

## Abstract

# Promoting Core Competency Education and Building Innovative Learning Ecosystems for Fostering Talent for the Future ( I )

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As the new Korean government's main focus in governing the state affairs is building a creative economy, it has become essential to figure out what major qualifications needed to be capable in the future are and how such capabilities can be developed and taught. Considering such policy challenges that lie ahead, it is important to establish skill-sets required in the future of the Korean society, analyze core competencies and suggest the purpose and policy directions of the future education.

Advanced countries have been trying to form a new education ecosystem based on a variety of education networks to provide education tailored to develop core competencies required in the 21st century. In order to respond to complicated and rapidly changing societal phenomena in the 21st century, the combination between regular learning and irregular learning and between education and work (or the labor market), going beyond the basic school education, has become increasingly important.

Since the 1960s, Korea had grown significantly for three decades under the state-centered development model and began to seek and implement new development models since the mid-1990s. Under such circumstances, the government is increasingly

demanding by the public to adopt new innovative education strategies and make policy choices suitable for the changing environment. As the life cycle of knowledge is getting shorter and the significance of collective intelligence is increasingly highlighted, whether a society has an advanced education system for developing advanced thinking skills, social skills and character is expected to determine the society's ability to promote national economic growth, social cohesion as well as the happiness of individuals and self-fulfillment. However, the Korean education system is currently facing a harsh criticism that it is disproportionally concentrated on the mere memorization of knowledge and preparation for exams and falls short of developing creativity, ability to think, ability to collaborate and building students' character needed in the future society.

Against such backdrop, a 3-year study is carried out to suggest a new education model for developing core competencies and learning ecosystems based on the Korean model on nurturing future talent. To that end, the first-year study is intended to analyze the limitations and drawbacks of the current education system, analyze the cases of advanced countries and implications to suggest the direction of the future education to nurture talents required by the future Korean society. The results of this study can be summarized as follows:

By re-defining the concept of core competencies, the study suggests the purpose and challenges for the education for nurturing talents required in the future. The study defines competence as a broad category of competencies that include knowledge, skills and character and categorizes performance competence into ways of thinking, ways of working and ways of living in the world, depending on the required elements. According to the results of the Delphi expert survey, the ways of thinking include creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, self-directed learning skills and ways of working include communication skills, conflict management and resolution skills, ICT utilization skills, collaboration skills, interpersonal skills while ways of living in the world include global citizenship, ability to pioneer one's life and career and a sense of individual and social responsibility. In addition, character means the ability to empathize with others, a challenge-fighting spirit and discipline.

The results of the Delphi expert survey indicate that the education for performance competency and character required in the future society is not provided adequately

although they are considered important for the future society, highlighting the need for narrowing the gap between education research and practice. Specifically, in elementary, junior high and high schools, the importance of creativity, collaboration skills, interpersonal skills and character (ability to empathize with others and a challenge-fighting spirit) is high at 4.60, 4.60 and 4.57 on a scale of 1 to 5 whereas the education provided for nurturing such skills is only about 2.65, 2.63 and 2.78 respectively, highlighting the huge gap between the requirements and the available education for nurturing skills. Furthermore, in university education, the importance of creativity, collaboration skills, interpersonal skills and character (ability to empathize with others and a challenge-fighting spirit) remains very high at 4.63, 4.68 and 4.37 whereas the education provided for nurturing such skills is only 3.15, 3.10 and 2.87. In higher education, the gap is relatively small but still raises concerns about the reality of the current education. When HR managers at companies are asked about the criteria to be used in recruiting and selecting new employees, they responded that communication skills, conflict management and resolution skills are important at 4.48 while they evaluated the current education at 2.83, highlighting a very large gap.

Finally, the study offers 10 major policy suggestions for nurturing core competency required in the future society as follows: Capable individuals in the 21st century should have core competencies such as creativity, collaboration skills and the ability to empathize with others and, in order to nurture such core competencies, it is important to improve and make a linkage between the current education curriculum, faculty education and evaluation schemes. Moreover, it is essential to develop core competence indicators and indices to enhance the education system in the long term while operating the ‘commission on future talent development 2025’ dedicated to the pending issue of nurturing talents required in the future. The follow-up study for the next two years is expected to provide core competence indicators and indices to measure core competencies, build a learning ecosystem suitable for the Korean education ecosystem and thus contribute greatly to building the core competence education system and the culture of learning in the Korean society.