

Working Paper

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Social Ethics in Korea: Social Challenges from the Perspective of Young People

한국의 사회윤리:

청년의 시각으로 본 사회적 도전과제

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Abstract

- > This working paper contains a collection of essays by young Koreans who reflect normatively on the social and political problems in their homeland. These are topics where Christian social ethics can also provide normative orientation to shape a just Korean society.
- > Against the backdrop of the country's rapid development, the introductory reflections briefly outline South Korea's current political and socioeconomic situation with a particular focus on young people. It shows the societal context in broad strokes in which the essays deal with social issues chosen by the young writers themselves.
- > This working paper thus aims to make a small contribution to the German-Korean dialogue on social ethical issues.

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Introductory reflections

South Korea is booming. More specifically, it is the South Korean culture, which has been gaining popularity worldwide for several years now thanks to the “Korean Wave” known as “Hallyu” (한류). Kimchi, K-pop and K-drama are just three keywords that stand for the cultural exports of this small East Asian country, which is now popular all over the world, especially among young people. South Korea is a fascinating country with a rich cultural heritage. It's home to ancient palaces, temples and traditional markets, as well as a thriving contemporary arts, culture and music scene.

As much as there may be fascination on the German side for this small, multi-faceted far eastern country, there is also a great deal of interest in Germany in South Korea. In intercultural dialogue, both countries can learn a lot from each other. This working paper, a collection of short essays by young Koreans about social and political challenges in their country, is intended as a small contribution to this dialogue. First, however, the specific sociocultural context in which the young essayists live and thus some of Korea's current social problem areas that they address in their essays will be outlined briefly. So what kind of country is South Korea?

Liberated from 35 years of Japanese occupation after the end of World War II, the country was divided at the latitude 38 into a Soviet-oriented authoritarian-communist north and an American-influenced authoritarian-capitalist south. The terrible Korean War from 1950 to 1953 cemented the radical division of the country and left South Korea a devastated and impoverished country. Thus, Germany and Korea share some historical parallels, as Germany itself was divided into two states, one liberal-democratic and one socialist-autocratic, until 1990.¹

Korea is a country, however, that soon thereafter experienced a rapid upswing and within a few decades advanced from a poor agricultural society to one of the four Asian tiger states (along with Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) and even more to a highly developed industrial nation as a result of the “South Korean economic miracle”. South Korea is regarded as a kind of prime example of successful catch-up industrialization and economic development. In 1996, the “late modernizer” country was admitted to the OECD and today has the world's tenth largest gross domestic product (GDP)² and, of all OECD countries, the best Internet coverage and the most advanced e-government.³ Since the 2010s, democratic Korea has ranked among the highest-income countries in the world, which has long benefited not only a small upper class, but also a remarkably broad middle class in the country: “Korea performs well across a number of well-being dimensions relative to other countries in the Better Life Index.”⁴

¹ Cf. on the parallels Hermannseder, Eveline, *Geteilte Staaten im Vergleich: Korea (2010) und Deutschland (1989)*, in: Stüwe, Klaus/Hermannseder, Eveline (eds.), *Die Wiedervereinigung geteilter Nationen. Erfahrungen aus Deutschland und Perspektiven für Korea (Kulturelle Ökonomik Vol. 10)*, Berlin 2011, 103-139.

² Statista.de, *Südkorea: Bruttoinlandsprodukt (BIP) in jeweiligen Preisen von 1981 bis 2022 und Prognosen bis 2028 (in Milliarden US-Dollar)*: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/14404/umfrage/bruttoinlandsprodukt-in-suedkorea/> (last access: 04.05.2023).

³ See the Essay of Song Do-Yun in this Working Paper.

⁴ OECD, *Better Life Index*: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/Korea/> (last access: 04.05.2023).

Politically, the country has also achieved a remarkable transformation: In 1987, after 25 years of military rule and almost 40 years of authoritarian regimes, the democratic period of the country began. Since then, an impressive process of democratization has been underway. Despite all the problems and setbacks that undoubtedly exist, South Korea is now just as much a well-functioning democracy with free and fair elections as it has succeeded in combating the big problem of corruption more effectively through greater transparency. In addition, the “Candlelight Rallies”, especially since 2016 during the protests against the corruption of former President Park Geun-hye, seem to have given rise to a peaceful protest culture of an increasingly self-confident public also with a growing sensitivity for the socially marginalized.⁵

All in all, South Korea today appears to be a country that can offer young people a high quality of life, prosperity, a highly competitive economy with a very diverse and sophisticated consumption offer, a low crime rate, an excellent infrastructure, a high density of universities and in total a wide range of future prospects. But many young people in the South Korea of 2023 are much more pessimistic, are even disappointed: by a highly competitive, unbearable education system,⁶ by the increasing difficulty of achieving a regular, secure job with a good income, by still too weak democratic values in society, by the high Confucian-hierarchical social expectations that weigh on them and inhibit their self-determination. The somewhat exaggerated seeming expression “Hell Joseon” (헬 조선; referring to the late feudal Joseon Period) today stands for the attitude towards life in Korea of many disappointed and disillusioned 20- and 30-year-olds.⁷ South Korea as a “hell” in which, for many, the successful Netflix series “Squid Game”, produced in South Korea, reveals true aspects. The series “shines a spotlight on South Korean society, which is characterized by inequality, social injustice and bone-headed competition. The series depicts a Janus-faced society in which the lure and danger of capitalism, people's desires and fears, and the freedom and brutality of competition are taken to extremes. The contradictions depicted are not far from reality.”⁸

And indeed, social science findings show several difficulties. Employment and income conditions in South Korea for example have deteriorated significantly,⁹ especially since the Asian crisis of 1997: Irregular (part-time) employment has increased, social security is relatively low, and the unemployment rate has risen sharply, especially among young people. Many people, including those from the middle class, are finding it increasingly difficult to afford their own property, especially in the Seoul metropolitan region. As a result, inequality and poverty have also increased massively since

⁵ Cf. for example Kang, Won Don, Candlelight Rallies and Politics of Minjung, in: Kim, Yonghae (ed.), *Solidarity. The 11th Korean-German Colloquium. 2017.10.11-10.13. Sogang University, Seoul 2018*, 46-67; see also the Essay of Jang Ye-ryung in this Working Paper.

⁶ Cf. the second Essay of Lee Yeong Seo in this Working Paper.

⁷ Cf. Koo, Se-Woong, *Korea, Thy Name is Hell Joseon*: <https://koreaexpose.com/korea-thy-name-is-hell-joseon/> (last access: 03.05.2023): According to this view „being born in South Korea is tantamount to entering hell, where one is immediately enslaved by a highly regulated system that dictates an entire course of life. Onerous education and service in the abusive military are the norm, and the only goal for the young is to become servants of the mighty corporations that rule the realm from its heart. Politicians turn blind eyes to the plight of the people from the luxury of their throne afar.“

⁸ Shin, Jin-Wook, *Spiel ums Überleben*: <https://www.ipg-journal.de/regionen/asien/artikel/spiel-ums-ueberleben-5623/> (last access: 03.05.2023).

⁹ Cf. on the problems of a polarized Korean labor market for example Yang, Donghoon, *The 4th industrial Revolution and Labor Problems in Korea*, in: Kim, Yonghae (ed.), *Solidarity. The 11th Korean-German Colloquium*, loc. cit., 118-132.

the mid-2000s. With a Gini coefficient of disposable income of 0.33, South Korea had one of the highest levels of inequality among OECD countries in 2011,¹⁰ and its relative poverty rate is the third highest in the OECD.

