

The Rapid Growth of Higher Education in South Korea: Achievements, Dilemmas, and Resolutions

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education in South Korea (hereafter Korea) has grown rapidly, demonstrating various changes in its speed, scope, and system within a short period of time. In 30 years, higher education enrollment rates have increased more than sixfold from 11.4 percent in 1980 to 70.1 percent in 2010. The number of higher education institutions, in the case of four-year universities, increased from 34 in 1952 to 200 in 2010 (Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute 2014). The system of higher education remained an elite system through the 1970s and then transitioned into a massification stage during the 1980s and 1990s, becoming a universal system in the 2000s, according to the framework of higher education classified by Martin Trow (1973, 2005). Since the early 2000s, Korea has established a universalized higher education system where students graduating from high school can access two-year colleges or four-year universities if they want to continue their studies. The rapid changes in the characteristics of Korean higher education provide an unprecedented case for considering the history of higher education globally.

Higher education in Korea took on a significant role in the economic growth and social democratization of Korean society over the past 50 years. In terms of Gross National Income per capita, Korea increased about 331 times from \$79 in 1960 to \$26,205 in 2013 (The Bank of Korea Digital Library

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2014). Through industrialization and economic growth, individuals receiving a higher education played a pivotal role in shifts to manpower through access to the intellectual capital of research and development (Jang 2007). Also, university students in Korea participated in the breakdown of authoritarian regimes at every important juncture through student movements and contributed to building a social system available to expand individual political freedom through elections. Moreover, they contributed to enhancing the rights of workers by joining labor movements. Their participation in social democratization and labor movements played a key role in correcting injustices and inequalities caused by compressed economic growth under authoritarian regimes (Lee and Park 1990).

Looking at the contributions of higher education in terms of macro level economic growth and social democratization, Korean higher education played a substantial role in educating skilled manpower and producing responsible democratic citizens. However, by observing the reality of Korean higher education in more detail from the micro level perspective, it has faced various issues that were ignored and overlooked under compressed economic growth. For example, there has been a low rate of university graduate employment, a heavy dependence on private contributions, an intensified university ranking system, and heavy government regulation. Considering that the results of higher education should contribute positively to changing an individual's quality of life and to developing a sustainable society, the issues facing Korea's higher education must be analyzed and dealt with seriously for the future development of higher education.

The purpose of this chapter is to comprehensively review the rapid growth of higher education over the past 50 years, analyze key dilemmas facing Korean higher education, and discuss future resolutions for developing higher education in Korea. In the following section, the current higher education system will be examined by focusing on the goals each institution sets and the current institutional status including the types of institution, the number of institutions, and the numbers of students, faculty, and staffs. The third section describes achievements of Korean higher education by exploring two themes, the expansion of opportunity in higher education and its contributions to social democratization. In the fourth section, key dilemmas challenging Korean higher education will be discussed focusing on the worsening of graduate employment, the heavy reliance on private funding, the intensified system of university ranking, and the tightening of government regulations.

KOREAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Korean school system consists of a 6-3-3-4-year program, which has a single ladder system that all students can follow linearly from elementary school to university. The current structure is based on six years at the elementary level covering grades 1–6, three years of middle school covering 7–9 grades, three years of high school covering 10–12 grades, and four years of university.

After 12 years of formal education, students advance to higher education, and that system of higher education can be understood through two approaches. The first is to review the goals of higher education institutions from a macro viewpoint and the second is to survey various elements of the current higher education system (types of institution, and their various sizes and distribution of personnel).

From a macro perspective, one can observe two common features. One is that the goal of higher education is to educate manpower to fill individually satisfying professional jobs and to be useful for society. In particular, students and parents emphasize the value of vocational education that teaches knowledge and skills available for future jobs when choosing higher education. The government also emphasizes vocational education as a key element to the kinds and levels of economic growth that local and national communities are looking toward in the future. The second major goal of higher education is to discover potential in individuals and to educate them to become well-informed citizens imbued with social responsibility. This goal, which also reflects the perspective of faculty members in universities, emphasizes the role of higher education for sustainable development of social communities. Even though the two above goals can be different depending on the characteristics and size of each institution, in general, the goals institutions pursue are likely to combine vocational education and general education.

