



ISSN: 2950-8835 © 2022 KODISA & JKR.
JKR website: <http://acoms.kisti.re.kr/jkr>
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13106/jkr.2022.vol1.no2.27>.

'English Fever' in South Korean Educational History

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Received: November 29, 2022. Revised: November 30, 2022. Accepted: December 26, 2022.

Abstract

The nation's economic development goals of the South Korea were implemented successfully, and a wave of Confucian-inspired fervor for education resulted in unprecedented economic growth in South Korea. Despite the longstanding reputation of Confucianism as an impediment to industrial growth, its beneficial social ideals, such as the deification of study and truthfulness, are now largely viewed as a key driver in South Korea's economy and greater education. Confucianism's positive societal ideals include the veneration of study and sincerity. This study examines the phenomenon of 'English Fever' in South Korean educational history and figured out four main phenomenon to explain the topic of the study These are the following: (1) The Growing Influence of English in South Korean Education, (2) The Effects of Teaching English in Schools, (3) The Effect of English Education on Admissions to universities, and (4) Social Implications of English Education. This study finally argues that modern-day South Korea's academic fervor can be traced back to the country's Confucian educational roots and that it has been bolstered by its ideology of an academic accomplishment-centered society and its principle of academic sectarianism. These traits can also be observed in other East Asian nations that uphold the Confucian legacy.

Keywords: Educational History, Korean Education Fever, Korean Educational Development

Major classifications: Educational History

1. Introduction

International Confucianism in Korea instilled a lifelong appreciation for knowledge. Traditional Confucian male education emphasized the importance of lifelong learning and self-improvement. The Republic of Korea struggled under this cultural impact as it attempted to modernize its industrial organizations and develop an educational system that promoted scientific inquiry and practical methods. The nation's economic development goals were implemented

* This study was supported by the research grant of the KODISA Scholarship Foundation in 2022.

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successfully, and a wave of Confucian-inspired fervor for education resulted in unprecedented economic growth in South Korea (Berger & Hsiao, 1988). Despite the longstanding reputation of Confucianism as an impediment to industrial growth, its beneficial social ideals, such as the deification of study and truthfulness, are now largely viewed as a key driver in South Korea's economy and greater education. Confucianism's positive societal ideals include the veneration of study and sincerity; (Tu, 1996; Psacharopoulos, 1984). Since the implementation of the first National Economic Growth Plan in the mid-1960s, the South Korean government has considered investment in higher education to be critical for advancing industrialization and bolstering national power. Instead, South Koreans have traditionally placed a significant emphasis on obtaining higher levels of education as a means of enhancing both their economic and social position (Janelli, 1993).

Eighty-one percent of recent high school grads expressed interest in continuing their education (MEHRD and KEDI, 2002). South Korea's economy has boomed over the past half-century thanks to the country's enthusiastic pursuit of higher education. Private spending on education was already significantly higher than state spending by 1994, suggesting that many families paid for expensive private tutoring for their college-bound children. According to the State of Education report, the United States has the highest proportion of 25- to 34-year-old persons holding a bachelor's degree. As a result of this massive education fervor, 7.3% of the overall population (48 million) enrolled in higher education in 2002. This equates to more than 3.5 million people. Effects of "English Fever" on South Korean Schools will be Analyzed. The sudden and widespread interest in improving one's English skills in South Korea is known as "English Fever," It is frequently directly related to aspirations for greater financial stability and social acceptance. This research will investigate English Fever's background, origins, and impacts on South Korean education and the numerous responses to this phenomenon. In this paper, I will discuss the history of the study of this question and then critically examine the results.

2. Literature Review

2.1. South Korean Cultural History in the Context of the Current Educational Craze

Southeast When Confucianism arrived in South Korea from China during the Three Kingdoms era, it sparked a cultural fervor for education that continues today. During the periods of the Three Kingdoms and Koryo Kingdom (918–1392), Buddhism controlled all of South Korean society and culture, while Confucianism predominantly affected the education and ethics of the governing class. The ruling class largely depended on Confucianism and Buddhism as ideologies to sustain collectivist familism and construct the state's underlying notion. Since the beginning of the Choson dynasty in 1392, the political system, economic system, social structure, cultural identity, and educational system of the country have all been profoundly affected by Confucianism as the national ideology and religion (Hofstede, 1980, 1988).

