

Back and Forth: History of College Admission in Korea

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I. Introduction

Korean education is too much focused on the college admission system. Korean students tend to fill their adolescence with preparing for entrance exams to go to the prestigious universities. Even if they go to college, they spend a lot of time again improving their resume to enter big companies without knowing what they really want. In fact, 75 % of new university graduates work in the “real world” that is not necessarily matched with their major. Thus, we need to stand up against this never-ending cycle. It's a tremendous loss not only for themselves, but also for the country. A bigger problem is to mass produce “too many”(jobless) college graduates, as compared with Korean industrial structure and sizes. Now, Korean education has fallen into the swamp of chronic and stagnant crisis, due to fierce competition, college entrance exam-oriented education, standardized education, and collapse of public education eccentrically transformed into the outpost of left-wing political ideology.

Let's look back on the successive changes in the education policies of the university entrance exam: (1) main test by university (1945-1968), (2) preliminary test + main test (1969-1981), (3) achievement test (1982-1993), (4) the CSAT (after 1994).¹In the 1980s, the government changed the main test (colleges' own written admission test) into the achievement test, for the reason that the former encouraged students to rush into private tutoring institutes. However, they revised it again into the college scholastic ability test (CSAT) in the name of reducing private education fees.²In 2008, they gave more importance on school grades in the standardized CSAT to lighten the burden of private education. After all, all the consecutive policies caused school parents and students to spend higher private education expenses.

Thus, the best alternative plan is not to abolish the private education, but to develop& normalize the public education facing a crisis of epic proportions such as “collapse of classroom”, “collapse of school.”³It is almost impossible to eradicate private education in Korean educational eco-system, similar to a vehicle that do not allow users to get back

Picture 1 Korean mothers were praying at the school where the final test was held

once off the train. From elementary school into middle and high schools, curriculums are sequentially taught; therefore, it's so difficult to catch up with class, if once left behind. In consequence, most students are forced to receive expensive private tutoring, if

they feel that they are dropping out of line. Unless such a vicious cycle is institutionally remedied, the private education exists and will continue to exist.

The fundamental problem of Korean public education is a (downward) standardization. The target of the current left-leaning Korean education is to put all students under one hat in the name of “equality.”It may sound ironic, but the standardized education deprives students of their dream, far from making the best of their various traits. For example, Korean students should be evenly good at several subjects to go to top university, even though they are talented in one particular area. Thus, they should spend more time to make better records in their weakest subject than to study their best subject in depth. The “authentic” standardization is not to give for everyone the right to education in the same way, but to obtain “customized” educational program according to individual talents and skills.⁴The aim of this paper is to diachronically analyze the whole dramatic changes that took place in Korean college admission system, and to draft possible solutions by trial and error.

¹Jung-bin Kim [in Korean] (2017), “The transition process of Korea's college entrance system and its future developments, *Monthly Seoul Education News*, vol. 227, Summer edition.

²In-sung Chun [in Korean] (2019), “The dark history of Korea's college entrance exam that has changed at least 19 times,” *The JoongAng*, December 1, 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/23645910#home>

³Byung-hyun Nah [in Korean] (2001), “Ideals of public education reconsidered,” *Asian Journal of Education*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 139-143; Yun-seo Hwang [in Korean] (2021), “The dilemma of public education and its future,” *EduinNews*, Auguste 7, 2021. Retrieved from <http://www.eduinnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=39735>

⁴ Byung-hyun Nah [in Korean] (2003), “Neoliberalism in educational reform,” *Asian Journal of Education*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 305-6.

