



Understanding the Internationalization of Higher Education in South Korea with Different Theories of Development

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INTRODUCTION

As a concept, ‘the internationalization of higher education’ (hereafter IHE) found its origin in the relationship between developed and developing countries. This concept can help to understand how the unequal higher education (HE) system of the world works in the development processes of countries, universities, and individuals. Developed countries and their universities are interested in spreading the intellectual and cultural assets they have accumulated, and developing countries and their universities try to accommodate the various types of intellectual and cultural assets built up by developed countries (Altbach and Knight 2007; Knight 2004). In this context, IHE can be linked to the concept of ‘development,’ which

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describes the process of transformation of organizations and individuals, wherein ‘development’ refers to the various activities that bring positive change or gradual growth to organizations and individuals (Collins English Dictionary 2018). The internationalization of *Korean higher education* can also be understood in the context of the political, economic, and social changes and development of Korea.

It may be inferred that Korea had already experienced IHE in various forms and contents at the individual, university, and government levels before the term IHE officially appeared in the academic world, because the structure and development of the Korean HE system have historically been greatly influenced by the political and economic effects of the surrounding great powers. Before the twentieth century, Korea had long been influenced by China and was subsequently impacted by Japan and the United States over the course of the twentieth century. During the Japanese colonial period (1910–1945), Japan sought to transplant the Japanese university system to Korea. During the US occupation (1945–1948), the United States transferred its HE system to Korea. Since the establishment of a nativist government (1948), Korea has organized and changed the Korean HE system again, based on the American model.

In short, IHE here refers to a variety of activities in which individuals, universities, and nations interact with and collaborate with foreign universities (Knight 2004). The core contents of exchange and cooperation among universities include research activities for the production of knowledge recognized as a primary purpose of universities and educational activities related to the propagation of produced knowledge. Research activities are focused on absorbing the knowledge and skills required for knowledge production, which can be a core resource for national economic development and social development, from advanced universities. Educational activities emphasize the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for the advancement of curriculum composition and teaching-learning methods to enhance the quality of HE. The acquisition of administrative knowledge and techniques related to university administration also constitutes part of the internationalization of content.

Altbach and Knight (2007) have argued that a primary purpose of IHE is directly related to the motivations of participants such as individuals/universities/governments, and their motivations overlap with each other. For example, individuals can participate in research and educational activities at foreign universities to expand their knowledge and skills in their areas of interest, as well as to secure learning opportunities for

understanding the society, language, culture, and economy of the country in which they are involved. The purpose of individuals engaged in such processes is closely related to the maintenance and improvement of their social status (Kim 2011).

The purpose of IHE, as understood and practiced by specific universities and governments, has both a relatively macro- and ideological component as well as its practical dimension. IHE, as promoted by universities and governments, can be viewed as divided into two aspects: the realization of the essential value of the university and the engagement of economic interests. For example, from a historical point of view, universities in developing countries have sought to acquire the knowledge, skills, and culture necessary to advance them through exchange and cooperation with more advanced universities. This approach is an effort to respect and maximize the value and function of universities in the traditional sense. The economic view is a more recently focused consideration. IHE is a sort of systematic marketing that is carried out by certain advanced countries or advanced universities to attract foreign professors and students for the purpose of advancing their economic interests (Altbach and Knight 2007). IHE from an economic point of view is an approach adopted by developed countries and so-called corporate universities in the twenty-first-century modern society wherein such outcomes are seen as an intrinsic element of globalization.

Briefly looking at the internationalization phenomenon within Korean HE, its purpose as mentioned above is reflected in a complex and overlapping manner at individual, university, and government levels. For example, Korea is the country in which the largest number of students per 10,000 population engages with HEIs in the United States (Kim 2008, p. 69). On the personal level, IHE has been acknowledged as a means of maintaining and upgrading the social status of individuals and continues to have a strong influence within the population. The phenomenon of IHE-centering on US institutions, emphasized at the university level, has come to be the theoretical and practical basis for the development of the Korean HE system over the past 70 years. The IHE at the government level can be confirmed through two different positions taken by the Korean government during the process of national and university construction. At the core of this process, the government promoted IHE in the second half of the twentieth century after the establishment of the modern government in 1948 for a period of about 50 years from the point of view of the importing country that unilaterally accepted the presumed superior value of a Western HE

system that could be gained through outbound-focused internationalization. In this overall process, the government focused on establishing its position as a supplier of HE expertise and value through inbound internationalization, especially since the beginning of the twenty-first century (Byun and Kim 2011).

