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## Developmental State Policy, Educational Development, and Economic Development: Policy Processes in South Korea (1961-1979)<sup>1</sup>

*Ki Su Kim*

Memorial University  
Canada

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**Abstract:** This paper explores two inter-connected issues – the state’s role in educational development and educational contribution to economic development – in the policy processes entailed by the South Korean state’s pursuit of economic development during the Park Chung Hi era, 1961-1979. It disputes the statist view that South Korea’s economic development was the outcome of a strong state’s imposition of developmental policies. It also denies the human capital account that central to the South Korean state’s education policy was the skills formation agenda. In this paper’s process analysis, educational contribution to economic development was made most importantly in the entrance competition-swept schools by virtue of their equipping South Koreans with basic knowledge and intellectual skills and the most important educational asset for economic development was those schools’ explosive growth. The latter took place as an unexpected

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effect of the state's developmental policy of containment which aimed to secure scarce funds for strategic developmental projects. This policy intensified entrance competitions, boosted demand for education, and provoked public call for state commitment to educational expansion. The legitimacy-deficient regime responded politically and compromised on the developmental education policy from one level of formal schooling to another. The image of the developmental state thus portrayed is quite contrary to that provided by the statist-human capital perspective.

**Keywords:** developmental state; policy process; Korean education; entrance competition; education and development.

### **Políticas desarrollistas del estado, desarrollo de la educación, y desarrollo económico: Los procesos políticos en Corea del Sur (1961-1979)**

**Resumen:** Este artículo explora dos temas interconectados - el papel del Estado en el desarrollo educativo y la contribución de la educación al desarrollo económico - en los procesos políticos ocasionados por la búsqueda estatal de desarrollo económico de Corea del Sur durante la época de Park Chung Hi, 1961-1979. Se opone a la visión estadística de que el desarrollo económico de Corea del Sur fue resultado de un estado fuerte de imposición de las políticas de desarrollo. También niega la cuenta de capital humano como el centro de la política educativa del Estado de Corea del Sur fue el *agendum* de formación de habilidades. En el proceso de análisis de este trabajo, la contribución de la educación al desarrollo económico se hizo más importante (barrio con la competencia) en la entrada de escuelas por virtud de sus equipamientos surcoreanos con el conocimiento básico y las habilidades intelectuales y el activo más importante de la educación para el desarrollo económico fue el crecimiento explosivo esas escuelas. Este último se llevó a cabo como un efecto inesperado de la política de contención de desarrollo del estado que tiene por objeto asegurar los escasos fondos para proyectos estratégicos de desarrollo. Esta política se intensificó con los concursos de acceso, impulsó la demanda por la educación, y provocó una solicitud pública de compromiso del Estado para la expansión educativa. El régimen respondió con una legitimidad deficiente, tanto política como comprometidamente, sobre la política para el desarrollo de la educación de un nivel de educación formal a otro. La imagen del Estado desarrollista así retratado es totalmente contraria a la que ofrece la perspectiva del capital humano-estadista.

**Palabras clave:** estado de desarrollo, proceso político, educación coreana, competencia de entrada, educación y desarrollo.

### **Estado Desenvolvimentista, desenvolvimento educacional e desenvolvimento econômico: os processos políticos na Coréia do Sul (1961-1979)**

**Resumo:** Este artigo explora duas questões interligadas - o papel do Estado no desenvolvimento educacional e na contribuição da educação para o desenvolvimento econômico - nos processos políticos que decorreram da procura de desenvolvimento econômico pelo estado da Coréia do Sul durante o Park Chung Hi, 1961-1979. Este artigo opõe-se à visão pró-estado de que o desenvolvimento econômico da Coréia do Sul foi o resultado de um Estado forte aplicando políticas de desenvolvimento. Este artigo também nega a perspectiva do Capital Humano como o centro da política educacional do Estado da Coréia do Sul. No processo de análise deste estudo, a contribuição da educação para o desenvolvimento econômico tornou-se mais importante na competição de entrada nas escolas em virtude da sua capacidade para equipar os sul-coreanos com conhecimentos e competências intelectuais básicas, e o recurso educacional mais importante para o desenvolvimento econômico foi o crescimento explosivo destas escolas. O último foi realizado

como um efeito inesperado da política de contenção de desenvolvimento do Estado que visava garantir recursos escassos para projetos estratégicos de desenvolvimento. Esta política intensificou competições de entrada, impulsionou a demanda por educação, e provocou um pedido público de compromisso do Estado para a expansão educacional. O regime respondeu com uma legitimidade fraca, tanto política quanto com o compromisso sobre a política para o desenvolvimento da educação de um nível de escolaridade formal para outro. A imagem do estado de desenvolvimento é retratado de forma tão completamente contrária à que foi oferecida pela perspectiva de capital humano-estatista.

**Palavras-chave:** estado de desenvolvimento, processo político, a educação coreana, a competição de entrada, educação e desenvolvimento.

## Introduction

This paper explores two inter-connected issues in the “policy processes” (Mackintosh, 1992) entailed by a state’s vigorous pursuit of economic development. One issue is what the state does for educational development and the other what education does for economic development.

