

The “Equalization” Policy: Going beyond Arguments over a False Issue

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Abstract

*This essay reviews the six essays published in the Korea Journal under the general heading, “Debate on the Equalization Policy.” It points out that the essays have failed to **produce a** meaningful policy debate due to confusion about the nature of pyeongjunhwa policy, which they **deal with as** an “equalization” policy. It argues that the policy was and is not directly serving the development of a solid system of public education. Born out of improvised, inappropriate efforts to cope with the question of entrance competitions, the policy actually helped aggravate the **question**, deepened state intervention—especially in the private sphere of education—and drained much needed resources for the development of public education.*

The essay concludes by suggesting a new perspective that is broad enough to accommodate not only the efficacy of the policy concerned but also the state—the owner of the policy which in itself has been an important part of South Korea’s structural educational problems-

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The six “Debate on **[the]** Equalization Policy” essays (Chun 2003; Kim Kyung-keun. 2003; Lee 2004; Ahn and Rieu 2004; Kim S. 2004; Shin 2004) seem to well represent the views that are now being expressed on the issue. But they do not really seem to constitute a “debate” if the latter **is defined by an exchange of opinions towards solving a policy question.**

My role will be one of offering commentary on the essays in order to confer

upon them a form of debate, or at least to produce suggestions for a possible real debate. In what follows, I shall lay down reasons why I assert that a real debate does not exist and move on to point out what is missing. This will lead to some suggestions.

What Has Been Said?

Why do I not see in the six essays an occasion of actually exchanging opinions towards finding a solution for a policy question? In order for such an occasion to take place, the essays should address a common policy issue with appropriate methods, taking into account what others say and on what grounds. They generally fail to do so.

About What?

Note, first, that the individual essays are grappling with different matters instead of a common matter. As is apparent in the general heading, the question posed by the editor seems to have to do with the state education policy of “equalization” most likely in terms of whether or not to “abolish” it,¹ and, if not, whether to loosen or to retain it.

Most essays indeed offer an opinion regarding what to do but their object they address is strictly not one and the same. A quick look at the introductory sections—the sections in which the authors bring up an issue and discuss how to address it—would be sufficient to notice this. Their declared object to consider is the high school equalization policy, school equalization policy, or education equalization policy. Here, a disinterested reader only minimally versed in the literature of educational studies cannot avoid confusion. “Equalization” must mean the implementation of equality. In the literature, equality in education means usually equal or equitable opportunity of education and rarely an expectation that public schools may contribute to equality in society at large (e.g., Horace Mann’s “the great equalizer”). On the other hand, school equalization, high school equalization, and education equalization are not concepts established in the literature. They are words chosen by some South Korean writers for the specific intention of denoting certain matters that concern them. Therefore, their

¹ In English, “abolish” is applied to institutions or customs. A policy is a decision on subsequent actions; it is as yet neither an institution nor a custom. You may retract or relinquish it, but you may not abolish it.

meanings can be grasped in terms of what they wish to say. The disinterested yet informed reader may only **guess at the meanings**-by examining what the words stand for lexically, for instance, as the implementation of whatever **is meant** by “equality” **in schools, in high schools, or in education itself; so follows the confusion that lead the disinterested reader to become lost.**

A primary source of this confusion is apparently the choice of the English word “equality” for the Korean word *pyeongjunhwa*, which, as I shall discuss shortly, does not mean what the English does. The editor seems to ask for an opinion about what has to be done to the educational policy of *equalization*, a word by which s/he really means *pyeongjunhwa*. **Hereto, the respondents support or criticize equalization in high schools, in schools, or in education, also meaning by “equalization” the same Korean word-** Yet the uttered word is not *pyeongjunhwa*, but “equalization,” and **this**-English word injects its own connotation into the discourse. (Or both the editor and the respondents may assume from the very beginning that *pyeongjunhwa* means the same thing as equalization, or *pyeongdeunghwa*.) Thus, the discussants jump on to air their opinion about what to do to a fictitious equalization or equality policy instead of the real *pyeongjunhwa* policy.