This chapter seeks to understand the current status and characteristics of Korean HE internationalization by drawing on different theories that explain the development process of countries, universities, and individuals. First, I briefly discuss four theories related to the concept of ‘development’: modernization theory, dependence theory, semi-periphery theory, and the social mobility effect theory of HE. Next, I present statistical data on four indicators that can explain the internationalization status of Korean HE and identify some characteristics based on the results of the theoretical review and statistical analysis. In conclusion, the characteristics of internationalization of Korean HE are discussed in terms of universality and specificity.

REVIEWING THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT APPLICABLE FOR IHE

The phenomenon of IHE is directly related to the level of economic and social development of the country within which a particular university is situated, primarily because universities in the so-called developed countries have a presumptive comparative advantage in their research and teaching capacity compared to those in developing countries. In this context, applying existing theories of development that explain the processes of economic and social change operating at both country and individual levels can help to better understand the nature of this phenomenon. Here, the concept of ‘development’ has two meanings, which seem to be slightly different but are closely interrelated (Cowen and Shenton 1996). First, development means advancing through intervention. Second, development is viewed as a form of transition to a capitalist system and results from the efforts of people to steadily improve their quality of life.

The main theories related to the concept of ‘development’ are modernization theory (neoliberalism), dependence theory, world-system theory (semi-periphery theory), and that focused on social mobility effects of HE. These four theories can serve as an analytical framework for understanding the perceptions and responses of the Korean government, universities, and Korean people in their various pursuits to IHE as it exists within the fundamentally unequal world HE system.

MODERNIZATION THEORY

The version of modernization theory, I employ, emerges out of the recent dynamics of state engagements focused on the constructs of neoliberalism (Thomas 2000). Notions of modernization have been at the core of mainstream social development theory that has been common to the collection of countries that have created and maintained the capitalist economic system since the 1950s. Modernization theory promotes the economic growth of poor countries based on their integration into a world capitalist system. Modernization seeks to liberate poor countries by improving on a range of sociocultural factors commonly associated with “traditional societies” that impede their development. Modernization theory is applied to HE policies pursuing economic growth mainly through government-led, top-down initiatives and policies.

The theory of modernization has been under constant change since its emergence in the 1950s and has increasingly become linked to the growth premises at the center of neoliberalism, which continues as the core of mainstream economic development today. Modernization theory has played a key role in how notions of economic development have been promoted, especially in the lesser developed countries, notions of how markets should be created and operate in such transitional societies, and ideas about appropriate means for the formation of the skills and attitudes necessary for knowledge production in such societies. Neoliberalism and the essential roles it assigns to marketization and privatization, so dominant in the late twentieth and early in the twenty-first centuries, are viewed as essential components in the promotion and achievement of economic growth, social development, and effective HE systems both in developed and developing countries (Trow 1970).

DEPENDENCE THEORY

Dependence theory has held a central and critical position within modernization and neoliberal theories (Paul 2016) of national development. Dependence theory focuses on the negative consequences that can and do arise from the acceptance and implementation of modernization theory. The theory of modernization has been particularly critiqued by the radical dependence theory that has emerged out of Marxist analysis since the 1970s. According to the dependency theorists, the social and economic underdevelopment identified in developing countries is the direct result of

an active and unequal global process. From the perspective of dependence theory, poor countries continue to be underdeveloped, not because of a lack of necessary resources, but as a direct consequence of their historical colonial experience and the subsequent unequal roles they have been assigned in an international system of trade.