II. “Literally Black” History of College Entrance Exams

The Ministry of Education announced new measures to strengthen “fairness” in college admissions in 2019: extension of regular admission (more than 40%) and abolition of essay writing, extra curriculum activities, and letter of self-introduction in 16 universities in Seoul.⁵ Since the introduction of “rolling admission,” the importance of the CSAT has remarkably dwindled every year but it is rising once again in 20 years. These latest measures are the 19th college admission reform plans after Korea's 1945 liberation from Japan! From 1945 to the present the topography of college entrance exam has been shaken once every 4 years. Each government successively attempted to improve the college entrance examination system to resolve excessive competition, financial burden of private tutoring, and controversy on fairness in education. However, they need to fix it again in a few years, irrespective of their political orientation, due to small and large side effects: excessive competition → rough-and-ready reform → side effects → new amendment. The history of college entrance exams is under the shade of Korean academic background-oriented society where a diploma from an elite university determines your career, income, and class, etc.

Table 1: The changing history of college entrance exams⁶

Period	Main Points	Side Effects
1945-1953	Selection by university	Great pressure on the students because of different entrance exam by university
1954	State-run unified entrance exam	
1955-1961	University's own written admission test	Shortfall of applications due to failing the state exam.
1962	State exam for college admission	
1963	Preliminary test + main test	Prevalence of expensive private lesson
1973	Preliminary test + main test and high school records	
1982	Achievement test	Cramming and memorization-oriented education, prevalence of wait-and-see strategy
1994	College scholastic ability test (CSAT)	Acceleration in the collapse of classroom
2002	Nonscheduled[rolling] admission.	“Death triangle,” “quick-delivery motorcycles”
2007	Admission officer system (comprehensive student record screening)	Stiff competition to build “specs,” gold spoon screening & blind screening

1) Period of Main Test by University + Preliminary Test

Before 1980s, the college admission system revolved around the “main test by university” to which the preliminary test was added. Till 1953, Korean universities selected new students for admission, but illicit and/or unqualified admission was the subject of much controversy for many years. In 1969, the government supervised the preliminary test of objective multiple-choice, whereas universities gave the main test of subjective essay writing. This combined model continued till the 1981.

2) Period of Achievement Test: Arrangement Plan and Wait-and-See strategy.

⁵Chun-jong Lee [in Korean] (2019), “History of Korean entrance exams: Generations of main test, achievement test, CSAT, and comprehensive student record screening,” *SegyeIlbo*, November 14, 2019. Retrieved from <https://m.segye.com/view/20191114503081>

⁶In-sung Chun [in Korean] (2019), *op.cit.* p. 3.



Picture 2 Two applicants getting on the ground were deeply occupied with rewriting their major for the last five minutes before the deadline on November 24, 1989.

The main test-centered college admission system was abolished by the government of Doo-hwan Chun (1931-2021) who came to power by the 17 May 1980 military coup. In 1980, the government announced the July 30 Educational Reforms that did away with the main test by university and added the school records to the established state-sponsored preliminary test with the total ban on private tutoring. In 1982, the Doo-hwan Chun government changed the name of “preliminary test” into “achievement test” in which all the examinees across the country took the only one test at the same time and went to college based on their achievement test scores. The achievement test contributed to reducing the burden of private education and alleviating a controversy about fairness in some degree. Nevertheless, there was an unusual but widespread trend where students chose their college and major focusing only on grades, regardless of their aptitude and career paths, according to the so-called “arrangement plans” provided

by the private college prep institutes and the “wait-and-see strategy” to include application for admission at the last-minute deadline. Moreover, there was growing criticism on the limits of the achievement test encouraging cramming method of learning, hindering university autonomy, and causing the problem of the equity on school grades among high schools, etc. On top of everything else, the private tutoring seemed to die away but reared its head again in the form of “secret-part-time job” or “pincette-private tutoring”(that is, test-oriented private lesson to correctly pinpoint the expected questions).⁷