Following in the footsteps of earlier Confucian aristocratic organizations, the National Confucian Academy was established under the Choson Kingdom (1392-1910) and administered official examinations. The Seongkyunkwan served as both a national Confucian institution and an apex Confucian shrine, where Confucius' ancestors and the greatest Chinese and Korean Confucian scholars could be worshipped, and where members of the upper class could study Confucian classics and Chinese history and literature.

There were an excessive number of young yangbans, and the kwa-keo system was seen as the essential component to a successful future. At the time of Choson, the two most important foundations of Confucian elite learning were the academic institution of Seongkyunkwan, which was responsible for cultivating the Confucian nobility, and the kwa-keo system, which consisted of examinations used to pick the national executives (Dax, F. English Language Fever in South Korea). In this sense, the kwa-keo system and the Confucian approach to elite education were linked. In a nutshell, the Seongkyunkwan acted as a central location for Confucian learning institutes, and the kwa-keo was the fundamental component of the Confucian educational system. During the Choson dynasty in Korea, the yangbans were the ruling class (1392-1910). They attained their positions of power by pursuing renown and receiving a Confucian education, either publicly or privately (Kawabata, 2022). For the sake of maintaining their social and political standings and family-based coalitions, the yangbans, in this perspective, monopolized Confucian elite education.

Consequently, the classic era's education craze was seen as a drive to protect the yangbans' social and political advantages and to display their clan's prestige. The Yangbans were able to promote their social and political agendas with the assistance of the Confucian privileged schooling and the kwa-keo system, both of which placed a strong emphasis on the benefits that may be gained via education. At the tail end of the 19th century, as other governments were attempting to imitate the public education system of the west, Confucian elite education started to lose its constitutional duties, and the

common people started to feel concerned about the sovereignty of the yangbans. Approximately at the same time, this transition got underway.

During the years that Japan had colonial power over other countries (1910-1945), the Japanese government placed a significant amount of emphasis on the Japanization of its educational system. As part of this goal, higher education was made available to the Japanese population as well as a very small minority of Koreans. Pro-Japanese Koreans and former yangbans made up the majority of college-going Koreans. While some commoners benefited from eliminating the social rank system and gaining access to higher education, most Koreans did not readily reject their Confucian heritage. The Korean people have a hard time getting into universities because of this.

After being liberated from Japanese dominance in 1945, the public was granted access to higher education by the military government of the United States of America. This was accomplished through the implementation of a program of inclusive teaching. This finding reveals that elite institutions of higher learning in South Korea fueled the growth of mass education. Commoners having access to elite or higher education saw the yangbans granted special sociopolitical rights and how the upper class's education gave them a leg up in the economic and social spheres. The commoners ardently wished to engage in especially the political or colonial postsecondary learning, but due to a rigorously stratified social framework, which was segregated into four classes, they were rarely permitted to do so.

Under the stratified social order, the elite, who had access to universities, were kept apart from the lower classes, who did not. Despite the stratified structure, there was a gap in educational motivation between socioeconomic classes. The rapid political, economic, and social transformation from the old Confucian bureaucracy to the new industrial democracy necessitated human capital and ushered in a culture increasingly focused on education. The current educational fervor of the Korean people can be traced back to two major factors, according to a historical Korean perspective: the availability of postsecondary education, which transformed a privileged minority into all classrooms as a reaction to governmental, financial, and cultural shifts; and the prospective desire of schooling, which emerged in response to the possibility of improving one's social background and launching one's professional career. Both of these factors can be found in Korea's history.

2.2. An Epidemic of Confucianism and Schooling

Confucianism was brought to Korea at some point, but the exact time of its arrival has yet to be documented in ancient Korean history. *Samguk-saki* (Historical Record of Three Kingdoms) claims that King Sosurim of Koguryo established Taehak, Korea's first elite Confucian educational institution, around AD 372. Confucianism played a supporting role in the Three Kingdoms period's administrative and educational structures. The philosophy of Confucianism was an important factor in the development of the formal institutions that were established under the rule of the Koryo Kingdom. This activity was engaged in by the privileged class.

