regional universities that could cultivate talented leaders. In a move to promote the development of academic research and universities through competition in good faith among universities, the government changed the mode of assessing the achievements of universities from the University Evaluation System adopted in the 1970s, to the University Evaluation and Accreditation System in 2010, and has carried out a system for supporting universities since 2014.

#### THE UNIVERSITY EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

The government had been implementing a system of minimum conditions and regulations under which people can establish a university. Since 2010, it has adopted the University Evaluation and Accreditation System as an active measure to promote the quality of university education. According to the system, the Korean Council for University Education, a university evaluation and certificate authority, evaluates whether each university “meets the minimum requirements for guaranteeing the quality of education in the operation of the universities in general” under the mandate of reinforcing the management of college autonomy and responsibilities that can cope with the trend of the expansion of autonomy in higher education. The Korean Council for University Education set six criteria for the assessment of university activities: the educational aim and the development plan for education; members of a university; education; educational facilities; funding and management; and social services. Universities are evaluated every five years. The University Evaluation and Accreditation System plays a symbolic role in that the government’s policy on universities changed from a previous control-based system to an evaluation system after the adoption of the approval system for the establishment of universities.

## Realization of Lifelong Education

Lifelong education, or lifelong learning, refers to education that is aimed at “enhancing the quality of life among the public and promoting the development of regional societies” under the motto of “realizing equal education for all the people of the nation.” The policies for lifelong education have always changed to cope with new social trends. After Korea’s liberation from Japan in 1945, the government carried out policies for social education to eradicate illiteracy and improve the standard of living. From the 1970s, the government carried out a plan to expand educational opportunities as part of a project to promote lifelong education. These include the establishment of middle and high schools affiliated with industrial companies for pre-school children of industrial workers, special evening study programs, and Korea National Open University. In 1972, Korea National Open University was established as a two-year primary college affiliated with Seoul National University. Its motto was “realizing lifelong education in society through the expansion of opportunities for lifelong and remote tele-education education.” It served as the impetus for promoting education in the nation from the level of higher education to that of lifelong education. The government also developed broadcasting communications courses established at public middle and high schools into Open High School. It was a watershed project for the development of education, along with the establishment of Korea National Open University, and contributed a great deal to the expansion of educational opportunities. In 1982, the government promoted the status of Korea National Open University to a five-year university and sharply increased the student



Seoul campus of Korea National Open University  
(Source: Korea National Open University)

quota, as well as separating it from Seoul National University and increasing the number of departments. Since 1991, it has operated as a four-year undergraduate university producing graduates with bachelor’s degrees. Since that time, Korea National Open University has made great strides due to its special status as a university offering remote tele-education. In addition, with the enactment of the Social Education Act in 1982, the government established open universities to offer the educational opportunities to industrial workers.

Private social organizations, meanwhile, began to open short-term or long-term liberal arts lectures to cope with the demand for education in the wake of the improvement of economic standards and changes in lifestyles. Mass media organizations and cultural centers operated a variety of education programs. Universities, too, opened lifelong education centers of their own to educate adults.

In 1990, the government adopted an academic degree acquisition system for self-educated learners. Under the scheme, high school graduates could receive a bachelor's degree issued by the Minister of Education when they pass a designated state-run examination. The system played a pivotal role in expanding opportunities for higher education, regardless of education level, by acknowledging the outcome of individual academic learning regardless of the personal situation of the learners.

In a move to reinvigorate the lifelong learning program, the government carried out a systematic policy by enacting the Lifelong Education Act in 1999, after revising the existing Social Education Act the same year in order to cope with the rising and diversified demand for education among adults. The Lifelong Education Act—based on the basic education law and the spirit of the Constitution which defined the promotion of lifelong education as the duty of the state—stipulated that the government should offer everyone the chance to receive lifelong lessons through various means, including: the establishment of lifelong education facilities; the cultivation of teachers devoted to lifelong education; the development of lifelong education programs; and financial support for the institutions of lifelong education. Since the late 1990s, an increasing number of cyber universities using the remote tele-education system have

