



# Ideology, nationalism, and education: the case of education reforms in the two Koreas

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## Abstract

This research explores the influences of ideology and nationalism on education reforms in South and North Korea through a comparative historical analysis of education reforms during the transition period from Japanese colonialism to the period of US and Soviet military government control. Ideas of modern education and nationalism had already emerged among Koreans before 1945 when they achieved independence from Japanese colonization. In this sense, during the US and Soviet military regimes, education reforms were conducted in light of already existing efforts for nation-building by indigenous Korean leaders. The hopes and desires of the leaders of the two Koreas, as expressed by their adoption of new ideologies within the newly established military governments, represented a clear break from the past—be that Japanese colonialism or Confucian traditionalism—and a firm determination to change the present for the future in accordance with these ideologies. In the field of education, this change occurred with the introduction of John Dewey’s liberal educational philosophy to rebuild the education system in South Korea, and with the adoption of socialist educational philosophies such as polytechnicism and collectivism in North Korea.

**Keywords** Education reform · Ideology · Nationalism · South Korea · North Korea

## Introduction

This research, through a comparative historical analysis of the process and practice of education reforms made by the US and Soviet military governments in the two Koreas, explores the influences of ideology and nationalism on education reforms, especially for countries undergoing state formation. In particular, this research focuses on the years from 1945 to 1959 when the two Koreas, “began their reconstruction efforts from colonization, military occupation and war” (Kim 2017b, p. 375). Our discussion on the concept of ideology is especially relevant for the Cold War context in which education reforms in many countries took place under big ideological clashes between the US and the Soviet Union.

Ideology, although there is hardly a scholarly consensus on its definition, can be regarded as a belief system through which the present state is evaluated, and the future ideal is presented. Ideology, based on the belief that things in the future will (and ought to) be better, attempts to “change political systems” (Roskin et al. 2016, p. 43). Ideology is thus political in nature and directed toward the public with clearly articulated action plans (Baradat and Phillips 2016; Ingersoll et al. 2001). Such characteristics of ideology allow it to function as a political ideal that every social constituent should pursue and as a tool of political control that penetrates every step of a country’s policy-making processes. In this regard, democratic rules and communist rules that arrived in South and North Korea, respectively, were not different in nature in that both sought to influence the processes of the formation of social institutions, including education systems.

There have been a considerable number of publications in Korean that analyzed the aspects of educational influences of the US in South Korea or the educational influences of the Soviet Union in North Korea during the early Cold War period, although none have compared the two (Ch’oe 1987; Ham 1984; Kang 1991; Puk Chosŏn Nodongdang 1995).

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For example, tracing the ideological functions of education from this perspective, Lee (1989) saw educational influence essentially as a channel for ideological indoctrination through which the US military government tried to implant its democratic values and, as a consequence, to strengthen its sphere of influence in Korea.

However, the formation of modern education systems in South and North Korea was not a mere product of the external imposition of ideologies exercised by the great powers at that time. As unfolds later in this paper, indigenous nationalistic movements had already arisen among the Korean political leaders in opposition to Japanese colonial occupation, even before the US and Soviet military governments seized power on the Korean peninsula. The movements split into various parties along distinct ideas regarding the newly built government systems after independence, and the groups each sought to take advantage of the education system as a way to implant their modern and nationalistic ideas. For example, Lee (2011) and Han (1986) divided the ideological types of education leaders in South Korea during Japanese colonialism and subsequent US military government into three groups—nationalists, conservatives, and left-wing—and analyzed how their ideological beliefs influenced their decisions to support or oppose reform efforts made by the US military government. Both scholars highlighted not only the external pressures but also the inner beliefs of actors which fundamentally influenced the ways in which education reforms were conducted in the local contexts of South Korea.

Despite the considerable number of publications in the Korean language which focused on the roles of indigenous nationalistic groups in Korea in modernizing their education systems, there is a lack of literature that provides a comparative perspective on the effects of ideology and nationalism on education reforms in the two Koreas. The contribution of this paper to the extant literature is thus twofold. First, this paper systemically compares South and North Korea, analyzing how the two Koreas, respectively, encountered similar challenges but ended up taking divergent paths to modernize their education systems during the transition period from Japanese colonialism to military intervention. Second, this paper seeks not only to trace the roles of external powers as the bearers of dominant ideologies onto the peninsula in the process of education reforms but also to reveal how indigenous leaders in both South and North Korea were actively engaged in the processes as the main promoters of the reforms. Few studies have fulfilled these two tasks simultaneously. In doing so, this paper is expected to provide a historical interpretation of the dynamics of the relations between domestic and external actors in educational areas.

