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**Research Report**

## Managing Education Reform: Lessons from the Korean Experience 1995-97

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# **Managing Education Reform**

## **Lessons from the Korean Experience: 1995-97**

**March 2000**

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**(KDI school of public policy and management)**

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## **Foreword**

This book reviews the process of education reform implemented during the years 1995 to 1997. It examines such issues as what have been goals and objectives of education reform in Korea. How has reform been initiated and implemented? What have been major difficulties and hurdles? Has reform been successful? If yes, what are the major factors contributing to success? If not, why not?

After examining reform process, the book tries to draw some lessons from the Korean experience for the better management of education reform. The author believes that the lessons from the Korean reform experience can aid in developing appropriate strategies for successful education reform both in future Korea and in other countries.

There have been many studies on what to reform to achieve rapid economic and social development, but very little studies on how to reform. I hope that this book can contribute to the study of successful reform management. Needless to say, the conclusions and recommendations reflect the views of the authors and not those of the Korea Development Institute.

**Jin Soon LEE**

President

Korea Development Institute

March 2000

Seoul

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# **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, to examine the process of educational reform that took place in Korea during the years 1995 to 1997. What have been the goals and objectives of education reform in Korea? How have they been initiated and implemented? What have been the major hurdles? How has the government dealt with those difficulties? Have the goals and objectives been achieved successfully? If yes, what are the major factors contributing to success? If not, why not?

The second purpose of this paper is to draw some lessons from the Korean experience for the better management of education reform in other countries. What can we learn from the Korean experience that will aid in developing appropriate strategies for successful education reform?

There is no general theory on the successful management of education reform. It may be too early to develop a general theory of reform management. Not many country-specific reform experiences have been collected systematically and studied analytically -- particularly from the perspective of reform management.

In this paper, rather than attempting any premature theoretical generalizations, I would suggest several important independent variables, which, I think, determine the success or failure of education reform and specify the causal relationship between those independent variables and the final dependent variable, namely, the success of reform. I hope that these determinants will evolve themselves into building blocks for a general theory of reform management in the future.



In Section 2 of this paper I will briefly discuss the historical background of the educational reform and identify the major goals and objectives of the reform which took place during the years 1995 to 1997.

In Section 3 I will examine the implementation process of the Korean education reform and in Section 4 I will evaluate its process from the perspective of successful reform management. In this discussion of reform evaluation I will present several determinants of reform success and specify the causal relations. With this implicit model of reform success in mind I will evaluate the implementation process of the Korean education reform.

In Section 5, I will attempt to draw some lessons from the Korean experience for better management of education reform in other countries.

## **2. Background and Objectives of Reform**

### **2-1. Historical Background of Reform**

Abundant and relatively educated human resources have been the prime movers in the development of the Korean economy during the past 4 decades. Korea started in the early 1960s as a typical labor-surplus economy with a scarce endowment of natural resources. By taking advantage of the abundant supply of labor, especially in labor-intensive manufacturing export industries, Korea has achieved a tremendously rapid economic expansion.

However, it should be pointed out that even in the early 1960s Korea was characterized not only by abundance in the labor supply, but also by a relatively high level of educational attainment. After 1945, a system of compulsory public primary school education was gradually introduced in both the cities and the countryside. Secondary and higher education also grew rapidly. The literacy rate reached 90% by the early 1960s, from a level of only 22% in 1945. In the 20 years following 1945, the number of college students increased almost 20-fold, and middle and high school students about 15-fold. As a result, by 1965 Korea's human resource development had exceeded the norm for a country with three times its median per capita GNP.<sup>1</sup>

The primary driving forces for this "education explosion" in Korean society has been parents who believe education to be a necessary condition for the

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<sup>1</sup> See F. Harbison and C.V. Meyers, *Education, Manpower and Economic Growth*, McGraw Hill, 1964, pp.31-48.

social advancement of their children. One observer noted that “Education in Korean society has to withstand tremendous cultural pressures --- Many families borrow beyond conceivable capacity to repay, mortgaging all property, skimping on food and clothing, making desperate sacrifices. In the village ambitious farmers sell out only cattle but sometimes house and land to send one’s son through college.”<sup>2</sup>

The abundant supply of labor with a relatively high educational background not only provided very favorable initial conditions for the Korean economy to take off in the early 1960s, but has also continued to be the primary source of growth in the Korean economy thereafter.

The education explosion continued after early 1960s through 70s, 80s, and 90s, and is now, in some respects, well above even OECD standards. Middle school education was universalized around the mid-1980s. As a result, more than 90 percent of the appropriate age group attends high school now, with about a 95 percent graduation rate. More impressive achievement may be found around the tertiary education sector. More than 80 percent of high school graduates advance to the tertiary educational institutes within the couple of years after graduation. About 60 percent of high school graduates enter college immediately after their graduation and the remaining 20 percent within in next two years. There is little doubt that Korea belongs to the worldwide leaders with the most extensive tertiary education sector.<sup>3 4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of Vortex*, Harvard University Press, 1968, pp.219-221.

<sup>3</sup> For detail discussion, see Cheonsik Woo and Ju-Ho Lee, *Efficiency of Korean Education: Myth and Mission*, unpublished paper, Korea Development Institute, Seoul, Korea, February 1998.

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid.*

Not only is the quantitative aspect of Korean education is impressive, the quality of students, especially in primary and secondary schools, is also exceptionally good, as far as their performances on international standardized tests are concerned. One international test shows that Korean students stood atop in both science and math, and another test reveals that Korea outperformed on the average all other OECD countries in both fields, and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in math and 4<sup>th</sup> in science, when non-OECD countries were included.<sup>5</sup>

This human resource situation, in terms of both quantity and quality, has been especially conducive to the rapid growth of the export-led labor-intensive manufacturing sector, such as textiles and electronics, during 60s and 70s. And the same favorable human resource situation has also continued to work during 80s and 90s especially for the rapid expansion of the export-led heavy and chemical industries, such as automobile, shipbuilding, and machinery.

The Korean economy, however, is now undergoing a tremendously rapid industrial structural change toward an OECD-type mature economy. Thus, the Korean economy becomes increasingly dependent on technology-intensive and knowledge-intensive growth. The coming age of globalization and information also accelerates trends toward this direction.

Even though the education expansion is expected to continue in the future, it does not necessarily follow that educational institutions will produce the “right human resources,” namely “right skills and right personalities” to meet the rapidly changing demand for labor in the coming 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>5</sup> See *ibid.*

There is no guarantee that educational institutions, which performed well during the industrialization period, will continue to perform well in the age of information and high-powered brain industries. There is no guarantee that the education policy that worked well in producing skills for copying advanced foreign technology will continue to perform well in producing skills for pioneering creative technological breakthroughs in new, unexplored fields.

Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing consensus in the Korean society that Korean education is confronting the following challenges as its economy moves into an OECD-type of mature economy. .

First: Even though the records of international tests outperform others, Korean education at the primary and secondary level is very deficient in nurturing self-assured, creative, and critical students with self-motivated learning abilities. This is mainly because of extremely test-oriented schooling at primary and secondary education. Students spend most of their time on rote learning in preparation of college entry exam. Thus, there is little opportunity for learning creative thinking and critical reasoning.

In addition, most schools are over-crowded, under-staffed, and under-equipped. Thus, teaching becomes naturally rigid, narrow, and one-sided with little two-way communication. An authoritarian classroom culture prevails to maintain an effective control of large class. Group norms such as order and obedience are praised but individual values such as creativity and spontaneity are not welcomed.

Rote learning and group norms could help a latecomer, such as Korea, to catch-up in the race for industrialization, but without individual values, such as creativity and spontaneity, Korea cannot compete in the coming age of globalization and brain-power competition.

Second: As seen above, college and university education has expanded greatly during the past decades, but its quantitative expansion has not been accompanied by a qualitative improvement. Schools decide the curriculum with little diversification and almost unilaterally without allowing much choices for student. The curriculum usually does not reflect the changing demands of the labor market. It frequently reflects the convenience and opinion of professors, but not the concern nor interest of students. Transfers of students to other departments and schools have also been severely restricted. In other words, there have been little choices for students but many choices for professors and schools in developing curriculums and managing schools. This is primarily because there has been no competition among professors, colleges, and universities to obtain new students.

In Korea, the Ministry of Education determines a restrictive enrollment quota for every college and university, which is far below the number of the students applying. Thus, there is no difficulty for individual colleges and universities in recruiting new students, which reduces the need for competitive curriculums. In other words, there has been no built-in incentive system for colleges and universities to work hard for the improvement of curriculum and teaching methods.

In addition, in Korea professors usually enjoy a life-time tenure system once hired. There have been virtually no professors discharged due to bad academic or teaching performance. Thus, this lack of competition among professors as well as among different schools has been a main reason for lagging qualitative improvement of tertiary education in Korea. The students just want college diplomas because holding one used to mean a great deal in the Korean labor market.

Third: The Korean education has suffered from too many regulations. To cope with the expanding educational needs, the Korean central government controlled virtually all processes and activities of individual schools, colleges and universities, teachers, and local educational authorities in an extremely regulatory way. In the beginning stages of educational development, government regulation benefited the orderly expansion of education, but later it became a major hurdle toward the qualitative improvement of education. As educational demands become more diversified and quality-oriented in line with the maturing of the Korean economy, the government's regulation must be taken away to set free the individual initiatives and incentives which are crucial for the qualitative advancement of education. However, government regulation is still very heavy and overpowering and covers every detail of school activities.

Besides heavy regulation, the administration and finance of education in Korea is much too centralized at the national level. Most public universities and colleges are national rather than provincial or municipal. More than three-quarters of the local educational finances are supported by the central government.

Of course, there are many other important problems in Korea's current educational system, but the above three seem to be the major fundamental challenges. In an attempt to meet these challenges education reforms have been carried out in Korea since 1995.

## **2-2. Goals and Objectives of Reform**

The overall goals and objectives of education reform in Korea were well laid out in the Presidential Address at the National Convention of Educators

Association held on April 27, 1995.<sup>6</sup> More specific objectives and detailed action plans were presented in a series of Education Reform Proposals prepared and reported to the President by the Presidential Commission of Educational Reform (see discussion below).