#### KOREA EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTING SYSTEM (EBS)

Broadcasting is one of the most efficient means of educating viewers of all social strata nationwide while investing modest amounts in infrastructure and equipment. These broadcasts of educational content can also mitigate a sense of social inequality and help narrow the gap among regions. Broadcasting of educational content in Korea began in 1951 with "Radio School." During the Korean War, the Ministry of Education—believing that education should not be discontinued amid the chaos of war—announced a special measure for education and opened a program titled "Radio School" through which it aired on the radio all the required content and subjects nationwide. In 1966, the public broadcasting channel KBS-TV aired "TV Summer School" and from 1969 aired a daily one-hour program of "TV School." In 1973, the Act on the Support of the Korean Educational Development Institution was enacted and from

1974 "Radio School Program" aired. The Korea Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) attempted to establish a system of lifelong education by overcoming the limitations of school instruction, supplementing the shortcomings of home education, and meeting the demand for new education, while making the best use of the potentiality of broadcasting channels. In 1981, it aired a program supplementing high school learning by using the KBS TV channel to offer every student a chance to receive additional instruction. The Korea Educational Broadcasting System, which was affiliated with the Korean Educational Development Institution, supplemented school education and offered an important opportunity to be exposed to comprehensive and systematic educational programs. EBS currently offers a variety of programs in the fields of school education, vocational education, and social education.

offered educational content. The government established the National Institution for Lifelong Education to map out lifelong education policies, make related research, and grasp the current trend of lifelong education.

### The Period of Qualitative Development: From the Mid-1990s to the Present

#### The Relation between Education and the Development of Korea

In retrospect, Korean contemporary history is best characterized by brilliant economic development and the realization of political democratization. Economically, Korea experienced rapid growth in the 1960s and the 1970s and became a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996. Politically, the nation opened a new chapter of democracy through constitutional revisions leading to direct presidential elections in the late 1980s. Afterwards, democratization became a keyword in every aspect of politics, the economy, and education. Most recently, the candlelight vigil in 2016 showed how Korean democracy had matured in that the citizens staged a campaign to peacefully oust the incumbent President within the framework of the democratic law and system until the National Assembly's decision to impeach the President.

Many scholars believe that education has become the driving force behind these developments. Through public education, the nation may have cultivated the necessary human resources for

industrialization. And the growth of political and social consciousness among the people, as boosted by public education, became the foundation for the nation's economic growth and democratization. In fact, the impressively high percentage of school attendance at elementary schools, middle and high schools, and universities, is an unmistakable indicator that the nation greatly values education.

Of course, this fervor for education that is driving the nation's growth has something to do with the tradition of focusing on the education of children. It, however, is also related to reforms in the educational system which led to an increasing number of educated citizens and a social structure under which they could climb up the social ladder by means of their educations.

First, the strong fervor for education was attributed to the open school system and student-recruiting system. Korea adopted a 6-3-3-4 single-track ladder system composed of four groups of learning institutions—elementary schools (six years), middle schools (three years), high schools (three years), and universities (four years)—according to the education law of 1949. The 6-3-3-4 single-track ladder system was a linear school system that did not differentiate the upper class from the general public. It was an open school system that did not permit schools of the same grade to differ in quality, unified the school year in the same grade groups of schools, and let graduates from grade groups of schools enter the upper grade schools without discrimination. Having long been oppressed during the Japanese occupation, Koreans could from 1945 express their educational fervor regardless of their social class.

Second, this fervor for education became stronger because the

people shared the same belief that they could overcome their backgrounds and improve their station in life through education. The Korean people believe that they “could be given a chance to become social leaders when they make efforts to sharpen their skills, enter advanced schools, and receive good education.” Actually, many students from the middle class and below became social leaders thanks to education. One of the major elements for boosting their educational fervor was the open social structure under which the people could overcome the limitations of social strata and enter the “elite” after succeeding academically through hard work and the acquisition of knowledge.