The two most alarming indicators are a very low birth rate and a very high suicide rate. In South Korea, there are several reasons why the birth rate has been very low in recent years (2023 it is 0,78 and it is the lowest in the world now¹¹): The cost of raising and educating a child in South Korea is very high. Many young Koreans therefore want and need to focus on their careers and establish themselves in a job with sufficient income before having children. Most people in South Korea live in cities, where there is also often a lack of space and resources to raise a family. Although South Korea has made progress in gender equality in recent years, there are still differences in the treatment of women in the labor market and in family life. Many, especially very well-educated, female academics are reluctant to have children for fear that it will affect their careers and independence. As long as immigration to Korea, which has increased significantly in the meantime,¹² is far from compensating for this birth deficit, society will continue to age and face drastic social and economic problems.

South Korea has one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and several factors contribute to this: for example, many young people in particular cannot always cope with the high social pressure, especially with regard to education and career; mental illness is also still often stigmatized and regarded as a taboo subject; and South Korea has a high unemployment rate and many people, especially young people, have difficulty finding work. Financial problems can lead to stress and anxiety, which in turn can lead to suicidal thoughts. But suicide rates are also high among older people; South Korea ultimately has one of the highest old-age poverty rates in the OECD¹³, and the pension system is far from adequate.¹⁴

The social challenges in South Korea in 2023 are big. Against this background, this working paper would like to let the voices of young Koreans be heard in the form of short essays. It is about what they think about their country, their democracy and their society. The idea for this working paper, created by Ordo socialis together with Society 451 and the Public Debate Promotion Agency (PDPA), originated from the 13th German-Korean Colloquium, which took place at the Jesuit Sogang University in Seoul in October 2022.¹⁵ The colloquia, which take place every two years alternately in Eichstätt and in Seoul, were established in 1997 on the initiative of Catholic Central Institute für Social Sciences (KSZ) and have been organized since 2006 by groups of scientists from the Sogang University in Seoul and the Catholic University of Eichstätt-

¹⁰ Cf. Statista.de, Gini coefficient of after-tax income in South Korea from 2011 to 2021: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/642046/south-korea-gini-coefficient/> (last access: 04.05.2023).

¹¹ Cf. OECD, Data. Fertility rates: <https://data.oecd.org/pop/fertility-rates.htm> (last access: 04.05.2023). Also worth reading for this: Seelmann, Ho Nam, Die Geburtenrate in Südkorea liegt bei 0,78 – alles wird auf später verschoben. Zu einem erfüllten Leben gehören Kinder immer weniger dazu: <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/zu-viel-jugend-in-den-metropolen-suedkoreas-geburtendefizit-ld.1730129> (last access: 04.05.2023).

¹² Cf. on Migration in Korean context Stüwe, Klaus/Hermannseder, Eveline (eds.), Migration und Integration als transnationale Herausforderung. Perspektiven aus Deutschland und Korea, Wiesbaden 2016.

¹³ Cf. OECD, Pensions at a Glance 2017: OECD and G20 Indicators, OECD Publishing, Paris 2017: http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/pension_glance-2017-en (last access: 04.05.2023).

¹⁴ See the first essay of Lee Yeong Seo in this working paper.

¹⁵ However, Society 451 and the PDPA are not affiliated with Sogang University, but are independent associations. About Society 451 and PDPA, see 'University Education Shift: Consider on Great Books Program', the second Essay of Lee Yeong Seo in this Working Paper.

Ingolstadt under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Kim Yonghae SJ and Prof. Dr. Klaus Stüwe, both political scientists. Successes, challenges and lessons learned from the German reunification process are an essential basis for an enriching German-Korean dialogue, even if the reunification of Korea still seems to be a long way off due to the continued existence of the ailing but nuclear-armed dictatorship in the North.¹⁶ Since then, the common value-based frame of reference of the Colloquia has been Catholic Social Teaching and Christian social ethics. This is also the starting point for *Ordo socialis*, which is committed to a global order of justice and peace and is guided by Christian social ethics. *Ordo socialis* carries out this commitment for the common good of the world primarily by promoting international scientific communication in the field of Christian social ethics as well as dialogue between people from different countries on the basis of Christian values.¹⁷ In this sense, this paper would like to be a contribution to this.

Times of crisis need ethics. The current crises that characterize Korean society also call for social-ethical orientation. Christian social ethics would like to provide such orientation within its horizon of meaning, the Christian view of man, of the world and of God, but arguing solely on the common basis of reason. It resonates especially with the vital Catholic Church in Korea. The Korean Catholic Church is remarkably unique in its origins and history and today powerful in its capacity as an important spiritual and moral institution in the modern South Korean consumer society and meritocracy. It can be said that South Korea is a highly modern industrial nation and at the same time a country of increasing Christian faith. The relatively young, lively Korean Christianity shapes the society. South Korea thus shows that Christian faith has its place in modernity and is even understood here as a sign of social progress.

Catholic Social Teaching and Christian social ethics can thus in principle be sown in fertile soil in Korea. Christian social ethics wants to bring its offer of normative orientation for a just shaping of society into discussion with all sciences and all people of good will.¹⁸ The search for what is ethically right is oriented, according to Christian understanding, to the autonomy of reason and experience that applies to all, in order to arrive at plausible ethical judgments that are as factual and contextually appropriate as possible.

In terms of methodology, the classical Christian social-ethical three-step approach of *seeing - judging - acting* still applies. In this sense, the following essays would like to show examples of how young people in Korea see their society and democracy, how they judge about it and what they think needs to be done to solve social problems.

The essays deal with the problems of the Korean pension system (Lee Yeong Seo); the importance of political education for a functioning democracy (Jang Ye-Ryung); reflections on Korean e-democracy and its educational implications (Song Do-Yun); the political-ethical need for a change of democratic mentality in the sense of a “critical revolution” (Park Geonhyung) and the importance of liberal arts for the Korean education system using the Great Books Program (GBP) as an example. (Lee Yeong Seo).

¹⁶ Cf. exemplary the German-Korean Papers in: Stüwe, Klaus/Hermannseder, Eveline (ed.), *Die Wiedervereinigung geteilter Nationen. Erfahrungen aus Deutschland und Perspektiven für Korea*, loc. cit.

¹⁷ See the new mission statement of *Ordo socialis* adopted in November 2022: <https://ordosocialis.de/wp-content/uploads/Ordo-socialis-Mission-statement-English.pdf> (last access: 03.05.2023).

¹⁸ Cf. in this sense the characterization of Christian social ethics as public theology in: Vogt, Markus/Schäfers, Lars, *Christliche Sozialethik als Öffentliche Theologie* (Kirche und Gesellschaft Nr. 480), Mönchengladbach 2021.

When reading, it is important to keep in mind: Essays are “thought experiments”: Unlike other types of texts, such as scientific papers, essays focus on the subjective exploration of a topic. Accordingly, the aim of the following essays was to give young Koreans the opportunity to express their views of their society in a personal and creative way by presenting the research theories of various Korean scholars. Against the background of the complex societal challenges shortly outlined above, which young people in Korea in particular are facing, they are intended to shed some light. We sincerely thank the young authors for their commitment.

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A Brief Study on the Korean Pension System

Introduction

In 2023, South Korea is pushing for the fifth national pension reformation. Based on the results of fiscal calculations, President Yoon Suk-yeol announced that the government would draw up a plan to improve the pension system in October 2024 and implement the reform in 2027. As the need for pension reform emerges in earnest, there shows up common questions among young people when they receive news from the media: “Will the existing pension policy work for the younger generation?” and “Isn't it that we pay only the pension fund of the existing generation and don't receive own pension?” For the younger generation in Korea, pensions are sometimes called a “sand castle on the beach.” This reflects the psychology that young people pay as pension subscribers and have greater anxiety about their retirement survival. Behind this anxiety lies the discourse of “fairness” by the young generation of Korea.

In this essay, I would like to consider two topics as answers to the aforementioned questions. First, Korea's pension system has structural contradictions. Second, structural reforms must be made including ethical issues. To research this, I will first introduce the history and current situation of the Korean pension system. This will provide the information needed to understand the main issues of Korea's pension system reformation. Next, I will briefly examine the concept of academic thinking advocating for structural reform of the pension system. In this process, it will be possible to identify the points of concern that should be considered before promoting Korean pension reform. Additionally, you will be able to understand the characteristics of the Korean pension system, ‘redistribution of total resources’. Finally, the pension system reform plan, which will eventually be adopted in the political field, will be considered against the backdrop of the “fairness” discourse of young Koreans, which poses an ethical problem.