This paper develops an argument in the following order: the first two sections outline the theoretical and methodological frameworks used. The third section illustrates the

historical narratives of the development of Korean nationalist movements and subsequent ideological divisions among Korean political and educational leaders. The following sections explore the specific contents of the various belief systems in order to evaluate how their understanding and interpretations of the ideologies of the occupying powers were translated into adoption of the educational philosophies of the US and the Soviet Union in establishing the education systems of the two Koreas.

## Ideology: a theoretical framework

In defining ideology, not only is there little agreement on a conceptual level, but there is also often disagreement among scholars on a more functional level. Baradat and Phillips (2016), in their extensive survey of political ideologies, provided two extreme examples with regard to the definition of ideology. On the one hand, Watkins (1964) defined ideology as a simplified, utopian, revolutionary, and sometimes violent political ideal, primarily advocated by political extremists who are opposed to the status quo. On the other hand, Ball et al. (2016) viewed ideology as a more abstract term that refers to a subject of academic intellect consisting of a set of questions and hypotheses that do not exist in a fixed form. Knight (2006) surveyed the usage of the term ideology by political scientists over the past century and divided its definitions into five broad categories: (i) personal traits, (ii) characteristics of a group, (iii) party/isms, (iv) spatial category, and (v) theoretical discussions. In addition, Hamilton (1987) provided a more critical analysis on the elements of the concept of ideology by critically examining 85 sources, defining it as “a system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes.”

Using the definitions of ideology suggested by various scholars, we defined ideology for this analysis as a system of ideas and beliefs imposed by political leaders to participate in and promote education reforms. One may think of a belief system as a hierarchy ranging from instrumental to philosophical beliefs (George 1969) or from peripheral to core beliefs (Rokeach 1960). Instrumental or peripheral beliefs influence the means, tools, or approaches used by actors to promote their core belief structures. In contrast, philosophical or core beliefs refer to beliefs that constitute the fundamental elements of one’s worldview, view on human nature and political conflict among others. The categorization of different types of beliefs indicates that the concept of ideology pertains to the philosophical or core beliefs that determine overall views of human nature and the world.

Mullins’ (1972) systematic analysis of the concept of ideology provides good insight for linking the concept of ideology with its influences on key leaders’ decision-making processes. For Mullins, ideological belief constitutes a basic

cognitive framework upon which a policymaker deals with specific issues or situations, allowing them to perceive a new situation with historical consciousness and evaluate alternative policies and programs to cope with social changes. Once a decision-maker forms a set of beliefs that are drawn from his or her understanding of ideology, he or she needs to simplify and order these beliefs in order to understand and explain new situations (Mullins 1972). The key action in this process of “abstraction,” especially for political matters, is “to understand situations in terms of their moral significance for human beings, and the normative language of ideology provides reasons for supporting” one social arrangement and political program over another (Mullins 1972, p. 508). Moreover, by elucidating complex realities and reducing them to understandable and manageable terms, ideology comes to have a “logical power” for the decision-maker with its crucial communicative role between the public and the leader. Finally, the logical power of ideology yields “action-oriented power,” making the mobilization of the public according to the leader’s will easier and thus helping to implement a policy effectively (Mullins 1972, p. 510).

Through these steps, ideology can play a key role in the process of regime transition when a new governing principle is needed. Fukuyama (1995) stressed the role of ideology during the transition process, dividing the areas of society where transition occurs into four levels: ideology, institution, civil society, and culture. He argued that changes that occur at the ideological level are intertwined with changes that occur at the other three levels. New leaders, in particular, require ideology as they call for a radical change in the extant order in opposition to the status quo (Watkins 1964) and seek to change the entire set of political systems and social institutions on the basis of the ideology’s grounding philosophies and principles. This line of reasoning leads us to posit that different ideologies will give rise to different sets of social institutions. The role of ideology as a guiding principle during a transition period is not new in contemporary politics, as witnessed in the post-communist transitions after the fall of the Soviet Union. Specifically, democratic political rules and capitalistic economic systems were substituted for their precedent one-party communist and planned economic systems, and such substitution thereafter altered every structure of the society.

