

Committee IV
Crisis in Education in the 1980's:
A Survey of Educational Values and Systems

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CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN EDUCATION

by

Woong-sun Hong
President
Duk Sung Women's College
Seoul, Korea

Discussion Paper

on

Richard Rubinger's

**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY
JAPANESE EDUCATION**

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Prof. Rubinger has very insightfully presented numerous factors that have contributed to continuity and change in mid-nineteenth century Japanese education, with special emphasis on the effects of education on economic growth. Among the questions Dr Rubinger raised in his paper were the following:

To what degree were continuities with the past as important as the discontinuities? To what extent and in what ways did modern institutions develop in Japan along trend lines already formed in the earlier Tokugawa period?

He also summarized his paper as follows:

Although the policy of creating a strong public system and of imposing uniform regulations from the top achieved many desirable results, it also tended to strifle individual initiatives and to overlook the special requirements of local areas. The result was a lack of flexibility in the system as a whole--a legacy with which Japanese educational policymakers must still contend. This analysis suggests that one counter to the oversimplifications of the Japan as Number One school is to see Japanese education not in isolation from but as part of a rich historical inheritance, representing the often conflicting demands of a complex and multi-faceted society. Until that is done comparisons are likely to be superficial and the practical benefits to others correspondingly few.

Another question raised by Dr Rubinger that aroused my interest was:

Are these elements in the Japanese experience that are universal and thus generalizable, or are they strictly particular to that culture?

In response to this question I would make a brief report of what Korean education has gone through in the hope that Korean experiences may furnish additional information on the question raised by him, and may prove helpful in gaining insight into Korean education.

The reactions toward western civilization by Japan and by Korea were different when western civilization knocked their doors about one hundred years ago. Japan had maintained some contact with the western world through Portugal and Holland. At the time of Meiji Restoration Japan already maintained close contacts with seven western countries, including U.S.A., Great Britain and Holland. Dr Rubinger gives us detailed information on how Japanese education has developed since then in addition to his lucid elaboration on Japanese education during Tokugawa period. Korea was known as Hermit Kingdom and Regent Taewonkun had adopted a national isolation policy and all doors were tightly closed against all foreign contacts.

The nation's highest learning institute then was Songgyungwan, or the National Confucian Academy, located in Seoul. Secondary educational institutes were Sahak, or the Four Schools in Seoul and Hyanggyo in the provinces, established on the initiative of local authorities. Sodang, or private elementary schools, were freely set up by various groups of private citizens for the education of the young. The curricula consisted of Confucian classics, Chinese and Korean classical literature and calligraphy. All these educational institutes, were, however, individually independent and not linearly incorporated. As the Yi dynasty came into being, Chu Hsi's neo-Confucianism was adopted as the ideological base for the dynasty. This philosophy exerted a far-reaching influence on political and educational systems. By and large, education in those days was heavily oriented toward training of Confucian scholars and government officials. All other teachings were considered heretical.

Partly because of the stimulus of western ideas, the 18th century saw the emergence of a group of scholars with a greater interest in practical sciences than in ideologies. The new school of thought, called Sirhak (Practical Learning), was directed primarily against the preoccupation among the bureaucrats either with the speculative side of new-Confucianism or with contradictoriness inherent in the feudal Yi dynasty.

The Sirhak scholars held that no doctrine, not even Chu Hsi's neo-Confucianism, deserved to be followed blindly and uncritically, and insisted that all ideas and practices be judged on their merits. They demanded an end to empty formalism and concern with ritual trivalities, emphasizing instead on the importance of a practical, empirical approach both to learning and to government.

The realities with which they were concerned, of course, were those confronting their society in their time, but their philosophy subsequently influenced the leaders of the Enlightenment Movement of the later days of the Yi dynasty and made it easier for the Korean society to accept the influx of American Protestant missionaries such as H.N. Allen, H.G. Underwood, H.G. Appenzeller, Mrs Mary F. Scranton, et.al. around the 1880s.

As the western civilization reached Korea with increasing impact in the last few decades of the Yi dynasty, the need to renovate the centuries-old educational institutions mounted. But the basically isolationist policy of the nation and the feudalistic sentiments of the people hampered and delayed introduction of modern education.

In 1882, a royal decree opened the gates of state-operated schools to ordinary citizens. Hansong Normal School was founded in 1895 for the education of school teachers. By 1900 many educational laws and regulations were enacted and proclaimed and several types of schools from primary and middle schools and schools for foreign languages were established. Many leaders in the educational innovations in these days recognized affinity between the Enlightenment Movement and the Sirhak philosophy. They set high value on the thoughts as having played an important role in the transitional period from the Confucian-oriented feudal society to the modern world.

Perhaps the greatest influence on education of the period derived from the missionary schools. Sciences and humanities of the western tradition were introduced. The subject matter taught at the schools included Bible, English, world history, geography, arithmetic, biology, physics, chemistry, handicraft, music and physical education. Extra-curricular activities such as speech meetings, debates, oratorical contests, athletic meets were encouraged. Basketball, football, tennis and baseball also made their debut on the scene. The missionary schools awakened Korean educators to the need to modernize public education in Korea.

The curricula offered in these schools were quite different from those of the traditional education which primarily concerned itself with the teachings of Confucian classics.

Conservative elements in Korean society, however, remained convinced of the impropriety of the new education. Sodang continued to receive much attention, especially in the rural areas, as an establishment for teaching traditional Confucian values. Innovative efforts of the time toward popular education for women were rejected and girls were mostly confined to a women's section, devoted to learning weaving and other household chores. The turn of the century was thus a period of rapid changes in new education movement going through Tradition and Reformation and Conservativeness and Progress phases.