In his address the President pointed out that the world is now undergoing profound transformation of civilization. The age of modernization and industrialization is making way for an era of information and globalization. This transformation calls for basic changes in the guiding principles for both individual and national development. In the coming century, the scope and depth of the intellectual capital of a nation -- information, technology, knowledge and culture -- will be a prime locomotive for the national economic and social development. These elements will be the major determinants of the wealth and strength of a nation and of the qualities of individual citizens.

The total intellectual capital of a nation can be defined by its people's accumulated intellectual capability. This capability depends on their creativity and learning capacity. As such the aim of education reform should be to enhance the abilities of such people. Thus, the education reform sets as its basic goal the establishment of **“an open and lifelong education system to allow each and every individual equal and easy access to education at any time and any place.”**

Open education implies: (1) unrestrained entry to and exit from schooling; and (2) unrestrained transfer from one college department to another department. Lifelong education means making it easy for anyone to receive

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<sup>6</sup> A condensed version of the Presidential Address can be found in Korea Overseas Information Service, *Korea's Reform and Globalization: President Kim Young Sam prepares the nation for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, May 1996.



education and training throughout their lifetime regardless of age. Unrestrained transfer from workplace to school and vice versa is an important ingredient of lifelong education. In addition to school and the workplace, the home should be transformed to an effective learning place through the use of information and communication technology. In other words, a lifelong education system must inter-link homes, schools, and workplaces together into an integrated educational network.

To build this new education system, the President suggested five reform principles and ten agendas of reform. The reform principles are as follows.

**Development of a flexible and diversified education system.** The practice of mechanically grading students solely on terms of their ability to perform rote memorization of specific subjects prescribed under a rigidly standardized curricula must be ended. Instead, far greater importance must be attached to individuality, talent, creativity, and personal character. The new educational system must be truly conducive to the development of the innate potential of each individual through the cultivation of creativity and individuality and the building of character.

**Establishment of learner-oriented education and raising the competition among educational institutions and programs.** In the past it has been the exclusive purview of the school and teachers to determine the content and method of education. Furthermore, there has been little competition between schools and teachers to develop better curricula. The new education system must increase competition between schools and teachers, namely providers of education, in terms of curricula and teaching methods. Students and parents should have a wider choice of schools and educational programs to attend and of curricula to choose. Students, parents, and society at large -- the

clientele of education -- should have more voice and greater say in determining the contents and methods of education.

**Full development of school autonomy and reduction of government regulation.** Thus far, education has been largely controlled by bureaucrats. Teachers, students, and parents have had very little say in school administration and curricular development. Schools must have greater autonomy and teachers must have greater participation in running schools. The need of students and views of parents must be accommodated in running schools and developing curricula. To this end, drastic deregulation of education must be carried out in favor of private initiative and accountability. In addition, all information of the state of education must be disclosed to the public and freely circulated.

**Promotion of excellence as well as universality in education.** In this age of globalization, the new education system must be aimed at raising the quality of education to a level that excels by world standards. Of course, this pursuit of global standards of excellence must be not only for a selected few but also for each citizen in his or her own field. However, a proper balance must be struck between excellence and universality in education. Excellence must be more strongly emphasized in the institutes of higher education, while universality is given greater importance in elementary and secondary education.

**Promotion of using information technology in education.** In the past education has been limited by time and space. Future education, however, must do away with such temporal and spatial limitations through the use of state-of-art information and communication technology. In this way we can build the new education system whereby anyone has easy access to education at any time and place.

Under the above five basic principles or directions of education reform, the President laid down ten specific reform agendas as follows.

- (1) An open society of lifelong learning must be developed. An open education should allow students to freely switch from the workplace to school and vice versa, from one school to another, and from one department to another within the same school. Adult education program at colleges and universities must be greatly expanded so that everyone can receive education from infancy to adulthood and to later years. Confronting the age of lifelong education, stronger emphasis must be placed on the cultivation of the ability of self-teaching and self-directed education.
- (2) A greater variety of colleges and universities both in size and character must be realized. The establishment of new colleges and universities must be simplified. Each college and university should be able to offer a wider range of more specialized and diversified educational programs and to compete with each other in good faith.
- (3) A more democratic and autonomous operation of elementary and secondary schools must be guaranteed. School principals should be vested with greater authority and responsibility so that they can display maximum creativity in running their schools. An “**autonomous school community**” should be formed of teachers, parents, and local residents with the aim of serving as the main instrument for participatory education as well as the core units of educational autonomy.
- (4) Curricula reform must be implemented to develop wholesome personalities and to cultivate creativity. Primary education should focus on inculcating a sense of self-discipline and developing health

personality. Middle school education should emphasize good citizenship, while high schools should stress the education of students as global citizens. The range of obligatory subjects in primary and secondary school curricula should be reduced in favor of a wider variety of optional subjects to encourage the development of students' innate talents and individuality. The thrust of education should be geared to cultivation of creativity and a positive attitude toward learning rather than the rote-learning of fragmentary knowledge.

- (5) A new system of examinations for admission to colleges and universities must be set up. Under the current system, the pain of students and parents is too severe due to the pressures of cramming for exams. Greater choice among schools and academic programs must be fostered through an increase in the range and variety of higher educational institutions and their programs. In addition, the current admission system which puts too much weight on the test scores of three main subjects -- English, mathematics, and Korean -- must be revised to introduce more diverse criteria for screening applicants. The right of each school to develop their own selection criteria should be significantly expanded.
- (6) Vocational education and technical training programs must be enlarged. Such programs should be revised to meet the rapidly changing needs of the real workplace. The current system of state certification of technical qualification should also be revamped to tailor vocational education to the changing technical conditions of workplace and industrial needs.
- (7) A new evaluation system for the performance of each school should be introduced. The clients of education -- students, parents, and industry --

should participate in the process of evaluating education. The evaluation results should be linked to various types of governmental support for schools, including financial support.

- (8) The system for training, appointing, promoting and remunerating teachers should be completely revamped to reward competent and dedicated teachers of moral integrity. Working conditions for teachers should also be improved, so that they can take pride and find fulfillment in their profession.
- (9) The educational infrastructure must be rebuilt to fit the age of information. Oversized schools and crowded classrooms must be trimmed. Teaching facilities and equipment must be modernized. A center for multi-media education should be established to help build effective educational networking among schools, homes, businesses, and public agencies.
- (10) The administration of education and educational financing should be boldly overhauled. Regulatory controls on schools should be reduced to a bare minimum. The educational administrative machinery should be streamlined accordingly. Educational expenditure as a whole should be boosted and the role of the local government should be given more prominence.

Based on the above five principles and ten reform agendas, the Presidential Commission for Education Reform has specified 120 action plans. Among these, 53 action plans target primary and secondary education reform, 19 plans target higher education reform, 23 plans target lifelong education and vocational educational reform, and 25 plans target the rebuilding of the

education infrastructure. The details of these plans will not be discussed. Discussion below will focus on those action plans that caused particular difficulties and problems in reform management.

### 3. Initiation and Implementation of Reform

Education reform of 1995 was initiated by former President Kim Young Sam. During his presidential campaign he stated that, “I concur with many others that education can not be left to deteriorate further. When reform is all around us, in various aspect of our life, the first reform to be undertaken among others is in education.” He went on to argue, “I will show a resolute determination to become, first and foremost, the Education President because education is the engine for turning the nation into a first class one.”<sup>7</sup> Before the presidential election, he declared his resolution to budget up to five percent of GNP to support education reform. In his inaugural address he reconfirmed that education reform will be the number one priority of his administration.

Of course, long before President Kim’s statements, there was a widely held consensus among the general public that the Korean education system was in need of an overhaul. However, it was President Kim who translated this public consensus and aspiration into concrete policy agenda and implemented it stubbornly. Two previous presidents, Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo, had also ordered the preparation of a blueprint for educational reform, but neither implemented it after it came out.

On February 5, 1994, former President Kim ordered the formation of a Presidential Commission on Education Reform (hereinafter, the “Commission”) to develop a blueprint for education reform and to produce a national consensus for education reform.

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<sup>7</sup> The Ministry of Education, The Republic of Korea, *Educational Reform Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Korea*, February 1998, p.38.

The first Commission (in place from February 1994 to February 1996 -- a second Commission was in place from April 1996 to February 1998) was composed of 26 members, mostly professors, journalists, civic leaders, and educators. The Commission was aided by 12 specialists to help on specific technical issues. Members and specialists of the Commission are all non-bureaucratic civilians. Three high government officials were allowed to participate in the meeting and express their opinions but not to vote. As such, the blueprint for reform could be made without interference from the Ministry of Education or other government agencies. To provide administrative and logistic support for the Commission, the Secretariat was formed, consisting of 21 staff members mostly from the Ministry of Education.<sup>8</sup>

The decision making process and implementation procedure of education reform in Korea is summarized in figure 1. Reform starts from the preparation of a blueprint or proposal for reform. Preparation is the primary obligation of the Commission. In order to prepare the blueprint the Commission holds numerous meetings, seminars, and public hearings as well as visits local schools and local administrative agencies. Once the blueprint is ready, the Commission forwards it to the President for his consent.