By focusing on the role of ideology, this paper is expected to shed light on how the ideological beliefs of political leaders in the two Koreas affected the education reform process during the transition period following independence from Japanese rule. During the US and Soviet military regimes, in particular, the driving force that guided Korean leaders’ decision-making processes was the combination of nationalism and their ideological beliefs, which had been shaped out of their acceptance of the dominant ideologies of the US or the Soviet Union. Thus, the two ideologies became “systems of beliefs that are elaborate, integrated, and coherent, that justify the exercise

of power, explain and judge historical events, identify political right and wrong, set forth the interconnections (causal and moral) between politics and other spheres of activity, and furnish guides for action” (McClosky 1964, p. 362).

## A historical approach

We employed historical documentation and expert interviews as a research methodology in order to contextualize the education reforms in the two Koreas within the backdrop of politico-economic development. Korean and English primary sources including diplomatic and legal sources, social documents, press documents, diaries, letters, and oral records were collected from various archival centers in the US, South Korea, and Japan and reviewed for analysis. Among them, the most reliable sources for the study of South Korea were documents captured by the US military during the Korean War, Record Group 242, Records Seized by the US Military Forces in Korea, 1921–1952. For the study of North Korea, documents such as *Selected Works of Kim Il Sung*, which compile Kim Il Sung’s speeches and ordinances he proclaimed during various conventions, *Kyowon Shinmun* (a newspaper), and publications by North Korean governments and authors were collected and analyzed (Yi 2001, pp. 86–107). Expert interviews were conducted with 12 academics, policy analysts and individuals who were educated in North Korea during 1945–1959.

The difference in terms of the number of Korean and English publications on this topic indicated that the issue of methodological nationalism for research topics that pertain to area studies or involve languages other than English might also arise for this research (Takayama 2011; Willis and Rappleye 2011). In particular, Takayama (2011) pointed out that there is a scholarly disconnect and lack of communication between English-language researchers mainly from Anglo-Saxon academia and indigenous researchers based in non-Western countries. This problem can entail a conceptual or theoretical gulf between the two sides as their epistemological and conceptual foundations come from very different cultural and philosophical backgrounds. In this respect, the perspectives of Korean scholars on this topic, not only on historical and cultural content but also on theoretical and methodological issues, were treated as equally critical as those of English-language scholars.

## The development of Korean nationalism and ideological division

After liberation from Japan, Korea became an ideological battleground under the influences of the two occupying powers, the US and the Soviet Union. In order to trace the

roots of domestic political conflicts associated with the two great powers on the Korean peninsula, the question of how Koreans' ideological consciousness began to emerge begs an answer. The rise of ideological consciousness among the Korean people was stimulated during the independence movement against Japanese colonial rule and culminated in the March First Movement in 1919, which brought Koreans from various social classes into unity. Although the movement failed to bring independence to Korea, Korean nationalism was manifested as a mass phenomenon for the first time, no longer limited to intellectual elites (Lee 1963; Robinson 1988).

After the March First Movement, Korean nationalist leaders formed a unified organization in Shanghai, namely, the Korean Provisional Government, in order to continue the independence movement. The Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai included most of the Korean leaders whose ideological spectrums ranged from moderate cultural nationalists to communist nationalists. Unity among the different nationalist groups within the Provisional Government was weak, since each group sought "different ideologies, supporting different tactics and looking toward different sources of support" (Scalapino and Lee 1972, p. 12). Consequently, the Korean nationalist movement itself split into different groups of individuals who chose to carry out the independence movement separately along the lines of their ideological divisions.

The various nationalist groups encountered a dual task of nation-building and independence, and which of the two tasks had priority differed across the groups. In the process of nation-building, the issue of how to construct and develop the nation's group identity also needed to be dealt with (Brubaker 1992; Citrin and Sears 2014; Mann 1986). Without resort to a political community that rests on a collective national identity, it is difficult for the state to be given political legitimacy from its people (Linz and Stepan 1996). At the same time, the nationalist groups were also left with the task of how to achieve independence from Japanese colonialism as a prerequisite to a sovereign state.