3) *Period of CSAT: Water CSAT, Fire CSAT, Lotto CSAT*

The College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) claiming to stand for de-curriculum and synthetic test was introduced in 1994. The CSAT is an eight-hour exam which has back-to-back papers in six sections: Korean, maths, English, history, social studies, and a second foreign language. Even though the proportion of “rolling test” (regional screening, screening of special talents) has been growing since 2002, the CSAT was the linchpin of college admission system. However, the difficulty level of the CSAT varied from year to year adding to confusion, so it caused widespread anger among examinees. For reference, the CSAT in 1996 was considered the most difficult test in history as being referred to “Fire CSAT.” On the contrary, the CAST in 2000 was the worst test ever, dubbed “Water CSAT” because as many as 66 students got a perfect score in all subjects. Even the person who got full marks failed to enter the Seoul National University, one of the flagship Korean national universities. In 2001, it was once again the Fire CSAT contrary to public expectations. Some of the examinees named as “the generation of Hae-chan Lee”⁸ did not only get out of the exam halls after the first or the second class, but one student committed suicide during the CSAT due to its high-level difficulty. Thus, the then President Dae-jung Kim (1924-2009) said “I’m very sorry about the panicked students who firmly believed the promise the government would give out easy exams” during his cabinet meeting.⁹

In 2004-6, “Lotto CSAT” was the buzz word because the final grade was more dependent on the luck of test takers in choosing elective subjects than on their competence. In 2004 liberal arts & natural science students could respectively select 4 subjects in the areas of science and social studies. It reduced the burden of entrance exams on them, but they failed to adjust levels of difficulty in choosing electives. To make matters worse, cheating by cell phones was caught on the day of the College Scholastic Ability Test (CAST). Thus, to prevent exam cheating in the CSAT, the electronic equipment such as mobile phones and MP3 players were not allowed to carry in the testing site. In 2005-6, as the noticeable gap in test scores between elective subjects has widened, the newly coined word “Lotto CSAT” became very popular. For reference, there was an untimely craze for Arabic language among college prep institutes in 2008-9

⁷Youn-sooh Nam [in Korean] (2016), “News Clip: The history of the college entrance system in Korea,” *The JoongAng*, April 18, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/19902097#home>

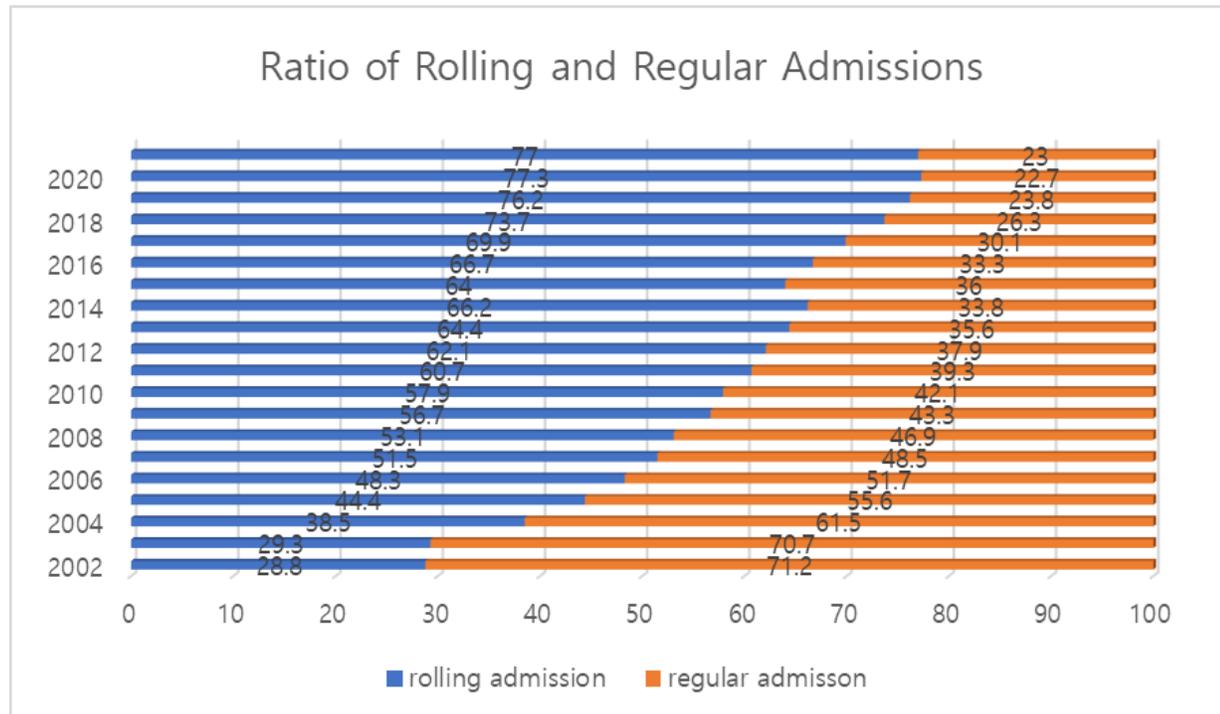
⁸Hae-chan Lee (1952-) served as the Minister of Education (1998-9) under the Dae-jung Kim government instituted reforms to the college admissions process. At the time was summed up in the slogan that being good at one thing was enough to get into college, was criticized for allegedly lowering dramatically the scholastic competence of the so-called “Hae-chan Lee generation” of then-high school students.