Third, the expansion of educational opportunities through the reform of the entrance examination system after the 1960s contributed a great deal to stimulating people’s fervor for education. After Korea’s liberation from Japan in 1945, the government made efforts to offer more opportunities to the public by implementing compulsory elementary school education and by actively pushing for a no-examination system for middle school entrance and standardizing the high school system. The centralized educational administration system of the nation made it possible to create a homogeneity-based standardization of school education. These series of policies expanded higher education in a short period and transformed secondary and higher education into universal public education. The closer access to secondary education and higher education contributed greatly to increasing the people’s desire for education.

Rapid economic growth and the development of education are spotlighted as international concerns. According to World Bank

statistics for 1992, Korea—once one of the most impoverished nations in the world right after the Korean War—became the most rapidly developed nation among the 197 countries in the world between the mid-1960s and the mid-1990s when the government pushed for industrialization. Korea carried out a total of seven Five-Year Economic Development Plans over the course of thirty-five years between 1962 and 1996. Thanks to the success of these Five-Year Economic Development Plans, the nation joined the world’s advanced nations. Surely, the development of qualified human resources was one of the main reasons for the achievement of the nation’s economic development. Thanks to the public’s gradually easier access to elementary, secondary, and higher education, the nation could supply the necessary human resources in each stage of economic development. Having established compulsory education in the late 1950s, the nation could accumulate the human resources needed for industrialization centered on the labor-intensive light industry in the 1960s. Thanks to the no-examination policy for middle school admission and the promotion of vocational high schools in the 1960s, the nation could cultivate the skilled manpower needed for the development of the heavy chemical industry in the 1970s. Thanks to the standardization of high schools in 1974 and the graduation quota system of the early 1980s, the nation could produce workers who had received higher education and who could help increase production at large conglomerates and power the knowledge-based information industry of the 1990s and beyond.

The democratic development in Korea was also indebted to the education of the nation. The expansion of elementary education

in the 1950s, secondary education in the 1960s and the 1970s, and higher education in the 1990s—along with the efforts for promoting the quality of education—have nourished the democratization of Korea. Boosted by the virtuous circle of the expansion of educational opportunities and the acquisition of economic power between 1945 and the late 1980s, a growing number of citizens received secondary and higher education and earned new-found economic power. Having received qualitative education, the public could develop a mature political awareness and have an increasing appetite for democracy. In the 1980s, the citizens took to the streets to protest against the military dictatorship and accomplished the goal of the constitutional revisions in favor of a direct presidential vote, thus opening a new chapter in the history of the democratization of the nation.

### Efforts for Promoting Educational Competitiveness and the Future of Korea

Since the mid-1990s, Korea has pushed for various institutional reforms and policies in order to establish a new educational system that can promote the creation and utilization of knowledge in the process of transformation from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society.

### DIVERSIFICATION AND INNER STABILITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education in Korea has developed rapidly since the 1970s with the school attendance rate at middle schools reaching

100 percent in the mid-1980s and that at high schools reaching up to 90 percent in the mid-1990s. The attendance rate at universities also expanded rapidly from the late 1970s, reaching levels comparable to that of North America from the 1990s and reaching nearly 100 percent in 2000.

Boosted by continuous government support for education and despite a series of economic crises, the nation grew to the world's eighth largest educational power in 2012. Meanwhile, the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) based in Lausanne, Switzerland announced an indicator of national competitiveness, which includes educational competitiveness. With regard to the result of the IMD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), being carried out every three years in the areas of mathematics, science, and reading, among 15-year-old students receiving secondary education from 34 countries of the OECD Koreans have maintained the highest position along with their Finnish counterparts. Korean students were favorably evaluated by former U.S. President Barack Obama with regard to the level of educational standardization, edu-

PISA Periodical Assessment of Korean Students (2000–2012)

Subjects	Ranking	2000 (41 nations)	2003 (40 nations)	2006 (57 nations)	2009 (75 nations)	2012 (66 nations)
Mathematics	OECD	2	2	1–2	1–2	1
	Total	3	3	1–4	3–6	3–5
Reading	OECD	7	2	1	1–2	1–2
	Total	6	2	1	2–4	3–5
Science	OECD	1	3	5–9	2–4	2–4
	Total	1	4	7–13	4–7	5–8

cational fervor, and global competitiveness.

