

Abstract

KEDI POLL 2019

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KEDI POLL 2019 was undertaken to investigate how the public feels about nation's schools and education policies. This study aims to understand what Korean society expects from educators and policy-makers. Serving as the most trusted source of public opinions about Korean education and educational issues, this is the 14th annual KEDI POLL in a series that began in 1999.

The results presented here are based on a nationally representative, stratified sample of 4,000 adults(age 19~74) in Korea. Results are subject to a maximum sampling error(MSE) of $\pm 1.55\%$ at the 95% confidence level. This online poll consists of nine sub-categories and 64 questions. The sub-categories are the followings: 1. Evaluation of Education Policy and Schools, 2. Teachers, 3. Student Life, 4. Curriculum and Learning Contents, 5. High School Policies and College Admission, 6. Educational Welfare Service and Education Finance, 7. Higher Education, 8. Current Issues in Education and Education for the Future, 9. Viewpoint on Education.

〈Evaluation of Education Policy and Schools〉

- The public prioritized 'an expansion and strengthened public kindergarten', 'an expansion of all-day after-school childcare' as the most needed change at the K-12 level. The results imply that Koreans want education policies to focus on issues related to 'education for public good' and 'safe care system' at the level of pre-K & kindergarten, elementary school(primary) education, middle and high school(secondary) education. For higher education policies, people want a reduction in college tuition and simplification of the college admission process the most. These results support that 'college tuition' and 'simplification and stabilization of the college admission process' are the most urgent issues at the level of higher education. In life-long learning and career education, Koreans want to strengthen customized career education and local based vocational training.
- Most Koreans(53.5%) give C's to schools in primary and secondary levels, which also leads to the conclusion that more Koreans evaluated schools negatively in general. The results suggest that the level of dissatisfaction on education is increasing as it proceeds onto a higher level of schooling. Thus the dissatisfaction level is highest at the high school level. The public believes 'personalized advising and teaching' and 'improving the quality of coursework' would help to make the school evaluation positive. At the high school level, it is recommended to center on career education and college advisory to achieve positive evaluation results.
- Regarding the school choices, the results on primary school level reveal that a character education(32.2%), specialties of education programs(13.1%) are the most influential factors to make a school choice decision. Notably, at the high school level, career advisory(23.4%) and teachers' quality(17.4%) are the most effective factors in decision making.
- While the respondents on average suggested a change of 'Hakbeolism' oriented society(27.0%) and the diversification of teaching method(19.5%) to

improve public education, the parental group of respondents suggested a change in college admission(21.1%) and enhancement of teacher professionalism(18.1%) improve public education.

- When asked whether parents are willing to send their children to study abroad, 37.6% responds they are willing to do, but 44.7% says they are not interested in. However, depending on the schooling level, the responses for willingness to study abroad vary (Elementary school 17.3%, Middle school 29.9%, High school 41.9%). Again, this result describes that a dissatisfaction level is higher as proceeding to higher education level.
- The respondents believe education policies in Korea are not consistent, nor having a long-term vision, while they view education policies are somewhat suitable for conditions in Korea and reflecting public opinions moderately. Moreover, the respondents believe the roles of the 'National Committee on Education' should also focus on long-term planning for education policy. Thus, the consistent efforts for long-term and stable policy planning are required.

〈Teachers〉

- Korean public holds an Average level of trust (2.79 on a 5-point Likert scale) on the competency of primary and secondary teachers. The public wants Korean teachers to acquire the ability to teach life skills(50.2%) communication skills with pupils and parents (20.7%) at the elementary school level. Furthermore, Koreans want teachers to develop professional teaching skills (37.4%) and the guidance(23.5%) at the middle school level; and career and college admission advisory skills (52.4%), and professional teaching skills (23.3%) at the high school level. These findings recommend reviewing current teacher training programs, whether they reflect what citizens want from teachers.
- The survey shows that more than half (53.1% overall and 56.1% among the

parental group) of Koreans agree to allow a portion of elementary and secondary teaching positions to be filled with field experts with no teaching license. This finding indicates the demand for teaching experts in various fields. Moreover, another survey shows that 63.2% of the respondents would support their children to become a teacher(66.8% of the parental group would support).

〈Student Life〉

- Koreans consider 'individual effort/grit(37.4%)' and 'academic atmosphere of school/classroom(21.5%)' to be the most influential factors on student's academic achievement. On the perception of moral/ethical standards of pupils, 46.3% of respondents answered Average, and 44.1% responded Bad or Very Bad. Koreans think the level of the moral/ethical standards of pupils is lower than the standard expectation. On factors influencing the moral/ethical standards of pupils, the respondents considered family factors to be more influential than formal education.
- The public perceives students' level of democratic citizenship is on Average(2.76 on a 5-point Likert scale). Survey on factors cultivating democratic citizenry reveals that Formal Education(34.0%), Society(27.4%), and Family(26.5%) to be influential. In order to foster democratic citizenship, schools are expected to encourage participation in various social activities(43.2%), create democratic school culture(23.7%), and strengthen democratic citizenship education(15.8%). The findings imply that cultivating democratic citizenship is not limited to classroom activities.
- On a comparative study of School Violence over the past 2-3 years, 55.7% responded that a School Violence problem is at a dangerous level. The respondents consider the lack of parental guidance(35.9%) to be most responsible for children being violent. In addition, the majority of Koreans(73.0%) are positive on having multi-cultural students at schools.