The writers of statist and human capital persuasions tend to uphold what seems true *prima facie* in view of what Mackintosh (1992) calls “policy as prescription.” In this view, the state, labeled “developmental,” endeavors to promote economic development and implements policies and this endeavor’s success materializes in economic development. This view easily captures audience and the development-pursuing state gets glorified if the economy has indeed developed significantly. An example of this is South Korea at the time of Park Chung Hi’s “developmental state.” His regime emerged as a military junta after the May 16th *coup d’état* of 1961, metamorphosed to a civilian regime in 1963, and completed its life with his assassination on October 26, 1979. It launched four Five-Year Plans for Economic Development (FYPs), the first of which commenced in 1962 and the fourth ended in 1981 two years after his death. Remarkable changes ensued. According to the historical statistics generated by a Seoul-based economic history and policy study group, real gross domestic product (real GDP) multiplied 58.1 times from 5,806.1 million *won* in 1960 to 337,598 million *won* in 1980 in the values of 2005 (Naksungdae Institute, n.d.). Here, a causal relationship between the state and development appears to be too clear to deny the statist-human capital account downright.

This paper takes note of a less known yet more remarkable development in the education sector because, there, the causal relationship was not that simple. The volume of this sector multiplied 111.9 times in real GDP from 228.5 million *won* in 1960 to 26,478 million *won* in 1980 (Naksungdae Institute, n.d.). In this case, however, the impressive growth was not caused directly by state developmental policy, for the latter actually sought to prevent it in order to secure necessary resources for development projects. On the other hand, however, the fact that the country’s economy grew subsequently to the state’s development drive cannot be overlooked, because although *post hoc* (precedence) may well not warrant *propter hoc* (causality), temporal sequence is sufficient to provoke a suspicion of causality.<sup>2</sup> Until proven otherwise, developmental policy’s impact on educational growth and the latter’s effect on economic development may not be brushed aside. Here, our issues take a more concrete form: what the South Korean state did policy-wise for

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<sup>2</sup> A lynchpin in the suspicion of *propter hoc* on the basis of *post hoc* in this case may be a faith in “the contribution of academic institutions to the development of firm-level capabilities.” Mazzoleni (2008) backs up this faith by identifying “an effective integration of academic institutions into the industrial development process” in a number of successful national catching-up processes.

educational development, and how South Korean schools contributed to economic development. Pursuing these issues may help renew our understanding of how policies work in their environment.

The perspective of this paper is that of *policy process*. Unlike the perspective of *policy as prescription*, this perspective does not privilege the state in the processes of policy development and implementation. Rather, it views the state as an actor whose status is relative to social forces and whose policies take effect only after dealing with the social forces (Mooji & de Vos, 2003, pp. v-vii; also Migdal, 2001). Limiting its scope to the dynamics in the state-society relationships, the paper presents how educational expansion could follow a developmental policy that sought to prevent it but greatly contributed to economic development nevertheless.

At this juncture, it seems appropriate to state what this paper does *not* do. This is a piece in educational policy study that explores how the Park regime's developmental education policy worked through its policy process. It does not pursue South Korea's economic and educational development *per se*, or the relationship between educational development and economic development. Its angle highlights the state-society interactions yet leaves out factors that a development study may well have to address, such as culture.

The paper *begins* with disputing the "developmental state" view that development was an outcome of state policies and, instead, arguing that state intervention in societal affairs could not always be one of unilateral imposition of policies, for the latter could be frustrated, modified, or even jettisoned during policy processes. *Then*, it turns to the human capital account that economic development was due to state policies for skills training. It argues that educational contribution to economic development cannot be explained narrowly in terms of skills development but, rather, in reference to the condition of the school system that churned out economic actors for diverse walks of social life. In the *third* step, the paper draws attention to the entrance examination competitions which heavily affected South Korean schools and explores the economic benefits of such schools' entrance examination-focused instruction. In the *fourth* step, the paper discusses the context in which the state's resource mobilization strategy for economic development necessitated a policy to contain the school system in a small size. In the paper's process analysis, this containment policy provoked entrance examination competitions and, consequently, caused demand for education to skyrocket, mobilized private resources for education, yet exacerbated public discontent. In the *fifth* step, the paper discusses the South Korean state's effort to cope with the public discontent by increasing educational investment. *Finally*, the paper concludes drawing answers to the two issues concerning educational contribution to economic development and state role in educational development and discusses implications for policy study and policy making.

## The Developmental State and the Human Capital Account

### The Developmental State as a Concept and as a Thesis

Underpinning the statist interpretation of development is the concept of developmental state that relates the state and development in causal terms. According to Clark and Jung (2002, pp. 18-20), this *concept* builds itself on two assumptions. In one assumption, a nation exists that requires development but its market forces alone cannot achieve the development due to insurmountable barriers. In another, there is a state which possesses the power to overcome the barriers. This state's power is unique on two counts. First, it is strong and capable of implementing decisions autonomously from, and even against, pressures from the vested interests of society. Second, it has under its command the professional expertise of the technocrats hired in state bureaucracy which is capable of generating rational decisions and policies. To this strong and rational state power can be

conjoined an additional element, that is, the will of the state or its leadership to remove the insurmountable barriers and realize economic development. The developmental state is here conceived of as a state that is in possession of “knowledge of what the end of development is” and “ability to implement developmental policies as a vehicle to that end” (Cowen & Shenton, 1995), and, further, commits itself to bringing the economy to that end.

