

Abstract

KEDI POLL 2018

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KEDI POLL 2018 was undertaken to investigate how the public feels about the nation's schools and education policies, what the public thinks schools in future need to prepare, and what the society expects from educators and policy-makers. Serving as the most trusted source of public opinion about Korean education and educational issues, this is the 13th annual KEDI POLL in a series that began in 1999.

The results presented here are based on nationally representative, stratified sample of 2,000 adults(age 19~75) in Korea. Results are subject to a maximum sampling error(MSE) of $\pm 2.19\%$ at the 95% confidence level. This online poll consists nine sub-categories and 55 questions. The sub-categories are the following: 1. Education Policy and School Evaluation, 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.

Significant findings of KEDI POLL 2018 are presented as follows:

〈Education Policy and School Evaluation〉

- The public demands for ‘an expansion of all-day after-school child care in elementary school’, ‘provision of a learning environment for future education and ensuring safety in school’, ‘full- funding on Nuri curriculum(early childhood education and care)’, ‘free high school education’ were high. For higher education and lifelong education policies, people want a reduction in college tuition and simplification of the college admission process the most. These results imply that Korean public wants education policies to focus on issues related to ‘caring’, ‘safety’, ‘welfare’ at the level of pre-K & Kindergarten, elementary school(primary) education, middle school and high school(secondary) education. On the other hand, the results support that ‘college tuition’ and ‘simplification and stabilization of college admission process’ are the most urgent issues at the level of higher education, life-long learning, and career education.
- Most Koreans(53.2%) 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 it is highest at the high school level. The public believe ‘personalized advising and teaching’, ‘improving the quality of coursework’, and ‘strengthening career education and educational guidance’ would help to make the school evaluation positive. Although, the suggestions for improving the evaluation for each education level are defined differently. While the primary and secondary school levels are recommended to focus on personalized learning

and advisory, high school level 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(36.4%), a distance to the school(13.4%), and specialties of education programs(15.2%) are the most influential factors to make a school choice decision. Particularly, at the high school education level, career advisory based on personal aptitude(19.9%) and character education(12.4%) are the most effective factors in a decision making. In the case of higher education choices, people tend to look for career advisory(25.8%) and transition rate to employment after graduation(17.8%). The results imply that people start looking for career advisory more as proceeding to the higher education level. In addition, suggested tasks for improving public education are the diversification of teaching method and educational content and a change of 'Hakbeolism' oriented society.
- When asked whether parents are willing to send their children to study abroad, 36.6% responds they are willing to do, but 41.1% says they are not interested in. However, depending on the schooling level, the responses for willingness to study abroad vary (Elementary school 27.6%, Middle school 34.4%, High school 47.7%). Again, this result suggests 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 reflect public opinions moderately. Thus consistency is required for long-term policy planning.

〈Teachers〉

- Korean public holds an Average level of trust (2.84 on a 5-point Likert scale) on the competency of primary and secondary teachers. In terms of essential

competencies for teachers to acquire, the public want behavioral instruction skills (51.2%) and communication skills with pupils and parents (18.3%) the most for Elementary school teachers, academic teaching skills (33.3%) and behavioral instruction skills (28.2%) for Middle school teachers, and career and college admission advisory skills (55.1%) and academic teaching skills (20.4%) for High school teachers. These findings indicate that not only teacher training to be organized by the level of schooling, but also teacher support system to be established for teachers to share and develop competencies.

- The survey shows that more than half (51.6% overall and 60.8% among parents with children in school) of Koreans agree with a motion that allows 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 56.2% of Korean agrees with expanding the scope of public recruitment policy for electing school principals. This result can be interpreted as rising public interests in electing school principals, who share the philosophy and vision of the school.

〈Student Life〉

- Koreans consider ‘individual effort/grit(36.3%)’ and ‘school/classroom atmosphere (27.4%)’ to be the most influential factors on student academic achievement. Regarding the students’ level of stress in schooling, 84.4% of respondents generally considered high and very high. Moreover, the stress level of pupils is perceived to increase as they proceed onto a higher level of schooling. (Elementary 40.6%, Middle 72.9%, High 87.6%) These findings confirm the general view that middle and high school students experience a significant level of stress and pressure from academic performance and competition for

college entrance exams.