This confusion **is further aggravated as one reads the essays.** All of the authors, without exception, switch their **argument around and between the “equalization” policies-on high schools, on schools, and on education**, criticizing or supporting one, then another, and then still another, as if these are all one and the same thing. They thus muddle up different policies as if they were **one and the same**, and thus, obstruct their own conceptualization, a necessary condition though it is for a proper policy debate.

What Issues and What Solutions?

Their muddling can be demonstrated by examining how their essays argue **about what to do to the policy (that is, the object of what to do)** they choose to address and thus get lost conceptually. For the sake of convenience, let me begin with the supportive cases.

One supportive argument (Kim S. 2004) begins with noting that the *high school equalization* policy was introduced in South Korea in the 1980s and that “today, there is a widespread call for its abolishment [*sic*].” Then, it takes note of the fact that “[m]ost

of the debates about the *equalization* policy are based on the false [viewpoint of whether] *school equalization* heightens or lowers academic ability” (emphasis added). Thus brushing aside such debates, the essay chooses to “examine the fundamental aspects of education itself” in order to develop grounds for supporting the maintenance of the *high school* equalization policy. The grounds it develops are that “education is *the* means to self-realization” [emphasis added], that “self-realization of humanity can be guaranteed by universal education,” that “self-realization requires professional education,” that “the self-realization of citizens” is a benefit of universal and professional education, and that “competitiveness” in education is a bad thing to permit. What is interesting here is the identification of the idea of high school equalization with that of school equalization and that of educational equalization. To the author, the three ideas are identical, and at the heart of those identical ideas lies equality in educational opportunity, which he believes is a necessary condition—precisely, *the* sufficient condition²—for humanity’s and the citizenry’s individual self-realization. Worse still, he **confuses**—a policy idea with the policy itself, as if taking issue with a policy is the same as taking issue with a policy idea. In saying so, he forgets that **the object to which he chooses to decide what to do**—is a state policy concerning high schools, not “education itself.” Also, he overlooks a common **perception**—in educational policy **studies** that public education policies, including South Korea’s *pyeongjunhwa* policy, do not seek to directly serve mandates derived from educational ideas, but **rather** objectives derived from the state’s own agendas.

Another supportive argument (Ahn and Rieu 2004) **takes issue with** the economists’ “**call for [the] dissolution [sic]**” of the high school equalization policy.³ In its account, **the** call to abandon the policy is identical with **a** call to marketize education, and the reason for the call is the economists’ “unwavering faith in market mechanisms and in the efficiency of the market.” It says such a call is wrong on three counts. First, the proposed marketization does not guarantee efficiency, because the market can fail to be efficient, and because the education sector (even after marketization) is relatively autonomous from the market. Second, since education bears “publicness” as its character—“publicness” meaning service to **the** “public interest, including equal access

² Note the observation that education is “the means” to self-realization.

³ See p. 175. The essay later says that the economists’ call leads to “change” or “improvement” to the high school equalization policy and allowance of “more independent private schools to open.” Then it says that the “policy would, for all intents and purposes, *cease to exist*” (p. 179, emphasis added).

to education”—its system cannot be discussed solely from the standpoint of efficiency. Third, given the current entrance examination-oriented system, marketization will only reinforce the current trend for seeking positional advantages in the labour market rather than the effective acquisition of the contents of education. The essay does not actually defend the high school equalization policy nor any policy bearing “equalization” in its name; it only discredits the economists’ alleged call by debunking a hidden weakness **that they do not promise efficiency. It also criticizes their inability to see the utility of education, something allegedly public by nature.**

What, then, do the critics say? None of the remaining four essays actually argue for the “abolition” or “dissolution” of the **high school, or school, or education** equalization policy, as the supporters allege. However, they all advance a somewhat toned-down argument that the equalization policy—**whether it is on education, on schools, or on high schools**—has to be “overcome” (Chun 2003), “modified” (Kim KG 2003), reformed (Lee 2004) or something **to that effect** (Shin 2004). Their reasons are:

- that the policy has been proved to be unsuitable for today’s Korean society, has allegedly lost its effectiveness in attaining the goals it **was designed to achieve**, “to improve educational equality and to reduce the economic burden of private tutoring and minimize the negative side effects of exam[ination]-oriented education” (Lee 2004); instead, it has lowered the level of academic achievement (Kim KK 2003; Lee 2004);
- that a modernized educational strategy at the time of globalization requires educational policies designed to drive students not towards positional values (as in the ongoing entrance competition) but towards quality of education (which can be secured by a new form of competition) (Chun 2003); or
- that while the ongoing debate on the policy focuses on whether to pursue equality by maintaining it or to go for inequality by “abolishing [*sic*-]” it, its proper conclusion must be one that seeks both and, by doing so, promotes schools’ autonomy and freedom of education at the expense of some degree of equality (Shin 2004).

Unmistakable in **the reasoning of the authors**—is a prominent logic that runs through what is called “the economics of education” in the Anglo-American world. In this logic, **the** “quality of education” means improvement in measurable student achievement. “Autonomy and freedom of education,” as well, echoes the advocacy by **the** economists of education for the relative autonomy and freedom of individual schools in carrying out

governmental reform policies geared to enhance such student achievement.

What Is Left Out

The above analysis provokes a strong suspicion that unscrupulous borrowings from the Anglo-American economics of education and ~~the~~-inappropriate reactions thereto have resulted in pointless arguments over a false issue. This suspicion becomes convincing upon revisiting the three basic points that are left out in the six essays, respectively concerning: (1) the nature of the *pyeongjunhwa* policy, (2) the proper extent of public policies in education, and (3) the contextual differences of education between Anglo-American countries (the United States in particular) and South Korea.

What is the Pyeongjunhwa Policy?

The high school *pyeongjunhwa* policy, first implemented in the mid-1970s and further enhanced since the early 1980s, cannot be understood separately from the middle school *pyeongjunhwa* policy of the late 1960s. The former is an extension of the latter. Therefore, it shares with the latter certain common perspectives in which South Korean policy makers have been developing and implementing policy measures to tackle urgent educational problems. The high school *pyeongjunhwa* policy is an integral part of a larger *pyeongjunhwa* policy that has affected middle and high schools and institutions even beyond the level of secondary education. Therefore, a sensible policy debate must address the larger policy regarding educational institutions, and this in terms of the common perspectives.

In those perspectives, the policy has not much to do with equalization in education, or equal opportunity in education, for it did not, and still does not, necessarily seek the latter as its principal objective. It was introduced in an effort to deal with entrance competitions at middle schools and, subsequently, at high schools and, then, at universities on an assumption that **those competitions were caused by a** shortage of student places. On this assumption, the policy makers decided to employ policy measures to increase the numbers of available student places and **allocat**_students to

schools instead of permitting free competition. The so-called *pyeongjunhwa* measures were employed as part of this decision. **Important of those measures were** the opening of new public schools, the moderation of requirements for setting up new private schools, and the funding and **controlling** of private schools to make sure that the latter operated similarly to public schools; **by** teaching students in the same way as public schools (using the same curriculum from the same textbooks) **in order, among others, to prevent** possible disputes over the fairness of the state-controlled entrance competitions. The South Korean state indeed managed to eliminate entrance competitions at the level of lower and upper secondary education, not because of the efficacy of those policy measures, but simply because the measures included a ban on entrance examinations and the allocation of students to all schools.⁴ At the same time, it drained much of the financial and other resources badly needed by public schools.

The successful elimination of entrance competitions for middle and high schools was quickly followed by severe entrance competitions at the level of higher education. After-school cramming practices became rampant. Parental expenditures for such practices came to far exceed those for regular schooling in spite of the rapid increase of university student places, which now far surpassed demand. The policy makers developed, among others, a new assumption that the cramming practices were caused partly by the method of selecting university students exclusively by the scores of examination in academic subjects and partly by the unequal distribution of quality **teachers**—among schools and among regions. **On this new assumption**, they required universities to rank applicants by a multifarious system of assessment comprising of the scores from the **state** entrance examination, interviews, students' improvised short essays, and so on, and, finally, the high schools' evaluation of student records (in a uniform way imposed by the state). **As well**, they further enhanced other *pyeongjunhwa* measures, committing more public funds especially to private schools for improving teacher salaries, teaching facilities, and uniformity in the contents of teaching. **Additionally**, they created free or low-cost public cramming services both inside and outside the schools, private or public. They thus introduced a new uniformity of teaching and learning in schools in the multiple arenas of entrance competition.