The developmental state *thesis* is an application of this concept to explaining an economic development that has actually taken place. It states that South Korea’s economic development, like what happened elsewhere in East Asia, was the result of a strong developmental state’s enlightened policies. The grounds for this thesis are already prepared in the concept, that the South Korean state was a strong state which was assisted by the technocrats who generated rational policies, and that it was committed to the promotion of economic development. This state, it is inferred, caused the economy to develop by imposing on it the development-fetching rational policies which the technocrats had developed. Examples of such policies are those aiming to help create a sound business environment for a market economy’s smooth operation, “state activism” to encourage economic growth, the setting up and enforcing of industrial standards, structural transformation in the economy and economic planning, and so on (Clark & Jung, 2002; also Castells, 1997; Green 2007; for earlier studies, see Amsden 1989; Evans 1995).

This way of conceptualization, dubbed “statist,” tends to overestimate the state’s role and neglect society as a factor in the policy process. State policies here are assumed to be rational and ready for implementation and, when implemented, to bring about desired results. Policy students, however, are not easily persuaded by such a simple logic, for, from their perspective, policies are not something which one can develop and implement one-sidedly (see, e.g., Haddad, 1995). The policy development process takes input from diverse stakeholders and the implementer of the developed policy often faces unexpected obstacles and resistances. Such situations can necessitate modifications to the original policy and even redefinitions of the objectives in pursuit. Thus, in effect, the original policy can be altered to something entirely different. This leads to another troublesome point in the above way of conceptualization, that the state cannot be immune to reactions from social forces (Cho, 2000).<sup>3</sup> In the worst scenario, such reactions may cause the state to fail. This kind of risks exists whether or not the state was strong and whether or not the technocrats in its bureaucracy were rational, because *strong* does not preclude frustration and *rational* is not necessarily infallible.

### The Human Capital Account

While there are many writers who examine the developmental state with reference to economic development in South Korea and other East Asian countries, the political economy of state-education relations in the region is attracting much less attention. The small number of writers on this issue tends to explain what the state did in the field of education in order to bring about economic development. Here, economic development is a *fait accompli*. Therefore, their focus is directed to the state’s education policies that have led to it. They thus assume that East Asian states, including the South Korean one, intervened in education diversely according to their policy environment, yet commonly promoted industrialization and economic growth by making their schools meet demands from the state-led development drive. Based on this assumption, for instance, Law (2009) explains the developmental states’ education policies on two venues. On one

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<sup>3</sup> The importance of social forces in the state-society relationship is noted in Jeong and Armer (2009) in the South Korean context. This study focuses on “the configuration of political and class forces that contribute to educational outcomes.” Vu (2007), on the other hand, offers an analysis of “elite-mass engagement patterns.”

venue, East Asian states embraced the human capital theory and opted for a “skills formation” policy in order to secure a necessary workforce for the upcoming industrialization. In this policy, he upholds, those states first guided the industry’s skills demand during a targeted span of time and estimated the target time’s manpower demand. Then, they invested in educational and training institutions to prepare them for the jobs they were to perform shortly. Finally, they made those institutions meet the demand by controlling and managing them as calculated (see also Ashton, Green, James, & Sung, 1999). On another venue, the states invested in educational institutions and mobilized them politically to foster a sense of nationhood, social cohesion, and unity so that the entire nation could join in the state-led striving for economic development.

Law’s skills formation and political mobilization venues are also pointed to by Morris (1996) specifically in the South Korean context. He observes that the interventionist state of this country sought to support economic development by “educational policies consistent with a human resources development strategy.” He writes,

In South Korea the government has also, since the 1960s, planned educational provision on the basis of a manpower plan which attempted to estimate the demands for different skills. This resulted in a heavy investment in and channeling of pupils into technical and vocational education in an attempt to provide for the future needs of the economy (p. 102).

Morris as well – and Green (1999) and Ashton et al. (1999) too – took note of the strong state’s political education which had fostered “a strong sense of social cohesion and political identity.”

These observations, too, are essentially inferences from the developmental state concept. Since the developmental state is conceptually a state pursuing economic development, it is inferred that this state pursued educational development as a way to the paramount goal of economic development and industrialization. Since industrialization demanded a large number of skilled workers to be supplied to the industries, it is inferred, skills formation was the top priority policy concern in education. Having done so, it should be easy to further infer that the remarkable economic development was due to the state’s skills formation policy. But these inferences do not fit in with the South Korean context.<sup>4</sup>

### **Discrepancies from the South Korean Situation**

Fairly to say, the human capital account is not entirely erroneous. Park’s regime in fact expressed interest in skills training and vocational education on numerous occasions. Park personally put forward the catchword of *kisuribgug* (“nation building on skills development”) verbally and in calligraphic displays, expressing thereby his dream of economic development in the German model (Park, 1997, pp. 209-24). His regime developed policies to enhance vocational education and installed new vocational schools and skills training centers. According to Oh (2006), as early as in 1965, it proclaimed an ambitious goal of streaming, by 1980, some 70 percent of upper secondary students into the vocational route. But this goal did not materialize as planned. Although many graduates of vocational schools advanced to the factories that sprang up during the years of development, their contribution to economic development was not as great as assumed in the human capital account. There were a few reasons.