A knowledge-based society requires talented leaders who not only acquire knowledge and skills but also have: 1) the mental capability for self-direction; 2) the moral and social capability for harmonious interaction; and 3) cognitive competency to create new knowledge. Despite the high level of its academic achievement, Korea has some problems of its own: intense cramming at after-school academies to prepare for the entrance examination and stereotyped education, among others. In order to help solve these problems, the government established specialized schools in diverse areas to meet the demand of parents, including special-purpose high schools, specialized vocational schools, and specialized alternative schools. Since 2016, the government has adopted a free semester system for middle schools across the nation. Students can spend one semester freely—without taking mid-term and final examinations—so that they can try various activities that will help them determine their future career.

#### PROMOTION OF PROFESSIONALISM AMONG TEACHERS

The quality of teachers is certainly a determining factor in the quality of education. Therefore, the government has established a teacher training system as a program for retraining teachers. It was not until 1961 that the government implemented a teacher training system in earnest. The government drastically revised the Public Educational Personnel and Staff Act in 1962 and established four types of teacher-in-service training centers: the Elementary School Teacher-in-service Training Center; the Secondary School Teacher-in-service Training Center; the Educational Administrator-in-service Training

Center; and the General Teacher-in-service Training Center. The education programs for the centers break down into three: a qualification training course for the acquisition of higher level of certificates; an on-the-job training course for promoting job performing abilities and job qualifications; and a general training course for teaching educational theories and methodology.

Moreover, in 1995 the government set the goal of “cultivating dignified and talented teachers” as part of educational reforms aimed at raising the quality of teachers and boosting their morale in preparation for a new era. In order to effectively carry out this goal, the government strengthened teacher training program under the catchphrase of “Cultivation of Teachers and the Reform of a Training System.” Instead of making teachers receive their training without their input, it let teachers choose a training center at their discretion. The government also came up with a competency-based teacher promotion system and a system of offering a differential pay scale according to the level of difficulties in their work. The government has implemented a “special research teacher support system” under which it offers those who excel at teaching or research a chance to join a training program held domestically or abroad for six to twelve months, or offers them research funds that they can use for teaching. This scheme was aimed to “promote the research activities of teachers and foster the efficient working conditions for teachers.” Other programs include a “top class teacher system” under which it reduced the hours of classes for the master-level teachers by half and instead encourages them to participate in a program to teach newly appointed teachers or participate in training programs.

## DEMOCRATIZATION AND INFORMATIZATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Democratization in Korean politics began in earnest after the period of military dictatorship began changing in 1987. The accomplishment of strong economic growth after 1945 became a momentum for the Korean people to seek out a new direction and change in social and educational development. In May 1995, the government announced “Educational Reform for the Establishment of New Educational Systems” that would lead the age of globalization, informatization, and pluralism. After the announcement of the reform plan, the style of government intervention in—and government control of—education qualitatively changed. The government pursued the democratization of education by promoting the Local Educational Autonomy System and expanding the teachers’ authority, while loosening the centralistic and the state-oriented nationalistic control of schools. A more noteworthy aspect was that the opinions and the participation of civilians and civic groups came to the fore after the mid-1990s. Since then, liberal political parties and intellectual groups as well as teachers’ and civil organizations have actively participated in the decision-making process related to educational policies. Various educational demands of the citizens were raised and readjusted in the field of public opinion and politics, exerting an influence on educational policies.