For example, advanced countries in the industrialized world are exporting their HE systems and knowledge production logic to developing countries, and universities in developing countries are therefore forced to rely on a knowledge production logic and HE system established by advanced universities (Altbach and Knight 2007). As a result, developing countries cannot form the logic of development or a HE system suitable for their own characteristics, and they are forced to be institutionally and mentally dependent on those of developed countries. These dependencies are manifested by the loss of subjectivity of developing countries in knowledge production and HE systems.

SEMI-PERIPHERY THEORY

Third, it is also possible to apply semi-peripheral theory to these analyses which was confirmed in the 2000s (Shi 2017). This approach is modeled on Asian countries that have achieved economic growth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, reflecting Wallerstein's world-system theory (Wallerstein 1974). He distinguished the world system as comprised of 'core / semi-periphery / periphery' to explain the economic disparities in the global labor market. The characteristics of semi-periphery theory question the claims of dependence theory and provide a theoretical framework to replace them.

Semi-periphery theory is recognized as an alternative to explain the changes in the world HE system resulting from rapid globalization since the late 1980s. According to these assertions, the border between developed and developing countries is blurred, and the middle zone between the center and the periphery is newly emerging. A concrete example is the HE system of the countries of the Asia-Pacific region that have achieved relatively recent economic growth including China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea. Developed countries classify these countries as major targets for investments in HE. Developed countries are strengthening their IHE in these countries through building overseas branch campuses or cooperative programs. These countries are moving from their past

periphery status to semi-periphery positions, or they play a dual role as periphery and center in the periphery (Shi 2017).

SOCIAL MOBILITY EFFECTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Fourth, the internationalization phenomenon of HE is seen in connection with the desire for the social mobility of individuals (Kim 2011, 2015). If the three large theories mentioned above can be helpful in explaining the internationalization phenomenon on a macroscopic level, the internationalization of HE seen on an individual level is focused on the analysis of microscopic personal motivations. This approach sees that an individual's foreign degree obtained through internationalization has a global competitiveness dimension not only in the domestic job market but also in the overseas job market (Kim 2011). Thus, acquiring a degree in advanced countries directly contributes to expanding career opportunities as well as enhancing the social status of participants. In this context, individuals in developing countries recognize IHE as an opportunity to maximize human capital and the cultural capital of participants.

For example, knowledge, skills, creativity, and attitudes acquired from universities in advanced countries have a direct impact as human capital on individual labor productivity and lifetime income growth (Becker 1993). In addition, competent English communication skills acquired by individuals through internationalization serve as an important asset that can become pathways to joining international elites. This approach, which relates IHE to the social mobility of individuals, shows that the acquisition of degrees in advanced countries contributes directly to the accumulation of individual human capital, social capital and cultural capital. It also demonstrates that the processes and outcomes of HE internationalization work simultaneously at the local, national, and global levels (Kim 2015).

The four mentioned theories serve as useful frameworks for explaining the IHE phenomenon from a 'development' perspective both at the macro- and microscopic levels. In particular, the theory of modernization, dependence theory and semi-periphery theory that emerged in the mid-to late twentieth century can help explain the IHE phenomenon particularly in developing countries in a macroscopic way. On the other hand, the approach to IHE, which has a substantial impact on individual social mobility, has recently been recognized more appropriately as involving the relevance of HE effects. The motivation for each individual to approach

Table 3.1 Overseas Korean students in higher education institutions

<i>Year</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2017</i>
Students	217,959	240,949	262,465	227,126	214,696	239,824

Source KEDI (2017). <http://kess.kedi.re.kr/index>

Table 3.2 Overseas Korean students by countries

<i>Year</i>	<i>USA</i>	<i>China</i>	<i>UK</i>	<i>Australia</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Canada</i>	<i>New Zealand</i>	<i>Philippines</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
2017	61,007	73,240	11,065	16,770	15,457	8735	6060	13,257	34,233	239,824
(%)	25.4	30.5	4.6	7.0	6.4	3.6	2.5	5.5	14.3	100.0

Source KEDI (2017). <http://kess.kedi.re.kr/index>

IHE, whether in developed or developing countries, can help to understand and explain the IHE phenomena.

