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### **Reduce the Expense on Private Education**

In South Korea, private education is an after school activity where students pay to get taught additionally out of school. For example, students can go to academies or institutes after school or parents can hire private tutors for students to receive extra education. According to Statistics Korea, 67.8% of South Korean students participate in private education in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Not only that over half of Korean students participate in private education, too much money is being spent on private education. Statistics Korea and the Ministry of Education reported that the total expense on private education in 2016 was 18 trillion KRW (\$16 billion USD), which was a 1.3%p (\$18 thousand USD) increase, compared to 2015. Additionally, the expense on private education per student was \$230 USD per month. This amount is 14% of monthly average income of Koreans, and the greatest amount since 2007.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 62.7% of parents feel the burden on spending their money on private education.<sup>3</sup> Since the data above suggest that the expenses on private education are costly, and over half of Korean students are involved in this problem, the expenses on private education should be reduced.

According to the analysis of the Ministry of Education, the increased expenses on private education of high school students was the major cause of the total 1.3%p increase in private education expenses. In Korea, high school students study hard and compete to get

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Korea, [1]

<sup>2</sup> News Chosun, [2]

<sup>3</sup> 2015 Survey By Korea Consumer Agency, Up Korea [3]

admission to major Korean universities. Students compete because universities evaluate students by examining one's high school GPA (grade point average) or by examining the scores of university entrance exams. (The former evaluation method is called 'Susi'). Meanwhile, according to the announcement of Korean Council for University Education<sup>4</sup>, major universities in Korea are increasing the number of students admitted by the Susi evaluation method. To put it in another way, this meant that high school students will have a better chance of getting admission to major universities through Susi. Thus it is highly likely for students to prepare for Susi, which means putting more effort for high GPA. However, since high school GPA is a method of relative evaluation, high school students have to compete with each other for better GPA. This leads high school students to get more private education, which is the main cause of increase<sup>5</sup> in expenses on private education.

Considering that the main cause of high expenses on private education was due to high school students, the Ministry of Education will introduce absolute evaluation system into university entrance exam, lessening the burden on studying and expenses on private education. University Admission Section Chief Kim of Ministry of Education wrote in his article<sup>6</sup> that the current university entrance exam, which evaluates students relatively, makes students compete more and spend lots of money on private education. However, under absolute evaluation system, there exists pre-set ranges of scores with ratings, and the students in the same range are evaluated equally. For instance, students with scores 90 to 100 in the exam will be evaluated equally as 'Class 1'. Thus students won't have to compare themselves with other students, which will reduce competition that relative evaluation caused. Kim also wrote that this change to absolute evaluation only lessens the burden on relative evaluation

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<sup>4</sup> Article from Kyung Hyang Newspaper, [4]

<sup>5</sup> This analysis was done by a group called 'World without Worries on Private Education', [4]

<sup>6</sup> "Absolute evaluation system to be introduced to university entrance English exams in academic year 2018" [5]

and competition between students. Therefore this change doesn't mean that the exams are going to get easier, so students are still required to put effort on English.

Despite the changes, I think absolute evaluation system will not solve the problem of high expenses on private education. First of all, the main cause of increase in expenses on private education was due to the Susi evaluation method, not An article<sup>7</sup> posted on Veritas Alpha, a newspaper specialized on education, wrote about the expenses of private education after the absolute evaluation system comes into action. "Yoon Sun Saeng", a professional English education enterprise, conducted a survey<sup>8</sup> on parents, about their expenditure plans on private education under absolute evaluation system. Unlike what the Ministry intended, 82.9% of parents plan to keep the expenses the same as before, 10.3% of parents plan to increase their expenses. Only 6.8% of parents replied they will reduce their expenses. The 93.2% of parents who are not going to reduce their expenses replied that they are not reducing it mainly because English skill is important regardless of exams. (51.8%) Another reason was because parents think it will be hard to get good scores on English exams without private education. Thus, the Ministry's solution, introducing absolute evaluation system on university entrance English exams will not work as they intended.

Recall that the main reason of increase in expenses on private education lies in high school students preparing for Susi. Considering that the solution should be in the range of Susi, which directly relates to high school and GPA, the solution to this is to introduce differentiated education in high schools. According to a survey<sup>9</sup> conducted by Korea Research Center, 20.4% of parents (who have an experience of sending their children to

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<sup>7</sup> "93% of parents: 'Not going to reduce expenses on private education despite the absolute evaluation on university entrance English exam.'" [6]

<sup>8</sup> From article [6]

<sup>9</sup> "Parents Survey: How to reduce expenses on private education" [7]

private education) chose introducing differentiated education in high schools as the best solution to reduce the expenses on private education. Researcher Song Mi Jin, who conducted this survey, analyzed<sup>10</sup> that the main reason parents prefer private education is because private educational centers in Korea provide differentiated education, providing and supplementing the students' academic needs at the right level. Thus if differentiated education is provided in high schools, the expenses on private education will be reduced, as the parents chose in the survey.

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<sup>10</sup> From Article [7]

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