⁹In-sung Chun [in Korean] (2019), *op.cit.* p. 7.

because Arabic as the second foreign language was known to be easy to gain relatively high grade without investing many study hours.¹⁰

4) *Period of Rolling Admission: Motorcycle Troops, Triangle of Death*

The ratio of rolling admission that had come into force in 1997 was only 1.4% in its beginning period, but it has expanded with the division of rolling and regular admissions in 2002. Various screening methods (essay writing, letter of recommendation, and depth interview, etc.) were introduced in the college admission system. In particular, the essay writing received a lot of attention from test takers, because there was little or no influence rates of their grades and scores in it.



¹⁰ Arabic was added to the options for the second foreign language test in 2005 to reflect the growing importance of the Arab world in the global economy. The number of Arabic test-takers, which stood at a mere 531 in 2005, has risen at a fast clip, reaching 2,184 in 2006, 5,072 in 2007, 13,588 in 2008 and 29,278 in 2009; see, "Arabic emerges as top 2nd language choice on college entrance exam," *Yonhap News Agency*, December 7, 2016. Retrieved from <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20161207005800315>

For example, Hanyang University's written essay exam was highly competitive by a 80-1 ratio in 2015. The unusual scene of so-called "motorcycle troops" appeared on the very day of the essay test to bring test takers to several different exam venues. On the other hand, there was growing debate over "triangle of death" (CSAT+ school grades + test by university). The then government changed the method of calculation of school grades from the absolute five-level system into relative nine-level one, to solve the chronic problem of "inflated" school grades. To reduce the influence of the CSAT, they decided to provide the report card rating one's performance on a scale of one to nine, instead of standard scoring expressed as percentage. However, contrary to the government's intention to decrease the burden of college entrance system, top-ranked students were driven to take care of all three tests. Accordingly, the 9 grade system of the CSAT was abolished by harsh protests from students downgraded by grade cutoffs and their parents in the following years.¹¹



Picture 3 Mobilization of Motorcycle troops

5) 5) Period of Comprehensive Student Record Screening: Spec and Competition Craze, Controversy over "Gold spoon" and "Blindness"

6) Nowadays, the dominant way of selecting students at the highly ranked universities in Seoul is the "comprehensive student record screening."¹² It admits students based on their latent ability, development possibility and person-major fits through their various activities, instead of standardized CSAT scores and school grades. Even though it partially contributed to normalizing the high school education by breaking away from college admission-oriented education to line up students according to their grades, students and parents were not happy because it engendered fierce "spec" competition among students. The neologism "spec" derived from the word "specification" used to refer to an individual's academic and career background. Thus, it is an indicator to show how competitive you are.¹³ However, most specs for college admission (club, volunteer work, letter of self-introduction, research essay, academic competition award, etc.) have been heavily criticized for they depended on parents' wealth & personal connections and high schools' capacity and ranking.

¹¹In-sung Chun [in Korean] (2019), *op.cit.* pp. 9-11.