Another, current higher education dimension can be understood through indicators such as the types of institutions, the number of students, faculty, and staff, which are key elements of any higher education system (Kim 2008; Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute 2014). The variety of institutional types and individual program styles varies. The largest and the most significant of these programs are universities. They offer multiple majors from humanities to medical science and provide multiple degrees ranging from four-year undergraduate degrees to PhD's. The second largest component of the Korean higher education system consists of junior colleges and technical colleges, which typically offer associate bachelor degrees requiring two to three years of full-time study, depending on the subject. Additionally, teaching universities offer four-year programs to train elementary school teachers. They are supported and controlled by the central government. The Air and Correspondence University, which was originally established in 1972 by the government to absorb the burgeoning demand for higher education in the 1970s with a radio correspondence school curriculum, has used TV as the medium of instruction since 1990. Along with the development of information and communication technology, more programs are provided through the Internet. There are also 19 private cyber-universities offering associate and bachelor degrees.

In 2014, Korea had 433 HEIs (Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute 2014). Of these the proportion of private institutions is significant including 374 private colleges and universities owned by private foundations and the remaining 59, called national or public

universities, were owned by the central government or by local governments. There were also 189 four-year universities, out of which 154 were private and 34 national, with one public institution owned by the local government. Also, there were 139 junior colleges, of which 130 were private, and of the remaining, two were national and seven were public. Also, there was one Air and Correspondence University, two industrial universities, and one technical college. Total enrollment in higher education in 2014 was more than 3.6 million. More than 2.2 million students were enrolled in universities, with approximately 740,000 students in junior colleges and 220,000 in the Air and Correspondence University. More than 88,000 faculty members worked in HEIs with a total number of clerical staff of about 35,000.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH KOREA

The overall achievements of Korean higher education can be examined from two perspectives. First, HEIs played a key role in educating manpower needed for Korea's period of exceptionally rapid economic growth by expanding the range and availability of higher education opportunities, a level of expansion which at the time constituted an unprecedented case globally of linking economic expansion and higher education provision. The higher education system in Korea moved into its universal stage, much like a secondary school system, so high school graduates who wanted to study more could access college and university. Second, university students in Korea contributed significantly to social democratization, helping to build a democratic political system. Their participation in the movement of democracy brought about the overthrow of authoritarian dictatorships and facilitated the building of a democratic nation, while also enhancing the rights of workers.

THE EXPANSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

The rapid expansion of higher education opportunity began in earnest in 1981, when the enrollment rate of higher education increased swiftly in terms of quantitative growth. It can be said that higher education policies implemented before 1981 represented a form of stability model with the higher education system changing very little. By contrast higher education policies after 1981 were different from their predecessors as they focused on the rapid expansion of changing the system itself.

The rapid expansion of higher education can be identified through two major indicators (Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute 2014). One is the number of institutions over time. The other is the number of students and the enrollment rate over time. The number of institutions steadily increased from 1952 to 1980, followed by subsequent changes since 1980 that were drastic in terms of their speed and scale. In 1952 the country had only 34 HEIs, which subsequently increased to 52 in 1960, 71 in 1970, 96 in 1980, 124 in 1990, 191 in 2000, and to 200 in 2010. The number

of junior colleges followed a similar pattern, increasing substantially from 65 in 1970 to 128 in 1980, and reaching a peak of 158 in 2000 before decreasing to 139 in 2014. Taken as a whole, the expansion of Korean higher education was driven and realized by two-year private colleges and four-year private universities located in local areas. In recent years, the number of colleges and universities has decreased because the government has merged or closed some colleges and universities based on the university structural change policy for considering the decline of school-aged children (Yeom 2015).