Moreover, after the late-1990s, the government started to apply information and communication technologies to education after the information sector was highlighted as a core industry for the nation’s economic growth. The government encouraged schools to

widely use information and communication technologies for school operations and “teaching and learning.” In 1999, the government established the Korea Education & Research Information Service (KERIS) under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. KERIS developed the system of EDUNET that can collect, store, and utilize the “teaching and learning” materials by using information and communication technologies. KERIS connected the system to education officials of Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education across the nation so that teachers could freely use the materials of information and communication technologies for classes in classroom. Students, too, could receive the study materials they need. Teachers and students could also easily access and use information from the entire world because all school classrooms across the nation are connected to the Internet. Since the mid-1990s, democratization and informatization have been established as the two key concepts when it comes to the educational system in Korea.

## A PLAN TO SEEK OUT NEW CURRICULUM

As far as education is concerned, the role of the government is determined by the standard of socioeconomic development. Since the mid-1990s, the government has changed the educational system from a state-initiated developing nation-type human resources cultivation system to the creative leader cultivation system suitable for a globalized knowledge-based society. As an outcome, the government announced the Revised Educational Curriculums in 2009. These curriculums were aimed at cultivating the diverse personalities and skills of students based on the principles of “selection” and

“competition” As for the college entrance examination system, the government decided to use student records—which comprehensively recorded students’ daily school life—as a major source of material for assessment and thus break away from the time-honored cram school exam-centric system.

In 2015, the government announced revised curriculums that will be carried out from 2018. These will focus on cultivating creative and multidisciplinary talents. It suggested the following six core competencies with which future citizens could lead a successful and happier life.

Six core competencies in the 2015 curriculum revision

Category	Contents
Competency for self-management	Competency for self-directed living with a sense of self-identity and confidence, as well as the basic skills and qualifications needed for the development of life and career
Competency for knowledge and information	Competency for dealing with and utilizing diverse areas of knowledge and information in order to rationally solve the problems
Competency for creative thought	Competency for creating new values through the interdisciplinary use of knowledge, information, and experiences in diverse professional fields, based on a vast amount of basic knowledge
Competency for aesthetic-emotionality	Competency for finding the meaning and the value of life based on empathic understanding of people and cultural sensitivity
Competency for communication	Competency for expressing thoughts and sentiments, and listening to others’ opinions in various situations
Competency for community consciousness	Competency for participating in the activities for the development of a community with a sense of value and an attitude required for the members of regional, national, and global communities

In the revised 2015 curriculum, the government added courses of “Integrated Social Studies” and “Integrated Science” in order to impart comprehensive knowledge and creative thinking skills. To that end, each curriculum suggests a core set of concepts and principles accompanied by a moderate amount of learning. Moreover, the new curriculums focused more on the process of class activities so that students can directly participate in discussions, seminars, experiments, and practice. The government also abolished the dual system of dividing the liberal arts courses from the science courses at high schools and let the students acquire basic knowledge of liberal arts, social science, and science and technology, so that students could complete the courses of their choice and aptitude for their future career. That was aimed at dismantling not only the dual system of the liberal arts and science courses but also the knowledge-oriented cram school education geared to the college entrance examination. In a nutshell, the revised 2015 curriculums sought to fundamentally change the educational paradigm in Korea so that education can help cultivate students who are equipped with basic knowledge ranging from the field of liberal arts, social studies, and science, and who could grow into talented leaders who are well versed in creative and multidisciplinary studies incorporating humanities-based imagination and scientific and technological creativity.



## CONCLUSION

School education in Korea boasts 1,500 years of history beginning during the establishment of the National Confucian Academy in the Goguryeo Kingdom. Education in contemporary Korea, however, has nearly lost its tradition in terms of institutional characteristics. When it comes to the content, methods, and systems of education, modern Korean education is closer to the educational system of modern Western society. That does not mean, however, that today's education has nothing to do with the education of old Korea. With regard to the strong enthusiasm for education and cultivation of morality in education, today's education is extensively modeled after the Confucian educational culture. Having been influenced by a tradition-bound educational system, Koreans still have a tendency to put education under the control of the government and to emphasize the social efficacy of education. Thanks to

the traditional method of allowing the state management of education, the Western educational system could make inroads and settle in Korea without being bothered by any social forces based on a particular social class, religion, or region. Although the systematic patterns and content of education have changed rapidly, the values and the belief system in education still remain as the major factors that constitute the educational environment.