The blueprint is next sent to the Office of the Prime Minister. The Committee for the Promotion of Educational Reform, which is composed of 11 Ministers related to educational reform, begins examination of the blueprint for implementation under the supervision of the Prime Minister. The Committee mainly deals with issues that need inter-ministerial

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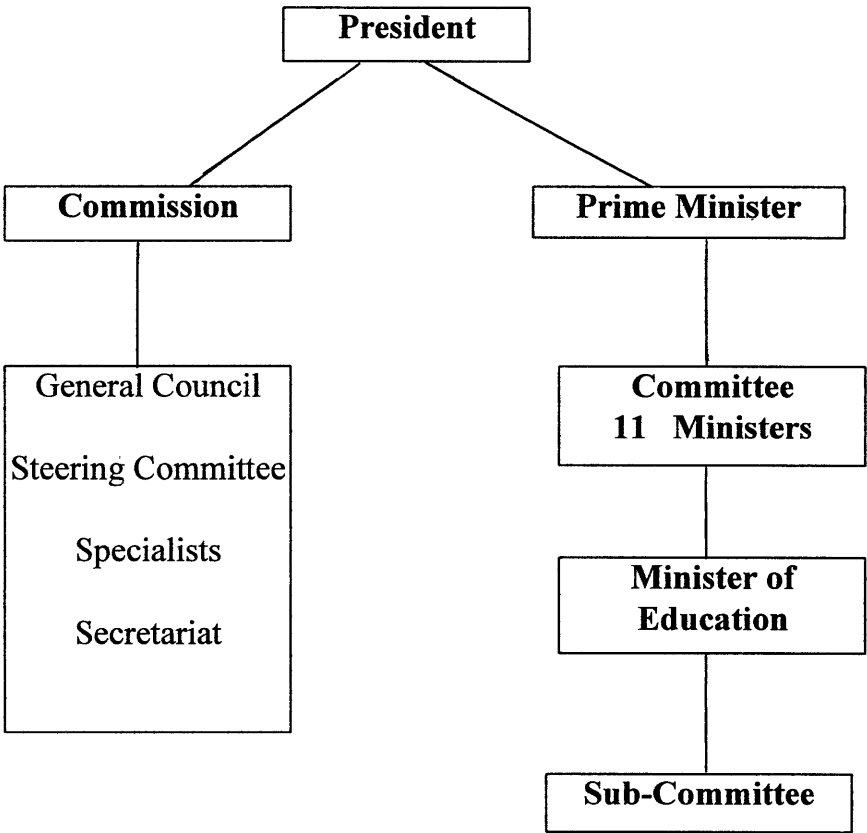
<sup>8</sup> The evolution of the Presidential Commission and its organization as well as its activities were all well documented in the White Paper. See The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, The Republic of Korea, *Hankuk Kyoyuk Kaehyuck Baeksuh(White paper on Korean Education Reform)*, 1998.



coordination. Thereafter, the blueprint is sent to the Ministry of Education. The Sub-Committee for the Promotion of Education Reform, composed mostly of top bureaucrats organized under the Minister of Education, begins to work on details for its concrete implementation.

In short, the blueprint of reform is prepared by a non-bureaucratic civilian body, composed of professionals, experts, and civic leaders, and its implementation is carried out by bureaucrats.

**Figure 1. Managing Education Reform**



The first Commission reported its initial blueprint or reform proposal to the President on May 31, 1995. Preparation for the initial proposal included 200 subcommittee meetings, 50 steering committee meeting, 33 public hearings, 80 school visits, 40 meetings of experts, 2 national public opinion polls, and 440 suggestions from the public.

The first proposal covered such issues as: (1) diversification, specialization, and internationalization of universities; (2) creation of an autonomous school community body, *i.e.*, a **school council**, consisting of teachers, parents, community leaders, and alumni at primary and secondary schools; (3) new curricula and new teaching methods focusing on humanity and creativity; (4) new system of university admission; (5) qualitative improvement of education conditions in primary and secondary school; (6) establishment of the **Committee for Deregulation**; (7) reforms in the education and training of teachers; (8) establishment of the **Curriculum and Assessment Center**; and (9) increase in the education budget up to 5 percent of GNP.<sup>9</sup>

The initial proposal of the first Commission tried to cover completely the most important issues. The leadership of the first Commission was concerned that societal enthusiasm for reform might subside as time passed by or that reform might become more difficult to implement as President Kim's term came to an end. In Korea, the Constitution limits the President to just one term of five years.

The first proposal was thus reported to and approved by the President, and passed on to the Prime Minister for implementation.

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<sup>9</sup> For details of the proposal, see The Presidential Commission on Education Reform, The Republic of Korea, *Education Reform for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: To Ensure Leadership in the Information and Globalization Era*, 1998, pp.11-51.

After reporting the first proposal to the President, the Commission began to work on a second proposal for reform. Through similar procedures, *i.e.*, numerous expert meetings, public hearings, visits to schools and local administrative agencies, and public opinion polls, the new proposal was prepared. The Commission reported this second proposal to the President on February 9, 1996. Upon the consent of the President, it was finalized and sent to the Prime Minister for execution.

In contrast to the first proposal that dealt with reforms in the general education, the second proposal focused mainly on reforms in the vocational and professional education.

The second proposal dealt with the following issues: (1) a new vocational educational system both in secondary and higher education; (2) a new university system linking workplace with schooling; (3) building an infrastructure for lifelong vocational education, such as through the promotion of training industry and introduction of a job competency certification system; (4) reform of state and private certification systems; (5) reform of primary and secondary school curriculum for individualized study; (6) strengthening of professional graduate systems, such as medical school; and (7) comprehensive revision of education-related laws.<sup>10</sup>

By virtue of the above two proposals prepared by the first Commission, the essential issues and fundamental directions of education reform have been well laid out and firmly established. Of course, there were still some issues left untouched, requiring further blueprints for reform. However, the focus of reform shifted from the drawing of blueprints to the implementation of that reform at individual schools and local communities. At this point the

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<sup>10</sup> For details, *ibid.*, pp.57-98.

first Commission was dissolved in place of a second Presidential Commission for Education Reform, which was formed on April 9, 1996. The second Commission increased its membership from 26 to 44 and raised the number of specialists from 12 to 26.

In contrast to the first Commission whose members were mostly professors and education experts, the second Commission included many teachers and parents. This restructuring was designed to channel the voice of the school and parents more directly to the Commission. In the first Commission the voice of teachers and parents were conveyed mainly through public hearings and campaigns for public comments. Now, however, their opinions would be represented directly in the Commission. This restructuring was, at the same time, aimed at encouraging the reform to take root through the participation of teachers and parents in the reform process. To anchor the reform more firmly in school management and teaching methods, the participation as well as full support of teachers and parents for reform was indispensable.

The second Commission organized a series of study tours to examine how the reform had been implemented so far at local schools and also organized a series of lecture tours to explain the main principles and directions of education reform directly to teachers and parents. At the same time the second Commission prepared a third reform proposal on the issues not covered by the first Commission. The preparation proceeded in a usual manner with intensive expert meetings, public hearings, and so on. The final outcome was reported to and approved by the President on August 20, 1996.

The third proposal covered the following issues: (1) reestablishment of the relationship between local government and local educational autonomy; (2) reform of the Board of Education and Superintendent System; (3) reform of

the teachers training and recruitment system and welfare program; (4) encouragement of autonomy and responsibility of private schools; (5) blueprint for educational information networking; and (6) promotion of social education <sup>11</sup>.

After reporting the third proposal, the second Commission began to prepare the fourth proposal. In this proposal, the Commission focused on reform policies supplementing the education reform already finalized in the first to third proposals and on a few reform issues missed in the previous reform proposals. The fourth proposal, the last one, was reported to and approved by the President on June 2, 1997, upon which it was sent to the Prime Minister for implementation.

The major issues dealt with in the fourth proposal were as follows: (1) reform to promote civic education and democratic school culture; (2) supplementary reform of primary and secondary education; (3) supplementary reform of higher education, (4) supplementary reform to introduce information technology to education; (5) strengthening preschool education; and (6) measures to curtail private tutoring and to reduce parents' burden from it.<sup>12</sup>

As said before, all these reform proposals were, upon the President's consent, sent to the government and implemented under the responsibility of both the Prime Minister and Minister of Education. In this process the four reform proposals prepared by the Commission, were translated into 120 action plans.

As of December 1997, out of 120 action plans, 80 plans were being implemented and 14 plans were in the process of legislation and 26 plans were still in the midst of detailed plans for action and so not yet implemented.

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<sup>11</sup> For details, *ibid.*, pp.101-129.

<sup>12</sup> For details, *ibid.*, pp.132-165.

Since the first proposal for reform blueprint was disclosed on May 1995, less than three years had passed by December 1997. Within this relatively short period of time, the reform has proceeded with great enthusiasm and vigor. The efforts of the reform group have been quite ambitious and in fact accomplished quite substantially. Of course, there have been many problems and shortcomings to this endeavor, which will be discussed later, but generally speaking, we can conclude that it has been quite a successful enterprise.

Quite rightly, the new government, which came into power in February 1998, declared that it would keep intact the basic framework and fundamental principles and directions of education reform as set in place by the previous government. The new government supported the same action plans developed by the previous government without much modification.

Now let us examine the problems of education reform more in detail from a managing and implementing perspective.

## **4. Evaluation of Reform Management**

There are numerous factors that determine the success or failure of reform and reform management.<sup>13</sup> Among them the following factors seem to be of vital importance in the context of Korea. (1) proper choice of the managing body of the reform (2) proper choice of sequence of reform (3) successful dealing with groups opposed to reform (4) media campaign to organize public support, (5) participation of stakeholders, namely, parents and teachers in the reform process.(6) attainment of budgetary support (7) bureaucrats' capacity to carry out the reform. I will discuss these factors below in turn.

### **4-1. Managing Body: Presidential Commission**

First of all, it must be properly decided which body or organization should be responsible for designing and implementing education reform. This is an extremely important issue because the character or nature of the managing body has a substantial effect on the nature and scope of the reform, influencing its final outcome.

For example, if the government's education bureau becomes responsible for the reform, then reform will face several problems.

First of all, reform will tend to be biased towards protecting the vested interests of bureaucrats within that bureau. For example, problems related to

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<sup>13</sup> For a general discussion of the subject, see John Williamson(ed.), *The Political Economy of Policy Reform*, Institute of International Economics, 1994; Stephen Haggard and Steve B. Webb(eds.), *Voting for Reform*, A World Bank Book, Oxford University Press, 1994; and Nancy Birdsall, Carol Graham, and Richard H. Sabot(eds.), *Beyond Trade Offs*, The Brookings Institution Press, 1998.

the administration of education, such as over-regulation and over-centralization, will not be properly dealt with.

Second, reform will tend to bend towards easy administration rather than proper or optimal administration. For example, undue consideration will be placed on administrative ease and expediency rather than the desirability of the reform.

Third, cooperation from other government bureaus will be limited. Especially inadequate cooperation or benign neglect from the government budget bureau can be seriously problematic. Education reform can not be successful without necessary budgetary support. The close cooperation with the labor bureau is also indispensable. The education and labor markets will become more and more inextricably interrelated as lifetime learning and training are highlighted in the age of information and globalization. Intergovernmental cooperation becomes more formidable in a situation where an education bureau is solely responsible for reform.

On the other hand, when education reform is placed in the hands of a purely non-bureaucratic civilian organization, different problems will result. First, while reform designs and proposals take idealistic, reform-oriented approaches, they may be lacking in practical application. Most civilian representatives in the managing body will be academics and journalists who have little or no experience in the administration of education. Second, bureaucrats, especially in the education bureau, may be less enthusiastic about reform and less cooperative in its implementation because they are not charged with the management of the reform. The bureaucrats may be reluctant to provide sufficient educational information with which the managing body should work for reform design.