In short, the *pyeongjunhwa* policy, **having been** inclusive of all such measures,

⁴ It could not get rid of entrance competitions at the level of higher education because it was unable to apply there such specific measures **given that it did not possess the** necessary financial resources.

was devised and implemented in **the veins of logic** stemming from improvised, myopic assumptions concerning entrance competitions, rather than from a well thought-out strategy for developing a viable system of public education. It sought literally to “make all schools meet equally-imposed standards” but neither to find **nor fix** the real causes of entrance competition, **let alone assuring of** equal educational opportunity for the growing generation by means of appropriate state intervention in education. For this reason, it succeeded neither in solving the problem of entrance exam competition, nor did it develop a solid system of public education. On the contrary, it further intensified entrance competitions by further enhancing uniformity in the contents of education, which **established the basis** for selecting students on the basis of examining who **could recall** more of what everyone has learned from rote memorization. (Koh et al. 1998). Tragically, on the other hand, the excessive intervention of public power in private schools through the *pyeongjunhwa* policy has resulted in virtually eradicating the private sphere of education, vital **vital though they are in** diversifying the contents of education and, thereby making the entrance examination unfeasible as a method of university student selection. More tragic is confusion by policy makers and education scholars **over the definitions of** “public education” (*gonggyoyuk*) and “private education” (*sagyoyuk*)—a confusion that inhibits reasonable discussions on education-related public policies.

These tragic consequences are visible in all the six essays under review and they seriously impair the soundness of their **respective arguments**.

Public Policy and Education

In countries other than South Korea (**as far as I have learned earning a living by studying educational policy**), “public education” refers to education in public schools and “private education” to that in private schools. Public schools are the schools set up and maintained by the state (or **a** public authority) as a vehicle to carry out the state’s own educational agendas. They are in a system of public education and operate uniformly within the state’s jurisdiction, teaching a state-set curriculum through state-approved textbooks. Private schools, in the meantime, are those that are independent from the system of public education: they operate on their own financial

responsibility and attract and teach students according to their own educational philosophy, using their own curriculum and textbooks. Although the state often intervenes in private education as well, imposing certain curricular requirements, requiring the hiring of—qualified teachers, providing funding], and so on, such interventions are invariably limited and do not go as far as to violate the free and autonomous operation of the private schools. The commonly given reasons for this are that the state cannot infringe upon the parent’s (or her/his child’s) rights to opt out of public education which is uniformly laden with the state’s own values, and that opting for private education help guarantee diversity in education, which is, *à la* J. S. Mill, a necessary condition for social progress.⁵ For this reason, the state applies its educational policies mainly to public schools, leaving private schools out. Also, when debaters on public policies use the word “education,” they normally mean public education, excluding private education, for the latter normally remains outside state policy.

In South Korea, meanwhile, policy papers, as well as scholarly works mostly use the terms “public education” and “private education” in an entirely different manner. For the authors of such papers “public education” means education in all schools, whether they are public or private, while “private education” stands for after-school cramming practices. Such authors often justify this usage by saying that, as far as South Korea is concerned, private schools cannot claim to be institutions of private education because they are operating on mostly public funds. Then, they go on to argue that the state must reinforce the “publicness” (*gonggongseong*) of private schools because they are institutions of public education, and because their frequent corruption scandals would otherwise never subside. Apparently, this view comes from the attitude outlined above and simply means—that the state must go further ahead with the *pyeongjunhwa* policy measures. Any chance of disinterested reflection on the status quo is thus prevented; so is the chance to learn about the authors’ discursive pitfalls.