Since ancient times, education in Korea has developed through exchanges with, or the importation of, foreign cultures. Therefore, education has become a foundation for the formation of culture in each period. The importation of Buddhism and Confucianism in the Three Kingdoms period laid the foundation for education in Unified Silla and the Goryeo Dynasty. Neo-Confucianism, imported in the late Goryeo period, formed the backbone of education in the Joseon Dynasty. With the importation of Western culture and thought during the modern enlightenment period, the Western educational system became the cornerstone of education in Korea. Such exchanges with, and the importation of, Western cultures had a great influence on the politics, economy, and culture of those times.

Ancient Korean society imported Confucian thought from China in the process of exchanging cultures with the nation. Neo-Confucianism, imported from China during the late Goryeo Dynasty, functioned as a revolutionary framework in the Joseon Dynasty that reorganized the world not from the exegetical perspective of original Confucianism but from the viewpoint of cosmology and the treatise of human nature. Modern education during the enlightenment period functioned as a means to avoid the closed and

moral obligations-emphasizing world of Neo-Confucianism and as a way of building up “a rich country with a strong army for surviving in the world where the weak fall prey to the strong.” With the annexation of Korea by Japan, the former’s sovereignty of education was taken away by the latter. Although the development of education in Korea was controlled during the Japanese occupation, education ultimately led to the nation’s brilliant development after liberation in 1945.

More than seven decades have passed since Korea’s independence. The Korean government has subsequently raised the nation’s global standing by becoming a member of the OECD in 1996 and the G-20 in 1999. Most recently, Korea has made remarkable technological strides and played a leading role in the global market of information and technology. Korea is also regarded as a rare case of a nation that had been colonized by another country achieving economic growth and political democratization. The level of elementary, secondary, and higher education in Korea is at a world-class level and the speed of its educational expansion is similarly remarkable. The International Institution for Management Development’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) also suggests that the qualitative level of education in Korea continues to remain world class.

Beyond the growth of society and education in Korea, however, a dark cloud is cast. Students are still suffering from the excessive competition for entrance examinations. Parents, too, are burdened by the high costs of private education. The content and the activities of school education are admission-oriented, making it difficult

to expect students to develop a diverse set of skills. Accordingly, education in Korea has recently focused on qualitative growth rather than quantitative expansion. The nation is focusing more on the promotion of creativity and inquisitiveness in science and technology education, in preparation for the challenges of the twenty-first century and the need for world-class education. Universities, the birthplace of knowledge and technology in the nation, are redoubling their efforts to raise the competitive edge of Korea in the educational sector.

Schools should be a place where the public interest, or the common good, should be realized. Education should be the last bastion of hope for the many people searching for a better future. Education should also serve to impart the joy of acquiring knowledge and the discovery of a myriad of possibilities. Education in Korea has not fully accomplished these two objectives. This is the reason why Korea remains in pursuit of a new paradigm in education.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The six grades of head-rank (*yukdupum*) refer to a rank of the bone-rank (*golpum*) institution in Silla. The bone-rank institution was composed of two parts: 1) the bone tribe—hallowed bone (*seonggol*) and true-bone (*jingol*)—and 2) the head tribe—head-rank six down through head-rank one. Thus, head-rank six is the highest rank in the head-rank institution.
- <sup>2</sup> The Three Histories refer to: *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*), *The History of the Han Dynasty*, and *The History of the Late Han Dynasty*.
- <sup>3</sup> The eight styles of calligraphy were used during the Xin Dynasty.
- <sup>4</sup> The Nine Classics refer to nine major Confucian texts. They are: 1) *Book of Changes*; 2) *Book of History*; 3) *Classics of Songs*; 4) *Book of Rites*; 5) *Rites of Zhou*; 6) *Rites of Ceremony*; 7) *Zuo Zhuan on the Spring and Autumn Annals*; 8) *Gongyangzhuan*; and 9) *Guliangzhuan*.

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