The flame of educational innovation was snuffed out in the face of the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. Korea was placed under Japanese colonial rule for almost 40 years. Education during the colonial period served the primary purpose of converting Koreans into loyal subjects of the Japanese Empire. Despite the increase in the number of schools, education was limited to only a small fraction of the Korean people.

The liberation of Korea from Japan in 1945 was a turning point for Korean education, which shifted from totalitarian methods of education to democratic and modern methods. In this sense Korea was one century later than Japan in starting "continuity and change" phase. After the liberation Korea was placed under U.S. Military Government for three years from 1945 to 1948. Educational renovation was by no means smooth in the first two decades after the liberation. Democratic ideals clashed with the traditional values of the past - too deeply rooted to be replaced overnight. Efforts were directed at rooting out the remnants of the Japanese colonial rule. Korea had to start building a new educational system based on the Korean tradition, but utilizing the best concepts of modern western education. On September 18, 1945 the U.S. Military Government promulgated Educational Policies for the Koreans of New Korea, which set forth three objectives for Korean education as follows:

- (1) Eradication of the remnants of the Japanese colonial education,
- (2) Maintenance of peace and order, and
- (3) Teaching of knowledge applicable to practical life.

Under these guidelines the military government set up the Korean Educational Council composed of 100 educators and authorities of the academic world, entrusting it with the task of drawing up new policies for Korean education. As a result, a uniform 6·3·3·4 school year system, was adopted. Centralized educational administration was established with an eye to educational autonomy to be further developed.

The most striking feature of education since 1945 is the tremendous quantitative growth. The aims and contents of education during the Japanese colonial rule were in line with the imperialist intents of the Japanese government. And only a small minority of Koreans were given the opportunity to study at schools. Discriminations were more obvious in higher education. The rate of illiteracy at the time of liberation stood at 77% of the total population whose ages were 12 years and upward and the number of students attending various schools were very small. Even on the elementary level the proportion of Korean children attending schools was no more than one-sixth that of Japanese. The high rate of illiteracy and low proportion of Koreans attending school clearly showed that education under the Japanese rule had a policy denying educational opportunity for the Korean people. The suppressed desire for education found its outlet in the furious quantitative growth of education following liberation. As shown in the table below the number of schools, students and teachers have

made tremendous quantitative growth since 1945.

Growth of Schools, Students and Teachers
of Various Levels of Education

Levels of Education	Year	Schools		Students		Teachers	
		Number	Growth Rate	Number	Growth Rate	Number	Growth Rate
Primary School	1945	2,834	100	1,366,024	100	19,729	100
	1984	6,500	229	5,257,164	385	124,572	632
Middle School	1952	609	100	291,648	100	7,115	100
	1984	2,254	370	2,672,307	916	63,350	890
High School	1945	165	100	83,514	100	3,210	100
	1984	1,494	905	2,013,046	2,410	63,109	1,961
Higher Learning Institute	1945	19	100	7,819	100	1,390	100
	1984	258	1,358	1,073,974	13,735	30,049	2,162

At the elementary education level the number of students has increased fourfold and the number of schools has more than doubled from 1945 to 1984. The rapid growth in the number of schools was even more noticeable at the secondary education level. The number of middle school students has increased 9 times and high school 24 times. The rapid expansion of institutions was more pronounced in higher education. The number of schools has increased 137 times with a combined enrollment of more than 1 million students.

Enrollment rate of primary schools has increased from 64% to 98.6% of the school-age children during the last four decades. The rate of students entering middle schools has increased from 37% in 1953 to 97% in 1984, and the rate of students going on to high school has increased from 50% to 89%. More remarkable is the high proportion of Koreans attending higher learning institutes. The number of college students is equivalent to 28% of the entire college-age population. Compulsory and free elementary education was established in the 1950s, producing labour force responsible for the economic growth of the 1960s. Secondary education was reorganized in the 1960s, contributing to egalitarian education, and higher education was expanded in response to emerging needs in the 1970s, supplying high-grade manpower for the continued growth of the nation's economy.

It is rare indeed for any nation to make such a phenomenal growth in education in such a short span of time. Such a rapid expansion of education is attributed to educational policy, social conditions, the public need, and last but not the least, the people's zeal for education. Korea has made an unprecedently rapid educational growth through the successful implementation of a series of educational policies. Two educational policies merit attention. One is continued encouragement of private learning institutes and the other is the establishment of free and compulsory six-year elementary

education in a comparatively short period of time. One of the social changes which contributed to the rapid growth of Korean education was the Land Reform Law enacted shortly after the establishment of the Republic of Korea. Many landowners donated their lands to educational institutes to build new schools. Job shortage also contributed to the growth. The Korean economy was not established yet and was unable to take in all the graduates the schools turned out, aggravating employment opportunities. Many high school graduates had no choice but to go on to colleges.

Underlying the dynamic growth was Korean people's traditional respect for education and learning, which is deeply rooted in the Korean culture and mentality. Korea is one of the most education-conscious countries of the world. Parents will send their children to school at any cost. All this zeal for education, however, was suppressed during the Japanese occupation. After Korea regained her independence, people could gratify their desire, long held in check.

A price had to be paid, however, for such a rapid growth; quality had to give way to quantity. Education policy planners now have to address qualitative aspects. Korean education is also confronted with important assignment of strengthening human education in the curricula at all levels of education. Efforts should be made to

nurture more effective thinking faculty and equal opportunity of education should be further expanded. I have made a brief summary of what Korean education has gone through since the latter part of the 19th century. The "continuity and change" of Korean education bears a formal resemblance to that of Japan, but given the difference of historic and cultural backgrounds of both nations, I think Korean education has its own characteristic aspects. Korea had to launch its modernization work for education about a century later than Japan. I believe the experiences Korean education gained may serve as an example to other developing countries and they may profit by our experiences.