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<sup>4</sup> The policy of political education to “inspire national identity” persisted throughout the Park era but its implementation was not always successful. While its main substance was the justification of the regime and its policies by promising economic prosperity, national unification, etc., lack of democracy, corruption, unequal distribution of economic gains, and violations of basic human rights were to many South Koreans too apparent and too painful to ignore. This paper does not pursue this interesting issue, however.

Most importantly, South Korea's industrialization took place at a time when technological innovations repeated much more frequently and the specific skills acquired in vocational schools bore far less upon the industry than in Germany a century earlier. Demands for skills shifted frequently as the "catching up" mode of industrialization picked up steam. So did state policies responding to new demands. In 1962, the junta's development strategy was centered on fostering production in the import-substitution industries of foodstuff and non-food raw materials. Upon experiencing bitter failures in agriculture, in 1964, the regime turned to the export-oriented industries of manufacturing steel plates, plywood and textiles. Then in the 1970s, state policies switched target to heavy-chemical industries (Rhee, 2011). Going through such policy changes, the regime tried to meet new manpower needs by revising the curriculum of vocational schools but without having sufficient time to consider the conditions of the programs in place. Therefore, as Y. T. Kim (2002, p. iv) opines, the revised curriculums "looked great on paper but they were mostly impracticable." In the long run, the repeated curricular changes became the cause of such chronic problems in vocational education as the "uncertainty of curriculum, poor instruction, [inadequate] quality of technology teachers, and so on" (Yi, 1997, p. 46). Persistently, thus, there existed a large gap between the innovative production sites and the outdated training programs. Because of the gap many employers relied on their own on-site training programs, to which the regime later on rendered legislative endorsement (Chung, 2008, pp. 65-76).

Second to note is that the rampant entrance examination competitions, to which this paper turns shortly, prevented vocational education from taking the central place in the schooling system. The competitions drove students to the academic route. Even those students who ended up in vocational schools continued to prepare for university entrance examinations. Thus, vocational schools became marginalized and the marginalized schools did not draw adequate funding despite the pronounced state policies to promote them. As Park (1964) acknowledged, vocational and technological education was seriously underfunded but his regime allocated only "whatever money [it could] find for this area."

Educational contribution to economic development and the state's role in educational development should not be explored narrowly in light of skills development. Between 1972 and 1982, nearly 60 percent of the South Koreans of age 16 and above were gainfully employed and their proportion among those able-bodied juveniles and adults desiring employment was 96 percent (Chung, p. 17, p. 61). During this time of near full employment, the secondary sector of the industry, of which manufacturing was a major part, hired roughly 20 percent of all employed workers (p. 63). That is, during the second half of the Park era, most South Koreans, unless they were in schools or other exceptional situations, participated in diverse economic activities and contributed to economic development in different roles. These roles included not only those of skilled and unskilled workers in the manufacturing industry but also those of office clerks, entrepreneurs, consultants, and the exporters who ventured into the world market. Educational contribution to economic development should be pursued in light of how South Korean schools had prepared those diverse economic actors.

A remarkable phenomenon of those schools that needs to be noted here is entrance examination competitions. The latter affected the schools' operation so extensively that such vital areas as school management, classroom instruction and student life came to be conducted to the effect of facilitating and taking advantage of them. Therefore, the policy makers since the Park era viewed this way of school operation as "abnormal" and grappled with the entrance examination competition question (*ipschimunje*) as a top-priority educational policy issue. They tried different policies to solve the question and "normalize" school operation but mostly failed to achieve their announced goals (Kim KS, 1997, 1999). The following three sections take a rather different angle

and argue successively (i) that entrance examination competitions had beneficial effects for economic development, (ii) that they were resulted by the state's developmental policy of containment and, in their turn, stirred up demand for educational expansion and public discontent, and (iii) that, in response, the state time and again compromised on its containment policy and enhanced its commitment to educational expansion.

## **The Benefits of Entrance Examination Competitions**

A way of discussing the beneficial effects of entrance examination competitions for economic development may be to consider two concerns: whether schooling in the midst of such competitions could generate educational benefits and, if so, what those benefits could be; and how the employers, or the world of economic life, would receive such qualities. Before discussing these concerns, however, it is in order to determine what those competitions were and how they occurred.

### **What Were Entrance Examination Competitions?**

An entrance examination was a procedural device adopted by a school for selecting new students. Since a student quota was in place as a condition of institution license, it had to select new students from the applicants if the latter outnumbered the quota. The procedural device of entrance examination tested how many correct answers the individual examinees could provide to the questions prepared out of the curriculum of the level of formal schooling they were completing. An entrance examination competition, on the other hand, was an event of rivalry that took place for admission to a particular school. Since examinations of this kind were imposed by most popular schools as the method of student selection, and since entry to the schools was perceived to be necessary, most students studied in preparation for such examinations. And since those examinations covered the curriculum that was common for all schools, their preparatory work was conducted similarly. For this reason, individual entrance competitions quickly merged to a large nationwide competitive movement and most students in the nation struggled to excel each other. Hereto, their families added support by dedicating money and effort. So did their schools by conducting instruction in a manner facilitative to their students' preparation for entrance examinations. Typically, their classrooms housed about sixty students, to whom one teacher lectured about the contents of curriculum, frequently tested the students by kits usually prepared with entrance examinations in view, ranked them according to their scores, and promoted competitiveness by reward and punishment.