¹²The admission officer system, forerunner of comprehensive student record screening was introduced in 2008 and extended farther under the Myung-bak Lee government(2008-2013).

¹³Hyun-juOck (2016), "Tough job market prompts stiff competition to build 'specs'," *The Korea Herald*, September 23, 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160923000563>

For reference, the “spoon class theory” was very popular in Korean society.¹⁴ It’s a self-mocking expression. The class of humans can be determined by the wealth inherited from their parents, not by personal efforts. It’s derived from an English idiom “born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth.”

Table 2: Spoon Class Theory (Korean monetary unit: won)¹⁵

Gold spoon	Silver spoon	Bronze spoon	Dirt spoon
Those having more than 2 billion of assets or their annual income is more than 200 000 000 wons.	Those having more than 1 billion of assets or their annual income is more than 80 000 000 wons.	Those having more than five hundred million of assets or their annual income is more than 55 000 000 wons.	Those having less than fifty million of assets or their annual income is under 20 000 000 wons.



According to this spoon class theory, some students named the comprehensive student record screening “gold spoon screening.” That means that many of them did not write self-directed learning and activities in the transcript of school records, but they did passively as they were told by their wealthy parents or expensive private consulting schools. In 2019, the highest rated drama titled *Sky Castle*¹⁶ aroused a good deal of sympathy among students of similar age. As the mysterious highest paying consultant appeared in the *SKY Castle*, the drama gave the viewers an immediate negative image on the comprehensive “student record” screening that started to be pejoratively called as comprehensive “school parents” screening or comprehensive “private cram schools” screening.¹⁷ On the other hand, it’s very difficult to find a cram school specialized for essay writing in province. Not surprisingly, we saw many local students usually accompanied by their ‘helicopter’ parents take a short-term intensive course in expensive private academies in Seoul during vacation or on the verge of essay test!¹⁸ Accordingly, public opinion about the comprehensive student record

¹⁴ The term appeared in 2015 and was first widely used among online communities in South Korea; Editorial [in Korean], “The idea of dirt spoons and gold spoons is real. South Korea is moving towards a new class society,” *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, November 17, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.khan.co.kr/opinion/editorial/article/201511172020555#csidx12244c8ff021ec9929ac09c2834ec8e%EA%B8%88>

¹⁵ Hye-kyung Cho et al. [in Korean], “There is a germ of inconvenient truth in the joke of spoon class theory,” *The JoongAng*, October 28, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/18949618#home>

¹⁶ SKY is an acronym used to refer to the three most prestigious universities in South Korea: Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University.

¹⁷ A satirical series that closely looks at the materialistic desires of the upper-class parents in South Korea and how they ruthlessly secure the successes of their families at the cost of destroying others' lives.

¹⁸ Myeong-seonJin (2016), “For prestigious university admission, S. Korean students and parents in a war for information,”

screening has been aggravated, and finally came to the climax with ex-Justice Minister Kuk Cho’s daughter’s college admission scandal.¹⁹

As Mr. Cho’s daughter’s college admission scandal has sparked public debate, if not wrath, over the issue, there was a vocal opposition to the comprehensive student record screening branded as a “gold spoon screening” or “blind screening.”²⁰ One of the reasons why the comprehensive student record screening is not trusted is a matter of evaluation criterion represented by the so-called blind (or black) screening. This is because objective criteria or information on why a student passed or failed are not convincingly provided to students and parents. Universities are reluctant to provide specific evaluation criteria, because there is a possibility of further controversy over unfairness, due to the leakage of their key entrance exam information.²¹

Thus, the former left-wing president Moon was obliged to order the extension of regular admission (more than 40%), the abolition of elite schools to level playing field, and the overall improvement of comprehensive student record screening. The Minister of Education Eun-haeYoo announced the measure to abolish the letter of self-introduction (written by students themselves) and non-curriculum activities (club, volunteer activity and award results) in 2019. The following Table 3 exhibits the governmental improvement plans in the college admission system after Cho’s notorious scandal.²²