It is not an easy task to choose the proper body in charge of managing reform. However, the proper and correct choice of a reform managing body will be one of the most important determinants for the success of education reform. In deciding which body should manage the reform, two considerations should be underscored: (1) balancing idealism with practicality; and (2) the mobilization of the full support of bureaucrats throughout all relevant government bureaus. The latter consideration is related to the issue of budgetary support. No education reform can be successful without securing the appropriate financial backing.

As explained in the previous section, Korea adopted two-tier system in the choice of managing body for reform. The Presidential Commission was responsible mainly for drawing the blueprint for reform, and the Ministry of Education lead the implementation of reform. It was basically a two-tier system.

The Commission was composed mainly of professors, journalists, civic leaders, educators, and parent representatives. There were no career bureaucrats on the Commission. Three high-level government officials could participate in the Commission meeting and could present their views but not vote. Thus, we can safely say that the Commission represented professional and non-bureaucratic civilian views on educational reform. One important advantage of this kind of arrangement is that the vested interests of politicians and bureaucrats could not easily transmit into the process of designing reform. So the Commission could deal with the issue of reforming the Ministry of Education unencumbered. It can also handle politically sensitive issues boldly without any political consideration.

However, this kind of arrangement has some disadvantages as already pointed out. One is that the reform blueprint can easily result in an

arrangement that is too idealistic or impractical. Another disadvantage is that it is not easy to get full support and commitment from bureaucrats in the implementing stage. Thus, the real important issue, in terms of reform management, is how to maintain the independence of the Commission while minimizing its drawbacks. How was Korea able to solve this dilemma? How did it succeed in striking a balance?

In Korea, the Blue House, or Executive Office, has performed an important role of staying balanced on this issue. The Blue House defended strongly the independence of the Commission and protected it from political influence and the interference of bureaucrats. But at the same time the Blue House restrained the Commission from being too impractical by providing the views of the Ministry of Education on the issues the Commission was working on. In fact, the Blue House played the role of mediator between the Commission and the Ministry of Education so as to strike a balance between idealism and realism or practicability. Usually the mediation process was carried out mainly through dialogue and mutual understanding as well as voluntary concessions from both sides. However, in those cases in which disagreements between the two were too profound and incapable of compromise, the Blue House played the role of compulsory arbitrator.

Generally speaking, the role of the Blue House has been twofold. One is as mediator between the Commission and the Ministry of Education in designing the blueprint for reform. The other is in monitoring and supervising the reform implementation by the Ministry of Education..

Let us examine from the first role of mediation in detail. When designing the reform proposal by the Commission approaches the final stage, the Blue House usually sets up a special task team to preview and evaluate the

probable final version. This special task team is consisted of experts from the Commission and from the Ministry of Education. The team is designed to check any possible pitfalls and unnoticed or unintended drawbacks in the proposal being prepared by the Commission. The team is supposed to respect the independence of the Commission and at the same time work to improve the practicability of the proposal. Thus, the team should keep a strict balance between idealism and realism.

If there are difficult issues even the special task team can not resolve, then the Minister of Education, The Chairman of the Commission, and the Senior Secretary to the President for Social Development, who is in charge of education affairs in the Blue House, meet together and make the final decision.

Thus, for a reform success, it is critically important to appoint to the above three posts reform-minded persons with similar world outlooks. Among them, any differences in opinion about technicalities can be worked out, but fundamental differences in philosophy and reform policy can not be solved through dialogue and discussion. Again, to make the reform successful, the above three posts must be occupied by strong reform-minded persons. Otherwise, the reform is most likely to fail.

The second role of the Blue House has been monitoring and supervising over the implementation of reform. The Presidential Decree that established the Commission allowed that the Commission could also monitor and assess the reform implementation. However, in reality, it was technically impossible for the Commission to monitor directly the reform implementation because it did not have enough administrative manpower under its control. So the Blue House has carried out monitoring and supervising role over the reform implementation being carried out by the Ministry of Education.

## **4-2. Sequence of Reform**

In deciding the sequence of reform the Commission seemed to have two considerations. One is that politically highly sensitive issues should be dealt with later. The Commission wanted to shun taking politically difficult issues in the early stage of reform. They did not want to lose the momentum of reform by being plunged into intractable issues from the beginning of the reform.

Most of these politically sensitive issues were directly related to the change of interest structure. Thus, if the Commission began to handle these issues, then the vested interest groups that had enjoyed the status quo would launch a huge anti-reform campaign. It became inevitable for the Commission to spend much energy responding to this attack. Thus, the Commission seemed to decide to keep away from those issues in the early period of reform. So they did not deal with in the first and second proposals such issues as (1) reform of the Board of Education and the Superintendent System; (2) reestablishment of the relationship between local government and educational autonomy; and (3) the strengthening of the pre-school education. The above issues were postponed until the third and fourth proposal. Detailed discussion on those politically difficult issues will be followed in the next section.

The second consideration in deciding the sequence of reform was that comprehensive and complete reform proposals should be presented in the early stage of reform. Usually societal enthusiasm for reform is high in the early period of reform as are people's expectations. Thus, the Commission wanted to cover in the first proposal almost all key issues related to both the elementary and secondary school as well as college and university education.

It took more than 15 months, from February 1994 to May 1995, to prepare the first proposal. The Commission also tried to include most key issues related to vocational education in the second proposal and they hastened to report it to the President for early finalization. Thus, there was only an 8-month interval between the first and second proposal. It took considerably less time to prepare the second proposal than the first one.

Generally speaking, education reform usually takes much longer period to complete than other kinds of institutional reform. While not easy to initiate, education reform is even more difficult to sustain and consolidate. It usually takes years or even decades to take root. Things related to educational change usually move quite slowly and people tend to be rather impatient. They do not like to have to experience the “long march,” no matter how good the final outcome may be. Even worse, this public impatience can easily influence the general opinion of the political leaders. If the reform process takes too long and its impact does not unfold easily, then not only people but also political leaders may withdraw their support for reform.

Education reform by its very nature is time-consuming, while the public and politicians are restless about waiting. Solving this dilemma and keeping a proper balance between two opposing demands is critically important to the successful management of education reform. Few strategies can be properly thought out. One strategy is to design several short-term victories or watersheds in the long journey of education reform. This allows people to enjoy and celebrate new gains from time to time during the journey to reform. Reform can be arranged in a sequence such that more visible and noticeable reforms can be found along the road regularly.

However, there was no clear evidence that the Commission planned to organize “short-term wins” for people to celebrate from time to time in the

relatively long march of education reform. There seemed to be no deliberate efforts to make the reform “felt by the skin” of the people. If the Commission were serious about making reform “felt by the skin,” they should have chosen the issue of curtailing private tutoring and reducing parents burden from it much earlier. They should have presented the action plan concerning this issue in the first proposal rather than in the fourth proposal as they did.

Private tutoring is a quite pervasive phenomenon in Korea.<sup>14</sup> In general, the competition for college and university entrance has been extremely keen in Korea. Parents’ expectation for their children’s education has also been exceedingly high. Thus, almost all parents want their children to get private tutoring, in one form or another, in order to send them to prestigious colleges and universities, regardless of their financial capability.

This parent’s zeal or enthusiasm for children’s higher education can not be blamed for by itself. The problem is that the financial burden of private tutoring is too high for the ordinary family.<sup>15</sup>

Those who can not afford it often fall into family problem mainly due to psychological stress and frustration. Even those who can afford it suffer financial distress due to extremely unbalanced family spending. So there has been a strong cry out for the government’s intervention to curtail private tutoring, thereby reduce parents’ financial burden.

This issue of private tutoring was not directly dealt with in the first and second proposal and has waited until the fourth proposal. Of course, all the

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<sup>14</sup> The issue of private tutoring is well dealt with in Woo and Lee, *op cit.*, especially pp.26-33.

<sup>15</sup> Total private tutoring expenses were estimated at 1.86 percent of GNP in 1994, 3.3 percent in 1997, and 2.65 percent in 1998.

issues the Commission has worked on in the first and second proposals are of critical importance. Theoretically speaking, they might be more important than the issue of private tutoring, in terms of long term permanent impacts on education system as a whole. However, from the parents' point of view, the issue of private tutoring must have been dealt with much earlier, for example, in the first proposal along with the other theoretically important issues.

There were reasons for the exclusion of the issue of private tutoring in the first proposal. First of all, in the first proposal the Commission might have wanted to present a new paradigm or new vision of education to meet the challenges of coming age of globalization and information. So they might have wanted to deal with more fundamental and structural issues rather than phenomenal problems. In addition, the issue of private tutoring was so much interrelated with other distortions in Korean education system that no clear-cut policy package that guaranteed an immediate solution could be possible. So they might have expected that in the process of reforming and fixing other educational issues more favorable conditions for solving the tutoring problem would emerge. A third reason might be that since the Commission included the reform of college and university entrance examination in its first proposal, it may have expected that the exam reform could help reduce the tutoring burden of parents by reducing competition for entrance examination.

In short, in choosing the sequence of reform the Commission seemed to have paid much attention on political feasibility but relatively little on the priorities of parents, which I think was a wrong decision.

### 4-3. Vested Interest Groups

As with most reforms, there are always many groups who are against the reform of education. They do not oppose education reform *per se* or as a whole, but are against some parts of it which are directly and adversely related to their vested interest or outdated mindset.

Education reform usually has two aspects. One is related to the change in the vested interest structure and the other is associated with the change in the prevailing but outdated mindsets or ways of behavior. We can call the former **interest reform** or **interest-related reform** and the latter **value reform** or **value-correcting reform**. People are opposed to reform either because it changes the established interest structure so as to hurt their vested interest or because it requires a change in beliefs or values.

Opposition group can be bureaucrats in the government, teachers in the schools, owners or owner-managers of private schools, and sometimes parents of students. In other words, all stakeholders can be support or oppose reform depending on the content of that reform. Bureaucrats may complain if the reform curtails their power over school administration and if the reform demands a more “serve the people” attitude.

Teachers may be discontented if the reform increases their teaching burden without additional compensation and if the reform requires more schooling initiatives on the part of students rather than on the part of teachers. Owner-managers of private schools will be angry if the reform raises the voice of teachers over the management of those schools. Parents of students become uneasy if the reform targets conventional primary and secondary education which is solely oriented to the successful passing of college entrance



examinations. This may make some parents unhappy and insecure because they put the highest priority on sending their children to the best colleges at any cost.