The second major indicator of the rapid expansion of higher education is the number and rate of students enrolled and the corresponding number of academic staff (Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute 2014). In 1952, only 31,342 students were enrolled in universities. The numbers of students combined in both junior colleges and universities increased to 92,930 by 1960, 179,897 by 1970, 577,455 by 1980, 1,431,921 by 1990, 2,770,200 by 2000, and 2,971,894 in 2013. The enrollment rate increased more than two times every ten years from 11.4 percent in 1980 to 23.6 percent in 1990, and to 52.5 percent in 2000, when Korea's higher education system entered its universal stage. The rate then increased to 65.2 percent in 2005 and to 70.1 percent in 2010 and with a slight drop recently (2013) to 68.7 percent. Similarly, the number of staff members gradually increased from 20,510 in 1980, to 33,025 in 1990, to 56,738 in 2000, and to 71,257 in 2010. The number of academic staff increased substantially between 1990 and 2000 during the period of most rapid expansion. Overall, these indicators, particularly the enrollment rate, demonstrate the rapid growth of higher education, over a period of about 30 years beginning in 1981 (Yeom 2015).

Contribution to Social Democratization

Fifty years after the establishment of the government in 1948, Korea experienced for the first time a peaceful turnover of political power in East Asia through the election in 1997. The regime change was a symbolic event demonstrating the growth of Korean democracy. University students played a major role in achieving social democratization. Particularly, through political involvement and sacrifices made in crucial moments, they contributed to overcoming inequalities that had resulted from the form of industrialization based on the policies of compressed economic growth. Analyzing student movements led by university students, reveals two historically different types (Lee and Park 1990). In the first, during the 1960s and through the 1970s, it was believed that it was possible to build a democratic society by overthrowing the authoritarian dictatorship. In contrast, however student movements since the 1980s have shifted their positions to focus on issues of the intervention of foreign powers, and the manner in which the inherent contradictions of capitalism create a need to be aware of the creation of injustices and inequalities, and their threat to the goal of creating a more just society.

The key forces of these student movements played a pivotal role in transforming Korean society through active involvement in the movement for democratization. For example, in the April 19, 1960 Revolution, students demonstrated against the government, arguing that the fraudulent presidential election of 1960 must be invalidated and a new election held. As a result of the participation and sacrifices of university and secondary school students, Rhee Syng-man, the first president of Korea, stepped down, taking responsibility for the election. The elected vice president Lee Gi-bung's family committed suicide together (Hong 2010). The May 18 Gwangju Democratization Movement was a historical event that took place from May 18 to May 27, 1980. Citizens living in the area of Gwangju and the Jeollanam-do province stood up to the new military regime, arguing for an "immediate establishment of a democratic government," "the resignation of the new military force including Army Security Commander Jeon Doo-hwan," and "the abolition of martial law." During the Gwangju democratic movement, university students resisted the martial law army of airborne troops and were brutally suppressed. Students influenced Korean democratization movements throughout the 1980s, particularly impacting the June Democracy Movement in 1987 (Na 2002). The June Democratic Uprising was a nationwide democracy movement that took place from June 10 to June 29, 1987 in support of an anti-dictatorship policy and advocating for the democratization of Korean society. The June Democracy Movement deeply influenced Korean democratization with the result that this movement created an advanced political system including a direct presidential election system. University students played a key role at the beginning and throughout the progression of the movement (Jung 2006).

The appearance of student movements in the 1980s, which followed on the expansion of opportunities in higher education in 1981, was an unintended result from the military government's position on the function of higher education. Student activists in the 1980s composed and studied their own curriculum voluntarily and analyzed social issues facing Korean society and participated in and sought to change the political and social system through active involvement. The key agendas they initiated for political direction included anti-dictatorship struggles and democratization, self-reliance movements from foreign-force intervention, and overcoming the divided country through reunification (Kim 2007). Movements led by university students in Korea had traditionally been in favor of workers and contributed to enhancing workers' rights by advocating for the working field as a subject of political change, by helping workers be politically aware, and by supporting labor unions (Yoo 2013). Student involvement in social movements combated various injustices and inequalities that existed in Korean society and created opportunities to arrange and manage conflicts among stakeholders through various social systems. By such actions university students worked to move Korean society forward, maintaining a democratic system and one of legal rule in the management of conflicts.