### **Reasons for Talking Their Educational Benefits**

The preparatory work that the students in such classrooms conducted was not an inquisitive endeavor spontaneously evolving out of a love of learning. It aimed at achieving higher scores than others at entrance examinations and, also, at numerous preparatory tests. Most writers on educational issues have been critical of this type of learning. Their principal reason was that it involved rote learning and cramming, which, in their view, was educationally meaningless practices involving no critical thinking. They observed that the students memorized a bunch of facts and rules on the eve of examination without really understanding them and what they had thus learned should escape their memory soon after. Their reason could be valid yet it could also be misleading. South Korean students' preparation for entrance examinations took a somewhat different route. First, their study was performed for the entrance examinations in the upcoming year or years ahead. This required that what had been learned be stored in memory in a sustainable manner, because they had



to be retrieved at frequent tests. Those students would not attain such a sustainable memory who had memorized the subject matter without really grasping related concepts.

Second, as entrance competition intensified, the administrators of entrance examinations found it hard to distinguish between high and low performers by questions requiring simple recollection of textbook contents. Many students learned by heart the entire textbooks of the subjects covered in entrance examinations. Therefore, the administrators established a criterion that each examination item should be able to discern between individual examinees and rank them by their scores (*pyŏnbyŏllyŏg*, or “discernibility”). Complying with this criterion, they prepared items that were believed to measure the students’ grasp of necessary concepts and ability to apply them to problem solving by virtue of their “thinking power” (*sagoryŏg*), or critical thinking. This criterion could not be entirely futile, for, as Yeh (2001) observes, mandated tests – be they entrance examinations or state-imposed standardized tests – could measure and promote some degree of critical thinking if they employed appropriate types of items.

There is a third reason. Recently, educational researchers began to ponder about the universality of the Western mode of individualized instruction. They ask whether East Asian classrooms which are usually under a heavy influence of entrance examinations may not create any educationally worthy effects. Observing those classrooms from various angles, they contend that the universality of individualized instruction is “an assumption rather than a justified conclusion” (Leung, 2000, p. 2), and that the East Asian type of whole-class teaching, even in a cram school, involves a culture which is very beneficial to student learning if taught by a well-prepared, skilled teacher (Stevenson & Lee, 1995; Huang, 2004). Some contend that East Asian students can, on their own, make transition from rote learning to critical thinking. They observe this kind of transition may be impossible in a classroom where the teacher in charge employs a Western-biased, assimilationist, or deficit approach to the rote-learning cultures, but it can be facilitated if he or she basically embraces rote learning as a legitimate mode of learning (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Dahlin & Watkins, 2000). Mayer (2002) observes the students can move from rote learning to meaningful learning through a chain of activities involving remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. Given these views, one may, from their perspective, argue that the South Korean students under Park’s regime did not waste time memorizing such useless stuff that they would forget shortly. Rather positively, one may say that, through their long preparatory work for entrance examinations, they accumulated a substantial body of basic knowledge and intellectual skills by thoroughly grasping concepts, learning them by heart, and applying them to problem solving.

### **Employment and Promotion by Examinations**

Finally to consider is South Koreans’ human resource practice. Government positions in junior to intermediary ranks were filled through the Civil Servant Employment Examinations. When the employees had accumulated certain qualifying years of service, they wrote Promotion Examinations. Large and small firms – not only public corporations but also private firms – hired their staff via employment examinations and, thereby, managed to construct efficient bureaucracies for their businesses (Ha & Kang, 2011). These examinations measured knowledge in the basic subjects that were being taught in schools. Their common subjects included language arts such as Korean and English and “common knowledge” (*sangshig*) covering the basics of humanities, social sciences and sciences. These were the subjects that had been considered essential for intellectual operation in the Western tradition of liberal education. That is, the employers hired and promoted their employees by screening them in light of whether they possessed the essential intellectual basis.

If the above observation is valid, then, there is a context of discourse as to the economic role of the entrance examination-centered education. Those South Korean schools were teaching their

students in a way ensuring of the acquisition of the qualities that the employers would expect of them. And the employers, in turn, hired the schools' graduates and, later, promoted them by and large in light of whether they retained the qualities their schools had taught to acquire. These qualities were certainly educationally beneficial and instrumental for South Koreans' economic roles. Especially when the economy was growing from a state of utter backwardness, as in the South Korean case, the individuals who were in possession of the kind of basic knowledge and intellectual skills which entrance examinations had demanded could play significant roles in a wide range of economic activities. In this context, one can say the explosive growth of the entrance examination-swept schools was the educational asset for economic development.

Is there empirical evidence for saying so? Considering two facts will suffice to answer this question. First, South Koreans during the Park era went to schools where instruction was usually conducted in preparation for entrance examinations directly or indirectly. Second, it was those South Koreans who, by now, have upgraded their country to one of advanced industry. We would not be able to make sense of the latter without relating it to the former unless we assumed that the South Koreans had been educated elsewhere. Having said so, the paper now turns to the policy processes in which the developmental policy of containment invited ramifications that triggered demands for educational expansion.