Table 3: Plans to Increase the Fairness in the College Admission System

	2021 (currently, second year of high school)	2022 (currently, first year of high school)	2023 (currently, third year of middle school)	2024 (currently, second year of middle school)
Transcripts of students’ school records	Strengthening the investigation on the prohibitive items	Reduction of items to specify in school reports (prohibitions of recording research essay, award winning career, and autonomous club activities)		Abolition of non-curriculum activities
Letter of self-introduction		Reduction in the number of questions and letters		Abolition
Teacher recommendation letter		Abolition		
Regular admission		More than 30% in the whole universities	40% in the top 16 universities *	
Social Integration Program		Making “select more than 10 % of socially disadvantaged students” mandatory Recommendation of more than 10% of regional screening		
Special admission (essay writing and special talents)	Inducing the abolition of special admission			

- Top 16 universities: Konkuk University, Kyung Hee University, Korea University, Kwangwoon University, Dongguk University, Sogang University, University of Seoul, Seoul National University, Seoul Women's University, Sungkyunkwan University, Sookmyung Women's University, Soongsil University, Yonsei University, Chung-Ang University, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Hanyang University (Source: Education Ministry).

From 2023 (currently, third year of middle school) the ratio of regular admission will be increased by up to 40%. After 20 years of seesaw game between regular and rolling system, the college entrance exam system returns to the CSAT-centered one at the end of twists and turns.

Hankyoreh, March 21, 2016. Retrieved from https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/736019.html

¹⁹Min Cho, the 29-year-old daughter of former minister Cho and Kyung-sim Chung, a professor of Dongyang University, is at the center of the admission scandal. Chung was convicted by the Seoul High Court for carrying out a series of academic frauds to help her daughter get into college and graduate schools including PNU’s medical school.

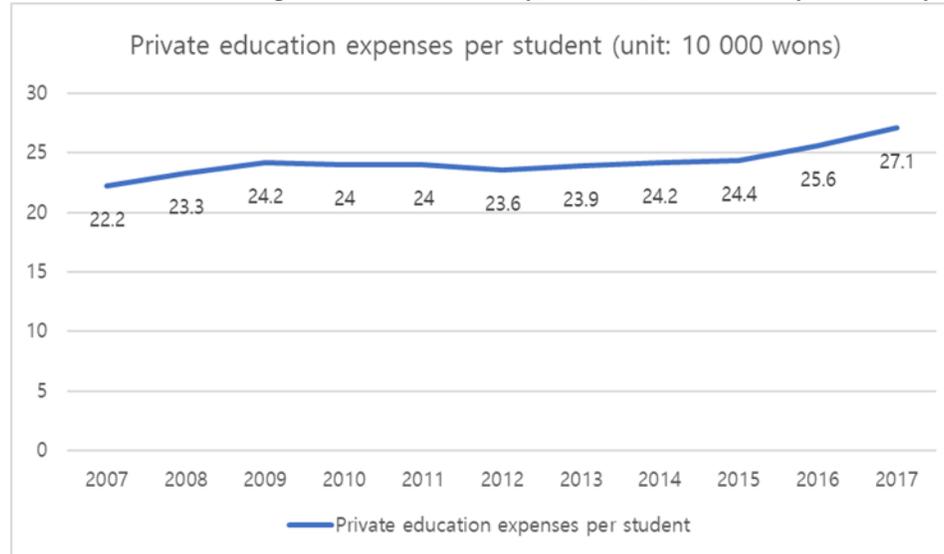
²⁰Kelly Kasulis (2019), “South Korea’s new ‘blind hiring’ law bans personal interview questions,” *Global Post*, July 23, 2019. Retrieved from <https://theworld.org/stories/2019-07-23/south-koreas-new-blind-hiring-law-bans-personal-interview-questions>

²¹Kwang-hyun Lee [in Korean] (2018), “Analysis of comprehensive school card admission system and direction of improvement of college admission system,” *Korean Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 58-59.