How to handle these opposing groups effectively is a very critical issue in reform management. General rules can be laid out as follows..

- (1) In the case of interest reform, in other words, if the reform attempts to change the vested interest structure, the major strategy for the dealing with opposition groups will be (a) building a reform coalition to minimize the opposition, and (b) providing a compensation scheme for the sake of the potential loser. Coalition building is aimed at raising political pressure on the opposition groups. However, in some cases raising political pressure is not enough to neutralize them. Then some kind of compensation scheme for the losers, even though the compensation remains partial, should be arranged to appease them.
- (2) In the case of value reform, in other words, if the reform attempts to change the mindset of people, then the strategy will be (a) reinforcing an extensive media campaign promoting reform, and (b) building a broad social consensus around the rationale for reform. To attain the support of the media is of vital importance for reform success. Active promotion of the rationale for reform by the managing body is a necessity as well. Getting the support of experts on education, such as eminent professors, journalists, and education specialists, is also critical for broad consensus building.

Since education reform has both value reform and interest reform aspects, the strategy for dealing with opposition groups will inevitably be a combination or mixture of the above-mentioned various strategies and methods. How to

combine them effectively will determine the success of reform. Let us examine how this was done in the Korean educational reform.

As discussed above there are several ways to deal with vested interest groups who oppose reform. Those means are through media campaign, coalition-building, compensation for potential losers, and consensus building.

Among these methods, only mass media campaign and consensus-building were used in the process of education reform in Korea. Other ways of handling the opposition groups were not utilized. The reform groups, those in the Commission, Blue House, and Ministry of Education, were lacking generally in terms of strategic thinking and social engineering. They tried hard only to persuade the opposition groups based on the desirability of goals and the worthiness of the reform proposals. Through public hearings, experts meetings, and intensive media campaign, they tried to appeal to the public in general and to the civic spirit of the interest groups in particular. They did not attempt more sophisticated carrot and stick approaches. More prepared and refined strategies or tactics to handle vested interest groups were not explored.

Generally speaking, however, the reform groups' simple and naïve method was successful in appeasing opposition groups in the first phase of the reform period. There was no significant opposition movement in the period of the first Commission, from February 1994 to April 1996. This was mainly due to the President's strong support for reform and the general public's enthusiasm and high expectations. Of course, the relatively intensive media campaign by the reform group also contributed to a certain extent.

In the period of the second Commission, from April 1996 to February 1998, however, vested interest groups became not only more active and aggressive

but also more effective in blocking reform. This anti-reform backlash emerged mainly as the presidential term of office approached its latter half and the President suffered from a lame duck phenomenon. (As mentioned, in Korea the President serves only one term of five years and cannot be reelected).

In addition, this backlash occurred partly because the reform group did not prepared more sophisticated strategy for dealing with vested interest groups. A more sophisticated strategy would have implied the following efforts: (1) providing some compensation to potential losers in order to reduce antagonism; (2) providing some carrot to the opposition interest groups by re-framing or re-sequencing the reform package; (3) making sure opposition interest groups were in a minority by forming a broad reform coalition; and (4) making the reform a mutually-gainful game, not a zero-sum game, by employing a professional mediator, etc. In fact, none of these approaches were applied.

Two cases of reform failure due to the opposition of interest groups deserve further examination. The first concerned the reform of the Board of Education and the Superintendent system. The second was related to the strengthening the pre-school education system.

Local autonomy in education (or in educational administration) began in March 1991 in Korea. At that time the local autonomy system in general administration was not in place in Korea. So it was designed to protect the autonomy of education at the local level from the intervention of central government. It was expected to enhance professionalism as well as political neutrality in dealing with educational matters at the local level. According to a new law enacted in March 1991, education boards, which serve a

parliamentary function, were set up at each locality and superintendents responsible for educational administration were selected in the same locality.

Various problems began to occur after June 1995 when the Korean government introduced a system of local administrative autonomy. Now there were two autonomous entities at the local level, one in charge of general administration and the other dealing with educational administration. The unintended separation of educational administration from general administration at the local government level brought with it much confusion and problems.

First of all, the heads of local governments had neither the authority over nor responsibility for education. They could not take any effective action independently regarding educational investments, such as the allocation of land for school construction or the subsidizing of meal plans for indigent students, despite the demands of local residents strongly for such activities. Moreover, locality heads had no strong incentive to carry out such action because education was not on their responsibility.

Furthermore, the educational decision-making process became too cumbersome and inefficient because by law important educational issues should go through not only the Board of Education but also the local parliamentary council. Timely policy responses to changing educational needs became more and more difficult. In addition, there was growing friction and rivalry between the local government and the educational autonomous bodies, and even within educational bodies, namely between the Board of Education and the superintendents.

To deal with these problems, the Commission prepared a reform blueprint for restructuring the relationship between local government and educational

autonomy and reported this to the President as part of the third proposal in August 1996. The fundamental direction of this proposal was to incorporate educational autonomy into the local government. The Commission felt that the introduction of local autonomy in general administration took away from the practical meaning and value of local autonomy in education. Thus, the Commission proposed the long term abolishment of the separation of educational and general administration in favor of the localities taking more direct responsibility over local education while maintaining a proper respect for educational professionalism. In other words, the Commission tried to integrate educational autonomy with local government autonomy to the extent possible, with some limits due to the professionalism in education.

As such, the reform blueprint proposed that, *inter alia*:

- (1) The Board of Education, in serving its parliamentary function, should be combined with the executive body, the superintendent, into a unified council system. This unified body should be responsible for educational administration;
- (2) Board members, originally ranging 7 to 25, should be limited to between 7 and 11;
- (3) One third of the candidates for the Board of Education should be recommended by the local government head and the other two thirds by the Educational Electoral Group; and
- (4) Members of the Board of Education should be selected by the local parliamentary council and the superintendent should be selected by the Board of Education from among its members.

As soon as this reform proposal was unfolded, it was confronted by severe opposition from vested interest groups. The superintendents and members of the Board of Education all assembled in Seoul and launched a series of protest visits to the Commission and the Ministry of Education. After realizing that the government's will to reform was unbending, the protesters changed their strategy for obstructing the reform. They began an intensive lobbying campaign directed towards members of the National Assembly to prevent passage of the reform bill. They aggressively and energetically pressured each member of the Assembly's Education Committee.

The reform bill was forwarded to the National Assembly in December 1996 where it went through two public hearings. However, opinion was polarized without any sign of convergence or compromise. The public at large generally supported the reform bill but the organized minority representing the vested interest groups was exceedingly vocal at each meeting. The organized lobbying was intensified and finally the Education Committee tabled the government-proposed reform bill in December 1997 after one year of lingering. In its place, the Assembly passed a bill that was a modified version of the current outdated system without many elements of reform.

Another case of reform failure was related to the strengthening of pre-school education. It is a well-known fact that the impact of education at the early age of human development is tremendously influential. It is often stated that investments made in preschool education are highly cost-effective. As such, preschool education is an important issue for both individual and the nation. However, preschool education has been given low priority among national education policies in Korea and has instead been left to the discretion and financial burden of parents.

There are two types of preschool education facilities in Korea: daycare centers and kindergarten. Both provide education and daycare service and are privately funded despite some governmental subsidies. Attendance at daycare centers start from under age 3 years and kindergarten usually starts after the child has reached age 3. The educational and daycare services of both institutions continue until just before entering elementary school.

The Commission took this issue of preschool education as a reform agenda and prepared a reform blueprint for it. The basic direction of reform was twofold. One was to merge current kindergarten education and childcare centers into a comprehensive pre-school education system to provide a more refined preschool curriculum and modern educational facilities to all children from age 3 and up. The second objective was to change gradually the current private-funded preschool system into publicly-funded one.

Once the reform objectives were announced, owners of both kindergartens and daycare centers began showing their opposition to the proposals, although for different reasons. Kindergarten owners felt uncomfortable about being grouped and treated equally with daycare centers. They worried that they might lose their identity and pride as an education institution if daycare activity were over-emphasized after the merger of the two. Daycare center owners worried of losing their own identity for the opposite reason.

Moreover, daycare center owners were skeptical that merging two institutions might result in some reduction in government subsidies they had enjoyed up until then.

The government subsidy to daycare centers had been larger than that given to kindergartens because daycare centers are disproportionately concentrated on poorer clientele. Welfare elements were included as a portion of that subsidy

to help poor families, and thus daycare centers were under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Kindergartens, on the other hand, were under the watch of the Ministry of Education. In part as a result of the government subsidy, daycare center user fees were normally somewhat lower than those of kindergartens.

Neither side was sure whether merging the two institutions would be beneficial to each. After careful calculation of costs and benefits, they preferred to stick with the status quo compared to the uncertainties of change. Therefore, they decided to oppose the proposed reform. Had the government promised a huge increase in subsidies to both of them, they would not have so vocally opposed the reform.

An added difficulty in merging kindergartens and daycare centers meant that the Ministry of Health and Welfare would have to give up control over its daycare center activities. Control over the subsidy budget for daycare centers would move to the Ministry of Education. For these reasons, the Ministry of Health and Welfare was extremely unhappy with the reform proposal.

The Ministry of Health and Welfare -- an important government agency -- became aligned with the vested interest group in opposing the proposed reform. The Commission tried hard to persuade both sides through a series of public hearings, but to no avail. Eventually the Commission proclaimed the introduction of comprehensive preschool education as a long-run goal of reform and decided to establish the Committee for Preschool Education Reform for further study and discussion. This postponement meant a de facto failure of reform in Korea. At any rate the Commission reported this final scenario to the President as part of its fourth proposal.



#### 4-4. Media Campaign

Part of the task of reform groups is to deal with the media. In Korea, most people in the government tend to have one of two opposing attitudes vis-à-vis the media: They either try to control or manipulate the press or completely shun it. At times people try to use the media as a tool to advocate their position and at other times they attempt to keep away from media because of the fear that they might be misquoted or misunderstood.