## **The Developmental Policy of Containment and Its Ramifications**

### **The Containment Policy**

The Park regime had framed its developmental education policy at the latest by the time of launching the first Five Year Plan in 1962. In the year's speech on state policies, Park (1962) mentioned the first FYP and laid down two policy lines for education. In one line, the schools had to "change along with the economic development plan" and "inspire national identity and reinforce productive skills." In another, while compulsory education at the elementary level would have to be expanded so as to "fully accommodate all children in the age group," secondary and higher education should be contained and not allowed to expand. In his succinct words, "The student quotas at the levels of lower and upper secondary education and higher education should be managed as dictated by the economic development plan."<sup>5</sup> Notable in his speech were two points: managing student quotas in secondary and higher education and expanding elementary education. The former implied a containment policy worked out of the developmental strategy to mobilize resources for strategic industries. As such, it sets for us a context in which to explicate, in this section, the ramifications through which entrance competitions intensified and demands for education surged. The latter point provides clues to explaining, in the next section, the state's compromises on its developmental policy and commitment to educational expansion.

The environment of the containment policy was South Korea's economic backwardness which, according to the first FYP document (Government of ROK, 1962), heavily restricted the financial resources available at the time. On the supply side, in 1960, the gross national product (GNP) accounted for only 86.7 percent of the financial resources needed in the country. The shortfall of 13.4 percent was covered by foreign aids. Of the available financial resources, on the demand side, 88.3 percent was expended for pure consumption. Only 3.8 percent, or a third of the remaining 11.7 percent, was at the state's disposal. The first FYP aimed to increase this share to 5.3

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<sup>5</sup> The junta's internal forum *SCNR Bulletin* revealed on numerous occasions its members' repugnance to "over-education" and "an education that was practically of no use." The junta in fact conducted large-scale downsizings of schools and universities by means of amalgamation and consolidation (Kim KS, 2007).

percent in 1962 and 6.9 percent in 1966. Since the growing economy would raise demand for investment funds (to 17.3 percent of the total available funds in 1962 and 20.7 percent in 1966), a sizeable portion of the required funds had to come from outside as foreign loans and aids. Given all this, available funds had to be allocated to strategic industries, which did not include education. Worse still, the monies allocated to the education sector had to be channeled to the most urgent area, namely, elementary education to which this paper turns shortly. Money had to be saved from secondary and higher education. For this, the regime adhered to the containment policy of freezing student quotas and institution licenses at these levels of formal schooling. Since this containment policy should result in entrance competitions, meanwhile, it intervened to manage the student selection processes.

### **Ramifications**

This policy had ramifications, of which two are noteworthy. One ramification was that the policy maintained the student places of educational institutions perpetually in short supply. Entrance examination competitions as well got much more intense under state management because they became a large-scale annual event of distributing educational opportunities available in the nation. And the intensified entrance competitions drew more and more students, even those with little interest in advanced learning, and their schools and parents too, into a national drive for more and higher education. Another ramification was financial. The intensification of entrance examination competitions assured individual schools of financial stability. Teaching and learning in individual schools focused on learning the basic concepts and rules prescribed in the curriculum and applying them to solving examination questions. This kind of instruction did not require sophisticated facilities and equipment. Mostly, minimally-required numbers of teachers and classrooms were enough. This was a welcome condition for most schools because it allowed them to keep operational costs low (Kim KS, 1997, 1999).

This turned private schools to an attractive place to invest. If only an institution license was in hand, and a bank loan too for land purchase and school building construction, new students would pour in and the tuition they paid would get a school going. The regime issued institution licenses from time to time and sometimes brokered loans from state-controlled financial institutions. In effect, private schools grew and assumed a significant role in secondary and higher education. During the period between 1962 and 1972, in higher education, full-time students increased from 92,930 to 163,932. Of those students, private institutions accommodated 65.9 percent in 1962 and 73.5 percent in 1972. In upper secondary education, the student population grew from 326,406 to 729,783 while the proportion of private school students doubled from 27.6 percent to 56 percent. In lower secondary education, the student population grew during the same period from 655,123 to 1,638,363. Although the state had installed many new public middle schools during the last three years of the period, the proportion of private middle school students did not decline; it rose from 40.8 percent to 44.4 percent (Mungyobu, 1962, 1972).

It is to be noted that the financial burdens for all this were borne substantially by the parents not only in private schools but also in public schools. The costs they paid included tuition fees, special contributions to the school development fund (*kisŏngboebi*) and still more. In addition, they shouldered large sums of cram school expenses. The latter were discretionary private expenses yet the competitive environment disallowed opting out (Kim YH, 1992). While South Koreans were thus spending money and time for their children's education, their private resources and zeal – or the so-called “education fever” (Kim YH, 1992; Kim YH, Lee IH, & Park HJ, 1993; Seth, 2002) – was being mobilized. This was a favorable environment for the state to make commitment to educational expansion.

## Non-Developmental Education Policies and Educational Development

### Financial Priority to Elementary Education

When the growing public discontent about the intense entrance examination competitions and the heavy parental financial burdens became a burning political concern, the Park regime made compromises on its containment policy at the most troublesome level of formal schooling. Non-developmental policies thus emerged to work in parallel with the developmental containment policy.