The History of the Korean National Pension System and Current Situation

The history of the Korean National Pension System spans 35 years. It was introduced during the Roh Tae-woo government in 1988. At that time, the policy was based on a 3% premium rate, a 70% income replacement rate, and a pension age of 60. Since the minimum payment period of the pension was designated as 15 years, workers aged 45 or older were systematically excluded from the pension. The first pension system reform was implemented in 1995. The first pension system reform involved a confrontation between structural reform and parameter reform. If structural reform is about changing the framework of the existing system, parametric reform is to maintain the framework of the existing system and adjust variables that affect pension finances within it. As a result, the parameter reform plan was passed, the premium rate was raised to 9%, the income replacement rate was reduced to 60%, and the pension age was changed to 65 years old. This was the starting point for all citizens to receive the pension system.

The second national pension reform was carried out during the Roh Moo-hyun government in 2007. At this time, the National Pension System, which has been functioning so far, was established for the purpose of investing and professional management of the fund. The reason why the pension system was not reformed until 2007 was that it was difficult to reach an agreement within the National Assembly. At that time, there was a confrontation between the opposition party that advocated structural reform, or basic pension, and the ruling party that wanted to push for parameter reform. It was not until 2007 that the premium rate was maintained at 9% and the income

replacement rate was reduced to 40%, but the basic old-age pension was paid to the lower 70%. Through this, Korea has achieved results that contribute to solving the problem of retirement poverty and narrowing the welfare gap.

Over 35 years, there have been only two institutional reforms of the nation's pension system. To summarize the history of pension reform in Korea briefly, it involves (1) parameter reform, (2) the reduction of the income replacement rate (60% → 40%), and (3) the maintenance of the premium rate (9%). Since then, no institutional reform has been carried out, and the need for reform of the pension system has been steadily raised since the Moon Jae-in government due to low birth rates and aging. However, there was no process of collecting public opinion through official public hearings. In 2019, the discussion on national pension reform was postponed by the Economic, Social, and Labor Committee, and the discussion has not been implemented since then. The reasons for this are the loss of reorganization power due to COVID-19 and the deterioration of national household income. In this situation, the time of exhaustion of pension funds in Korea is being advanced. The current financial calculations are as follows.¹⁹ What is urgent in this situation is how to reorganize and reform the structure.

Maximum reserve fund time point	2040 5 th calculation	2041 4 th calculation	2043 3 rd calculation
	1,755 Trillion	1,778 Trillion	2561 Trillion
Time point of fund extinction	2055 5 th calculation	2057 4 th calculation	2060 3 rd calculation
	-47 Trillion	-124 Trillion	-281 Trillion
The cause of financial deterioration	Declination in Birth	Increase in life expectancy	Economic growth rate the rate of wage increase

<Table 1> Ministry of Health and Welfare's fiscal estimate of the national pension in 2023

4 th pillar	Personal Pension	
3 rd pillar	special employment pension	Retirement allowance
2 nd pillar	special employment pension	National Pension
1 st pillar	Basic Pension	National Basic Livelihood Security

<Table 2> Korea's retirement income guarantee system

¹⁹ It is organized according to statistical data from the Ministry of Health and Welfare of Korea.

Proposed reform: Concepts of pension reform structure

In Korea, discussions on pension reform primarily focus on two aspects: financial stability and institutional stability. Various alternatives have been proposed to address these issues, with some arguing for the reduction of the national pension and the strengthening of the basic pension, while others call for the strengthening of the national pension and the reduction of the basic pension's function.²⁰ In this section, I aim to critically engage with a fairly brief introduction to theories with data from Gyeonggi Research Institute, weigh their arguments, and present my own point of view on the matter.

According to a research survey by the Gyeonggi Research Institute, Seok Jae-eun²¹ and Kim Won seop²² and others²³ are among the first types. Kim Won-seop and others argue for two proposals to reduce the national pension and strengthen the basic pension. The key is to strengthen basic security by lowering the national pension income replacement rate to 30% to 35%, and strengthening income proportionality by providing supplementary screening assistance along with universal basic pension payments.²⁴ According to Seok Jae-eun, the national pension should be considered in multiple dimensions. Considering the class, gender, and inequality aspects, the national pension should be reduced and the basic pension should be strengthened. This argument is approached in terms of guaranteeing the basis of people's lives. It is suggested that the National Pension Service's salary rate be maintained as it is now and that insurance premiums be raised from 9% to 12%. This is to protect the household income ratio of 1.0.²⁵ In addition, at a time when it is difficult to maintain the cost of household income, it was proposed to switch to a nominal contribution (NDC) method. However, Jung Hae sik²⁶, Director of the Korea Pension Research Institute argues that the national pension, which is in conflict with this, should be strengthened. According to Jung Hae-sik, the function of the national pension should be strengthened in terms of

²⁰ Kim Yoon young and others, A Study on the Reform Strategy of Korean Public Pension Focusing on the Basic Pension, Gyeonggi Research Institute, 2022).

²¹ Seok Jae eun is a Korean professor at Hallym University. In this essay, following has referenced by Gyeonggi Research Institute; Seok Jae eun (2018). "National pension and basic pension reform measures to ensure sustainable basic income for the elderly: Improving inequality between generations and inequality within generations", data presented at the Social Security Association's 2018 Spring Conference.

²² Kim Won seop is a Korean professor at Korea University, and President of the Korean Pension Society (2023). In this essay, following has referenced by Gyeonggi Research Institute; Kim Won seop, Kang Sung ho, Kim Hyung soo, and Lee Yong ha (2016). "A Study on the Rebuilding Plan of Korea's Public Pension into a Universal Middle-Layer Guarantee System", in Social Security Research, 32(4), 1-26.

²³ Others are following researchers for social insurance and pension system; Kang Sung ho, Kim Hyung soo, Lee yong ha.

²⁴ Kim Yoon young and others, A study on the Reform Strategy, 2022.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jung Hae sik is director of the Korea Pension Research Institute. In this essay, following has referenced by Gyeonggi Research Institute; Noh Dae myung, Kim Hyun kyung, Jeong Hae sik, Lee Won jin, Gil Hyun jong, Oh Sang bong, Choi Ok geum, Lim Ji young, Joo Eun sun, and Kwon Hyuk-jin (2020). "Study on the Restructuring of the Income Security System: Focusing on Linkage-Adjustment between Systems", Economic Humanities and Social Research Association; Jung Hae sik, Choi Ok geum, and Kwon Hyuk jin (2020). "A Plan to Restructure the Income Security System for the Elderly", Research on the Restructuring of the Income Security System: 181-333, focusing on linkage and coordination between systems, Economic Humanities and Social Research Association and the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs; Jung Hae sik (2022). "Strengthening National Pension Security and Introducing a Supplementary Income Guarantee System", a study on the restructuring of public pensions, 121-158, Korea Institute of Health and Social Affairs.

reducing the burden on future generations. He suggests that the national pension income replacement rate should be adjusted to 45% and the subsidy rate should be raised to 11%.²⁷ The minimum subscription period for pensions will be reduced to five years and the credit system will be expanded. In the same opinion, Joo Eun sun²⁸ proposed to raise the income replacement rate of the National Pension Service to 45% to 50%.

Seok Jae eun's proposal, which considers aspects such as gender and inequality, can be discussed comprehensively and holds significant potential for addressing ethical issues. However, the proposal might face opposition from the majority of the public sentiment, as it involves lowering the income replacement rate further and raising the premium rate. Despite this, it is essential to address moral and ethical issues in policy-making.