First, moderate Korean nationalist leaders gave weight to nation-building in the colonial context, rather than taking actions for immediate independence from Japan, by navigating ways to self-strengthen and develop the Korean people gradually. They chose to engage in a process of gradual cultural and social transformation and believed that "schools were necessarily an important part of this process" (Green 1990, p. 109). Many of these cultural nationalist leaders were Christian, and their nationalistic efforts largely derived from the belief that Christianity and its moral principles could build Korean people into a strong nation (Chang 2001; Ch'oe 2010). Moderate nationalists spent considerable efforts on education since their main "axiom of statehood" rested on the establishment of a spiritual and moral foundation for

their nation, which they believed could be achieved through education (Wells 1990). To this end, the intellectual enlightenment and moral awakening of the Korean people through educational efforts were perceived to be of the utmost importance among the cultural nationalist leaders (Ch'oe 2010, p. 39). However, the dilemma that they faced during the Japanese colonial era was the question of "how to remain faithful to legitimate nationalist goals within the limits of the cultural policy without crossing the line to outright collaboration" with the Japanese colonists (Robinson 1988, p. 104).

After the March First Movement, a new ideology, communism, began to be widely acknowledged by radical nationalist leaders as an ideological basis to implement the independence movement. The watershed event was the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 held at Versailles in which the request of the Korean delegates to place the matter of Korea's independence on the agenda was turned down. Unlike the expectation of many Korean leaders, "the Korean problem did not come within the purview of the Conference," and while the Japanese were "accepted as representing a great power," Korean delegates were excluded from even presenting their case at the conference (Bonsal 1946, p. 224). Consequently, the delegation leader at Versailles, Kim Kyu-sik, as well as other prominent Korean leaders including Yi Tonghwi and Yŏ Unhyŏng, turned to Moscow to seek alternative support for their nationalistic efforts (Wells 1990).

Outside Korea, Kim Il Sung also joined the Communist Movement in Manchuria in 1926 and later joined the Chinese Communist Party in the 1930s. In the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, Kim became a division commander of the Second Army (Suh 1970). After the disbandment of the guerrilla army, Kim Il Sung and his regiment joined the Russian Army in Khabarovsk in 1941 and participated in the European Front (Scalapino and Lee 1972). Although many Korean communists, at both domestic and foreign fronts, believed that Korea's independence from Japan would be achieved through a communist revolution and that its independence would pave the way for an ultimate communist revolution on the peninsula, they borrowed the communist ideology chiefly as a means to achieve the nation's independence (Scalapino and Lee 1972). In other words, Korean communists' primary objective was to construct a state (*Gesellschaft*) on the Korean peninsula by restoring their sovereignty through independence.

Ideological divisions among nationalist leaders re-emerged after liberation from the Japanese in 1945 with the arrival of the competing ideologies of the US and the Soviet Union. Both cultural and communist nationalists made their move to fill the political and institutional vacuum that was created out of the liberation and secure their own power bases in the country. Firstly, indigenous groups inside Korea began to emerge immediately after liberation. For example,

Yŏ Un-hyŏng (1885–1947), a moderate left-wing nationalist, exercised his influence on Korean politics by forming the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence in the South, and Cho Man-sik (1883–1950), a more leftist nationalist, emerged as a political force as he established the People's Political Committee of the Five Provinces in the North (*Ibuk odo inmin chŏngch'i wiwŏnhoe*, PPCFPN). In the meantime, the nationalist leaders who had been conducting their activities abroad returned to Korea. In particular, Kim Ku (1876–1949), who was a right-wing nationalist, and Syngman Rhee, who was a far-right nationalist and anti-communist, returned to South Korea to represent the leadership of the provisional government. Furthermore, Kim Il Sung, a communist, returned to North Korea with the support of the Soviet military.

In terms of political organizations, the first modern political party established on the Korean peninsula after liberation was the Communist Party of Korea (*Joseon Gongsan Dang*) led by Pak Hon-yong, a communist independence activist, and his leftist colleagues. Soon after, its rightist counterpart, the Korea Democratic Party (*Hankook Minju Dang*), was founded by a group of rightist political elites. A number of more moderate leftist and rightist parties such as the People's Party of Korea (*Chosun Inmin Dang*) led by Yŏ Un-hyŏng and the National Party of Korea (*Chosun Kookmin Dang*) led by An Jae-hong were also established, laying the ground for further ideological divisions (Kang 2018). With political organizations proliferating across the peninsula, and despite their efforts to thwart the trusteeship agreement, Koreans were met with the military regimes of the US and the Soviet Union in South and North Korea, respectively.