A precedent of such exceptional policies was the junta's decision to expand elementary education, as mentioned earlier, at the time of launching the first FYP. The decision to allocate as much as 80 percent of state education budget to this level of formal schooling was a difficult one to make. In an election campaign speech, Park (1967) touched upon his regime's obligation to ensure "full and substantial compulsory education" in elementary schools and complained that this obligation, in combination with some other obligations, hampered the economic development effort. But his regime had to fulfill this obligation in fear of potential political repercussions. While many families sent children to elementary schools, the latter's infrastructure was in a very bad condition. Tent classrooms were not rare in urban centers. Some teachers in Seoul taught as many as ninety students in a classroom available on a two-shift basis. The legitimacy-deficient regime could not let discontent brew over the institutions of universal compulsory education.

Through its time, the Park regime adopted other exceptional policies as well in order to appease public discontent. It tacitly allowed private schools and universities to admit students in excess of quotas especially during several years after the regime transformation of 1963. In the late 1960s and 1970s, it drastically increased student quotas and institution licenses. Such exceptional measures were not concessions unilaterally undertaken to avert potential crises. The aforementioned ramifications of the containment policy had tamed public responses in a fairly definite context and, in turn, the regime's educational policy as well followed the context, generally speaking. The leaders of public opinion in the early years of the regime complained that inadequate state funding to education was being compensated by the increased parental financial burdens.<sup>6</sup> Since the scarcity of available financial resources was apparent, however, most South Koreans agreed that their country could provide only a limited amount of educational opportunity and the available opportunity had to go to more promising students as determined by the results of entrance examinations. They were concerned, rather, with the fairness of distributive procedures. For this, they believed that entrance examination was the fairest procedural device and state management the surest way to guarantee the fairness of the device.<sup>7</sup> And when the expected fairness was violated in the distributive processes, as in the December 1964 scandal where a multiple-choice question of a state-managed middle school entrance examination turned out to permit more than one correct answer, the parents protested and the public quickly rallied behind. From here, public demand grew incrementally because, when demand for educational opportunity far surpassed its supply, fair distribution alone could not pacify bad feelings. Since the supply was under control it was only logical to hold the controller responsible. So the public cried for greater state intervention and responsibility and against any reduction in state role in education.

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<sup>6</sup> This observation received scholarly documentation. See, e.g., Chõn, Kim CB, & Choi (1969).

<sup>7</sup> K. S. Kim and J. Jung (1994) analyze over 200 publications advancing arguments concerning desirable educational reforms during about two years since the first civilian President Kim Young Sam's takeover in 1992. They note that most writers still believed that the state should intervene in the student selection processes and there was no viable alternative to state-managed entrance examinations.

## Two Trends in State Responses

While demand for educational opportunity kept rising with a great deal of discontent, the surest way for the Park regime to assuage the unhappy public was to offer more than what was being asked. Examples were the large-scale policy about-turns in 1968 and 1973. The 1968 education reform included measures to close those middle schools where entrance competition was fiercest and ban entrance examinations at this level of formal schooling. Instead, the state allotted funds to increase educational opportunity. It built 377 new middle schools with 8,578 classrooms and 11,517 teachers in a very short period (Pag, 2006). The 1973 reform targeted upper secondary schools to moderate the intensity of entrance competitions by means of a policy of *pyŏngjunhoa* and student selection by lottery. Although some writers on educational issues take this policy to have meant “equalization” of educational opportunity, the reform’s measures were mainly those aiming specifically to improve the infrastructure of private high schools, which the policy makers believed was a major cause of entrance competitions (for the simple reason that many popular high schools were public) (Kim KS, 2004). As part of this policy the state commenced private school funding initially covering teacher salaries and, later, the construction of school buildings as well (Pag, 2006). As S.Y. Chŏn (2009) aptly points out, these two reforms laid foundation for universal secondary education and, as such, they reached far beyond what the public had demanded. The policy environment was quite different, in the meantime. By 1968, disputes over the fairness of middle-school entrance examinations had not developed any further than vaguely attacking the regime for its inability to introduce such a great student selection method that could, at once, do away with the “entrance examination inferno” (*ibshijjog*). By 1973, the measures of the 1968 reform were only beginning to take effect at the level of upper secondary education in the form of intensifying entrance competitions. The 1973 reform was remarkable, however, because it was part of the *Yushin* package of policies by which the regime sought to buy popular support while transforming the state to an emergency dictatorial system with Park as its perennial head. In neither of the two cases, the public demanded universal secondary education.

Another notable fact in this connection was the state’s increasing financial commitment. While the regime persisted with the developmental policy of minimizing educational finance, and while the parents continued to shoulder what they believed unfairly heavy financial burdens, the state, on its own part, allocated to schools increasingly larger sums of money. The state education budget, conveniently taken as the Ministry of Education (MOE) budget, rose from 6.4 billion *won* in 1960 to 2,492.3 billion *won* in 1980 in nominal values (Lee CJ & Kim SG, 2009, p. 523). It multiplied 389 times in twenty years! Although such a rise was largely due to the rapidly growing economy, there was also an indisputable policy-level commitment. Precisely, the size of South Korea’s economy, considered in nominal GDP, grew only 160 times during the period from 243.1 billion *won* in 1960 to 38,774.9 billion *won* in 1980. State education budget grew 2.4 times the GDP.