- On the perception of moral/ethical standards of pupils, 45.2% of respondents answered Average and 46.6% responded Bad or Very Bad. The moral/ethical standards of pupils are generally perceived as under standard. (Total 2.44, Elementary 2.75, Middle 2.37, High 2.33 on a 5-point Likert scale) On factors influencing the moral/ethical standards of pupils, 52% considers Domestic Family and 19.4% considers Formal Education. These findings confirm the importance of Domestic Family and Formal Education in moral/ethics education.
- On the perception of the sociability of pupils, 54.3% answered Average (2.64/5) and responded that students become less sociable as they progress to the next stage of education. (Elementary 2.86/5, Middle 2.61/5, High 2.55/5) Moreover, on factors cultivating democratic citizenry, 43.0% of respondents point to Formal Education.
- On a comparative study of School Violence over the past 2-3 years, 56% responded that a School Violence has not been improved. Regarding the factors that cause School Violence, respondents choose Lack of education from home (36.5%), Insufficient behavioral correction in school (19.4%), and Mass media violence (19.4%) to be the most influential. Since the response rate for Insufficient behavioral correction in school has increased every year (15.0%→18.8%→19.4%), the demand for school-based effort to decrease School Violence is rising.

〈Curriculum and Learning Content〉

- The results on what Koreans wish for youths to cultivate from formal education are sociability(31.1%), morality(22.5%), and good daily habits(19.4%). In particular, respondents chose developing good daily habits(37.5%) and morality(21.1%) to be priorities at elementary school level, sociability(25.9%)

and morality(24.1%) at middle school level, and sociability(34.1%) and morality(14.6%) at high school level. These findings reflect that general public regards schooling as a stage for cultivating basic qualities for citizenship as much as a stage for acquiring the knowledge.

- Koreans think Social Studies (including History and Ethics, 24.6% and 19.8% respectively) should be more emphasized in the current curriculum of elementary and middle school education. Korean Language(14%) in elementary school curriculum and Korean History(14.3%) in middle school curriculum are also noted. Of high school curriculum, elective courses(such as career education and environmental studies)(30.1%) and English(12.1%) are considered to be in need of improvement. Various demands on curriculum for a different level of schooling is notable as 2017 survey indicated all three levels of education(elementary, middle, high school level) desired Social Studies (History and Ethics included) the most. Moreover, in terms of curricular improvement, respondents chose character education(46.0%) and creativity education(16%) for elementary school, character education(39.9%) and sex education(14.4%) for middle school, and career education(26.5%) and character education(24.8%) for high school. Therefore, the findings suggest that the public wishes formal schooling to cultivate the appropriate character and prepare pupils for their future. Furthermore, the overall increase in the demand for sex education implies that school education needs to respond and take measures to prevent possible sexual assault and harassment incidents.
- On the issue of Consolidated Schools, 46% of respondents agreed to have an option. The response is remarkably high considering the unfamiliarity of Consolidated School concept to the general public. Especially, 52% of the parents of pupils in all levels agreed to have Consolidated School, which suggests that Korean parents are seeking more flexible curriculum in schools.

〈High School Policies and College Admission〉

- The education agenda of the current government includes gradual reduction of secondary education cost, an introduction of high school credit system, and status change of specialized schools (high school for foreign language studies, independent schools, and international schools) into general public schools. On the first agenda(gradual reduction of secondary education cost), 57.0% of Korean public agrees, and 11.3% disagrees. On the second agenda(introduction of high school credit system), 36.5% agrees, and 15.2% disagrees. On the third agenda(status change of specialized schools into general public schools), 47.2% agrees, and 15.2% disagrees. Percentage of those supporting the agenda is respectively five times, 2.4 times, and 3.1 times higher than the opposite. However, since 48.5% responded Neutral to the implementation of high school credit system, additional advertising and PR activities of the agenda are needed.
- About the policy to expand vocational high school (Meister high school and specialized high school), 63.5% agreed, and 15.% disagreed. About the policy to expand vocational education within current public high schools, 69.9% agreed, and 13.1% disagreed. Therefore, the current government must continue to pursue its agendas.
- The survey suggests that following factors should be considered the most for college admission process; CSAT(College Scholastic Ability Test)(29.2%), specialty and personal aptitude(26.7%), character/volunteer experience(21.9%), high school GPA(11.3%), writing(4.5%), interview(2.9%), extracurricular activities(2.4%), awards(0.7%), others (0.5%). Since the survey result of previous year shows that specialty and personal aptitude(26.7%) and character/volunteer experience(25.9%) are more important than CSAT(24.4%), the result of the recent survey reflects a change in public opinion. Such change may be