The Commission had a quite different view of the media. They thought that press could neither be manipulated nor shunned.<sup>16</sup> They correctly attempted to make the press a partner, or at least a sympathizer, for reform. First, the Commission made sincere efforts to provide full and honest information to the press. Every time the Commission planned to present a reform proposal to the President, the Commission and the Blue House as well as the Ministry of Education made tremendous efforts to make separate comprehensive packages of information, specifically designed for the use of press. The information packages covered more detailed explanation on the rationale and content of reform proposal as well as some comparative international statistics related to the reform issues. The Commission made it in such form that the press could use it rather easily. They distributed these packages in advance of the official report to the President to give them enough time to prepare for it.

The Commission also made efforts to meet the press directly and explain and persuade the press regarding the proposal. The Chairman of the Commission, the Minister of the Education, and the Senior Secretary in the Blue House

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<sup>16</sup> Incidentally Prof. Susskind supports this attitude. See Lawrence Susskind and Patrick Field, *Dealing With Angry Public*, The Free Press, 1996.

were involved in these media campaign activities in one form or other. Not only spokespersons for each organization but also those in top positions committed fully to these policy promotion activities. It was realized that the press could help educate the people to support the reform and play a powerful role in promoting civic discourse on reform issues. In short, it was expected that the press be engaged in the reform process as a powerful reform partner.

Partly due to these efforts, the media's response to the education reform was quite favorable and generous. Even though critics were made regarding some parts of reform, usually those were based on well-informed judgements. The media's comments based on misconception or miscommunication were substantially reduced. For reform to be successful, the minimum objective of press campaign must be to ensure that the reform is not misunderstood. Of course, the overarching objective is to make the press an ardent supporter for reform.

Each time the Commission reported a reform proposal to the President the press allocated a relatively large space to cover the event. It reported not only the major contents of the reform, but also detailed background information and rationale for the reform to promote the understanding of the general public.

#### **4-5. Participation of Stakeholders : Teachers and Parents**

There are many who hold stakes in education reform. Among them, teachers and parents are the most important stakeholders. Thus, their active support and participation in the reform process is very critical for the success of reform.

Just same as other types of reform, education reform can not be completed only through institutional change. It must be accompanied by or at least followed by changes in mindset and ways of behavior. Education reform must proceed simultaneously with the voluntary movement of teachers and parents. Education reform can be started from the top, but it should be translated into and sustained by bottom-up movement to succeed.

Movement from the bottom has several important merits. First, it provides an opportunity for teachers and parents to voice their collective opinion for improvements in reform designs and reform administration.

Second, bottom-up movement makes teachers and parents more responsible for the reform success because they now become a part of it. Participation and voice beget responsibility. Thus, these actors become responsible partners of reform.

Third, bottom-up movement provides an invaluable opportunity for self-education on the part of teachers and parents. They will become aware of the need to change their own attitudes and mindset, not only those of bureaucrats, to make reform succeed. They will realize that it is extremely important but very difficult to change the minds of all stakeholders in educational reform. furthermore, they will feel themselves partly responsible for any failure.

Fourth, bottom-up movement turns teachers and parents into a keenly concerned monitoring group over the whole process of education reform. The bureaucrats' behavior can be checked to ensure that education reform is on the right track as originally planned or proclaimed. Those who initiated the reform from the above can be moved out of office through elections or reshuffling of posts, while the movement from the below can continuously monitor the consistency and continuity of reform implementation thereafter.

The successful initiation and maintenance of teachers and parents as participants in the reform movement is a critical determinant of reform success. There are two ways to encourage this participation.

One is for the reform management body to create a favorable political and social environment for such a reform movement to emerge voluntarily and to show strong moral support for voluntarism.

Another is to institutionalize or legalize the participation of teachers and parents in school governance and in the decision-making processes of government education policy. For example, we can introduce, in revising the legal framework for school governance, a new organizational structure which guarantees the permanent participation of teacher and parent representatives in school management. Or we can rewrite the rules governing the decision-making process of the government's policy and institute a public hearing of teachers and parents as a *sine qua non* for final decision.

No one will dispute that participation of teachers and parents in the reform process is of vital importance. In Korea this was done in two ways. First, teacher representatives, who would portray the views of teachers as a group, and parents' organization representatives were selected as members of the Commission. These representatives would transmit the opinion of teachers and parents into the process of reform formulation.

Second, the participation of teachers and parents in school administration was permanently institutionalized. This act, achieved by the first reform proposal, was of significant historical importance. The first reform proposal recommended a **school council** system of school management which was approved by the President and then later by the National Assembly. Each national or public school, at both the primary and secondary level, was

required to organize a school council composed of the principal, teachers, parents, community leaders, and school alumni. The school council was responsible for making important decisions in school administration and academic matters, such as on the management of contributions from the community and alumni, selection of invited principals or teachers, decisions regarding the curriculum, and internal regulation of the school.

Through this school council the teachers and parents could participate in the reform implementing process at the individual school level. Their participation was an important self-correcting mechanism to check and monitor the process of reform implementation at local level. We can safely say the introduction of school council system was a real success for Korean education reform.

Problems resulted, however, with the teachers' organizations. In Korea, one legalized nationwide teachers' organization called Kyo-Chong (Korean Federation of Teachers Associations) exists. Unfortunately, it does not represent the views and interests of ordinary teachers very successfully. It represents more or less the opinion and interest of principals and elderly educators. An alternative organization was Chun-kyo-jo (National Teachers Union). Chun-kyo-jo was mainly composed of rank-and-file teachers, especially young teachers, but unfortunately had not been legalized. At the time, trade unions for teachers in Korea were illegal. Public sentiment had not been favorable towards the legalization of teachers unions. In Korea teaching has been traditionally regarded as a respectful and even sacred occupation so that it was unimaginable that teachers would be allowed to form unions and demand wage increase through collective action.

Reform groups in the government tried to take a middle road, namely legalize Chun-kyo-jo in the form of a teachers 'association', not a teachers

‘union’. The reform groups felt that the organizational participation of rank-and-file teachers in education reform was indispensable to reform success but at the same time they tried to respect the public anti-sentiments against the idea of teachers’ union. They believed firmly that if Chun-kyo-jo could have participated in the reform process, then more advanced reform could have taken place at the individual school level. So they attempted to legalize it in the form of an association, not of a union.

However, the National Assembly rejected even this idea. The National Assembly argued that they could not accept this idea because of the uneasy popular sentiment in Korean society towards Chun-kyo-jo because of its past militant image. To a certain extent this belief was true. However, the more fundamental reason for the failure at legalization was the overall conservative character of the National Assembly, a character which crossed all parties. As a result, rank-and-file teachers were rejected participation in education reform as an organized force. This has been a crucial shortcoming of Korean education reform.

#### **4-6. Budgetary Support**

It is relatively easy to discuss reform, but extremely difficult to act on that discussion. The first critical action the government should take to ensure the success of reform is to provide for budgetary back-up. Typically, the topic of education reform spurs many eloquent speeches, but such rosy rhetoric is rarely followed by actual budgetary allocations. As such, the will of the head of state and/or ruling party becomes very important.

In fact one of the important factors contributing to the success of Korean education reform was that reform received the necessary budgetary support.

Many education reforms attempted in Korea by the previous governments have failed mainly because of insufficient educational finance.

It was relatively easy to draw an ambitious blueprint for reform, but very difficult to secure sufficient budget to implement it. Of course, there are many reforms that do not necessarily require financial expansion, but most reforms need increases in budgetary support.

Former President Kim Young Sam proclaimed his commitment to the allocation of up to five percent of GNP to educational reform during the campaign period. He has repeated his commitment after being elected. The Commission also reported to the President that five percent must be secured for the success of reform in its first proposal. Five percent of GNP was, of course, not a magic number that had any intrinsic value. It represented the government's firm will to expand its financial support sufficient enough to implement the education reform successfully.

Unfortunately, promises are one thing and while practice is another. The bureaucrats in the Korean Budget Office resisted strongly against the commitment to five percent of GNP. They argued that five percent was too much for education reform considering the urgency of other budget allocation needs. There were several long and hot debates in the Blue House among Senior Secretaries and relevant Ministers. After long struggle final decision was made to stick to the original promise. Still, it was politically quite difficult. The President's strong commitment has been indispensable for securing budgetary support for education reform. In addition, the fact that the government stuck to its commitment conveyed a strong message to the people that government was taking the education reform very seriously.

After the decision to commit five percent of GNP to educational reform, the President decided to transfer the Chief of Budget Office to the post of Vice Minister of the Education. The government rightly was concerned about the possibility that the substantially increased educational budget might be use inefficiently. For this reason the government sent a top budgetary bureaucrat with a strong reputation for belt-tightening to the Ministry of Education to directly administer and oversee the spending of the educational budget.

#### **4-7. Bureaucrats' Capacity and Deregulation**

The success of education reform is dependent critically on the capacity of bureaucrats. If the bureaucrats' capacity is inadequate, then two types of failure could happen.

The first is that the reform may not be implemented as planned or as decided. It may be executed only partially or superficially or it may be executed differently. It may be implemented in such a way as to maintain vested interests of bureaucrats or simply for administrative convenience. Of course, reform of this type will end in failure. According to a Korean expression, "reform will not be felt even by the skin."

The second type of failure occurs when reform is executed dogmatically through words yet the responses or suggestions of the people for improvement are completely neglected or ignored. This is another type of reform failure due to the inadequate capacity of bureaucrats. Usually reform is, at the macro level, a drastic shift in the rules of the game, while at the micro level it is a process of continuous adjustment and improvement. When new game rules are introduced into individual cases, for example to individual schools, micro-adjustment or micro-modification, which reflects



differences in local conditions, is not only inevitable but also very desirable. Moreover, the reaction -- either in the form of well-intentioned advice or outright discontent -- of the people in individual cases is extremely valuable for the future improvement and refinement of reform plans. However, if the capacity of bureaucrats is insufficient, this information will not be used productively.

The successful implementation of reform requires a flexible and creative application of the original plan to individual cases, as well as an effective feedback mechanism reflecting the opinions and responses of local people. If the capacity of bureaucrats is insufficient, neither can be attained.

The first type of failure is rather easy to detect, but the second type is not easily discerned, is difficult to correct, and thus potentially more harmful. For reform to succeed, the capacity of bureaucrats should be enhanced so that neither type of failure will result.

Theoretically speaking, the improvement of bureaucratic capacity requires the preparation of two policy measures.