## Wrap-Up

Answers can now be drawn from the above analysis to the issues posed at the outset. As regards the issue concerning educational endorsement of economic development, vocational education and skills training did not play as great a role as assumed in the human capital theory. Where the employment rate was near full and the secondary sector of the industry hired only a fifth of the workforce, one cannot talk about educational contribution to economic development without implicating the schools that gave formal instruction to the entire population. As well, it is to be noted that most schools at that time were affected by entrance examination competitions and their

instruction was conducted in tune with entrance examinations. These facts suggest to us that educational contribution to economic development owed greatly to certain benefits of the schools' entrance examination-centered instruction. From this perspective, the paper has pointed to the acquisition of basic knowledge and intellectual skills as such benefits.

Answer to the issue concerning the state's role in educational development can be made in reference to a bipolar structure of education policy. At one extreme, the state's developmental policy of containment persistently intensified entrance examination competitions, stimulated demand for education, caused the parents to pay heavily for their children's education, and mobilized private resources for education. At the other extreme, the state repeatedly dealt with the consequential public discontent by means of non-developmental measures helping the schools to grow. Brought together by the ongoing state-society interactions, the two opposite policies drove schools to expand, apparently taking advantage of the growing economy.

This bipolar structure of educational policy remains entrenched in the post-Park era as a problematic legacy. Park's civilian epigones have continued to control student quotas and institution licenses and managed entrance examinations, thereby provoking entrance competitions. When the latter's competitiveness declined due to the increasing supply of student places, the policy makers created such attractive educational institutions as "special academic high schools" (which were *de facto* university-preparatory schools) and designated and funded "research-centered universities" with a declared goal of upgrading them to "world-class universities."<sup>8</sup> They have done so as part of their strategy for educational endorsement for their globalizing economy, or simply for preserving the status quo of entrance examination competitions. On the other hand, they have implemented policies that expanded secondary and higher education to a state of full and near full participation respectively, because this was what the public wanted, or because this was the way to garner political support. Presently, South Korean students still struggle for educational opportunity in a desired institution and their parents continue to complain of unfairly heavy financial burdens. The vote-seeking politicians, meanwhile, have ceased to promise more or better schools, for educational infrastructures are already excellent. Instead, they now promise a "universal free, healthy school meal" program.

Now that it has turned out that educational development was achieved gradually at a cost of the developmental policy of containment, and also that economic development was endorsed educationally in a way which the state had tried to sidestep, can one still maintain that the state under Park's regime was a developmental state and, as such, the cause of the country's development? One's answer cannot be affirmative unless one sees the developmental state in the way rejected earlier on in this paper: as a strong state with rational policies dictating societal and educational affairs. On the other hand, it is unrealistic now to downplay the legacies of the developmental and non-developmental policies. These policies are still very much in place and continue to create ramifications. These ramifications are no longer beneficial educationally and economically. Educationally, the intellectual basics acquired through entrance examination-centered instruction are no longer sufficient to buttress today's sophisticated economy. Economically, growth and development are no longer substantial enough to permit the state's ever-increasing educational spending.

Further studies that analyze the policy processes with focus on the policy environment may yield useful policy ideas for overcoming the problematic developmental legacies in South Korea and for planning educational development in relation to economic development elsewhere. Such studies

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<sup>8</sup> For this, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is running a project. For details of this project, visit: [http://www.mest.go.kr/me\\_kor/intro/general/1/1/policy.jsp?ucd=F01&nno=8](http://www.mest.go.kr/me_kor/intro/general/1/1/policy.jsp?ucd=F01&nno=8).

may help determine the social matrix from which interactions between social forces embraced and rejected state policies, or negotiated new solutions.

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### **About the Author**

Ki Su Kim  
Memorial University

E-mail: [kskim@mun.ca](mailto:kskim@mun.ca)

Ki Su Kim is Professor of Philosophy of Education and Educational Policy at Memorial University, Canada. Recently, he has been exploring ways to make sense of educational policies in light of liberal philosophy and political economy. Two of his papers have appeared in EPAA.

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**Fabiana de Amorim Marcello** Universidade Luterana do Brasil, Canoas, Brasil  
**Alexandre Fernandez Vaz** Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brasil  
**Gaudêncio Frigotto** Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil  
**Alfredo M Gomes** Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil  
**Petronilha Beatriz Gonçalves e Silva** Universidade Federal de São Carlos, Brasil  
**Nadja Herman** Pontifícia Universidade Católica –Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil  
**José Machado Pais** Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal  
**Wenceslao Machado de Oliveira Jr.** Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brasil

**Jefferson Mainardes** Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa, Brasil  
**Luciano Mendes de Faria Filho** Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil  
**Lia Raquel Moreira Oliveira** Universidade do Minho, Portugal  
**Belmira Oliveira Bueno** Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil  
**Antônio Teodoro** Universidade Lusófona, Portugal  
**Pia L. Wong** California State University Sacramento, U.S.A  
**Sandra Regina Sales** Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Brasil  
**Elba Siqueira Sá Barreto** Fundação Carlos Chagas, Brasil  
**Manuela Terrasêca** Universidade do Porto, Portugal  
**Robert Verhine** Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil  
**Antônio A. S. Zuin** Universidade Federal de São Carlos, Brasil