### Adoption of liberal education in South Korea

From the beginning of the US military occupation in South Korea, the new goals of education, based on liberal democracy, were mentioned and discussed in many US military government reports and documents about education. Eventually, the objective of education in Korea was officially determined in the fourth plenary session on December 20, 1945. An Chae-hong, who was the head of the sub-committee Educational Purpose and Objective of the National Committee on Educational Planning, provided a report on education which defined the two pillars of Korean education: liberal democracy and nationalism. According to a sub-report for the Korean educational commission, the US military government viewed the development of a new education system as a way to “rebuild a national life on a democratic basis,” and “provide the foundations for a democratic society” (SCAP Sub-report, 21 January 1945, p. 1).

The democratization of education during the US military government in South Korea should be understood

within the context of the continuity of the Christian influence and nationalism that had begun during the Japanese colonial experience (Kim 1990; Chang 2001; Ch'oe 2010). For example, since Lieutenant General John R. Hodge, who was appointed a commander of the US army forces in South Korea, had little knowledge of Korean matters, he relied on the advice of American missionaries such as Underwood and Fisher to select pro-American, Christian Korean leaders for the chief administrators and advisors in the government. The influence of Christianity was also evident in a survey of Korean students in the US during the early 1920s, all of whom were Christian (Kim 1990). This aspect is significant for this analysis because many of the students who had studied in the US during the 1920s and 1930s returned to Korea to teach in Christian schools and subsequently became chief Korean advisors to American military officers in charge of education reforms during the US military regime. Notable examples include O Chŏn-sŏk, Baek Nak-jun (George Paik), and Kim Hwal-lan (Hellen Kim) (Kim 1990, 2001). “As innovative nationalist leaders infused with Western knowledge,” these Christian academics in private colleges became significant agents of educational modernization during and after the Japanese colonial period and also “affected the reorientation of Korean society after Liberation” (Kim 2001, p. 87). Also, among the books on Korea recommended for American military officers, Underwood's and Fisher's books on Korean education were listed not only for their information on Korean education matters but also for their perspectives on the democratization of Korean education (An 2009).

On March 21, 1947, a Korean radio program broadcast a translated message on democracy from the US Secretary of State, which gives a good summary of the concept of liberal democracy that was promoted in South Korea at the time:

I understand that several interpretations exist for the term, democracy. But American government as well as American citizens believe that all human beings have an innate right which guarantees that, as long as one does not breach the other's rights, one has freedom to develop his or her own mind, heart and soul in his or her own ways, free from oppressions and fear. According to our [Americans'] opinions, if one who respects the other's rights, cannot express his or her own faith and conscience because of fear of exclusion from his or her own family and friends, that society cannot be called democracy. If we live in a society in which a citizen...lives in fear that his or her pursuits of freedom, happiness and life can be deprived, that society cannot be called democracy (Kim 1995, pp. 154–155).

Along this same line, O Chŏn-sŏk, one of the chief Korean advisors in the education administration of the US military government, explained the concept in terms of reforming

individuals' lifestyles. In particular, he explained that since democracy is not a matter of form and theory but of heart and lifestyle, democracy should include reforming a person's behaviors, attitudes, emotions, and thoughts rather than reforming a political system or a country in entirety. From this perspective, he argued that democratic education should help students form a proper outlook on life and become responsible for their own tasks and duties (O 1975). In particular, O explained the needs of educational reform and the direction of "the New Education" as follows:

1. To eradicate the feudal and authoritarian vestiges of Japanese colonialism and to introduce a new educational system based on liberal democratic ethos;
2. To exclude the educational goal of Japanese colonial government which exploited people for its imperial ambitions and to introduce an educational goal which regards human beings as the supreme value;
3. To introduce education which promotes respect and love, treating a person's freedom and rights as fundamental value of the society instead of a Japanese colonial education which trained people to become obedient citizens for Japanese rule;
4. To value individualism, with its respects for individual students' personalities, capacities, hobbies, and hopes in education, instead of totalitarian education which subjected individuals to a total state;
5. To emphasize the formation of whole personality in education, rather than an education which merely delivers knowledge of the past (O 1975, pp. 32–35).