〈Curriculum and Learning Content〉

- The findings on what Koreans wish for youths to cultivate from formal education include sociability and relations(28.8%), creativity(17.7%), morality(13.4%), good daily habits(11.2%), and critical thinking(10.2%). In particular, respondents chose the priorities to be developing good daily habits and creativity at the elementary school level; sociability and morality at the middle school level; sociability and knowledge at the high school level. These findings reflect that the general public regards schooling as a stage for cultivating essential qualities for citizenship rather than just passing the knowledge.
- Koreans think Social Studies(including history and ethics) should be more emphasized in the current curriculum of elementary and middle school education. In the high school curriculum, elective courses(such as career education, philosophy, environmental studies) are considered to be in need of improvement. The overall demand for Social Studies seems to reflect poor diplomatic relations with Japan in recent days.
- In terms of curricular improvement, respondents want character education to be strengthened the most. There is also a demand for increasing creativity education at the elementary and middle school level. When the respondents are asked to choose the competency that the future generation will need the most, the respondents picked a self-managing skill and creative thinking skill.

〈High School Policies and College Admission〉

- More than half of respondents(53.7%) support the proposed agenda of free high school education. 44.1% of respondents agree to change in the current high school system. In regards to the introduction of the high school course credit system, 35.6% agrees to implement it. When only collecting the responses of the parental group, the magnitude of advocacy seems to increase overall. The findings suggest that the general public is favorable to

all three agendas proposed by the current government. However, the implementation of a high school credit system requires further advertising and dissemination of information.

- About the policy to expand vocational high schools (Meister high school and specialized high school), 55.4% agreed to an expansion. Due to various interpretations of this result, further studies need to be done in the future.
- The survey suggests that CSAT(College Scholastic Ability Test)(30.8%) should be considered the most for a college admission decision. As follows, specialty and personal aptitude, character/volunteer experience could also be counted for college admission. The survey results of previous years(2011-2017) continuously supported that students' GPA from high school should be the most critical factor. However, the recent survey(2018-2019) reflects a change in public opinion regarding the importance of CSAT.
- On average, Koreans expect that the overall competition for college admission would decrease. However, it is held consistent with previous studies that 47.5% of respondents view an admission process for prestigious universities will remain competitive.

〈Educational Welfare Service and Education Finance〉

- The public observes early childhood education(30.0%) is in need of the expansion of educational finances the most, while high school education(23.0%) seems to be the second most urgent level with more financial support. When the respondents are asked to prioritize where to spend limited public fund, free childcare and education for pre-K(23.2%), more financial support of marginal students(15.0%), creating safe education environment(12.6%), strengthening childcare service at elementary schooling level(12.4%) are mentioned. Lastly, the respondents think financial support toward the meal plan(37.6%) at the elementary school level, the school uniform(25.2%) at the middle school level, and laboratory safety equipment

(24.2%) at the high school level should be prioritized.

- Given that the number of students has been decreasing, 33.5% of the respondents say that the public finances for education can be decreased only after education quality meets the level of a developed country's education. Other respondents(29.7%) believe the government should maintain the current level of public funds for education, while only 11.7% insist on reducing the public funds in education.
- In regards to the childcare policies, Koreans would like the government to focus more on the transparency of childcare centers and kindergarten. On the other hand, Koreans view adult learning as a responsibility of the local and central governments. This viewpoint indicates that Koreans expect the government to be responsible for adult learning as well.

〈Higher Education〉

- The plurality of respondents thinks higher education institutions in Korea do not educate students well enough to be prepared for life after graduation (55.4% say institutions are not preparing students). Although there have been several policy attempts to ameliorate higher education, the public is not satisfied with the current status. In order to improve the evaluation, the public wants higher education to concentrate on capacity building for careers(38.0% support) and development of democratic citizenship(36.4% support). Based on the results, there is a demand for higher education to play a vital role in preparing students for the labor market without difficulties.
- The responses to "professors at Korean universities teach appropriately based on the specialties of their institutions" were generally negative. For 4-year colleges, 41.8% of the responses disagree with professors teaching appropriately based on the specialties, and for 2-year colleges, 35.1% of respondents negatively assessed professors. 52.3% of the respondents disagree on increasing support for private universities, while 28.5% agree. In other words,

the rationales to support private universities are not verified by the public.