CURRENT STATUS OF IHE IN S. KOREA

Four indicators can be employed to explain the internationalization of Korean HE. The first is the number of students studying at overseas institutions of HE. The number of overseas students over a recent 11-year period increased from 217,959 in 2007 to 239,824 in 2017. The largest number of students in 2011 was 262,465, with an average of 232,221 students studying each year for the past 11 years (Table 3.1). Among them, students studying in the United States constitute an average of 25.4% of all overseas students (Table 3.2). This number is the highest in the world per 10 thousand people. This table also shows the percentage of students attending English-speaking countries. In 2017, the proportion of students studying in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the Philippines, as dominant English-speaking countries was close to 50%, at 48.6%.

Overseas students biased toward the United States have been a common feature that has been confirmed in Korean modern history, and it is also confirmed as a primary practice during the initial stage of nation-building. For example, from 1953 to 1961, the number of students studying overseas was 5406. Of this total, 4653 students studied in the United States, accounting for 86% of all international students (Jeong 1967, cited in Kim

Table 3.3 Foreign students in Korean higher education institutions

<i>Year</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2017</i>
Students	12,314	22,526	49,270	75,850	89,537	85,923	91,332	123,858

Source KEDI (2017). <http://kess.kedi.re.kr/index>

2018, p. 87). The results of the government-funded study abroad program for the past 40 years (1977–2017) also show similar phenomena (Ju 2018). The purpose of this system has been to support scholarships so that talented people selected by the government can learn advanced foreign cultures and contribute to national development. According to the National Institute for International Education in 2018 (cited in Ju 2018), among the 2440 students dispatched with government scholarships over the past 40 years, the United States (67.04%) has the highest percentage, followed by the United Kingdom (7.81%), Japan (2.87%), Russia (2.58%), China (2.45%), Germany (2.33%), and France (1.41%).

The second important datum is the number of international students attending domestic HEIs. The number of foreign students has increased about 10 times over the past 15 years since 2003, when the recording of data began. In 2003, the number was 12,314, rising to 123,858 in 2017 (Table 3.3). These data indicate clearly the characteristics of the internal-oriented internationalization that the government carried out in the 2000s. The government aims to expand the number of foreign students to 200,000 by the year 2020 and has implemented various policies to achieve this objective. Considering the current trend, the number of foreign students will continue to increase.

Third, it is the influence of the English language which is important in lectures and research conducted by major universities in Korea. Major universities in Korea have been obliged to provide English-medium lectures in undergraduate classes for more than 10 years and provide incentives for professors to publish English articles. In particular, the faculty's tendency to publish English papers explicitly underscores the power of English as a medium for both research and teaching. For example, the tendency of publishing articles in SCI journals by Seoul National University (SNU) professors, accepted as Korea's leading university, is an indicator of internationalization trends in research at major universities in Korea (Table 3.4). The results of the last 10 years show that the numbers of articles published

Table 3.4 Research performance 2007–2016 at SNU

<i>Year</i>	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
SCI Journal	4324	4296	4475	5053	5395	5718	5996	6231	6994	6570
KCI Journal	2439	2177	2214	2401	2435	2318	2375	2428	2823	2430

Source SNU Statistics Annual Report (2010, 2013, 2015, 2017)

in SCI journals are about 2–2.7 times higher than the number of articles published in domestic journals. Major university faculty members, including those at SNU, place more importance on publishing articles in English journals than in domestic journals because the university and the government give more weight to publishing numbers of English papers and their citation (Cho 2016).

CHARACTERISTICS OF IHE IN S. KOREA

As we have seen from the previous statistical data, Korea is a country where many students have been studying abroad (especially the United States) since its liberation in 1945. Over the past decade, the government has been implementing policies to accommodate as many foreign students as possible. These two trends are evidence of a unique trend of IHE in Korea, although outward-oriented internationalization and internally oriented internationalization differ in size and content. Here, I discuss some of the significant features based on the analysis; these can be discussed in conjunction with the four theories related to a concept of ‘development.’