According to the majority of secondary literature, the primary philosophical foundation for the New Education was based on the American progressive educational philosophy of John Dewey. The term New Education (*Saekyoyuk* in Korean) was borrowed from Dewey's use of the term in *Experience and Education*, where he contrasted "new education" indicating a progressive education with "old education" indicating a traditional education (Kim 1975, p. 77). Dewey's progressive education became popular during the 1920s and 1930s in the US and is still considered one of the dominant educational philosophies. For Dewey, school was a "miniature community" and "embryonic society" in which students learn and cultivate virtues of democracy since a democratic society entails a type of education "which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control" (Dewey 1916, p. 115), and promotes "free intercourse and communication of experience" (p. 101). His educational philosophy was deeply related to his understanding of democracy as a way of life: "a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Dewey 1916, p. 99). He, therefore, felt that schools should become the

most basic ground in which children learn how to express their individuality and interests in free communications and lively experiences, and, in the process, contribute to building a democratic society that "would serve to develop the talents and interests of each member of those communities in an effort to develop potential and encourage growth" (Hickman 2006, p. 68).

John Dewey's educational philosophy was introduced in South Korea by Korean education administrators and leaders with the support of the US military government in the name of the New Education Movement (Kim 2017a). They tried to make educational reform more "action-oriented" by introducing the public to the philosophy, thus paving the way for effective policy implementation (Mullins 1972, p. 510). Not only was the New Education Movement "a reaction against the classical and authoritarian systems of the past and a call for recognition of the student as an individual with peculiar characteristics to be considered and personal needs to be met," but it also satisfied the political interests of the US military which wanted to implant its own liberal democratic ideals in the Korean education system (Adams 1960, p. 30; Pak and Pan 2005, p. 68). As a result of the efforts by indigent educational leaders and administrators, the foundation of educational philosophy was established on the basis of liberal democratic principles after the establishment of the independent government of the Republic of Korea in 1948 followed by the US military government (Paek 1963).

### Adoption of communist education in North Korea<sup>1</sup>

In the case of North Korea, the implementation of Soviet ideology in the education system worked more systematically and quickly due to the nature of the communist regime. For the Soviet military government, the issue of government agency was rather straightforward compared to the US military government, since the bureaucratic machine was established much more efficiently in different provinces and domestic political opponents to the government were quickly purged from the beginning of the regime. Thus, in pursuing the organizational goal, "that is an objective whereby their organizational activity is bound together to achieve a satisfaction of their diverse personal motives" (Simon 1997, p. 14), the Soviet military government in North Korea did not allow for the diversity that characterizes liberal democratic societies. Instead, it followed a single line of authority and order from the onset of regime control. As in all other areas

<sup>1</sup> Most of the ideological discussions that pertain to the educational philosophy of North Korea are referred to in Kim Il Sung's name due to the totalitarian nature of the government. Therefore, although the details of the educational philosophy must have been made by different individuals, they are referred to in Kim Il Sung's speeches or remarks and thus cited mostly by his publications in this section.

of bureaucracy, the North Korean education system was established under the direct influence of the Soviet military authorities.

In Kim Il Sung's speech entitled "On Improving and Strengthening the Work of Teachers' Training College" at a Meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of North Korea on 5 January 1948, the objective of education was set as follows:

*Political and ideological content and scientific accuracy must be fully guaranteed in education so that all students are thoroughly equipped with progressive thought and a wealth of scientific knowledge...Party organizations should intensify education to eliminate the ideological survivals of Japanese imperialism lingering among teachers and to equip them with progressive, democratic thought. They should be brought to understand fully our Party's line, decisions and directives and informed of the internal and external situation in good time (Kim Il Sung Selected Works vol. 4, 1983, pp. 5–10). [emphasis added]*

As indicated in the speech, the Party's educational objective was to train the younger generation, who could "serve the country and the people with devotion." Therefore, the key element in education and training was to bring the Party's line of ideology to the next generation with "*political and ideological content and scientific accuracy*" (Kim Il Sung Selected Works vol. 4, 1983, pp. 5–10).