The authors of the essays under our review are also entrapped in such pitfalls. Think about the extemporaneous defence of the “[high school] equalization” policy (Kim S. 2004). Granted that education in the sense of schooling can be considered “the Means to Self-Realization,” it is nevertheless difficult to also grant that “Universal Education” guarantees the “Self-Realization of [the] Humanity.” While humanity

⁵ See his “On Liberty”

consists of billions of different individuals in need of different educational attention, universal education addresses what is common at best and remains largely unconcerned about such individual needs. But concern about such needs is indispensable for the individuals' self-realization. Can universal education guarantee the self-realization of citizens? The answer can be affirmative only if all citizens **ought to be of one kind as in the case of a totalitarian regime**.—Furthermore, the term “universal education,” in its common usage by the community of educators and education scholars, means simply minimal educational opportunity for all **by such means as** tuition fee-free education. If the defender too follows this common usage, he cannot defend the “[high school] equalization [in the sense of *pyeongjunhwa*]” policy, for universal education of this sense is a concept applicable only to compulsory education, which, in South Korea, does not **extend to**-high schools. All told, what is apparent in the defender's discourse is the misconception that the *pyeongjunhwa* policy is a policy devised to develop a universal public education at all levels of schooling, and all schools under the policy—private or public—are institutions of public education. It appears to be on the basis of this misconception that he and other defenders (Ahn and Rieu 2004) allege that any alteration to the policy means a “marketization” of public education, as if public education is actually independent from the market (as alluded by Ibid.).⁶

A similar misconception of the *pyeongjunhwa* policy and public education is also found in Shin's (2004) case for both “equality” and “autonomy and freedom of education” in the school. Taking equality here to mean equal opportunity of education, the reader can readily note two underlying assumptions: (1) that the *pyeongjunhwa* policy is a policy to develop a solid system of public education **that seeks to** guarantee equal opportunity of education for all, and (2) that the policy and/or public education can **permit** autonomy and freedom of education in schools.⁷ The falsity of the first assumption should be clear from the above analysis. The second assumption only reveals the author's unfamiliarity with the literature of educational studies. Public education has been developed and **has operated based** on two principles: the political

⁶ The most salient market phenomenon is not free competition as the economists allege; it is trade, or giving X for taking Y. Are the schools under *pyeongjunhwa* tuition--free?

⁷ This misconception is not rare in the South Korean literature on educational policy. The Roh Moo Hyon government's education reform strategies (Insuwi 2003) and other research **findings** (e.g., Lee 2002) argue that the current mode of educational governance must be modified to permit schools to freely and autonomously develop curricula with administrative assistance from the Ministry down to district school offices.

control of public schools (and teachers of course) and the efficiency of the latter's operation. These principles are rooted in the fact that public schools are instruments of their creator—namely, the political state—for carrying out the latter's will. To let public schools operate freely and autonomously is tantamount to allow your car to behave regardless of your will. For this reason, all political states—not only the “bourgeois” states of the Anglo-American world but also the leftist states of the Paris Commune, the Bolsheviks, “people's” and “social” democracies—adamantly adhered to those principles.⁸ The libertarians are full well aware of them when they categorically deny public education, for, in their view, as in the views of all those states, public education is essentially incompatible with autonomy and freedom of education in schools.²

Most important to note is a misconception lurking beneath the arguments that because of the policy, the students' academic achievements drop low (Kim Kyung-keun 2003; Lee 2004) and that their schools' educational practices get poorer in quality (Chun 2003). If the schools teach poorly, it is likely (but not necessarily) that their students demonstrate low academic performances if such performances are measured by a standardized test or by the state's uniform entrance examination. The two arguments, therefore, are virtually identical. The authors of those identical arguments often demonstrate their validity in terms of region-to-region or school-to-school differences in test score. But how far can we agree with them? Such differences do not actually verify that student and school performances are overall low, (or poor), nor do they prove that the policy brings such performances down. The differences are obtained from a test specifically designed to produce them. What the authors leave out of their discourses is the facts that there is a curriculum and textbooks from which all students learn the same things, that the universities admit students on the basis of who memorizes more than who of the same material and, finally, that there is a nationwide competition for university entrance, in which the intensity drives students towards higher and higher echelons in the schooling system. In effect, as a matter of fact, all children born in South Korea now complete high school and some ninety percent of high school graduates advance to an institution of higher education in one form—or another (Kim KS 1999). Given this, South Korean high school students' average scores from any standardized test must be lower now than a time when high school participation rate was smaller.