A DUAL NATURE APPLICABLE TO BOTH MODERNIZATION AND DEPENDENCE THEORY

The results of the analysis of the internationalization status of Korean HE are relevant to both modernization and dependence theory and explain the process and results of ‘development’ in opposite directions. In particular, the internationalization of Korean HE’s heavy bias toward the United States provides sufficient evidence to recognize the appropriateness of the theories, whichever position we take. This dual feature indicates that Korean HE internationalization is a substantial force in efforts to modernize the university system, even as it is overly dependent on the US HE system in other respects.

From the viewpoint of modernization, Korea has promoted industrialization based on the American model of capitalism during its modernization process and reconstructed and renovated the Korean HE system based on the American model. In the process, US-aid policies and US-centered study abroad programs were key drivers in establishing American academic foundations for Korea's HEIs. As shown in Table 3.2, the high percentage of Korean students in English-speaking countries is a clear indication of an internationalization tendency biased toward the United States. The Korean HE system accepted the American system as it was, and this was reflected in the composition of its undergraduate and graduate school systems. The undergraduate curriculum also accommodates the American system and experience in its quantitative composition and the distribution of academic majors and liberal arts subjects. The curriculum structure and operating system of graduate schools have also reached their present state in a form modeled after the American system.

From the standpoint of dependence theory, Korea has been heavily dependent on intellectual and cultural outcomes developed within the United States in the formation of the HE system and the development of its overall academic climate since its liberation from Japan. In the background has been a strong US influence in terms of Korea's direction and dynamics of both political and economic development processes, the elite status of students having American degrees, the importance of English in admission to education, and American hegemony in the global economy and geopolitics (Kim 2015). A typical example is the biased phenomenon of US degrees held by the professors of so-called prestigious universities. For example, as of 1999 in the case of the College of Social Science, 79 (77.4%) out of 102 professors in Seoul National University, 94 (89.5%) out of 105 professors in Yonsei University and 59 (67%) out of 88 professors in Korea University held US degrees (University Newspaper 1999, cited in Kim 2018, p. 250). Considering that professors specializing in social sciences are recognized as the key intellectuals in diagnosing the reality of Korean society and seeking alternatives, the fact that many of these major college faculty members were studying in the United States indicates the extent to which not only universities but also Korean society as a whole are very dependent on the United States.

THE RELEVANCE OF SEMI-PERIPHERAL THEORY

In the twenty-first century, the type of IHE strongly promoted by the government indicates the possibility of applying the semi-periphery perspective and demonstrates the primacy of underpinning the system with an economic viewpoint, aspects of which are preeminent in recent trends of internationalization in practice. Especially in the 2000s, the changed position of the government within IHE reflects the transition from Korea as an existing importing country to that of being a supply country. The background of this change is Korea's increased international status, documented by its trade volume ranking within the world's top 10, economic growth over \$ 30,000 GDP per capita, and the dramatic growth of popular culture including among others, K-pop. It also reflects the position of governments and universities emphasizing IHE for purposes of direct economic gain.

The government has determined that the outbound IHE has caused a serious national wealth outflow and is pursuing a policy of attracting foreign students to pursue the economic benefits that flow from their participation in the national economy. For example, statistics for the past decade (see Table 3.3) indicated that the number of foreign students studying at tertiary institutions in Korea reached 123,858 as of 2017 (KEDI 2017). In particular, universities are active in supplementing their lack of tuition income resulting from the decline in the domestic entering cohort by attracting foreign students, given that the contribution of international students to the expansion income of receiving universities is very substantial. From a theoretical point of view, recent government-led, inbound-oriented IHE models the characteristics of Asian countries whose growth is based on neoliberalism, entrepreneurship, and market-based performance. The Korean case shows that it is seeking to move away from its periphery status of the past and to transform itself into a core of the periphery. The Korean case shows the applicability of semi-periphery theory to IHE.