On the other hand, Jung Hae sik's and Joo Eun sun's proposals focus on strengthening the national pension and increasing the income replacement rate, which might be more economically viable. While these proposals might not directly address ethical concerns, they could contribute to a more stable pension system that supports retirees in the long run.

After examining the various proposals, I believe that a combination of both approaches might be the most suitable solution. This approach would involve increasing the income replacement rate, raising the premium rate moderately, and incorporating ethical considerations such as gender and inequality. By adopting this mixed strategy, Korea's pension system could become both financially stable and social-ethically sound.

Furthermore, it is crucial to involve the younger generation in the pension policy-making process, as they are the ones who will be most affected by these reforms. By creating a more inclusive policy-making process and considering the social-ethical implications of pension reform, Korea can build a pension system that is fair, sustainable, and beneficial to all its citizens.

Ethical Consideration

The pension system adopted by Korea is a structure that faithfully implements the function of income redistribution. In other words, it is the redistribution of income between the generation receiving the pension and the generation of workers paying insurance premiums. Korea has not yet fully considered the public nature of these pensions. Before accepting the reform, it is a matter to consider, including the contents of accumulating funds when the pension system was first introduced. Therefore, another challenge facing Korea is the insufficient consideration of the pension system, which has been accepted and expanded in a short period of time. This leads to an ethical problem, which is expressed by the antipathy that the younger generation has toward the pension system. It is a fundamentally ethical issue among the younger generation that the pension system is called the Ponzi Game, which takes away the present value of the next generation. Young people are absent from the pension system policymaking process. The committee appointed some self-employed people and young people as members recently, but it does not collect public opinion. In other words, there is plenty of room for Korea's young people who cannot participate in the pension policy-making

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Joo Eun sun is a Professor at Kyonggi University. In this essay, following has referenced by Gyeonggi Research Institute; Joo Eun sun (2022). "Public pension reform measures for proper retirement security: establishing the role of the basic pension and the national pension", in *Social Welfare Policy*, 49(3), 87-119.

process to be considered unfair. In a word, *Korea lacks social consensus in establishing the pension system*. Unlike Europe and Japan, there has never been a public hearing on the pension system. The nominal contribution (NDC) method proposed by Seok Jae-eun in the first branch can be an option to solve this ethical problem of “unfairness”. The NDC method is a method of paying basic pensions through virtual accounts, although insurance premiums are not actually accumulated. This is a policy proposed by Choi Jae sik, the former chairman of the Korea Pension Service, as a consideration issue, and there is ample room for acceptance in Korean society.

As such, the proposal and acceptance of policies should consider moral and social-ethical aspects as well as utilitarian and economic aspects. Therefore, the top question of reforming the pension system for future generations is not whether it should be parameter reform, structural reform, or a proper mix of the two, but rather how public opinion is formed and what ethical issues are implied in it.

Conclusion

So far, we have looked at the history, status, and structural reform of the Korean pension system and its reforms. In this process, the structural contradictions implied in the pension system and the policy discourse of structural reform in Korea that discovered them were confirmed. The priority task that could be derived through this was that there was something that had to be considered first in order to reform the structure: ethical issues. Ethical problems caused by insufficient deliberation in our society are revealed by the discourse of unfairness that the younger generation has toward the pension system. The pension system is often called a Ponzi Game for young Koreans. In some cases, it is felt to be used as a tool for the previous generation. This is largely due to the failure to understand and consider the public nature of the aforementioned pension. Specifically, it is argued that the pension is a structure that steals money from the younger generation based on the “1” indicator of household income. This must be the result of a narrow way of discussion resulting from the short history of the pension system.

Eventually, after all discussions, the acceptance of policy will take place in the political sphere. The history of the pension system examined earlier clearly showed that the balance of social capacity and power in real politics is reflected when policies are decided. In some ways, the structural contradictions and insufficient deliberation of the Korean pension system may not be reasonably resolved. This reveals not only the problem of the pension system but also the problem of the subjects dealing with the system. And here again, we face ethical issues. In the process of reforming the pension system, social consensus must be reached through public hearings. By doing so, a reasonable and fair system should be improved to prevent gaps that can be considered unfair.

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A democratic state cannot exist without its citizens

Who is to blame for the 2016 candlelight protests?

As we all know, Korean politics rocked the world seven years ago, and the world witnessed unprecedentedly large-scale candlelight vigils. More than 2.32 million people participated in the rallies, and everyone spoke with one voice. Numerous foreign media outlets paid attention to South Korea and received positive reviews. This is because the impeachment process demonstrated the excellence of South Korea's democratic political system. Afterwards, the president was impeached and the regime was changed, and the citizens were happy. It was as if the citizens themselves were not responsible for anything. At the time, the candlelight vigil and impeachment only held the incompetent government accountable, not the people who elected it. This is the big hole in the 2016 candlelight rally. No one will be able to easily answer the question, "Is Korean society better off after the candlelight vigil?" and "What has changed?"

Nondemocracy in South Korean society

Article 1 of the South Korean Constitution states, "The Republic of Korea is a democratic republic." However, South Korean society is not a democracy in practice, even though it is ostensibly a democracy. What this means is that while South Korea may be a democracy with good political processes and institutions - in fact, South Korea's democracy index according to the Swedish Institute for Democracy and Diversity (V-DEM) ranks among the best in the world - it lacks economic and social democratization in addition to political democratization.

Currently, South Korea is plagued by various social conflicts and problems such as gender and generational conflicts, as well as youth housing and elderly poverty, and citizens perceive the level of conflict in Korean society as above average. The causes of these problems all stem from the undemocratic nature of Korean society. For example, gender and generational conflicts are still hot political issues, but these social conflicts are not caused by differences, but by the lack of diversity, which is one of the highest values of a democratic country. Despite the fact that a society that respects diversity and coexists together is a truly democratic society, Korea's current situation is one in which men and women, young and old, take sides and hate each other, even leading to crimes. The increasingly serious problems of youth housing and elderly poverty in South Korea are also examples of the country's undemocracy. The issue of youth housing in South Korea is of great concern to the international community, such as the United Nations, where the right to housing has been "commoditized" and unprotected due to capitalist-oriented real estate policies. South Korea also has the highest elderly poverty rate in the world, with nearly 15,000 elderly people earning a living by collecting waste paper. They earn 10,000 won for working 11 hours a day. That's 948 won per hour. This means that although South Korea has achieved political democratization, it has not achieved full democratization in various aspects such as economic democratization and social democratization. To be a truly democratic country, South Korea needs to democratize not only its political system but also its economy, society, and culture.

Political education and the need for an electoral license system

In order to achieve true democratization and have a democratic country, it goes without saying that we need a democratic citizenship. There can be no democracy without citizens. And it is education that cultivates democratic citizens. Democratic education. It is a subject that must be taught in a democratic country. Education in Korea requires only memorization without sufficient reason, and it is an education that constantly injects only knowledge. It is the opposite of education that fosters democratic citizenship.

Democracy is a citizen-centered political system in which citizens become the owners of the country and have their own subjectivity and diversity. But how can an education that requires only conformist and uniform knowledge produce democratic citizens?

Among civic education, I would like to emphasize political education. The most powerful weapon a citizen has in a democratic society is the right to vote. In all democracies, everyone has the right to vote once they reach a certain age. However, the impact of the right to vote is too great for just anyone to be eligible once they reach a certain age. In other words, I believe that the right to vote should be given to true “citizens”, not “just anyone”, and that the state should provide education to create citizens. That is the most basic duty of a democratic country. However, political education is not practiced in South Korea. There are textbooks and curricula for civic education, but they are not properly implemented due to the trend of entrance examination-oriented education, so students do not know what civic education is. In Germany, on the other hand, civic education, including political education, is centered on the “Beutelsbach Consensus” - the Educational Guidelines for Political Education. The German education system is able to empower young people to become civic-minded, responsible, and rights-conscious citizens. Using Germany as a precedent, Korea should now discuss political education in accordance with the Beutelsbach Consensus. Alongside such civic education, we argue for the need to introduce an electoral license system. As in most countries, the right to vote is restricted by age, and the Constitutional Court of South Korea limits the voting age based on the following criteria. Is the age of political judgment (maturity)? Is the age of mental and physical autonomy sufficient?