- When asked to choose the most crucial factor in evaluating universities, 25.5% picked 'financial transparency in university management', 23.4% chose 'ability of instructors', and 22% selected 'appropriateness of curriculum'. These three factors have been selected for the last few years; thus, the public's expectation of higher education has not changed much.

〈Current Issues in Education and Education for the Future〉

- The public demonstrates that school districts should be responsible for policy-making and setting a standard achievement level for students. Establishing a core curriculum is a task of the Minister of Education. On the other hand, people think school principals should be responsible for students' achievement of essential knowledge. The results imply that there is a demand to disseminate the central power on the control education system to the locals and individuals to some extent. However, Koreans still rely on the central power to determine the core curriculum for everyone.
- The public believes that there is no significant change in an individual's educational costs compared to prior 2-3 years. However, compared to the last year's survey result, there are more people who think private tutoring became intense in the education market(19.9%→30.9%). In addition, among the factors mentioned, those that respondents rate as most effective in reducing individual's educational expenses include linking EBS courses to the CSAT(21.7%), after-school programs(16.8%), general EBS courses(14.7%), and simplification of the college admission process(13.2%). Among the parental groups, the most effective factors in reducing an individual's educational expenses are the simplification of the college admission process(16.2%) and the prohibition of prerequisite learning(11.8%).
- The survey results also explain that parents spend money on private tutoring(private education in general) because they want to support their

children to develop specialties and aptitudes(24.6%), though the results also reveal that most parents(94.7%) feel overwhelmed by the educational expenses they spend for children. The continuous concerns regarding individual burdens on education expenses should be studied in-depth to find appropriate strategies to ameliorate the problems stem from private tutoring.

- Interestingly, Korean parents hold a bilateral perspective toward private tutoring. They admit that starting private tutoring at an early age is not helpful(42.7%). However, they think private education is necessary for their children to enhance self-motivated learning(35.3%). Parents want to decide on what kind of private education their children would get(36.9%), and they feel insecure when their children do not study(43.2%). While parents feel educational expenses are burdensome, they also feel relieved when their children are receiving private tutoring(41.5%).
- Many Koreans are aware that the current low birth rate and aging society will greatly influence Korean society, and the reduction in the school-age population will be the most effective factor(46.7%) to shape education. In preparation for the future society, Koreans believe setting a flexible education system for an individualized learning environment(22.9%), and a management system for learners(21.7%) are the most critical tasks in the education field.
- The public wants future elementary schools to focus on childcare(25.0%), middle schools focus on teaching students self-management and problem-solving skills (33.4%), and high schools focus on future-oriented career education(35.6%).

〈Viewpoint on Education〉

- When children refuse to attend school for some reason, Koreans would instead find an alternative (50.2% of the respondents). At the same time, many Koreans(44.6%) respond they would find another public school if their

children refuse to attend a school. Compared to the previous year's result, the result reveals that Koreans' demand for public education is increasing.

- When the public is asked to define the meaning of 'being successful in educating their offsprings', 25.1% responds 'when they(children) find a job they wanted', 22.4% responds 'growing up with a good personality', and 21.3% says 'having a decent/good salary/stable job'. The overall parental expectations have shifted towards the happiness of their offsprings from performance based outcomes of children.
- Regarding the financial support for offsprings, the public tends to support their children until they graduate college(48.2%) or even until they get a job(19.4%). The results indicate that a plethora of Koreans are willing to offer financial support to their children. As financial support can determine the education attainment, more research on the link between family socio-economic status and education attainment is in need.
- Koreans observe that discrimination formed by academic background and 'Hakbeolism' is still significantly noticeable in Korean society, and 58.8% thinks this 'Hakbeolism' would not disappear. Furthermore, the public supposes that a hierarchical ranking structure of higher education institutions in Korea would not change.
- Finally, the survey intends to find a correlation between education and social status, wealth, and satisfaction. The public perceives that the more education they receive, the more possibilities to become affluent, achieve higher social status, and feel satisfied.

Policy Proposal

- The table below summarizes the policy proposals based on the research outcomes.

Education Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of trust in education policy by concentrating on the core of education • Long-term planning to maintain consistency in education policy
Schools & Future Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding the roles of schools to respond to the changing demands in elementary and middle school level • Redesign the function of education reflecting a change in values
High School Policy & College Admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth foundational research on high school education • Propose appropriate policies regarding course credit system and reformation of high school • Reorganize the vocational high schools • Expand the access to information on admissions and create long-term planning for college admission
Educational Welfare Service & Education Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing between policies for selective group and policies for the general public • Raise awareness on the importance of educational welfare service and investment in education • Maintain consistent and stable financial support
Teacher/ Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current teacher training programs for improvement • Utilize a visiting lecturer to enhance the effectiveness of high school course credit system • Emphasize the role of the family in education to foster student character education • Maintain the support for field training of civic education • Improve the multi-cultural education through the comprehension of multi-cultural families
Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic management of institutions based on performance • Matching higher education to job needs • Change the system to ameliorate the stratification of higher education

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