²² Chi-dong Lee (2019), “S. Korea sets 'drastic' reform of college admission system in motion,” *Yonhap News Agency*, October 25, 2019. Retrieved from <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20191025004151315>

III. Conclusion: from Regulation and Standardization into Deregulation and Liberalization

Korean college admission system has been changed or modified at least 18 times since its introduction in 1945. The three main axes are ① multiple choice state exam (represented by the CSAT), ② subjective exam by university, ③ high school records. Despite criticism that the revival of CSAT could turn schools into problem-solving cram academies, the left-leaning government brought up the “regular admission” card relying on public opinion such as “comprehensive student record screening=parental chance”²³ and “CSAT=fairness,” especially in regard to the scandal of former Justice Minister Cho's daughter suspected of passing foreign language high school, university, and medical graduate school without any written test, only through “rolling admission” based on comprehensive student record screening. Are these two above equations valid? Indeed, according to existing research results, the comprehensive student record screening (document & interview evaluation) seems to have more limitations as an evaluation mechanism for student competency than the CSAT screening.²⁴ From the perspective of universities, they were able to achieve their college admission “autonomy” due to the rapid expansion of the comprehensive screening,²⁵ but kept silent about the various problems (reasonability, fairness, and reliability) caused by the comprehensive screening.



The previous governmental policy to expand rolling admissions was not only a measure to “normalize high school education,” but it was also intended to reduce the ratio of regular admissions centered on the CSAT, which is said to be fair but has the negative effect of inducing private education. Thus, since the late 2000s, the proportion of rolling admission has gradually increased. However, there was no direct correlation between the expansion of rolling admission and the reduction in private education expenses.

Except for 2010, the size of private education expenses per student has steadily increased as the rolling admission has expanded (see, the statistics above on the trends in private education costs in 2007-2017: Korea national statistical office).²⁶ Nevertheless, leftists argue that regular admissions and CSAT are the main culprits of private education, while rightists point out that excessive expansion of rolling admissions has driven students to private education. Confusion is intensifying as conflicting arguments are being made over the same phenomenon.

The most sensitive part of college admission policy is the issue of unfairness and inequality in Korean society. As a way to resolve unfair education, the former left-wing government hastily proposed a (temporary) solution to strengthen the fairness of college admission that is little more than leftist idealism (that is, downward standardization), bearing no relation to the real world. As a joke, every citizen in Korea pretends to be an expert in the field of college entrance exam, as much as of football. Everyone has their own way of thinking based on their own experience. There are two camps: expansionists of regular admission vs. reformists of comprehensive student record screening. However, both camps are not aware of the biggest challenges for colleges and universities. Currently the most important task in many universities is to recruit students due to declines in the number of students, and in order to secure them, the number of rolling admissions must be increased as much as possible. Regular admission only creates symbolic figures, and more than 90% of students must be selected from early admission, so that more than half of the students can be secured. In the past, some universities interested in government subsidies increased the number of early admissions, but now almost all universities want to increase rolling admissions as it's a matter of survival. The same goes for top

²³“Parental chance” is a neologism referring to solving problems that children cannot solve by themselves but through a socially influential father or mother.

²⁴ Kwang-hyun Lee [in Korean] (2018), *op.cit.*, pp. 88-89.

²⁵ Short for comprehensive student record screening.

²⁶Hyun-gap Park [in Korean] (2018), “Private education costs increased as the rolling admission proportion increased,” *Seoul Shinmun*, March 26, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.seoul.co.kr/news/newsView.php?id=20180326500142>

universities. In order to preoccupy excellent students, the number of rolling admissions must be increased. Only then will the cutline of the CSAT be raised in regular admissions. If the government forces the number of rolling admissions to be reduced, many universities will immediately be swept into the whirlwind of domino bankruptcy. At the same time, the universities' efforts to innovate for survival will quickly go down the drain. If so, Korea's higher education system may collapse rapidly. It is no exaggeration to say that there is no future for our society if we cannot cultivate new talent through the educational revolution in the era of population decline.

