

ABSTRACT

KEDI POLL 2012

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The KEDI Poll 2012 was conducted to examine public opinion about the present and future of Korean education. The sample size of this survey was 1,800 males and females ranging in age from 19 to 64 living in the 16 Korean metropolitan cities and provinces chosen. The conclusions of individual interview survey are as follows:

(Results are based on a random sample with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 2.31 percentage points).

1. Government's Role in Public Education and the Quality of School Education

First, the respondents consider Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to be responsible to the decisions of educational policy and curriculum and Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education to be responsible for setting up the standards of academic achievement and subsequently meeting these standards. In consideration for the local autonomy of education, national responsibilities and local responsibilities need to be divided according to certain guidelines. To achieve this, it is necessary to engage in in-depth discussion and role reestablishment regarding the division of responsibilities between Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education.

Second, based on the results of the survey about the public satisfaction with elementary and secondary education, schools are negatively evaluated. The government should pursue the policies for raising the quality of teachers continuously in reference to the people's opinion that it is necessary "to improve the quality of the contents and methods of the class," and "to recruit and arrange high-quality teachers" in order to lead the people to hold them in high esteem. In order to elicit high ratings for schools, they must strive to fix fundamental problems to improve the quality of education in response to the demands of "improving the quality of the contents and methods of the class," "recruiting and placing high-quality teachers," and "counseling the students kindly."

Third, the major considerations among parents in the selection of schools are "the quality of teachers," "characteristics of the educational program," and "the results of entering advanced school," while the main consideration at the elementary school level is "commuting distance." Thus, schools need to guarantee educational equity and excellence in order to ensure that all students can choose the school located near their homes. At the university level, the result of university graduates' employment is considered the main factor for selection. To ensure that these realistic demands are met, it is necessary to reinforce the universities' educational capacity and to improve job competency among students.

Fourth, in terms of emerging issues, "weakening of students' personalities and ethics" and "school violence" are ranked as first and second highest. In order to resolve these matters, school need to establish educational policies aimed at strengthening the students' personalities and ethics and solving problems related to school violence.

Fifth, the "Policy for Reducing Private Education Expense," the "Policy for Supporting Improvement of Basic Academic Ability," the "University Admission Officer System," and "the High School Diversity Policy" are rated as the best policies set by the present government. Therefore, the government should be continuously pushing for these policies by improving the problems that are presented.

2. Opinions about the quality of teachers and the teaching profession.

First, people's negative evaluation of elementary and secondary teachers' roles, abilities, and attitudes is clear. It is essential "to improve the quality of the contents and method of the class" and "to recruit and assign high-quality teachers" in order to raise satisfaction about school. In regard to school choice, the quality of teachers is an important criterion; therefore, government endeavors are needed in order to manage policies for recruiting high-quality teachers and strengthening the professionalism of teachers.

Second, most people tend to perceive that teachers should receive suitable wages according to their abilities and careers. Also, payment of teachers based on their students' academic achievement tends to be accepted positively. The teachers' pay system must reflect their ability, and above all, the development of a method to estimate teachers' capacity in propriety and credibility must be performed.

3. Students' school life

The results of the survey show that students' stress regarding on academic achievement and competition and students' addiction to the IT machine are serious. People perceive that school violence is emerging as a serious social problem, caused by media violence, the absence of home education, a shortage of effort for preventing school violence, competition for university entrance focused on scores, and so on. Hence, educational authorities must make efforts to relieve students' stress, to diversify the elements of students' school life and to help students focus on issues other than academic achievement and competition through collaboration with school, home, and society.

4. Students' learning

First, teachers (schools) are considered to be the most important factors that determine

students' academic achievement, even more so than parents (family). This result demonstrates parents' expectations regarding school; schools and teachers are expected to play a primary role in the education of students.

Second, More than half of the respondents evaluated students' personality and ethics negatively. Personality education should be valued more highly than it is now, since personality education is emphasized as an important educational aspect at every school level.