For this purpose, the cultivation and training of workers were deemed essential, and educational processes were dictated with these goals in mind (Kyoyuk pun'gwa chipp'il wiwŏnhoe 1961, p. 12). In particular, Kim Il Sung argued that in order to achieve the transition of power from capitalists to workers, the cultivation and training of workers were fundamental in the establishment of a socialist and communist state (Kim 1979, p. 369; Kyowŏn Shinmunsa 1992, p. 32; Kyoyuk pun'gwa chipp'il wiwŏnhoe 1961, p. 12). This emphasis on technical and vocational education was in sharp contrast to the stress put on humanities education in Western capitalistic societies, which was largely reserved for elite classes (Ch'oe 1987).

Krupskaya, who was a prominent educator in the Soviet Union as well as Lenin's wife, strongly emphasized linking education and productive labor and encouraged students to nurture their ability to plan and implement projects through various activities inside and outside school (Kyoyuk pun'gwa chipp'il wiwŏnhoe 1961; Pak 1991). Krupskaya envisioned that this training would eventually produce "a person who understands all the interrelations between the different branches of production, the role of each, the tendencies of the development of each" (McNeal 1973, p. 203).

Her theory was a progenitor of polytechnicism, "an all-round study of the labour of the populace" (McNeal 1973, p. 203). North Korean authorities followed this view, claiming that in order for education to have practical implication for a life that is predominantly shaped by the material forces of production, knowledge or skills to increase one's productivity in the given mode of production should be nurtured in the educational processes (Kyoyuk pun'gwa chipp'il wiwŏnhoe 1961; Pak 1991). Communist education was implemented in order to foster the "action-oriented" nature of communist ideology in North Korea, thus enabling communication among group members to mobilize themselves for the regime's chosen policies and goals (Mullins 1972, p. 510).

Kim Il Sung argued that students should learn how to implement knowledge acquired at schools into reforming their society (Kim 1967). He made numerous cabinet decisions from late 1949 to 1955 that gave preferential treatment to technicians working in various industries, especially those working in mines, the coal industry, the forestry industry, the railway industry, and the construction industry. These decisions dictated that technician workers in factories and research institutes be given bonuses in accordance with years of experience and level of their academic degree (Nodongdang Nodong kwahak yŏn'guso 1955). One of the most fundamental characters that a person should exhibit was a socialist or communist work morale that "involves a willingness to work indefatigably and a sense of duty to accept every task that the society deems as necessary. Marxist theoreticians and educational philosophers regarded this as their most significant goal—a society in which workers gain both subjective and objective satisfaction in their work" (Fishman and Martin 1987, p. 33).

In addition to a strong emphasis on technical education, socialist education accentuated the importance of collectivism. Collectivism in the socialist context meant that society as a whole could be changed by educating citizens into true "communist men" who would adhere to a socialist worldview and revolutionary spirit throughout their lives (Matthews 1982, p. 2). A prominent Russian educator, Makarenko, devised the educational theory of collectivism based on his experience running two communes for juvenile offenders and orphans in Ukraine. He defined a collective body as "a rationally organized and effective body" which runs like "a social organism" and never like a crowd (i.e., a random collection of people) (Makarenko 1964, p. 246). Through this collective educational process, a child becomes a disciplined citizen of the country who "always, under all conditions, is able to choose a correct line of conduct which is of greatest service to the community, and who had it in him to go through with it in face of all difficulties and obstacles" (Makarenko 1964, p. 174).

Similarly, one of the aims of schooling in North Korea was to create and nurture a collective consciousness (Kim 2017a). One of the important objectives of education was to produce “fighters armed with Marx-Leninist ideologies” (Pak 1991, pp. 146–148). This goal was followed by strong political indoctrination through the strict control of communication and education in schools, mass media, and even families (Lee 1985). In this regard, communist ideology as exhibited in the education system of North Korea clearly exhibited the cognitive and logical power of ideology by describing “the contours of reality, not merely as it exists, but also [how] it might be shaped depending on the intervention of politically organized human beings in the historical process” (Mullins 1972, p. 508). In the process, the normal thought processes of individuals belonging to a social group in North Korea were unified, directed, and refined to a thought structure that was ultimately used as an essential tool for revolution.