My proposal is to replace the above criteria with an electoral license test instead of age. The idea is to have a certain level of education through public education, and to have the right to vote through a licensing system for political judgment. You may not like the idea of a voting license right now, but it's a natural process if you think about the meaning of the right to vote. Compared to the importance, value, and influence of the right to vote, we have been taking it for granted without any effort or cost. This is a mistake. In order for rights to be guaranteed, obligations must also be fulfilled.

The obligation of the people, or sovereigns, to ensure the right to vote is to have a minimum level of knowledge, judgment and understanding of the candidates and their promises. They should have the ability to determine which politicians are good for them and society. This is especially true in the information age. In the modern world, various media such as YouTube and social media can play a decisive role in shaping voter perceptions. If people vote just because their family and friends tell them to vote, it will be a shortcut to the decline of democracy and the beginning of center-right politics.

If we don't change, politics won't change, and society won't change.

The ratio of public social expenditure to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in South Korea is about 10%, the lowest among OECD countries. In other words, the political sphere has been representing the interests of a small number of upper class and capitalists. While it is legitimate to criticize the political establishment and its leaders and hold them accountable, the more fundamental problem is that we have elected them “with our own hands”. Is the solution to this to impeach politicians and make it a truly democratic society? If impeaching them doesn't change the people who elect them, the problematic politicians will be elected every time. It's not an inherent solution; the people who elect them have to be the ones to change, and we have to be the ones to realize true democratic values.

Furthermore, the electoral license system is a clear distinction from elitism and dictatorship. The fact that anyone can take the license test to obtain the right to vote guarantees equal opportunity. It is different from elitism and autocracy, which deny people the opportunity to participate in politics, and is a complementary alternative that should be realized within a democratic system. Also, I am not denying democracy itself. I would like to emphasize that I am proposing an electoral license system with political education as an alternative to realize a better democracy. Democracy is an excellent political system because it reflects diverse values and guarantees individual freedom and equality. However, I would like to see a society where the original values are not distorted and can be realized in reality.

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Reflections on e-Democracy in South Korea and its Educational Implications: Centering on the Beutelsbach Consensus

Introduction

Democracy, recognized as an ideal political system, has been diluted in the name of representation, and the essential meaning of democracy has faced constant challenges. However, with the advent of the technological innovation era, democracy has entered a new phase. In particular, SNS (Social Networking Service) has emerged as the most important public forum in the era of technological innovation. The given passage discusses how SNS has a significant impact on expressing political opinions and conducting election campaigns. This phenomenon began to gain attention after the successful use of Twitter and Facebook by former US President Obama in the 2008 presidential election. In Korea, the National Election Commission announced a policy allowing the use of SNS for election campaigns in early January 2012, and since then, SNS has become a legitimate tool for election campaigns.

According to the 2021 Youth Social and Economic Survey of South Korea, “posting or responding to posts on SNS, homepages, and blogs” is the most frequent type of political participation among the younger generation. 10.2% of young adults post political posts on social media once, twice, or every day, and 35.5% of young adults express their political opinions on social media at least once a year. SNS has emerged as a public forum for consuming news and discussing political discourse with other SNS users, rather than just a place to share and communicate with acquaintances.

The use of social media in South Korea's election process has become increasingly common, especially in the 2022 presidential election, where candidates sought to communicate with the 2030 generation, which has emerged as a casting board for the 20th presidential election. For example, unlike past presidential campaigns, which were structured, specialized, and centered on long texts, in the recent 20th presidential election, both parties focused on short, personalized campaigns. They utilized various memes (internet trending content) and short forms to capitalize on the social media content consumed by the 2030 generation.

So are SNS the most important public forum for realizing democracy in Korea, operating as a healthy place for discussion? Unfortunately, online public forums are not fully realizing this. According to the results of the 2019 Intelligent Information Society User Panel Survey conducted by the Korea Communications Commission, the percentage of respondents who have used automatic recommendation services by content has increased from the previous year. In particular, 79.9% of people have used news recommendation services, and more than half of Koreans use AI algorithms to recommend news and videos. With the Internet, audiences can choose only the information they need. The phenomenon of individualization of news and information bias deprives people of the opportunity to “accidentally” hear and discuss their own perspectives and those of others.

Democracy in South Korea

South Korea's democracy is facing a crisis due to increasing polarization. The polarization stemming from the political conflict between liberals and conservatives is spreading beyond ideology and values to emotions. While it has been pointed out that it is a problem of representative democracy itself, there are still limitations to the formation of public opinion through direct democracy. E-democracy, which has emerged as a result of technological advancements, is vulnerable to communication distortion. While

it is possible to aggregate everyone's opinions, representation is still essential in the real world.

The April 19th 1960 revolution was caused by the combination of the judiciary and the executive. The politicization of the academy. The separation of powers and the right to education, which are the foundations of democracy, were violated, but due to the one-party dictatorship of the existing government, the means of checks and balances were outgrown. However, a pure and cohesive group grew into a “citizen” force that could check the power. Belief and action in democracy led to the realization of social justice.

The revolution was not just a student movement. It drew collective action from all sectors of society, including the media, religious, cultural, and artistic communities. People from all walks of life came together to pursue the same ideals, and people from all walks of life participated in political action without hierarchical or group restrictions.

Since the commercialization of the Internet in the mid-1990s, technology has made it possible to directly express opinions and participate in policy-making. E-democracy can solve the shortcomings of traditional representative democracy, where policies are mainly determined by a small group of people. Without the constraints of time and space, democracy can accommodate everyone's opinions through national referendums or national decision-making. In other words, centralized policymaking power has been decentralized to all citizens through e-democracy.

In practice, however, the internet has not been able to fulfill its full potential. The overwhelming flood of information contributes to political apathy. As the ability to sift through and absorb information becomes more important, the information gap between the rich and the poor has become more extreme than ever. This has led to the centralization of political power and the strengthening of political bureaucracies. Platforms that selectively provide information for the convenience of users have actually polarized politics.

Deliberative democracy is about expanding the debate by intentionally delaying the democratic process. Therefore, deliberative democracy and education are indispensable. Especially in Korea, “digital literacy” skills are becoming more important, so “education” connected to digital literacy is necessary.

The Beutelsbach Consensus

Deliberation requires rationality to function fully. Argumentation is achieved by verifying that the process is fair and the content of the discussion is reliable. Only then can a collective decision be made that is acceptable to everyone involved in the discussion.

With the advent of e-democracy, debate in the public square has moved to deliberation on platforms. On the other hand, information is selective, and the authenticity of secondary sources is difficult to determine. This is why political education is more important than ever. You have to “judge for yourself” whether the evidence is accurate, the arguments are logical, and the discussion is on track. An educated citizenry is a key requirement for online public forums.

After the war, perhaps the biggest question in German society was how the community would react and how to prevent the reemergence of totalitarianism in the form of the Nazis. German pedagogues recognized the need for guidelines to ensure that political education was no longer instrumentalized and did not produce self-righteous representatives. This was the beginning of the “Beutelsbach Consensus” a set of student-centered pedagogical principles.

In its domestic formulation, the Beutelsbach Consensus can be summarized as German political education that prohibits teacher indoctrination and coercion when dealing with political and controversial topics, imposes obligations to limit debate, and encourages student-centered political judgment. As it is a minimalist educational principle, it is still accepted as a core principle of political education in a pluralistic order.