related to heated discourses on weighing standardized tests in the admission process held by College Admission Reform Committee this year. Moreover, the survey finds that overall competition for college admission would decrease. However, it is held consistent with previous studies that 46.1% views an admission process for prestigious universities will remain competitive.

〈Educational Welfare Service and Education Finance〉

- The public observes high school education(27.5%) is the most urgent with an expansion of educational finances, while early childhood education(23.9%) seems to be the second most urgent level with more financial support. This trend is identical to that of the 2017 survey results (high school > early childhood > elementary school > 4-year college > middle school > 2-year college). When respondents are asked to prioritize where to spend limited public fund, ‘free childcare and free education for pre-K’, ‘strengthening childcare service at elementary education level’, ‘free high school education’, ‘more financial support of minorities’, and ‘reducing college tuition or offering more scholarship for college students’ are mentioned in the order.
- Koreans believe both elementary schools and middle schools need public funds the most for a meal plan and after-school program. and high schools need public resources the most for enrollment deposit, tuition, and school management. Furthermore, 34.1% of the respondents say that the financial support for education should decrease since the number of students has been decreasing. This trend contrasts with the last year’s result which had 55.6% of the responses for maintaining or increasing the financial support for education.

〈Higher Education〉

- The plurality of respondents thinks higher education institutions in Korea do

not educate students well enough to be prepared for life after the graduation(average score of 2.32 on a 5-point Likert scale). Results reveal that the public does not trust the competency of professors in general, nor confident that professors do a good job teaching student. Similarly, the responses to “professors at Korean universities teach appropriately based on the specialties of their institutions” were generally negative. For 4-year colleges, 46.0% of the responses disagree with professors teach appropriately based on the specialties, and for 2-year colleges, 48.3% of respondents have a neutral opinion. Based on this result, there is a clear need for a long-term plan that can ameliorate public dissatisfaction with higher education.

- 49.8% of the respondents agree that support for low tier schools should be at the priority while 26.3% disagree. The percentage of the agreement tends to decrease, and the number of people whose opinion is unsure has increased over time. Furthermore, 31.1% of the respondents agree on increasing support for private universities, while 45.3% disagree and 23.7% stay unsure. A more detailed plan on increasing support for private universities is needed to gain support from the public.
- When asked to choose a most crucial factor in evaluating universities, 29.6% picked ‘financial transparency in university management’, 21.9% chose ‘appropriateness of curriculum’, and 21.6% selected ‘ability of instructors’. This result suggests that the public holds non-negligible suspicions on higher education institution’s corruption and administrative flaws. It also reveals that the public pays close attention to the quality of education provided by universities.

〈Current Issues in Education and Education for the Future〉

- The public states that school districts should be responsible for policy making, setting a standard achievement level for students, and forming a

curriculum. On the other hand, people think school principals should be responsible for guaranteeing students a basic knowledge achievement. The results imply that there is a demand to disseminate the central power on control education system to the locals and individuals to some extent.

- 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 fewer people who believe private educational cost has not been changed(63.8%→57.7%) and more people who think private tutoring became intense in education market(15.7%→19.9%). 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(23.6%), simplification of college admission process(13.1%), after-school programs(12.8%), and curriculum-oriented test for student evaluation(12.0%).
- The survey results also explain that parents spend money on private tutoring(private education in general) because they would feel insecure(26.6%) when they do not offer private education to their children, though the results also reveal that most parents(88.4%) feel overwhelmed by the educational expenses they spend. In particular, a higher level of schooling leads to higher expenses for private education.
- In preparation for the future society, Koreans believe a management system for learning is the most important(19.1%), and they also value setting a flexible education system for individualized learning environment(18.8%). The public supposes elementary school and middle school need to focus on teaching students self-management and problem-solving skill(28.0%), competency to belong a community and cooperation(21.0%), while high school education needs to focus on career education(45.7%) and self-management and problem-solving skill(23.9%).
- Moreover, respondents chose creative thinking competency(32.4%) as the

primary competency for students to have in the future. In particular, both elementary and middle school education should consider creative thinking competency the most (Elementary 30.1%, Middle 22.4%) while high school education may focus on self-managing skills (26.0%) the most.