Third, most people respond that they prefer to have their children participate in after-school programs. These programs need to be developed to complement regular classes in the school curriculum and specialty and aptitude courses.

5. High school and university entrance system

First, the majority of the people approve of the equalization policy for high school and the high school diversity policy. In a large sense, these policies are needed in order to pursue diversification in the schools complementarily.

Second, more respondents answer in a positive way regarding whether the university admissions officer system is complementary to the university's admissions system. High school students' grade point average (GPA) is ranked first as the most important item in university admissions, but in the case of parents, specialty and aptitude have the highest priority. A university admissions officer system needs to be developed to complement the admissions system that is focused on score.

6. Educational Welfare

First, a large number of respondents still think that school should provide all students free school meals regardless of their living conditions. However, supporters of this element are decreasing in number in comparison with last year. The government needs to give careful consideration to the priority beneficiaries of the educational welfare policy.

Second, above all, the government should provide money for tuition to the low-income students and then cover the cost of textbooks, school supplies, and other fees. This means that the government should offer low-income students the financial support that most closely relates to their learning.

Third, when the government distributes limited budgets to the educational sector, the reduction of university tuition or expansion of scholarships has the highest priority. Considering each cost and effect, the effective sector should receive support first.

7. University Management and the Quality of Higher Education

First, it is highly important that people's negative sentiments toward the university's function for cultivating competent people to fulfill the role of university professor be managed. The government and university should try to improve university education according to evaluation of the quality of university education.

Second, the majority of people supply negative evaluation of the financial transparency of the university. In order to raise the quality of the university, institutional apparatuses for the guarantee of transparency of fiscal management should be designed.

Third, in order to actively cope with the changing social economic reality and improve national power, the university's function for cultivating competent workers is taken very seriously. For this reason, it is the government's task to continue to drive the reform of the university's structure and management toward the improvement of the quality of the university and guarantee for transparency of fiscal management.

8. Emerging Issues and Future Trends of Korean Education

First, the majority of people think that, in current Korean society, there is serious discrimination in favor of people's university diplomas and graduates' university reputation and against graduates from local universities. Reflecting this tendency, most people expect their

children to get at least some level of university education. However, it has been controversial whether all students receive a university education. The change in public perception must take precedence in order to solve social problems, including determining human ability through a university diploma. Also, companies' recruiting system and wage system must be improved.

Second, about half of respondents intend to let their children enter technical schools like Meister High School instead of going to the university. If graduates from Meister High School are recognized as competent men in the industry, excessive competition for entrance into universities would be reduced. However, the introduction of Meister High School has been relatively recent; thus, it would be premature to evaluate the effectiveness of Meister High School. The majority of respondents agree that companies hire high school graduates in certain proportions. In this sense, the policy for Meister High School graduates or other high school graduates to guarantee jobs not only restrains the ranking system of the university and academic sectarianism but also promotes the cultivation of competent and skillful individuals.

Third, about half of the respondents expressed desire to let their children study abroad if circumstances permitted. The number of people who intended to let their children study abroad has steadily increased since the year 2006. Considering the expense of overseas education, it is necessary to absorb these demands in domestic education.

Fourth, more than half of the people expect private education expenses to have a similar level of presence or to increase rather than to decrease. In addition, many expect competition in university admissions to have a similar level of presence, and a few people expect that competition related to entrance exams will be mitigated in future. There is less room for a decrease in private education expense according to the lowered expectation regarding competition in university admissions. Since the policy for reducing private education expense is rated as one of the most effective policies, it is necessary to pursue this policy continuously.

Fifth, most people responded that there will be no big change in the ranking system of the university. Little change in public perception of the ranking system of the university and academic sectarianism leaves great potential for suggestions. On the other hand, it is necessary

to mitigate the gap and competition by establishing excellent university policies to ban discrimination according to students' school experience and the academic cliques.

Key words : educational public opinion, elementary and secondary education, higher education, educational policy, emerging issues of Korean education, future trends of Korean education