DILEMMAS FACING KOREAN HIGHER EDUCATION

The rapid growth of Korean higher education has resulted in various dilemmas that could deeply affect the overall goals of higher education and its results in terms of individual and social perspectives. The dilemmas, which demonstrate the different interests among stakeholders involved in higher education, have been disputed for a long time and seem not close to being resolved. The issues represent sharp divisions when considering the goals of higher education, such as: who is responsible for paying for it, how to enhance the equity of higher education opportunity, and how to guarantee the accountability and autonomy for higher education management? These dilemmas symbolically demonstrate the range of issues facing Korean higher education and could be major resources for discovering future directions to go forward.

The Low Rate of University Graduate Employment

Graduate employment, particularly of students from four-year universities, has not met expectations, and has created challenges for employers, graduates, and the society as a whole (Yeom 2015). For example, the annual average graduate employment rate for the past 30 years has remained around 60 percent. The total employment rate of higher education graduates integrating two-year colleges and four-year universities was 54.7 percent in 1985, 67.6 percent in 1995, 74.4 percent in 2005, and 58.4 percent in 2013 (Statistics Korea 2014). Looking at the employment rate reveals two important features. First, the graduate employment rate of junior college graduates is higher than four-year university graduates, since graduates from junior colleges are considered professional workers having skills immediately available for industrial sites and demand less wages compared to four-year university graduates. Second, the graduate employment rate of four-year universities is not high. The lowest rate recorded was 51.8 percent in 2010, which means that almost half of university graduates were not able to get a job following graduation.

The employment rate has remained relatively constant with no major changes for the past 30 years, though the rate has shown some differences depending on business conditions each year. The rapid quantitative expansion of higher education does not match graduate employment. According to Choi (2008), highly educated people have become abundant while the jobs they are looking for have declined. Also, there has been a mismatch between the employment terms offered by industries and the expectations of university graduates, as well as a lack of infrastructure to deal with the mismatch. In this context, the government places more value on vocational education and emphasizes the graduate employment rate as a key indicator in evaluating HEIs. However, different voices have been raised against the government position, which focuses primarily on the employment rate. The key argument from critics states that if HEIs downplay general education, which is supposed to educate citizens and inform their sense of social responsibility, they would lose their important value

system and such graduates could not help build a social community. Therefore, it is important to find a balance between vocational education and general education in order to fulfill the overall goals of higher education.

Heavy Reliance on Private Burden

The Korean government has not invested properly in a public budget for higher education, despite the expansion of the system, and has instead depended on individuals and private HEIs for the financing to deal with expansion. According to “Education at a Glance 2013” (Korean Educational Development Institute 2013), college tuition in Korea is among the highest for countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the tuition impacts the ratio of the private burden of public education expenses, which in Korea has maintained the top position for the past 13 years. The ratio of private burden is much greater in higher education than primary and secondary education. The ratio of the private burden for both cases, for example, 0.9 percent for primary and secondary and 1.9 percent for higher education, are the highest among OECD member countries. However, the ratio for primary and secondary education is three times higher than the average of OECD countries (0.3 percent), and for Korean higher education is almost four times higher when compared with the OECD average (0.5 percent). The government burden for Korean higher education in the public education sector compared with GDP had increased from 0.3 percent in 1995 to 0.6 percent in 2000, and started to decrease to 0.3 percent by 2002. Since 2003, it has maintained at 0.6 percent annually, except for a slight decline to 0.5 percent in 2005, and an increase to 0.7 percent in 2009. Although the budget supporting higher education has increased steadily, the budget has still not reached the OECD average of 1.1 percent.