KEY MEANS FOR INDIVIDUALS' SOCIAL MOBILITY

The viewpoint of 'social mobility' linking the phenomenon of IHE with individual motivation can be recognized in the Korean case. The experiences of studying in the United States for Korean students is closely linked to individual social status competition (Kim 2011; 2015, p. 46). Korean students want to acquire a foreign degree (especially an American degree)

in order to improve their social status and career opportunities. They pursue global cultural capital to stand out from competitors within domestic universities. Learning experiences at US universities provide Korean students with expertise, English competence and confidence, which result in strengths in getting better job opportunities at universities and businesses both at home and abroad. In particular, the comparative advantages of having an American degree in seeking a university professorship, or research and professional positions are confirmed through various channels. As indicated above, faculty positions at major universities in Korea are dominated by American degree holders. For Koreans, studying abroad is recognized as a key channel for individuals' achievement and social status.

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates that the internationalization of Korean HE is the combined result of complex factors surrounding the effects of HE. These factors not only exist within the university but also its surrounding environments, including the political and economic growth processes of Korea, the development context of Korean universities, and the individual expectations developed within HE. For over 50 years since the middle of the twentieth century, the government has pursued IHE around the dominant context created by the United States in the course of its own national construction and university development. Universities have also actively accepted and imitated the university operating system and academic characteristics accumulated by American universities. Individuals recognize the strong influence of the United States that they directly and indirectly identify within the process of economic growth and social development, and in which they preemptively participate in IHE as a means of social mobility both on an individual level, and those that are confirmed in broader, more diffuse, effects experienced through other social engagements.

The Korean case indicates that the four theories that seek to explain the changes and development process of organizations and individuals and the applicability of each theory are supported in this dimension of social activity by statistical data and a few examples. In conclusion, I emphasize the phenomenon of IHE in Korea from the standpoint of both its universality and specificity dimensions. Here, universality means the characteristics of internationalization that are commonly identified within the global HE system. Specificity means contents that can be confirmed only through the case of Korea.

First, considering the universality of IHE, the Korean case reflects the level of political, economic and social influence between developed and developing countries. The universal characteristics identified in the Korean case show that national and social development and the improvement of individual social statuses are closely linked to IHE at the international, national and individual levels. From the viewpoint of modernization theory, the internationalization of Korean HE is recognized as a practical contribution to national economic growth and the establishment and development of the Korean HE system.

The Korean case also explains the effects of IHE on the individual dimensions of social mobility. The internationalization of Korean HE indicates that individual aspirations loom larger within individual career processes than elements of national influence. IHE in Korea is an important tool for maintaining and promoting the social status of individuals. In the meantime, the results of HE in Korea have played a key role in acquiring status and income for the middle class. In this process, studying abroad has played a key role as a ladder for individual social mobility. This is confirmed by the fact that university professors and graduate students utilize IHE as a concrete and practical means for improving their social status.

Second, in terms of specificity, the Korean case shows some exceptional characteristics. One is that the content and method of IHE is biased almost completely toward the United States model. This is confirmed at government, university, and individual levels. For example, Korea accepts the American model in its HE system, knowledge production structure, and curriculum composition and operation. The results reviewed above indicate the lack of diversity within the HE system. Another characteristic is that the internationalization of Korean HE shows the applicability of semi-periphery theory. A typical example is the number of domestic foreign students which has increased more than ten times over the last 15 years, reflecting both the economic growth and cultural improvements achieved by Korea.

The last characteristic is government-led IHE policies. Such policies have determined the direction and content of internationalization, and universities promote such internationalization in the form of passive responses to government-led policies. This characteristic indicates the degree to which the Korean political system has been maintained as a state-led authoritarian regime for the past 70 years. Specific evidence includes the outward-oriented internationalization that has been conducted by the government

since the middle of the twentieth century and the inward-oriented internationalization that has proceeded in the twenty-first century.

This chapter has discussed the current status and characteristics of IHE in the Korean context by drawing on various theories explaining the development of countries, universities, and individuals. In particular, the theoretical review attempted in this chapter provides an opportunity to comprehensively identify the background, current status, and characteristics of IHE in Korea. This approach suggests that IHE is a result of a combination of individual, university, and governmental factors. These characteristics within the Korean case can be of particular help in re-conceptualizing future IHE dimensions and in building strategies for developing related programs.

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