〈Viewpoint on Education〉

- When children refuse to attend formal public education in Korea, the public would instead find an alternative (57.0% of respondents). This result implies that diverse types of alternative educations should be considered seriously at the decision-making table.
- Koreans observe that having a diploma affects not only finding a job in the labor market but many other societal aspects. It is also believed that discrimination formed by academic background and 'Hakbeolism' is still significantly noticeable in Korean society, and 59.9% thinks this 'Hakbeolism' would not disappear. Furthermore, the public supposes that a hierarchical ranking structure of higher education institutions in Korea would not change. Thus, the respondents agreed (55.5%) with an idea which guarantees no discrimination by legal action. The results support that a plethora of Koreans perceive discrimination by schools and levels of education is a deleterious problem in society, and the demand for legal actions regarding this issue is high.
- The majority of people continue to view getting a good job as the most valuable outcome of education. When the public is asked to define the meaning of 'being successful in educating their offsprings', 25.2% responds 'having a decent/good salary/stable job', 19.3% responds 'growing up with a good personality', and 18.4% says 'they(children) can find a job they wanted'. The most frequently mentioned meaning of education has been 'having a decent/good salary/stable job' since 2015, and it implies that the public

perceives education as a human capital investment.

- Regarding the financial support for offsprings, the public tends to support their children until they graduate college(50.3%) until they get a job(17.8%), and until they graduate high school(11%). The results indicate that more people(87.6%) are willing to offer financial support to their children. This result reflects that the amount and duration of financial support from family would depend on family incomes and socio-economic status. Therefore, more attention to children from vulnerable classes by providing educational support is desirable.
- Finally, the survey intends to find a correlation between education and social status, increase in wealth, and satisfaction. The public perceives that the more education they receive, the more affluent life(3.79/5), the higher social status(3.82/5), and the more satisfaction(3.68/5) they gain.

Policy Proposal

Based on the survey results summarized above, the following policy recommendations are made.

- When designing and implementing new education policies, Korean government needs to take the changes in schools and society into account and reconsider the necessity for high school system reforms in order to meet the expectations of the nation. Furthermore, the government needs to communicate with the public in the long run.
- Teacher professional development and capacity building need to be on the emphasis. There is a need for improving personnel management of teachers and a principal as well as the participation of external lectures to maintain the quality of education in individual classes.
- It is desirable to have a long-term plan that can bridge schools and society to ameliorate growing disbelief in public education and meet society's

- expectation. Researches about reformulating education policies reflecting on changes in society are desirable and redesigning school policies for granting a diversity of school credits and taking a future-oriented manner is needed.
- Adapting to new expectations of society may require teachers to have majored in multiple specialties and thus better ways to train new teachers are desirable via exchanging courses between multiple training facilities.
 - For high school policies, more detailed and aggressive policy proposals are necessary while they are advertised concurrently. A new high school policy needs to aim a student-oriented school system. Therefore a comprehensive policy on transforming different types of schools into an integrated school system should be reviewed in depth.
 - The college admission process needs to consider individual student's interest, aptitude, and goals more than grades of particular subjects. Moreover, it is suggested that elementary and middle schools should not be pressured from the preparation for the college entrance process.
 - A selection and concentration strategy is required for education finance policies. Particularly, a detailed financial management plan on free high school education is needed.
 - Medium and long-term plans must be created to improve the quality of higher education. Such plans should include means to enhance governance of higher education, financial support, and annual university evaluation.
 - It is essential to develop a system bridging higher education and job market, and this aspect can be reflected in the evaluation when assessing higher education institutions.
 - A novel approach to research on influential factors for private tutoring is desirable, and an appropriate policy needs to be developed based on such researches.
 - There is a need for institutional efforts to ameliorate academic cliques which

leads to inequality in academic achievement. Notably, the intervention of policies should be activated at the very beginning stage where the gap in academic achievement may arise.

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