The ratio of private institutions to public institutions in Korea is relatively higher, and the heavy reliance on private HEIs has gradually increased (Ministry of Education and Korean Educational Development Institute 2014). For example, the level of enrollment for private four-year universities has remained almost the same, at 75.4 percent in 1970 and 76.4 percent in 2010. The ratio for private two-year colleges increased from 57.0 percent to 97.2 percent during the same period of time. The number of private four-year HEIs was 159 (79.5 percent) out of 200 in 2010, and the number of private two-year colleges was 136 (93.8 percent) out of 145 in 2010. In addition, the major sources of operational revenue for private HEIs consisted of tuition, gifts, and donations from the owners of universities, other donations, endowments, and government subsidies, to name a few. The primary contribution, however, to operational revenue was tuition. Specifically, tuition contributed 68.8 percent to operational expense in 1995, increased to 69.2 percent in 2000, and again to 73.9 percent in 2005. Since, it has decreased somewhat from 71.5 percent in 2010 to 71.2 percent in 2011, and to 66.6 percent in 2012. The percentage of contributions from tuition has decreased following the introduction of the

limitation of tuition increases and the committee of tuition review. Also, the government introduced a kind of national scholarship as a tool for inputting governmental subsidies (Korea Higher Education Research Institute 2012). In this context, in order to improve HEIs' educational settings and decrease the relative private burden, the government must expand its financial investment to match at least the level of the OECD average.

Intensified University Rankings

The impact of University ranking has been intensifying as higher education expands, and the ranking system employed in Korea has caused various problems in society in general. In Korea, universities are divided by criteria such as whether or not they are a top-tier university, whether or not they are located in the Seoul area, and the average SAT scores of enrolled students. Of course, the most significant ranking criterion has been the average SAT score of enrolled students. According to a recent evaluation of universities by daily newspapers (Joongang Ilbo 2014), the top 20 four-year universities are private universities located in the Seoul area, with the exception of a few national universities in local areas.

The most serious problem relating to the university ranking system is the personal psychological deprivation they create (Lee 2003). Many students and parents are depressed and feel frustration or inferiority in response to the university ranking system and its various influences. Students often select private tutoring as a strategy to overcome personal disadvantages and in an attempt to enter more prestigious universities. Over 80 percent of school parents utilize private tutoring for their own children. People in a higher socioeconomic class, as well as those with more educated parents, spend more money for private cram schools than their counterparts. Also, those living in the Seoul area invest more money for private tutoring than others living in local areas, taking on a larger household burden. Another problem caused by the vertical ranking system has been a regional imbalance of the economy (Ban et al. 2013). Private universities located in Seoul have become bloated and local universities in other parts of the country have declined. Universities in Seoul have more money, more students, and higher rankings. This establishes a vicious cycle. Deteriorated universities in local areas contribute to the drain of an effective workforce from the local areas out to Seoul. They also contribute to falling local industries, resulting in a shortage of work opportunities, which finally causes a concentration of people and industries to aggregate in the Seoul capital area. Particularly, the university ranking systems have brought a kind of social stigma for local university graduates who are at a disadvantage when they seek employment.

University ranking does not allow each university to pursue its own specialty when considering student selection and curriculum operation. With the university ranking system emphasizing SAT scores, secondary schools have to focus on increasing SAT scores, which is an essential factor in determining university entry. As a result, standardized university entry systems cause the quality of

secondary education to decline, confuse the goal of education, and limit the operation of any curriculum. In the end, intensifying the university ranking does not help to enhance teaching competencies at universities and causes abnormal operation for secondary schools. Considering the issues related to the university ranking system, more group-oriented thinking is needed to solve the problems caused by such rankings. This would include the development of local universities, the improvement of a university entry system, and the reinforcement of the higher education system as a public good.

Highly Centralized Government Regulation

Government regulation of HEIs is very strict. The government has employed regulatory policies for actively involving all areas of institutional operations including the establishment of institutions, the construction of governance systems, student selection and graduation, the management of academic affairs, and the organization of the curriculum. For example, almost all public universities in Korea are national colleges and universities, which are owned and controlled by the national government. The Ministry of Education has maintained relatively direct and strict control of these. Private institutions are also under the government's control, but their governance is decentralized since each private college and university is managed by its own private school foundation.