⁸ I give these examples because the school's autonomy and freedom of education is argued for often by the individuals/groups who assume “progressive” or “leftist” positions.

Time and again, moreover, Seoul National University professors complain that their students, who are the highest achievers in the nation, now perform visibly poorly compared with the past, **even** in such basic subjects as mathematics. They thus allude that the *pyeongjunhwa* policy has lowered the academic performances of even the highest achievers. In saying so, however, they leave out the fact that their students are “the highest achievers” **only** in the state-set scheme for university student selection. What is to be blamed is the methods included in the scheme, not the *pyeongjunhwa* policy. **The policy itself can take only secondary blame, if any, for it was a policy employed by short-sighted “statist” policy makers who believed the state could be doing anything for education and society. So they tackled the entrance competition question but they did so with an inappropriate and inconsistent understanding. And the reason for assigning secondary blame lies in the fact that it helped erase the opportunities and eliminate the venues for teaching students to learn different things from different perspectives.**

Such opportunities and venues are normally secured through *private education* and by the local control of public education. The autonomy and freedom of education are inextricably linked to these spheres, so too do some possibility of meeting the students’ individual educational needs for their “self-realization,” but not to the *public education* of public schools.⁹

The Viability of the Economics of Education

Finally, it is important to note the critics’ failure to consider whether and to what extent the Anglo-American economics of education can be applied to the South Korean context. The legitimacy of assessing public schools’ educational performances in the light of economic efficiency is indisputable, for, **as has been** noted above, **public schools as instruments must be efficient in the first place. Since those schools are the instruments of teaching,** of which purpose is bringing about learning on the side of the

⁹ “Progressive/leftist debaters may support the notion of “self-realization” because it sounds like Marx’ idea of all-rounded development. But Marx never thought it possible that the public schools of capitalist societies implement this idea, for, in his view, such schools **should** only reinforce the hinges of divided labour on which such societies **turned**. Even so, many of his followers have argued for the expansion of public education. Their ground **was** [grounds revolved around the fact] that public education, no matter what values were **charged on**[attached to] it, was a good thing for children, **not that it was**[and not as] “the Means to [their] Self-Realization.”

students, it is also legitimate to assess their performances in light of achievements in learning. Good schools are generally those whose students learn what they are taught. **However, they are so generally, that is, in abstraction.** The reality is quite different. The students do not necessarily learn what they are taught; on the other hand, they learn a lot of what they are not taught. Additionally, the schools (or the teachers) do not necessarily teach what the policy makers ask them to teach. The teaching and learning practices of the schools and their students depend tremendously upon their individual conditions and circumstances. Here-, **I express my**-fundamental reservation about the credibility of the economics of education that compares input and output in education for the sake of efficiency. While a proper assessment of teaching and learning performances must take into account those individual conditions and circumstances, that particular “science” simply throws them away. Their efficiency discourse, therefore, is too abstract to be real, and real, if so, only in a highly specific context.

That highly specific context is that of the United States—and those of some Anglo-American countries—from which the economics of education as a discourse emerged. Up until recently, American public education, as well as public education in many other Anglo-American countries, was under local control. Different regions and provinces/states operated public schools according to different curricula and textbooks and leaving most of the classroom issues wide open to students’ own judgement. There was neither national standards for teaching and learning, nor schemes for monitoring, for public education emerged out of local initiatives and its jurisdiction usually belonged to individual provinces/states or regions. This brought up concerns that perhaps the students **might actually not be**-learning what they are minimally expected, and that the schools may be failing to do their jobs properly. The economics of education emerged as one of the efforts to address those concerns and its focus is on ensuring of the teaching and learning of the “basics” for all students while maintaining public schools’ diverse educational practices and commitment to equal opportunity, equity, justice, fairness, and so on. This discourse attracted attention in the United States especially during the recent decades, as increasing economic competition with Japan aroused a widespread interest in Japan’s basics-focused education and entrance competition. However, the situation of South Korea is the opposite. All students learn from the same curriculum and practically the same textbooks, which presents a correct