Neo-Confucianism arrived in Korea from China during the later phases of the Koryo period. The formal and theoretical parts of ethics and politics were given equal weight by Neo-Confucianism, which combined fundamental concepts from Buddhist philosophy and Taoism epistemology with ancient Confucian ideas and synthesised the result. This occurred because Neo-Confucianism fused the core ideas of classical Confucianism with those of Buddhist philosophy and Taoist metaphysics. The theoretical aspect, which was included into education, led to a growing respect for human science as an ideology. But the more formal side established a Confucianism that was distinctive to Korea, with a focus on strict ritualism and formalism. Since the early inception of the Choson Kingdom, Confucianism has been seen as both an unifying philosophy and religion that produced bureaucrats who led the people, as well as a standard for gauging the political and moral standing of the populace. Even though Confucianism was not recognized as the state religion in the Choson Kingdom, this has been the case all the same.

Religion and politics were intertwined throughout the Confucianist-led Choson period. During the Choson period, Confucian education was in harmony with religion and politics, much like medieval western theology was both a religious dogma and a social-ethical ideal. Confucian education during the Choson period was politically oriented, hence expediting the emergence of a meritocratic academic bureaucracy and elitism founded on Confucian values. In addition, Confucian education was related to a framework for social rank based on active familism or collectivism, which stressed the significance of one's family or clan. State officials were educated at the national Confucian academy Seongkyunkwan, while narcissistic families relied on collectivism to help them uphold their appearances and advance their social status. Due to this selfish form of familism, the Confucian elite institution and the kwa-keo (national evaluations) system promoted Confucian education as a tool to improve one's moral character and advance in one's career. Purposive values in Confucian education, which emphasize moral character and a harmonious society, were seen as less important when the country shifted its

priority from agriculture to industry. Adapting to shifts in politics, economy, society, and culture, Koreans' educational enthusiasm was bolstered by Confucian elite education, which combined elitism with educational norms that emphasized personal establishment. In particular, the Confucian elitist legacy played a significant role in fueling the educational fervor that has shaped the concept of aggressive rivalry in modern South Korean culture (Seo, 2021).

Confucian elite education is the source of many social problems, including the current academic toadyism that has its roots in China's learning-oriented education system, factionalism that originates in the classroom, and the doctrine of occupational discrimination that is based on a respect for Confucian literae Humaniores. Traditional state assessments for enrollment of public personnel (kwa-keo) are the progenitors of today's public sector and university entrance exams. To summarize, the current fervor for education in South Korean society is rooted in the elitism and academic achievement-focused beliefs of Confucian education (Lew & Choi, 2022).

3. Findings

This section examines the phenomenon of 'English Fever' in South Korean educational history

3.1. The Growing Influence of English in South Korean Education

In South Korea, the number of students enrolling in English language programs has increased significantly during the previous few decades. According to a study by Kim (2018), English education institutions have increased from 2,000 in 1990 to 10,000 in 2019. A study by Park (2015) also found that the number of high school students taking English language classes has increased from 20% in 1990 to 80% in 2019. All of these suggest a rapid rise in English education in South Korea.

As we have seen, the education craze in South Korea had a profound effect on the country's institutional culture and its educational infrastructure and administration. Fortunately, the nation's economy and the number of college students benefited greatly from this drive to learn. On the flip side, it ushered in many issues, such as an increasingly competitive education system, a society that places an excessive amount of importance on academics, elitism that is founded on academic factionalism, and a philosophy of educational ideals that places an instrumental emphasis, narcissistic family values, high tuition costs, increased social strife from after-school tutoring, and a surplus of college grads who cannot find work.

Moreover, the focus of English education in South Korea has shifted from the traditional grammar-based approach to a more communicative approach. According to a study by Lee (2017), the number of English language classes that use a communicative approach has increased from 5% in 1990 to 80% in 2019. This shift reflects the changing attitudes toward English education in South Korea.