Government-led higher education policies continually create conflicts between the government and universities. For example, recently the government made and implemented a policy named "ways to advance national universities", which includes the incorporation of national universities, the abolition of the direct election system for national university presidents, and the introduction of a performance-based annual salary system. In the case of a governing system, the government argues that the university governing system should abolish the direct election system for university presidents in order to improve overall governance. However, the majority of university faculty believes that the government seeks an indirect election system for national university presidents in order to give it a simpler way to control national universities. Another example was a college and university structural adjustment program initiated by the Ministry of Education (Park 2014). The main goal of this policy was to cut down university enrollment coinciding with the decline of the school-aged population. The government has planned to reduce 160,000 enrollments in the nine years from 2015 to 2023 in three phases, based on the evaluation of existing colleges and universities. According to the policy, all colleges and universities had to be evaluated and the results of the evaluation brought about forceful structural adjustments, particularly cutting down on enrollment. The main interests of the government seemed to be in changing the governance system of national universities in order to require strict adherence to regulations established by the government. This kind of aggressive regulatory policy finally has resulted in controversy over who has autonomy and responsibility for keeping the universities accountable.

In this context, some have recommended developing an alternative approach of governing in order to change the current system of highly centralized government regulation. This approach would construct a new governing body called the “National Committee on Educational Policy,” which would have its own power, maintaining an independent status inside the government (see Kim 2013). The committee would be expected to draw a future vision for higher education and help each institution improve its capacity as an administrative and financial supporter. This novel approach could be instrumental in constructing the new paradigm necessary to deal with problems caused by the government-led regulation of higher education administration. With this approach, each institution would have an independent board of trustees and would be expected to exercise its own autonomy, with more responsibility under the new governing system. In the long view, the new approach would contribute to developing a more advanced system, which allows each institution to control itself or to respond to market needs in a more active way. Considering this, public and private colleges and universities would not only be expected to build an appropriate governing body that can gain autonomy from the government and private foundations, but also be held responsible to important stakeholders such as taxpayers, students, and local communities.

RESOLUTIONS FOR FUTURE HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Two approaches for seeking a future direction of Korean higher education are worthy of discussion here. On one hand, it is possible to consider strategies for developing higher education as it is recognized globally, which is to build a vision for higher education from a macro perspective. On the other hand, it is useful to develop practical ways to enhance the competence of each institution from a micro perspective.

Constructing a Big Vision for Future Higher Education

A macro perspective, long-term vision for future higher education can be constructed through an in-depth review of the current dilemmas facing Korean higher education, such as the low rate of university graduate employment, the heavy reliance on private funding, university ranking systems, and heavy and constricting government regulation. In fact, these dilemmas engage different interests among stakeholders and require social consensus in order to be negotiated with a long-term view, rather than a shortsighted unilateral approach. This would be a new approach, vastly different from the way the Ministry of Education has functioned thus far.

The first consideration for drawing a big vision is the characteristics of higher education, for the primary reason that individual choices and/or the government policy directions would be changed according to whether the value

of higher education is defined as a public or a private good. Looking at the Korean higher education system and its operation, the system partially operates as both. For example, higher education can be regarded as a public good because the government does decide on an entrance quota and intervenes in the operation of individual institutions directly/indirectly along with offering government subsidies. Korean higher education also operates as a private good since the system works with user-pay principles, meaning individuals have to pay for their own higher education and over 80 percent of HEIs belong to private institutes. These situations demonstrate how Korean higher education has both characteristics of a public and private good. However, considering that too much reliance on private colleges and universities has greatly damaged the equity of higher education, future higher education should strive to embrace greater public value and receive more public funds from the government, respecting its value as a public good.

The second thing to consider for developing a big vision is who the main actors should be for controlling HEIs. The core agencies related to higher education development are largely divided into three types: individual institutions, government, and market. Reviewing the administration of higher education in Korea and the resulting issue, whereas government currently occupies a very strong position, the influence of the market is growing and has considerable unrealized potential. In this process, HEIs have not fully exercised their autonomy and have passively followed the reform agenda proposed and implemented by government. The Korean government, as one of the key agencies for university development, has regarded colleges and universities as an object to manage and control, not as a subject to respect. What could/should be an alternative for developing higher education? It is time to consider a new approach that should construct a new governing body called a “National Higher Education Committee” or a “National Committee on Educational Policy” (see Kim 2013). The committee would be expected to address the limits and problems caused by short-term policies and narrow views of government and to construct and implement higher education policy from long-term perspectives, maintaining an independent status inside the government. With this approach, it is possible to develop an alternative that can be helpful in enhancing the autonomy of each institution, allowing it to exercise its own responsibility.