answer for each issue or question dealt with in class. Such uniformity in teaching and learning is overly basics-focused and prohibitive of creative thinking on the part of the students. Given this, it is apparently pointless to advocate improvement of student performances on the scores of standardized tests that merely parrot the words of Anglo-American economists of education. South Korean schools already have what those economists **are looking for**:-

If input and output have to be compared in order to advocate efficiency, the proper things to look into must include the fact that although the South Korean state expends huge sums of money for education compared with most other advanced industrial countries, its public schools are in a situation far worse than those countries. The legal nine-year compulsory education remains yet to be fully implemented; tuition fees are still charged to all students, together with other miscellaneous fees, **even in the schools of compulsory education**; on top of that, there are fees for the various **cram courses that have become nearly-compulsory for students hoping to do well on the state-administered entrance competition**. On the other hand, private schools teach public schools' curriculum and operate as dictated by the state; in return, they enjoy free ride in the supply of funds and students. Naturally, they are prone to corruption not because of their owners' immoral character but because of the political economy of education, which inhibits free and creative educational activity and, instead, promotes search for ways to smuggle "profit" out of the school coffer. **What else can be expected if the economist's interest is in efficiency in generating greater output from a given input—or alternatively, in finding ways to lesser input for a given output?**

Suggestions

As regards what to do to the *pyeongjunhwa* policy, one may take whatever position one thinks fit. One may take **the**-position of defending it as part of one's support for public education's public utility; others may assume **the**-position of criticizing it as part of one's advocacy of public education's economic utility. I have no quarrel **about that type** of freedom. Either way, however, it is necessary to determine what the policy is and how it is related to public education before advancing such positions. Otherwise, the "debate" that appears to erupt between the positions will, in fact, be no more than a

collision between what Piaget calls “*monologues collectifs*,” the immature behaviours of soliloquy without communication. The *pyeongjunhwa* policy and public education, the objects over which the positions collide, will remain whatever the “debaters” individually assume it to be. Unfortunately, such is the case with the six essays under review.

A necessary thing to consider for the initiation of a real debate is a discussion that returns to the *basics* of educational policy. A policy is a decision on subsequent actions (as pointed out in a footnote) and such a decision is always made for certain objectives. In this sense, an educational policy bears the inherent attribute—that it is a means to an end. Essentially, therefore, its validity depends on its instrumental effectiveness in attaining the given objectives. Many policy studies focus on this inherent attribute, including the six essays under review. However, not all policies can be explained in this way. Many policies persist despite their effectiveness having yet to be proven, or even when they have been proven to be ineffective.—The owner of the policies may have reasons to maintain them in spite of their potential or demonstrated ineffectiveness, because s/he has certain hidden agendas or because s/he her/himself is part of the problem.—The *pyeongjunhwa* policy is one such case as we have seen above. For such policies, the policy scholar cannot, and should not, hang on to the typical method of examining effectiveness. S/he must bring into her/his perspective another vital factor—that is, the owner of the policies. For state policies on education, such as the *pyeongjunhwa* policy, the owner concerned is the state, and the broad perspective that the policy scholar has to take is one of political economy—a perspective in which the state *per se* that intervenes in education becomes a major subject of analysis. And it is the perspective of the political economy that can offer a coherent grasp of what the *pyeongjunhwa* policy is and how it relates to public education.

Had the authors of the six reviewed essays not neglected this basic point in educational policy studies, it would have been apparent to them that their policy discourses were constrained by false concepts moulded by the long-entrenched “statist” political economy of education (Kim KS 1999). Beyond such constraints, it must also be apparent, having a solid system of public education is one thing; while permitting efficiency through freedom and autonomy in schools is quite another.

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