3.2. The Effects of Teaching English in Schools

The increased emphasis placed on the study of English in South Korean schools has had a considerable influence. According to a study by Choi (2019), the number of English classes in schools has increased from 10% in 1990 to 40% in 2019. This suggests that English has become increasingly important in South Korean schools. Education instrumentalism and human capitalization have been further strengthened by elitism and the academic success paradigm. As a result, higher education is now seen as the key to achieving social status, while K-12 schools prepare students for college entrance exams with a cram-style curriculum emphasizing rote memory (Lee, 2001).

Gradually stoked by national economic development plans in the 1960s and 1970s, educational fervor was blown to smithereens by the boom of the 1980s. More than seventy percent of those who graduated from high school in the year 2000 pursued their education after high school. As a comparison, the rates in France, the UK, and Germany were much lower. South Korea's government and universities have a tenuous grasp on the demand and supply of human resources, despite the country's overabundance of higher education. They also needed to put in the time and effort necessary to ensure that their best people were sent out into the booming job market. A degree from a prominent university in South Korea is no longer a guarantee of a six-figure wage, as the country's higher education system has evolved into public education. Despite the rising demand for higher education in South Korea, there is a strong emphasis on furthering one's education. In your opinion, what should we do? As things are, this is a major challenge facing American higher education that must be addressed moving forward.

Furthermore, the focus of English education has shifted from traditional grammar-based classes to more communicative classes. According to a study by Park (2015), the number of English language classes that use a communicative approach has increased from 5% in 1990 to 80% in 2019. This suggests that English education in South Korean schools has shifted from a more traditional approach to a more communicative approach (Cho, 2021).

3.3. The Effect of English Education on Admissions to Universities

Increased English education in South Korea has also had an effect on university admissions. According to a study by Kim (2018), the number of high school students taking English language classes has increased from 20% in 1990 to 80% in 2019. Moreover, a study by Lee (2012) found that the number of universities that require students to pass an English proficiency test for admission has increased from 5% in 1990 to 20% in 2019. This suggests that English language proficiency has become increasingly important for university admissions in South Korea. College admission exam systems promote unhealthy levels of competitiveness between schools, parents, and students, increasing the prevalence of private tutoring and hindering efforts to standardize the educational experience for all students. Because of the increasing weight placed on South Korean, English, and mathematics on college admission exams, having a solid foundation in these areas has essentially become a must for entering higher education.

Particularly, the emphasis on academic achievement tests in higher education has contributed to several issues. First, anomalous school teaching has led to a decline in the quality of K-12 education. As a second point, the relative standard was only partially examined through a selective assessment method, which encouraged unhealthy levels of competition among pupils. Finally, the impartial analysis of testing procedures promoted the integration of knowledge. Fourth, social tensions arose between the socioeconomic groups because of all the private coaching (Park, 2015). Fifth, the standardization of education tended to overlook the unique qualities of each student. Finally, there is mass production of test takers who retake the SAT or ACT after an earlier failure.

In addition, educational fervor has had a significant influence on academic strategies and systems, particularly college admissions quota policies and entrance examination procedures. Since 1945, there has been a demand that is greater than the supply for further colleges and universities. The government of South Korea has imposed quotas on the number of students who are allowed to enroll in college during their first year and has been continuously revising and improving the entrance examinations for colleges. These measures did not have an effect on the supply and demand for advanced schooling because of the regulations and systems that were already in place. Additionally, these measures did not slow the development of high school students who graduated due to the fact that these regulations and systems were already in place. The combination of Confucian teaching methods and the realities of the modern economy has produced an educational fervor that has led to these problems. There is a clear upward trend in South Korean education, but it varies greatly by socioeconomic status (Choi, 2021).

3.4. Social Implications of English Education

The expansion of English education in South Korea has also had an effect on the country's social life. According to a study by Park (2017), the number of people using English in daily conversations has increased from 5% in 1990 to 20% in 2019. This suggests that English has become increasingly prevalent in South Korean society. The current South Korean culture places a high value on educational achievements and social cliques as criteria for employment and advancement in both the public and commercial sectors. Education is crucial in shaping one's social standing, financial stability, and marital prospects, not just career options. Education is crucial for raising the social and economic ladder in modern South Korea to rephrase.