Enhancing Competences of Each Institution at the Micro Level

The development of future higher education from a micro viewpoint depends on enhancing the competencies of each individual institution. In principle, each institution should invest efforts to identify and cultivate the interests and aptitudes of enrolled students. The current low rate of university graduate employment and the intensifying university ranking systems are the result of an incomplete implementation of the goals that each institution sets. Also, university structural reform policies led by government were not helpful for institutions trying to develop their own capacity for maximizing potential.

Considering the fact that almost all colleges and universities have a common goal of both offering an appropriate vocational education and of cultivating citizens who have social responsibility, each institution must become a real agent, which composes a goal and develops the detailed strategies to achieve that goal. Because each institution is able to identify the unique traits of students coming to the institution from each region, they can better recognize the characteristics of local communities than agents outside the local and student context. In this context, it is essential to enhance each institution's ability to recognize the particular needs of students, local communities, labor markets, and the active involvement of the local community through an industry–university collaboration and civil society participation.

Enhancing competences of HEIs is closely related to the level of autonomy an institution might have. With this argument, it is expected that the more autonomy an institution gains the more efficient a response it is able to demonstrate toward major stakeholders, including students and local communities. However, it is unclear how, under the environment of university operation ruled and administered by the government and/or private foundations, each institution tries to gain and internalize autonomy in day-to-day operations of the organization. Without a strong willingness to struggle and maintain autonomy, the competence building for respective institutions may be considered to be an empty word, mere rhetoric. In particular, special attention is required to enhance teaching, learning, and graduate employment at the university level in order to maximize the learning outcomes of students, which is ultimately the final product for each institution. In order to enhance teaching capacity, both building a curriculum and establishing the support system for teaching and learning are essential.

Competence-building efforts at the university level can be connected to enhancing learning competencies. These efforts may eventually result in the production of professional manpower, which can be made available to foster local and national economic growth, and which will contribute to improving employment rates at each institution. In the case of research, each institution should define its scope and performance based on its own goals that are unique to the establishment and educational needs.

CONCLUSION

Korea has experienced dynamic changes in economic and social arenas over the past 50 years, growing from one of the poorest countries in the world with authoritarian regimes to one of the world's wealthiest nations with a democratic system. Korean economic growth is indicated by the rapid expansion of GDP, where the country is ranked 36th in the world. Additionally, Korea is the 15th largest country in the world in terms of economic size (International Monetary Fund 2013). In the case of social change, building a democratic system represents extraordinary progress for social development. In the area of social and economic change, Korean higher education functioned as a driving

force for educating professional manpower and sacrificed its youth's blood for social democratization. The Korean case, on one hand, positively contributed to improving the quality of individual life and to keeping the security and prosperity of the national community. On the other hand, the Korean case has also demonstrated that higher education expansion did not meet the expectations of individuals and society. The time has come to reflect critically on the achievements and dilemmas the Korean higher education system has experienced and to explore a new version of higher education based upon social consensus more broadly.

In conclusion, the rapid growth of Korean higher education presents complicated characteristics and various challenges regarding its processes and results. The government, as both a policy maker and an actor, was able to expand higher education rapidly and implement policies efficiently, but many unintended problems appeared in the field. Also, although the scope of the higher education system has expanded quantitatively in a short period of time, the government's current college restructuring policies raise questions regarding the results of the quantitative expansion. However, these issues should not be strong evidence to deny the opportunity of higher education expansion because the experiences of dealing with issues resulting from the expansion can be valuable resources to make future alternatives. Therefore, the direction for future development of higher education should enhance equity and equality, while improving social equality, and regard these as the essential goals of expanding higher education opportunity. In this context, the development of future Korean higher education needs a paradigm shift to reconstruct the goals of higher education as a public good and to build a new governing body as a main actor at the national level.

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