First of all, the level of human capital -- namely, the degree of specialization and amount of knowledge and information possessed by bureaucrats -- must be increased. In the early stage of economic development, manpower in the public sector is more likely to be superior to that of private sector, but as economic development unfolds the exact opposite tends to occur. So, it is important to raise systematically the quality of manpower in the public sector to enhance the technical capacity of bureaucrats.

Second, an appropriate incentive system for bureaucrats to work diligently and sincerely in the interest of people is required. Likewise, the incentive

system should be countered with a suitable penalty system. Those implementing reforms in a sincere and serious manner should be rewarded for their extra efforts. Those who take more responsibility for and are more responsive to the need of local people should be recognized accordingly. Those whose resistance leads to the above-mentioned failures should be penalized without delay. In this respect, the inducements to bureaucrats from the reform managing body should be clear and firm.

Unfortunately, throughout the whole reform process, no new incentive or penalty system has been introduced to make bureaucrats more pro-active or enthusiastic about reform. A conventional pay system and promotion schemes have been used without any change or modification. As is well known, conventional pay and promotion systems are linked more closely to the duration of service but less to the quality of service. So there has been still broad criticism that the authoritarian attitude of bureaucrats has not changed much even after the reform.

However, it is worth noting that the bureaucrats especially in the central government worked really hard to implement reform. This was partly through self-motivation especially among middle-level career bureaucrats, and partly because of a tight timetable for rapid implementation conditioned by the Commission. Mid-level young bureaucrats were very excited by and proud of the fact that they were participating in the re-framing of the Korean education system. They worked hard to attain a sense of pride and fulfillment out of their jobs. To a great extent, this psychological reward has played an important role in Korean reform. In addition, the Blue House and the Minister of Education drove the bureaucrats rather harshly towards quick implementation according to the original timetable set by the Commission.

Instead of changing the incentive and penalty system, the Commission decided to establish the Educational Deregulation Committee within the Ministry of Education. This Committee consisted of 13 consumers of the government's service, such as professors, teachers, school managers, industrialists, and parents. The Committee was designed to review all regulatory laws and provisions related to the school establishment and the school management in order to sort out unnecessary red tape. They ambitiously started to review current laws and decrees issued since 1945. The total number of enactments subject to review in the central government (Ministry of Education) was 1,009. Of these, 381 laws/decrees were repealed and 114 were partially deregulated. The remaining 514 remained valid. Similar deregulation efforts were carried out in local education offices. Out of the 4,323 enactments reviewed in the local education offices, 1,457 were repealed, 687 partially deregulated, with the remaining 2,179 unaffected. In addition, The Committee was required to examine the validity of every new regulatory measure the government planned to introduce in the near future.

There have been opposing opinions about the success of the Committee. One group of people evaluated the Committee's achievement quite highly while another criticized the ineffectiveness of the deregulation efforts. The former group has praised the Committee for its accomplishments in spite of the constraints it was facing, but the latter has criticized the Committee by pointing out that there hasn't been deregulation but *re*-regulation. The truth is probably somewhere between these two stances.

## 5. Lessons and Conclusion

The overall evaluation of Korean education reform should be positive. A policy review team of the OECD described the Korean reform as “bold, comprehensive, and imaginative.”<sup>17</sup> However, it may be too early to make any conclusive evaluations regarding Korean reform because reform is very much still going on. Some reforms have been moving smoothly as planned and others have not. However, looking back on the approximately three years of implementation, we can draw some lessons from Korea’s experience. From the perspective of successful management of reform, the lessons or insights from Korean experience would be as follows.

### I

As a reform managing body, Korea decided to establish the Presidential Commission for Educational Reform and assigned the designing of the blueprint of reform to the Commission. This was the right choice. The Commission consisted of non-bureaucrat civilian experts and professionals. This composition meant that reform proposal were more future-oriented and reform-oriented and easier to deal with issues associated with educational administration, such as the issue of deregulation.

Korea also set up the Committee and Sub-Committee for the Promotion of Educational Reform under the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education, respectively, to work on concrete action programs in accordance with the proposals and blueprint designed by the Commission. These committees

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<sup>17</sup> Education Reform Evaluation Committee, *21Seki uh Sae Jipyung: Kyouk Kaehyuck (New Frontier in 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Education Reform)*, 1998, pp.459-478.

were allowed to make minor modifications to the blueprint, provided they did not thwart the blueprint's main framework and spirit, in order to facilitate the administration of reform. This institutional setting was also a good decision because it increased the practicality of the reform. The role of the Blue House as a mediator between the Commission and the Committee was also unique and commendable. The Korean experience showed that this type of three-head system works fairly well. The three-head system seems especially appropriate for implementing educational reform because educational reform needs a truly subtle balance between idealism and realism.

However, a good institutional arrangement is not enough to guarantee reform success. What seems more important is to appoint the appropriate persons to the right positions. The Chairperson of the Commission, the Minister of Education, and the Senior Staff in the Executive Office should all be reform-minded and share similar a philosophy regarding public policy. If some believe in state intervention while others believe in private initiative, then education reform can not proceed in one direction. If some believe in competition and market incentives while others believe in a paternalistic approach, reform will be internally inconsistent. Sharing a similar philosophy is very important. Otherwise reform will fail. In addition, close cooperation and a good working relationship between and among the above three posts is truly essential for successful reform management.

## II

In dealing with opposition groups, Korean reform seems to have lacked sufficient strategic preparation. Among the four typical strategies or methods of handling vested interested groups, a media campaign was rather intensively used and some attempts at consensus building, although rather

ineffective, were made. Other methods, such as coalition building, compensation scheme, and more sophisticated methods of consensus building, were not seriously attempted. This insufficient strategic preparedness might be one of the reasons why Korean reform was, even in part, modified or defeated when it confronted a strong organized opposition from vested interest groups.

In dealing with vested interest groups, a coalition building strategy was not implemented sufficiently. Coalition with the teachers' union movement was tried once but ended unsuccessfully and coalition with parents' associations was not attempted seriously. A compensation scheme for potential losers was not even considered. There was no particular strategy for consensus building for the reform, other than expert meetings and public hearings by the Commission. More sophisticated methods of consensus building, such as hiring professional mediators to convert the seemingly zero-sum game into a "win-win" positive sum game was not attempted at all.<sup>18</sup>

However, the reform group was very active in public relations policy or reform promotion through the media. The reform group correctly tried to induce the press as a social partner for reform. It provided a comprehensive package of information about the education reform specifically designed for the easy use of the press. They also met with members of the press one-on-one to explain the content of reform and to promote the ideals and desirability of reform. As a result of these efforts, to a great extent, the reform group succeeded in inducing the press their camp as a partner.

One problem associated with this media campaign was that the reform group did not carry out these activities throughout the whole period of reform

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<sup>18</sup> Some interesting examples can be found in Lawrence Susskind and Jeffrey Cruikshank, *Breaking the Impasse*, Basic Books, 1987.

implementation. They accelerated media activities only when the Commission was to make public its reform proposals by reporting to the President. Proposals were reported to the President on four occasions. Only on those occasions were media campaigns very aggressive and intensive. After reporting to the President the reform group did not continue its efforts for media campaign. In other words, the reform group shared information with and received the support of the press in the initiation period of reform. They did not continue these activities throughout the implementation period of reform. Thus, for reform consolidation they did not receive sufficient support from the press.

Strategically, this was a big mistake for the reform group. They should have continued to share information with the press and ask for its support. For example, the reform group should have organized study tours with the press to local schools to see how reform was proceeding and taking root at the local level. Out of the tours the press could report success stories as well as criticize. The former would be good publicity for the cause of reform and the latter would be a valuable opportunity to correct mistakes or reform mismanagement. Without a constantly active and persistently honest press campaign about reform, only a few misunderstood or misinformed events appearing in the press could seriously ruin the entire image of reform.

### III

One huge obstacle to Korean reform was the conservative character of the National Assembly and especially its vulnerability to the lobbying of interest groups. We have already seen that the Assembly halted the government proposed bill to reform the Board of Education and the superintendent system. It was stopped mainly because of the aggressive lobbying of the

vested interest groups, namely, members of the Boards of Education and superintendents.

Another typical case of reform failure triggered by intensive lobbying activities through the National Assembly was the reform of private schools. One of the major goals for private school reform in Korea was to change the current school governance into a more transparent and accountable one. The reform was designed: (1) to increase the government's financial support of private schools; (2) to assure more autonomy in school administration, and (3), as preconditions of (1) and (2), to change the school governance to a more transparent and responsible one.

The private school owner-managers association also strongly opposed the reform proposal. Of course, the association wanted more money and more autonomy from the government, but not transparency nor accountability. In the beginning it tried to prevent the Commission from including this issue as a reform agenda. After this failed, it intensively lobbied members of the National Assembly, especially members of the Education Committee. The Association asked Assembly members to persuade the government not to take an action plan, *i.e.*, a reform bill, concerning this issue of private school reform. Finally the lobbying succeeded and the government postponed making reform bill for private school governance.

The reform group in Korea was not prepared for the potentiality of the National Assembly as an instrument to block the reform and the Assembly's vulnerability to the vested interest group. Through political donations, some legal and some not, the vested interest groups could substantively influence the behavior of Assembly members in Korea. In addition, the private school owner-managers association is noted as one of the most powerful and effective lobbying groups in Korea.



So why is it that the Korean National Assembly members were so susceptible to the lobbying activities of interest groups? The most important reason is that the members' voting behavior in the Assembly is not open to the public. People simply do not know what members are saying and doing in the Assembly. There is no cost to being lobbied by the vested interested groups, only benefits. The Assembly records are published, although not promptly nor are they circulated widely due to limited publication. It is almost impossible for ordinary people to get the record. Moreover, the Assembly record does not carry individual voting records. It only shows the final total result. Most votes are by secret ballot. Thus, no one knows how the individual members voted. This lack of transparency and accountability in the activities of the Assembly members has resulted in them being highly vulnerable to outside influence. In addition, the people's general absence of concern and interest in the voting behavior of the Assembly members has also contributed to this tendency of unaccountability.

Korea needs National Assembly reform. The first goal of reform would be to make its activities transparent and accountable to the voters. People should have easy access to full information about the Assembly's activities and individual voting behavior. Aggressive monitoring by NGOs would be truly beneficial to the reform of the Assembly. Without National Assembly reform, other institutional reforms, including education reform, will be increasingly difficult in Korea.