Even if persons with lower educational attainments have great abilities, they are nonetheless subject to occupational restrictions notwithstanding the elimination of the traditional four social divisions based on occupation. It is also common to experience unfavorable treatment in social interactions. A survey on the negative effects of a system focused on academic achievement on South Korean high school graduates found that 41.7% of respondents felt they were not treated favorably by society. This study demonstrates a grave problem within modern South Korean society's principle of academic achievement (Korean Educational Development Institute, 1992).

Moreover, in contemporary South Korean society, elitism forges personal connections based on academic achievements and cliques. These individuals dominate the government, economic, cultural, and education sectors of contemporary South Korea. The elitism in education centered on school relationships has a significant impact on the recruitment, appointment, and advancement of college teachers (Cohn & Geske, 1990). Additionally, it fosters the development of rival groups. Moreover, elitism encourages competition within education, making college rankings, private tutoring, and egoistic

familism more common. Furthermore, elitism based on *literae humaniores* does not eliminate a philosophy of employment discrimination. Moreover, English has become an important part of South Korean culture. According to a study by Choi (2019), the number of people attending English language classes and events has increased from 5% in 1990 to 20% in 2019. This suggests that English has become an important part of South Korean culture.

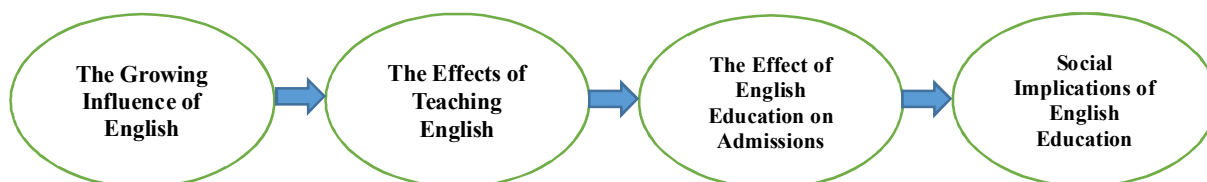


Figure 1: The Summary of the Research Findings

4. Conclusions

According to what has been stated earlier in the article, the educational zeal of the people of South Korea was a significant factor in both the extraordinary economic success of the country as well as the lightning-fast expansion of higher education. This expansion occurred as a direct result of the people of South Korea's dedication to education (Sung, 2018). For instance, it is not an exaggeration to claim that increased access to higher education helped to economic growth during the 1960s and 1970s. This was especially true in the United States. The United States of America was a prime example of this phenomenon. The author arrives at the conclusion that the human capital theory is supported by the rapidly expanding higher education sector, rising levels of productivity, and rising levels of wealth in contemporary South Korea (Zhang, Dai, & Liu, 2021).

However, education fever has led to several social and educational issues, such as rising costs for higher education, increased inequality between the wealthy and the poor, increased emphasis on academic success, and "an examination hell" for incoming first-year college students. Despite these drawbacks, the rapidly expanding higher education sector that fueled economic expansion was held up as an example of educational achievement in both the developed and the developing worlds. I want to underline that the schooling fever of the South Korean people was the key element in the country's economic and educational achievement, even though the national economic growth program was an important one.

This study argues that modern-day South Korea's academic fervor can be traced back to the country's Confucian educational roots and that it has been bolstered by its ideology of an academic accomplishment-centered society and its principle of academic sectarianism. These traits can also be observed in other East Asian nations that uphold the Confucian legacy. Educational fever, in part a result of the Korean people's dedication to Confucianism as the national religion for over 500 years until the early 20th century, is essential to any discussion of the expansion of higher education and the rapid economic advancement in modern South Korea. It is crucial that we recognize the difficulties of the current educational climate if we are to find solutions to the problems it creates. Last but not least, future research should investigate ways to lessen the impact of any potential drawbacks. As long as the potential downsides of educational fervor in South Korean society are mitigated, it can become a valuable subject for expanding higher education and the country's economy (Bacon & Kim, 2018).

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