

Abstract

Prospects and Tasks for Changes in High School Education Environment: From Students' Point of View

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The purpose of this study is to examine the reality of high school education and to explore future education from the perspective of students and to suggest policy tasks that can create a hopeful educational environment students desire. There are three major key research questions in this study. First, what are the problems of high school education from students' perspective? Second, how do they predict the change in the educational environment of high schools and its future? Third, what are the policy tasks of creating a hopeful high

school education environment for students? To answer these questions, the research team devised a research method called the ‘Student Agency Driven Action Research(SADAR)’ which involves students as the key research agents. Students conducted a study that concerns examining problems of high school education and its future direction with the guidance of their teacher, and the research team collected data through observation and conducting interview throughout the process.

Chapter II provided a theoretical basis for the study based on reviewing the current status of high school education and various policy documents high school education. The chapter focused on providing in-depth document analysis on the status of various policies introduced for improving high school education in Korea, including ‘high school education capacity enhancement policy’, ‘curriculum diversification policy’ and ‘high school credit system policy’. Previous literature pointed out that despite the continuous introduction of policies to improve high school education, existing policies did not satisfactorily enhance the level of student satisfaction nor achieved effective educational accomplishment. Moreover, the current study confirmed that previous studies on the change of future educational environment excluded actual voices and experiences of students, hence more in-depth research that includes student perspective is required.

Chapter III analyzed various environmental requirements for high school education and current global trends in the high school education sector in order to identify the situation and location of Korea’s high school education. The analysis result was later used as a source to interpret the results of high school education problems and prospects viewed by students. The changes in the demographic environment as well as employment, welfare system, IT

and cultural environment requires the education sector to cultivate ones with high problem-solving and situation estimate skills. However, the current situation of high school education is not effective in developing competencies of students that social change requires. Meanwhile, various implications were obtained through analyzing trends in educational innovation in international organizations and major countries such as quality management of high school education, expansion of career and vocational education, strengthening emphasis of student agency and freedom of choice.

Chapter IV presented the progress of the Student-led Future Education Initiative Project. The project was conducted on nine high schools for a total five months period from April to August 2018. At the 'Project Preparation' stage, the researchers planned to carry out the student-centered project and invited participation of teachers from total 9 schools (7 general high schools, 2 specialized high schools). The researchers and participating teachers discussed and agreed to conduct the project under a comprehensive theme of achieving 'student-created education policy', and the teachers agreed to act as a guide to facilitate student exploration and discussion activities. The "Project Execution" phase took place from May to August 2018, and activities such as 'discussing problems of high school education', 'imagining dream school and idealistic educational environment', and 'exploring factors which limit education improvement'. Finally, in the 'Project activity sharing and reflections stage', students who participated in the project gathered together and held a 'student forum' to draw policy suggestions. These activities have provided an opportunity for the students to realize the necessity and importance for them to become active players in shaping educational environment.

Chapter V provides results of the data collected through the student-led project

and presents the results in five major areas. They are categorized as “the purpose of learning and the meaning of school,” “the content and process of learning,” “the way of learning, the way of evaluation, and the future,” and “the voice of life and students in school.” The image of our high school education in which students recognize and experience in each area was characterized as ‘troubled’ due to competitive academic culture and inflexible learning environment. Students had a somewhat different perspective (positive or negative) on the future of high school education and expressed their expectation on the direction of change in future schools. Students pointed out the importance of establishing a flexible curriculum that can effectively respond towards fast-changing society and to enhance opportunities for students to design their own future with a high degree of autonomy.

Chapter VI describes the characteristics and implications of the students' views on high school education. First, 'relationship' and 'emotion' were the major frameworks that students used for viewing the state of high school education. Second, students called for a change in the system that could strongly support 'real' learning in high school. Third, students feel the barrier between 'real education' and 'future education' and do not wish to have their youth plundered because of high pressure on their future. Also, students demanded diversification and individualization of education. Fourth, the students expressed their opinions about the reality of education and actively participated to bring out changes in future education policies. In conclusion, the students' views on education were in line with the diverse environmental needs for high school education and the trend toward global educational innovation. Such similarities between students' views and the results of global educational innovation, environmental needs, etc. support the view that students have accurate views on diagnosing educational problems and can effectively participate as a major

agent for policy change.

The final chapter VII proposed three major values for change in high school education and proposed ten policy tasks. The vision of future high school education that students aspired was 'Happy life with a harmonious balance between students' academic life and daily life, and balance between present and future'. Also, three major values that should be accompanied with such a vision is 'self-agency and autonomy', 'cooperation and co-existence', and 'diversification and openness'.

Also, the study proposed the 10 policy tasks to be implemented. In order to realize the value of 'students self-agency and autonomy', the policy tasks that secure 'student participation on education policy', 'student impact assessment on policy', 'establishing platform to secure student participation on policy shaping,' and 'enabling student-led project classes'. Concerning the value of 'cooperation and coexistence', the policy tasks such as 'publicizing issue on resetting high school education objectives', 'enhancement on student participation and to create cooperative learning environment', and 'establishing Students Basic Living Standards' were suggested. Finally, in order to realize the value of 'Diversity and Openness', policy tasks such as 'operating self-designing semester', 'introducing regional curriculum and multi-level curriculum', 'expanding student learning choice and liberalizing between academic track' and to 'introduction on the share of expenses on student future career'. These policy tasks reflect the demands from the students and may act as an important indicators that can transform the framework of our education.

Lastly, the conclusion of this study is as follows. First, the current study has its significance in terms of drawing a new initiative to develop student-led project implementation techniques, which had not been attempted in the past. Second, the study found the potential of shifting perspective of future education

to become more ‘learner-oriented’. Third, this research not only gave students an opportunity to develop their own framework but also experience meaningful educational growth throughout the process. At the same time, participating teachers also had rewarding experiences, especially through witnessing the growth of their students. Through this process, the importance of ‘co-agency’ between students and teachers was confirmed.

The final conclusions obtained from this study are as follows. First, we need to achieve a student-led learning environment and education governance.

Education can change as students learn based on their own will and once they have certain level of interests in learning subjects. Through allowing more opportunities for students to participate, they can grow as agents that can lead the growth of future society. Second, an education system should secure learning stability and to provide an environment that allows ‘second-chance’ to students in order to reduce their burden. Third, a high school education should ensure students to have a balanced academic life and a personal life. Moreover, students should be given opportunities to ‘live’ and ‘enjoy’ the present time rather than investing too much energy and time on securing unsecured bright ‘future.’ Also, students should have the strong sense of belonging to their affiliated organization and should be respected with what they are in order to maximize their capacity building and learning outcome.

□ **Keyword:** High school education, Student perspective, Educational environment, Prospective and Tasks, Future Education, Student Agency Driven Action Research (SADAR)