1) No coercion

This is the principle of not allowing students to be indoctrinated with a particular political view and interfere with their independent judgment. For Korean citizens who are unfamiliar with democratic education, political opinions that are given to them as creations act as a hindrance to making their own democratic decisions. It transforms the public forum into a gathering where opinions are not established, but rather a place of disagreement. Hate speech that is not based on human dignity is an example, and according to the 2021 Online Hate Speech Awareness Survey conducted by the National Human Rights Commission, 70,3% of respondents have heard or seen hate speech in one of two places, offline or online, in the past year. Hate speech participates in and reinforces the logic of discrimination and exclusion of certain groups of people. The actors of hate speech production can distort groups. Although these are minimum conditional guidelines that are not legally binding, they provide a methodological basis for cultivating the attitudes of citizens living in a deliberative democracy.

2) Maintaining controversy

The principle is that controversial issues in the academic and political spheres should be introduced in the school curriculum and made available for critical analysis and discussion by students. Diverse opinions should be presented in deliberative discussions. In the debates that take place in the public space, the parliament checks, debates, and, if necessary, submits bills. The Republic of Korea has been promoting online policy debate since 2006 by opening the National Newspaper Archive and inducing policy formation based on citizen participation. In addition, the 2014 amendment to the Administrative Procedure Act clarified the grounds for online policy discussions to revitalize public communication. However, out of 41 central administrative agencies, 11 have not even registered their agendas on the KDN, and the utilization of policy forums and surveys has been relatively low compared to e-public hearings. It has been transformed into a non-debate platform. Considering that a prerequisite for the realization of democracy is “the ability to productively sublimate conflict in the coexistence of opposing views”, it is time to introduce the second Beutelsbach principle.

3) Strengthening interest recognition and political action skills

This principle calls for political education to help students recognize the political situation and their own interests, while enabling them to make their own decisions. Based on mature critical skills, they are encouraged to have their own views. One of the criticisms of the Three Principles is that it emphasizes individual interests, which can conflict with the common good. However, since the Beutelsbach Principle promotes mature democratic citizenship, I think there is less concern that emphasizing self-interest will lead to political fragmentation. Also, since the basis of the second Beutelsbach Principle is the attitude of recognizing others as the same as oneself and showing respect for each other, it is expected that people will quickly accept the opinions of others if they perceive that their own opinions are no longer valid.

Conclusion

Contrary to the expectation that e-democracy can help shape political opinion and democratic decision-making, SNS are currently causing social division and polarization due to their structural characteristics. Various political platforms have emerged to overcome this, but they have failed to solve the inherent problems and have been forgotten. The general public, tired of confrontation, is more interested in other things than politics.

Nevertheless, the advantages of e-democracy cannot be abandoned. Certainly, an environment that overcomes time and space constraints and the inclusion of everyone's opinions will lead to the development of democracy. In order to maximize its net function, the “educational aspect” of deliberation is necessary. I believe that the Beutelsbach Consensus in Germany could be a new phase for Korea.

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Reflections on the Critical Revolution within democratic system

This essay begins by agreeing with the perspectives of Professor Kim Nuri and writer Yoo Min-sin on the problems of South Korea. In her personal column, Professor Kim Nuri argues that South Korea is a fascist state. Kim, who studied abroad in Germany in 1980s and is a professor of German language and literature who wrote a book about Gunter Grass, argues that universal values have not been realized due to the “Korean exceptionalism” caused by the deployment to the Vietnam War. He cites as an example the fact that a contemporary event, the '68 Revolution, was not able to unfold in South Korea. In his book “Postpaid Democracy”, Yoo, who became one of the instigators of the June Democratic Uprising and is a former Minister of Health and Welfare with a liberal line, describes South Korea's Constitution as a kind of “postpaid constitution” to rebuild itself as a nation. He argues that it is a constitution that was obtained without paying a sufficient price, and therefore a conscious movement is needed to properly enjoy the constitutional values that remain at the institutional level. Both arguments are premised on the need for a conscious revolution that Korea deserves.

I would like to consider what kind of revolution Korea needs. For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to it as a “critical revolution”. As the name suggests, it is inspired by German critical theory. Its perception of and solution to fascism is influenced by the writings of Theodor Adorno. Jürgen Habermas's conceptualization of the “living world” and the “public square” became the framework of the critical revolution.

Critical revolution is a concept with an ontological contradiction. Revolution is the mobilization of disobedience and violence against the existing state to establish new power (Jeff Goodwin, New York University). Critical revolution, however, is the realization of constitutional values that are already institutionally “affirmed”, so there is no need to establish a new power. It only requires that members of the existing power system realize mature democratic values. The problem is that we are not doing that.

The reason for this lack of enlightenment, based on 30 years of observation, is two lies. The “Generation 586” that brought about institutional democratization became fascists at home when they became parents. 586 refers to the generation that led the society at the time when the IMF broke out in South Korea in the 1990s. Because they led the June Uprising in 1987, they have a sense of moral superiority and consider themselves democratic. This is the first lie. Generation MZ, which means millennials and Generation Z, has resentment for the fascism of their parents' generation. However, they have honed themselves as human resources under marketist values. Marginalized by objects, they want to make each other scapegoats for the beast of capitalism. Rising from the bloodied corpses, they flatter themselves and claim to have achieved human dignity. This is the second lie. Because the members of society are deceiving themselves, they are lost, like blind men with their eyes open.

The success of a critical revolution comes from a rational consensus about the past. One of the lies comes from attaching too much meaning to the past, and the other comes from forgetting it. It is self-evident that dealing with the past is the key to solving problems.

However, South Korea does not currently have a good handle on its past. Public education in South Korea does not teach modern history, and the writing of history textbooks is a hotly contested political issue. This is because humanistic values have been thoroughly neglected during the country's rapid reconstruction.

It's worth referring to Habermas's division of the modern world. Habermas divides the world into four spheres: The system is the political and administrative system and the economic system, and the living world is the public forum and civil society.

South Korea has overly strengthened the system by realizing institutional democracy and sublimating systemic competition with North Korea into state-led development. On the other hand, the meaning of life has become unimportant due to the marginalization of the living world. From this perspective, it can be seen that dealing with the past is deeply related to the strengthening of public debate and civil society. But how does this relate to the original purpose of exposing lies?

We know empirically that the more we talk, the more lies are revealed. This is true even when liars talk to each other. This is explained by the history of science and philosophy. Humanity got to the current level of science by starting from a society of scientists with false perceptions (Jang Ha-seok, *The Philosophy of Thermometers*). Therefore, we need to expose ourselves to the realm of public debate in order to realize our own lies. In addition, freedom of expression in civil society must be guaranteed to enable this.

Thus, the critical revolution is the totality of dealing with the past at the level of the living world. It can be a value judgment of past events, or it can be the creation of an environment to make this behavior healthy. The purpose is to expose the lies of members of society. If exposed in public, more people will realize that they have been deceived. This would be a desirable exercise both from the perspective of realizing universal values and from the perspective of realizing national constitutional values.

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University Education Shift: Consider on Great Books Program

Introduction

The problem raised in Korean universities over the past few years is *the serious mismatch between university majors and jobs*. The mismatch between majors and jobs reveals two realities in Korea. First, university education can be influenced by a functional evaluation of efficiency and performance. Second, due to Korea's excessive population concentration, education itself has no choice but to focus on fostering the manpower necessary for the industry. Regarding the university's responsibility to foster human resources necessary for society, it is reasonable to state that university education and operation should change. However, regardless of how public the content of change is, it should not be rushed.

Korean universities are turning into vocational training institutions for industries. Student protests have also occurred frequently as a series of policies to abolish humanities in universities have been implemented. The rapid pace of change has left Korean students confused, prompting them to ask the essential question, "What is the role of universities?" This question was a key topic of discussion during the second youth policy debate "Expanding University-Centered Start-ups" held at the Gyeonggi Provincial Council in November 2022 by PDPA²⁹ and Society 451³⁰. Considering the situation faced by Korean society and young people, this transition is expected to accelerate. I have come to think that as a student who has experienced this transition, it is necessary to examine what values we are missing.