#### IV

To increase the capacity of bureaucrats, no special policy measure has been adopted during the educational reform. No special incentive system for bureaucrats has been introduced during the reform period. A tight and

detailed timetable for policy implementation imposed by the Commission has been to a certain extent effective in pushing the bureaucrats to work hard. Constant promotion of the rationale of reform and people's high expectations for reform must have psychologically motivated the bureaucrats, especially the mid-level young bureaucrats, to a greater extent. Besides these factors, no particular systematic efforts have been made to encourage and motivate bureaucrats. Conventional compensation system was used without any modification. Some financial compensation scheme for extra work or extra contribution for reform was envisioned but never attempted in Korea.

Korean educational reform saw substantial progress towards deregulation but little progress towards decentralization. Decentralization of educational administration was not carried out mainly because of the failure of the reform bill that was designed to change the current Board of Education and superintendent system, as discussed above. In contrast, deregulation of the educational administration advanced substantially. As seen above, the Educational Deregulation Committee, mainly composed of non-bureaucratic civilian professionals and experts, was established in the Ministry of Education and implemented the deregulation rather aggressively and ambitiously. However, evaluation regarding its success was split into two extremes. The truth would be somewhere in the middle. No one will dispute that there has been a certain progress in deregulation but not without limitations and problems. Let's examine below the two most important problems associated with deregulation efforts.

- (1) Information asymmetry between bureaucrats and the deregulation committee members was the most important hurdle for effective deregulation. Bureaucrats as regulators know details much better than the deregulators, namely those in the Committee. So even though the

deregulator changes the regulatory provision in the law, the regulator can easily find a detour and ways to maintain de facto regulatory power. The regulator can play with the administrative decrees if laws are to change in the National Assembly. Thus, more organized preparation and in-depth studies are needed to overcome this information asymmetry. Without reducing information asymmetry, an effective deregulation is simply impossible.

- (2) Change in regulation is one thing, but change in mindset and behavior is quite another. It is relatively easy to deregulate rules and provisions. However, it is extremely difficult to change the mindsets both of bureaucrats who produce the regulation and the people to which the regulation is applied. Even after deregulation, the regulatory mind of bureaucrats, in many cases, is not easily altered. Their behavior is likely to remain the same. On the other hand, almost the same tendency takes place with people. Deregulation means freedom and self-regulation of the people. However, those who are used to being regulated for a long period of time tend to have no will nor ability to self-regulate. So, frequently deregulation does not promote creativity, efficiency, and responsibility of the private sector, as are expected, but rather tends to produce corruption, inefficiency, and irresponsibility. Thus, after deregulation, things could be much worse than under the regulation.

One way to deal with this persistent regulatory mindset of bureaucrats is to downsize the organization itself. Reducing the size of regulatory agency can certainly help deregulation. But there is no easy way to fix the unpreparedness of the people for deregulation. Thus, inevitably it will take sometime for deregulation to take root. Reform groups should learn to be patient.

## V

Korean reform has been initiated and implemented by the government with little spontaneous movement from the bottom. It has typically been the result of top-down policy, not bottom-up movement. The importance of the participation of teachers and parents in the reform process has already been discussed, so will not be repeated here. Some representatives of parent organizations did take part in the Commission as regular members. .

At the time reform was being designed, the teachers' union Chun-kyo-jo was outlawed and thus could not participate in the Commission as an organized voice. Few teachers affiliated to the union participated in the Commission as individuals. Thus, Chun-kyo-jo was not actively mobilized for the cause of education reform. This was one of the shortcomings of Korean reform.

The Commission tried to improve the general compensation level of the teachers to boost their morale and make them more proactive for reform. But this effort was not sufficiently materialized.

In this regard, one success of reform was the introduction of the school council system in public primary and secondary schools. This was a real fundamental reform of school governance. It institutionalized the permanent participation of parents and teachers into school administration and management. It will be recorded as a reform victory, a historically important accomplishment. Of course, how well the school council will work, as originally intended, is still an open question. But at least its introduction as a permanent institution in school governance deserves high assessment.

## VI

No particular strategy for reform consolidation has been attempted in Korean reform.<sup>19</sup> For example, to maintain the momentum of reform over the long period of consolidation, the reform group could have organized a series of short-term victories or reforms easily “felt by the skin” in the middle of the reform process, that is, during the unexciting long march toward reform. However, the reform group in Korea did not plan such an arrangement. If the reform group was serious about making people celebrate during this long, monotonous journey, they should have organized the sequence of reform quite differently.

There was no particular effort to make reform “felt by the skin” of the people early and as quickly as possible. For example, as mentioned earlier, the private tutoring problem has been a serious financial as well as psychological burden to ordinary families in Korea for quite long time. However, this rather urgent issue was not taken up comprehensively until the last reform proposal.

Another strategy for successful consolidation will be to install a built-in engine of reform within the country’s political and legal structure. The most desirable one is, of course, the establishment of a committee for educational reform the life of which is not tied to election cycles. The appointment of committee members can be for terms longer than those of elected high officials. Reform will thereby be less likely to be influenced by short-term political electoral cycles and will maintain consistency as well as continuity.

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<sup>19</sup> The importance of consolidation policy is well pointed out in John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

The institutionalization of the participation of teachers and parents in school governance could be another type of built-in engine of reform contributing to reform's successful consolidation.

To repeat, for the successful consolidation of reform, the most effective way is to ensure that the reform managing (designing and monitoring) body outlive the usual term of the government. For example, if the President's term of office is five years, then the term of the members of the reform body should be greater than five years. A ten-year term would be appropriate. Then it will be institutionally much easier to consolidate the on-going reform and to maintain the reform ideal consistently regardless of a power shift in the government. Otherwise, the new government tends to attempt something new to distinguish itself from the previous government, so that it becomes extremely difficult to maintain the consistency of reform, thus hampering its consolidation. However, this kind of institutional arrangement was not attempted in Korea.

But, fortunately enough, the current new Korean government, which replaced the previous one in 1998, proclaimed that it would continue the on-going education reform, initiated by the previous government, without much change in its basic philosophy and directions.

## VII

Lessons from the Korean experience of educational reform can be summarized as follows:

- (1) The organization of an independent Presidential Commission is a good start for successful reform management. The concern of the President as well as his personal commitment is very important for reform success.

Only civilian experts and professionals, not career bureaucrats, should occupy seats on the Commission. A close cooperation as well as a check and balance between the Commission (designing body) and the Ministry of Education (implementing body) are important. The Executive Office (Blue House in Korea) should play an effective role as a well-balanced mediator between the above two, in other words, between idealism and practicality. This three-head triangle system seems to be an effective institutional arrangement for successful reform management.

- (2) For reform success, the careful appointment of the heads of the above three organizations is extremely important. Each head must be clearly future-oriented and strongly reform-minded and should share similar vision and philosophy about education reform. If there is any fundamental difference in vision and philosophy among them, then the reform is doomed to fail. Institutional choice is of course important but what seems more critical is to appoint the right persons to the right positions. The importance of human factors and leadership in successful reform management can not be over-emphasized.
- (3) To procure a sufficient budget for reform is a must. Without budgetary support the entire discussion of reform could be meaningless. Politicians tend to be very active in presenting a big fancy blueprint to the people but very passive in securing minimum needed budget. Thus, before beginning design of the reform, the reform group should obtain in advance the political commitment from the President and the dominant political party for sufficient budgetary backup.
- (4) In dealing with vested interest groups, more refined and sophisticated strategies must be prepared. Merely appealing to the moral conscience,

civic virtue, or public-mindedness of the interest group will not work very well. For example, it could be desirable to device a compensation scheme, even though partial, for potential losers if the burdens of reform are too high. And it also could be desirable if to convert the zero-sum struggle vis-à-vis interest groups into a positive-sum game or mutual-gain negotiation. Sometimes well-trained professional mediators can work on this kind of conversion successfully in advance countries. But in newly democratized countries, these flexible approaches are quite rare.

- (5) In new democracies, the national assembly or parliament tends to be susceptible to the influence of vested interest groups. Reform groups should take this constraint into serious consideration in preparing reform. Of course, the transparency and accountability of representatives' activities and voting behaviors would be ideal. In other words, it will be most welcome if National Assembly reform could be achieved before other institutional reforms, such as education reform. But if this is impossible, encouraging NGOs to oversee their activities could be a second best.
- (6) Providing the appropriate incentive system to bureaucrats should be sought after. A special pay system and promotion policy could be designed to motivate them to be more proactive for reform. For example a "reform allowance" could be devised for those who did extra work due to reform or who reveal excellent performance in reform implementation. In addition, a "special promotion path" for reform-minded bureaucrats with outstanding accomplishment could be assured.
- (7) For an effective deregulation it is recommended the establishment of a "Committee for Deregulation" composed only of non-bureaucrats.



Reducing the information asymmetry between deregulator (members of the Committee) and regulator (bureaucrats) is extremely important to make deregulation endeavors successful. Another effective deregulation effort could be the downsizing of the regulatory agency itself. But for the deregulation to take root, not only bureaucrats but also the people, who have been accustomed to regulation, must change their mindset as well as their behavior.

- (8) Close cooperation with the mass media is indispensable for reform success. To try to manipulate media or to shun it is not a correct policy. The best media policy is honesty. The reform group should provide the media with information it needs before being asked, and the media should be persuaded to become a reform partner. To help media members become civil journalists is the most desirable. These media campaign efforts must be sustained throughout the whole period of the reform, *i.e.*, not only in the initiation period but also in implementation period.
- (9) It is inevitable for the government to initiate reform. But for reform to succeed, a top-down approach should be accompanied by a bottom-up movement. The participation of teachers and parents in the reform-designing and implementing process is of pivotal importance. Participation and voice as a group is more effective than as individuals. To institutionalize the permanent participation of teachers and parents into educational policy making and implementing process is highly desirable. One way to do this is to organize a school council system, composed of teachers and parents, at each school level and to empower it to participate in school administration and management.

- (10) Education reform usually takes a long time to consolidate. The reform group should prepare small victories or reforms “felt by skin” for people to celebrate during the road to reform. By doing this people will maintain a high level of enthusiasm for reform and the possibility of anti-reform backlash will be prevented.

The best way to successfully consolidate reform is to set up a reform body that outlives the current government or regime. Then, more consistency and continuity in the reform management could be politically possible and institutionally guaranteed, thus more successful consolidation of reform could be generated.

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