According to prof. Don-hee Lee, egalitarian education is one of the greatest ideologies of public education. The national education system in a democratic society should be primarily planned and operated according to the principle of equal education. At least as far as education is controlled and planned by the state, the principle that the beneficial educational opportunities should be distributed equally precedes any ideology of education.²⁷ Equality in a quantitative sense has been realized to a certain extent. This is the biggest achievement of the public education system so far, but it is difficult to positively evaluate whether "qualitative" equality has been achieved or not. In other words, the public education system introduced for equal education is ironically an obstacle to the realization of equal education in that the universal nature of public education imposes "standardized education" rather than considering individual personality and aptitude. The challenge to contemporary public education trapped in left-wing values depends on realizing the promise of equality in a qualitative sense, that is, guaranteeing the right to education according to ability and aptitude.

Looking back on public education in South Korea, public education has serious problems to the extent that it is difficult to solve with fine adjustments. Along with the "collapse of classrooms" caused by the standardization policy, the growing dependence on private education shows that Korean-styled public education is not working properly. Many point out that creative and diverse talents are not being cultivated as the public curriculum becomes a problem-solving education for college entrance exams, and the school and curriculum are uniform, standardized and drastically left-oriented under the guise of "true education": that is, socialist controlled education that keeps all education controlled by the state from deviating from the framework of equality and non-competition. There can be no competition in this chimerical educational system. It eliminates competition systematically. Why is that? Competition is "inhumane." This is because it results in classifying students and schools as winners and losers. This is the epitome of socialist thought. For reference, the starting point for the youth unemployment problem, which has emerged as a social problem today, is also equalization education. With the standardization admission without exam, most Korean parents will be able to let their children go to college without having to worry about their children's abilities and aptitudes. The standardized entrance exam is the source of frustration of youth unemployment by forcing parents to postpone deciding their children's aptitude and career path as much as possible, causing credentialism and academic inflation.²⁸ The problem of Korean education is often described as high cost & low efficiency. More than half of middle and high school students cannot keep up with regular classes even after spending a large amount of public education (25 trillion won) and private education (13 trillion won) annually. The scholastic ability of college graduates is falling significantly. The competitiveness of Korean education is ridiculously low. According to the IMD, it ranks 31st out of 49 countries.²⁹

Every education policy fails because it aims for equal, equalized, and non-competitive education in a liberal democratic country. In order to reduce private education, it is necessary to compete with private education through competition between schools and teachers. It can be said that the fundamental problem of public education in Korea is that it is operated as a national monopoly system away from the perspective of liberalism & education market, and its stance is left-wing. Thus, the left-wing education system should be corrected as a solution to the public education problem. There is a clear path for Korean education. It is necessary to take the path of liberalization and liberation of Korean education from standardization education. Therefore, what we should do is "deregulation" of education by priority. Just as economic freedom brings economic prosperity, liberalization of education brings prosperity of education. Specifically, first, the fundamental law of education should be revised to suit the purpose and goals of public education in accordance with the spirit of the constitution of liberal democracy. Second, by gradually liberalizing the standardized educational policy, schools should not only restore their right to select students, but innovate & manage themselves autonomously, and parents should be given the right to choose the school of their preference. Third, private educational property rights should be stopped from being infringed by the state.

²⁷Don-hee Lee [in Korean] (1983), *Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Seoul: Kyoyook book, p. 318.

²⁸Credentialism and educational inflation are any of a number of related processes involving increased demands for formal educational qualifications, and the devaluation of these qualifications; Keun-chan Moon [in Korean] (2018), "Fundamental problems and solutions of Korean public education," *Freedom & Market*, vol. 10, pp. 15-17.

²⁹Kyung-kuk Min [in Korean] (2004), "Korean education trapped in left-wing values," *Dailyan*, September 22, 2004. Retrieved from <https://m.dailian.co.kr/news/view/6388>