In this article, I would like to introduce the Great Books Program (GBP) of liberal arts education as a supplementary alternative to university education and consider its value. GBP, also known as the Chicago Plan, is a liberal arts education program proposed by American educational philosopher Robert Hutchins. To begin, I will critically review the situation of public education and university education in Korea. Next, I will introduce GBP as a supplementary alternative to the current educational landscape. With this, we will explore the values and goals it aims to provide. Finally, examine how GBP is progressing in Korea and draw conclusions based on previous findings. Discussions on the advantages, disadvantages, and improvements of GBP are not covered in this article.

Public Education in Korea

Education in Korea has undergone various changes. During the Japanese colonial period, colonial autocratic education was imposed, while the military regime emphasized anti-communist ideology and growth-oriented education. Through the period of the military regime and industrialization in 1961, Korea's education was suppressed in diversity and economic centralism was strengthened. In the 1980s, further measures

²⁹ Full name: Public Debate Promotion Agency; An organization that promotes public debate. It is derived from Society 451, and designed and planned the 2022 Gyeonggi Provincial Council Policy Debate Grand Festival. In 2023, it was launched as a separate official organization from Society 451. PDPA conducts debate focusing on policy issues in regional community.

³⁰ Korea's research organization that has been in operation since 2016. Society 451 studies topics in various fields and build projects to apply and realize what they have studied. Recently, studied Habermas, and promoted 'public debate' with PDPA by cooperate with Gyonggi Provincial council; <https://www.youtube.com/live/MnRiQYPpyIs?feature=share>. Name of 451 is derived from Ray Bradbury's novel 'Fahrenheit 451'. Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian novel that depicts a society where human thoughts are controlled by the disappearance of books. In addition, 451 degrees means the temperature at which the book starts to burn.

were taken to control education, including publication oppression, tax inspections, seizure searches, and the prohibition of certain ideological books. The focus of education shifted towards producing a workforce for the growing industries, driven by the high population concentration in the country. As a result, public education became centered around entrance exam, reducing opportunities for individuals to explore and show their diverse abilities. This emphasis on exams led to a surge in private education, with parents investing heavily and students facing immense pressure. Midnight cram private education became a trend, and around 2008, the suicide rate among teenage students in Korea reached the highest among OECD countries. This alarming situation highlighted the consequences of the education system's excessive focus on exams.

Korea has tried various educational policies to solve these problems. At the national level, a policy was introduced to prohibit educational activities after 10 o'clock, aiming to regulate private education. Efforts were also made to promote educational diversity through policies like the "Free Semester System" and "Innovative School" implemented since 2009. However, the impact of these policies was limited. Following the implementation of the "Free Semester System", private education thrived during the remaining time. Similarly, the concept of "Innovative School", which advocated a more relaxed approach to studying and playing, faced skepticism and lack of trust with discourse of "loose education". The discourse of "loose education" or the evaluation of "increasing dependence on private education" disproved that public education in our society is difficult to escape from entrance exam-focused education.

Korean education is currently facing two main challenges. First, the intense competition for entrance exams limits individual opportunities for self-exploration. Second, there is a lack of sufficient emphasis on liberal arts education, which plays a crucial role in personal growth. The diminishing importance of liberal arts education in universities calls for urgent improvements and strengthening.

The problem situation of Korean universities

An important question that arises in the education in current Korean universities is: "What use is education?", "Is it selling well?", "Is it efficient?". Which means it focuses on how efficiently it can be used in society. This reflects an educational direction that emphasizes presentism and occupationalism, transforming universities into vocational training institutions for industries. These changes have been influenced by the university evaluation policy implemented by the Ministry of Education and the challenges in employment difficulties.

The university evaluation policy was first implemented in 2003 under the name of the 'National University Restructuring Policy'. Whenever the government changes, the contents are reorganized and have continued to the present, and universities with high-cost and low-efficiency systems are selected from a large framework to reduce administrative organizations and induce institutional consolidation. Universities adjusted their educational administration and policies in accordance with this policy, and the consolidation and abolition of philosophy and humanities departments was prioritized. This was the result of considering the aspect of the decrease in the school-age population and the increase in the employment rate.

Meanwhile, society is rapidly changing into a knowledge-information society, but education has lagged behind the change. Accordingly, universities tried to reduce the gap between education and industrial demand, and students' majors were frequently merged unilaterally. To respond this, student protests such as occupying the president's office and refusing classes increased, and the politics of professors and employees in the school intensified. In this process, rather than exploring the intellectual

traditional values or combining intellectual and moral excellence, the focus has been on what kind of skills they can learn in the present and future.

University confusion is also having a great influence on the values of students who choose to major in university after public education. In Korea, where university entrance has become a routine practice, it is worrisome that university education is turning into an institution that pursues such special interests and can immediately obtain useful skills.

From the perspective of educational philosophers Robert M. Hutchins (1899-1977)³¹ and John Dewey (1859-1952)³², the current situation in Korean universities is not desirable. Hutchins took a critical stance on the phenomenon that education loses its intellectual tradition. He opposed the pursuit of occupationalism by American universities in the 1950s. And he pointed out that the main reason for the education change into occupationalism is that education focuses on vocationalism skill training and information acquisition. According to him, these changes make universities as a service institution that provides vocational training and information, and result in the neglect of intellectual traditions, the essential value of education. As a result, universities sacrifice the depth of their studies and the broad value of education. He argued that the acquisition of vocational skills and information is also possible without knowing the intellectual tradition.

Dewey thought that the “growth” pursued by education was to enable education to continue in one's life. According to Dewey's educational philosophy, the university's original mission is to function in conjunction with individual growth and social development. The consequence of the economic benefits involved is only an incidental result. As a result, he stressed that education should not simply be reduced to a means of promoting socio-economic interests. Dewey was clearly opposed to Hutchins' philosophy of education, but likewise recognized the importance of intellectual tradition and human civilization.³³

³¹ American educational administrator and lawyer. Known as a promoter of Perennialism, he developed a challenging theory against experimentalism and progressivism, attacked the anti-intellectualism of education at the time, and completely reorganized the contents of education at the University of Chicago. With the help of M.J. Adler, a theorist of Perennialism, he founded the “Great Book Program” as a liberal arts course at the University of Chicago and established St. John's College to realize their ideas. In 1951's “The Great Conversation”, he wrote, “American culture is shallow and too secular, and universities are also following this trend. Students should stop exercising, professors should stop making money and social activities and return to school to open the way for conversation with students. Conversation is education by Great Books. He emphasized, “We must restore the cultural heritage that is being lost through dialogue and grasp the value of truth that is immortal forever to become a valuable human being.” In 1953, he wrote “The Conflict in Education” to criticize liberal education, and in 1969, he published “Education and Personality” to point out the educational crisis following the development of modern industrial society and to predict the future of society by emphasizing the role of education through great books.

(<https://terms.naver.com/entry.naver?docId=886912&cid=43671&categoryId=43671>)

³² American philosopher, founder of the Chicago school of pragmatism. It had a great influence on philosophy, sociology, pedagogy, and aesthetics, and it spread abroad. He studied at Burmond University and graduated from Johns Hopkins University. He has been a professor at universities in the United States, including Chicago and Colombia, and has traveled to China, the United Kingdom, Japan, and other regions. His pragmatism is also called instrumentalism and humanist naturalism. (<https://terms.naver.com/entry.naver?docId=389073&cid=41978&categoryId=41985>)

³³ Shin Dukyul, “The Future of John Dewey's Philosophy”, in Korean Educational Philosophy Society, 69(2018), 87-118.

“Within the human community, we are a link. We are responsible for preserving, communicating, correcting and expanding the legacy of the values we have received. Those who come after us should make this legacy more robust, safer, more accessible and more generous to share than we inherited it.” (Dewey, LW, 9:57-8)³⁴.