Especially when combined with the workings of totalitarianism, the communist system provided a convenient excuse to overthrow and eliminate elements or persons which were deemed unnecessary or contradictory to building a New Communist Society and New Communist Men. These radical actions were present in most communist countries, but they were more pronounced in those states that had to rebuild their nation-states out of revolutions and wars. Examples include Russia, as seen in the breakout of the Russian Revolution after the First World War and the emergence of Stalinism after the Second World War; China, as seen in Mao’s communist revolutions after the Chinese Civil War and subsequent political split from the Soviet Union; and Vietnam, as seen in a series of nationwide political and economic reforms after the Vietnam War. In particular, the transition process occurred more intensely in North Korea since anti-communists who were fighting against the Soviet authorities in North Korea simply left for South Korea by late 1945 or early 1946 when they saw what was happening. Others in the middle ground simply gave in, seeing the limits of what could be done (E-mail Interview, Lee).

In this way, communist ideology was quickly incorporated into the North Korean education system as a conduit for channeling actions for social reform (Mullins 1972). Consequently, the earliest function of the education system in North Korea was as a propagator of the communist ideology: it enabled the leaders in North Korea to communicate the esoteric concepts of socialist-communism to the Korean public, most of whom were experiencing it for the first time in their life. As a result, not only was the communist ideology established as a common view or belief system held by Koreans in North Korea but the Korean public was mobilized to bring about changes in the whole societal outlook in times of great social and political change.

## Conclusion

Korean leaders used education as a major platform to push for modernization at the twilight of the ancient kingdom during the late nineteenth century and to pursue nationalistic aims during the Japanese colonial period. In this sense, education and schools in Korea became the primary agents that shaped indigenous ideologies and defined national identities for the Korean pupils who later became political and educational leaders. The liberation from the Japanese was expected to provide a long-awaited opportunity for Korean leaders and the public to build a modern nation-state on the Korean peninsula with their own hands, but the arrival of the US and Soviet military regimes proved a greater challenge. However, ideas of modern education and nationalism had already emerged among Koreans well before 1945, and, in this sense, the education reforms during the US and Soviet military regimes were conducted in the light of already existing efforts for modernization and nation-building by Korean leaders. This contextual perspective provides an important clue to understanding Korean decision-makers’ motivations for participating in policy-making and implementation processes during and after the US and Soviet military regimes, a critical aspect that affected the *modus operandi* of translating policy into practice. For the Korean leaders who were involved with educational reforms as well as for the Korean public, education was perceived as a major vehicle to carry out their nation-building and state formation projects which had been long postponed due to the foreign interventions during the late Nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In fact, the hopes and desires, as expressed by their adoption of new ideology by Korean leaders within the newly established US and Soviet military governments, clearly exhibited the cognitive power of ideology in that both represented a clear break from the past—be that Japanese colonialism or Confucian traditionalism—and a firm determination to change the present for the future. In the education field, reform was conducted with the introduction of John Dewey’s liberal educational philosophy in South Korea, and with the adoption of socialist philosophy such as polytechnicism and collectivism in North Korea. In this respect, the formation and development of modern education in the two Koreas was not the same as that of modern education in Europe. In Europe, modern education was introduced as a result of state formation in many countries and was clearly at the heart of this state formation process (Green 1990). In other words, schooling became “a major agent of acculturation, shaping individuals to fit into societies and cultures broader than their own” (Weber 1976, p. 212), thus playing a major role as “an instrument of unity” (Weber 1976, p. 214) in the process of state formation.



On the other hand, the formation of modern education in Korea was not necessarily driven by the formation of the state. Before a “modern” sense of state was formed in Korea, a sense of nation, a so-called sense of “imagined community,” was already in existence and developed due to the imagined sense of togetherness (Anderson 1983, pp. 5–7). In fact, the critical conceptual element—that is state—is missing in defining modern education in Korea. Rather, the principal agents who planted the seeds of modern education in Korea were reform-minded individuals with nationalistic sentiments. This is important not only in analyzing the ideological influence of educational reforms of both South and North Korea but also in deriving lessons for other countries undergoing state formation. Although systemic features for educational reform could be imposed from outside forces, such as the US and the Soviet Union in the case of the two Koreas, internal forces which could sustain and develop the imposed features over time and on the ground become imperative for the successful implementation of the reforms.

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