Hutchins and Dewey's two approaches show fundamental differences in understanding of the nature and purpose of education. However, even from the perspective of the two scholars with different perspectives, the direction in which Korean university education changes is not desirable.

Consideration of liberal arts education: Great Books Program (GBP)

Considering the current situation of Korean universities, I think Hutchins's proposed liberal arts education is necessary as a supplementary alternative. Hutchins argued that students should enter liberal arts and great books to become educated people, not professional workers. He thought that in order to live freely, people should understand the traditions of the world they live in, and that it was contained in great books.

Since 1930, Hutchins and his colleague M. J. Adler³⁵ (1902-2001) have created and implemented the Great Books Program for liberal arts education for college students and the general public. With the help of their fellow scholars and supporters, they published a 54-volume collection called “Great Books of the Western World” by the Britannica corporation in 1952. A total of 51 books, from the fourth to the 54th volumes, are “Great Books”. The collection contains 443 articles written by 74 writers. The editorial board, which published the entire book, said that the great books of the Orient should be selected by Asians. If that happens, it was expected that the “Great Books of the World” would be born. Hutchins says this in the preface to the entire book, “The Great Conversation”:

*“Our editors do not believe that any social or political changes that have occurred over the past half-century, or any changes that will happen in the near future, can make Western traditions useless or useles, and make them unsuitable for modern people. On the contrary, we are convinced that the Western world should regain the wisdom contained in the writings of great thinkers and the discussions they have shown themselves, re-emphasize them, and apply them to solve the problems facing the West.”*³⁶

Hutchins saw that the great book itself played the role of a great teacher. He thought that the problems raised in the book, such as property, divorce, religion, morality,

³⁴ Ibid; Dewey, J. (1938), Experience and Education. In The Later Works, 1925-1953, Vol. 13, J. A. Boydston, ed. (2008).

³⁵ Mortimer Jerome Adler (December 28, 1902 – June 28, 2001) was an American philosopher, educator, encyclopedist, and popular author. As a philosopher he worked within the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions. He taught at Columbia University and the University of Chicago, served as chairman of the Encyclopædia Britannica board of editors, and founded the Institute for Philosophical Research. In 1930, Robert Hutchins, the newly appointed president of the University of Chicago, whom Adler had befriended some years earlier, arranged for Chicago's law school to hire him as a professor of the philosophy of law. The philosophers at Chicago (who included James H. Tufts, E. A. Burt, and George H. Mead) had “entertained grave doubts as to Dr. Adler's competence in the field [of philosophy]” and resisted Adler's appointment to the university's Department of Philosophy. Adler was the first “non-lawyer” to join the law school faculty. After the Great Books seminar inspired Chicago businessman and university trustee Walter Paepcke to found the Aspen Institute, Adler taught philosophy to business executives there.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mortimer_J._Adler)

³⁶ Hutchins, Rober M., “The Great Conversation”, Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc, 1952.

friendship, and death, could not be avoided by anyone as long as human beings exist, and that individuals or times should answer in any form. Hutchins believed that if people became interested in great books, they could become better experts and grow into good citizens.³⁷ And thought that an educated person means those who can lead their lives freely and are not frustrated in these problems.

GBP has been proposed with a specific methodology. It involves reading and discussing books once a week, following a curated list of selected books in chronological order. GBP originated at the University of Chicago, where Hutchins was president, and was called as 'Chicago Plan'. Later, St. John's University accepted its program. It was not accepted by other universities because professors did not support it. The Chicago Plan faced set backs after Hutchins resigned as president.

The goal of the GBP was not to foster vocationally skilled people, but to be able to deal with the hardships of life with dignity and to sustain intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth as a democratic citizen. Meanwhile, GBP was criticized for aristocratic education, utopian reform methods, and Western-centered education. Hutchins responded to these criticisms and was called the enemy of science, Thomast, and absolutist by several critics.³⁸ Such criticism is reasonable on one side. In addition, there are practical problems he experienced during his lifetime, and the problem that it is very difficult to try liberal arts education for adults. However, just because there are such criticisms and problems with reality does not mean that they are unnecessary.

GBP in Korea

On November 11, 1991, Professor Shin Dukyul³⁹ established the "Paideia Academy" in Daegu and adopted GBP as the main activity of the institute. Professor Shin began GBP education in Korea by translating and writing "The Paideia Proposal" (1993) and Hutchins' research on educational philosophy. The cradle of the institute reads:

"Today, the nation's secondary education has become centered on college entrance exams and university education has become professional-specialized, making common dialogue almost impossible among people. With the impossibility of common dialogue, people became prisoners of low popular culture. The Paideia Institute aims to restore lost dialogue by reading great books left by mankind. (Feb, 2002)"

The Paideia Academy supported fostering 'Co-Leader' for dissemination of GBP. The Co-Leaders have established 17 Paideia branches across the country (currently, 2023) and run GBP. Members of the academy have formed the "Paideia Society" to delve into the works of Great Books - Plato, Aristotle, and Aurelius etc, and they regularly host academic seminars. As a result of these efforts, The Graduate School of Busan National

³⁷ Shin Dukyul, *Great Conversation: Research on Robert M. Hutchins*, Keimyung University Press, 2002.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Korean professor of educational philosophy, founder of 'Paideia Academy'. Retired at Keimyung University, Korea. In 1991, he established the Paideia Academy, a liberal arts education institution, and has been serving as the director until now. Paideia Academy, which reads and discusses classics, has 17 branches across the country (currently, 2023). In 1995, he studied as a visiting scholar at Oxford University. His main works are as follows; "Authority, Autonomy and Education" (1997), "History of Educational Thought" (2000), "The Great Conversation" (2002), "The Philosophy of Modern Education" (2003), "Philosophy of Happiness" (2007), "Liberal Arts Education" (2016), "Study on Pliteia: Plato" (2020), "Study on Meditation: Marcus Aurelius Antonius" (2023).

University of Education signed an MOU with the Paideia Academy and the “Great Books Program” was entered as a regular course for the first time in Korea.

In 2014, public broadcaster EBS produced GBP of St. John's University as part of an educational documentary and screened it in Korea. In 2019, students who returned from studying at St. John's University started spreading GBP. They are distributing programs to universities and local libraries in Seoul with modified form under a reading platform called ‘Philous.’

Korea's GBP still has little influence. However, it is noteworthy that liberal arts education, which was not sufficiently provided by public education and university education, is steadily spreading outside of school.

Conclusion

For a long time, Korea was considered as successful country through education. In the 1980s and 1990s, education actually helped the country grow. However, because education has been centered on material growth, there has been a lack of opportunities for balanced maturity. Currently, university education also focuses on vocational skills and information acquisition according to government policies and social demands, and intellectual tradition is ignored due to this change. In this situation, GBP can be a supplementary alternative to education.

Also, our society is facing a big change after the COVID-19 pandemic. Various problems such as unexpected disasters and wounds, personal isolation and mental pain, and conflicts within the community have become more important. That is precisely where liberal arts education should be in charge. We now realize that education should value intellectual traditions and ethical values for the development of communities as well as individual growth. Education has come to have a role as a tool to form a richer community. Moreover, the world is currently facing a major change into a knowledge and information society. The pace of change is significant, making it more inefficient than before to provide vocational training in universities as it is now. In this respect, it is clear that universities should have a greater meaning than places of vocational training.

Amid these concerns, the idea that a degree awarded by a university proves the completion of education or that successful employment after graduation from university is a proof of a good education should also be changed. Educated people should mean those who are free to lead their lives and are not frustrated amid pressing issues such as property, divorce, religion, morality, friendship, and death that no one can avoid and that individuals or times have to answer in any form. The GBP we have seen so far may be a challenge that is fully accepted and unfulfilled. Furthermore, in modern times when the code of society and culture has changed, it may be even more so in Korea, where academic traditions are completely different. However, we can try to make it happen as much as possible. What liberal arts education seeks is to create the best community beyond individual education, which is all the more necessary at this point.

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