

## The Development and Expansion of Higher Education Sector in the Republic of Korea

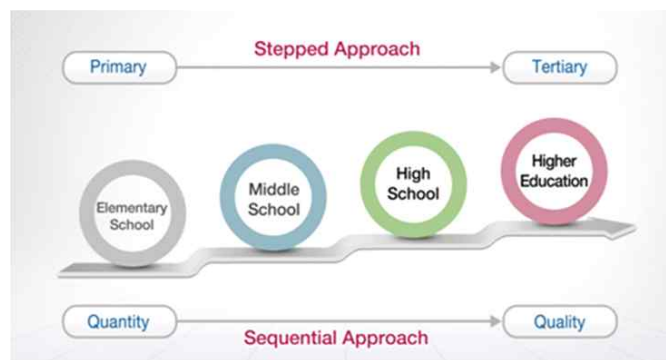
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Korea has invested heavily in education and the development of an education system aligned with its national development plans by adopting a sequential approach, both in terms of school levels and the quantity and quality of education. Working on one educational level at a time, Korea has focused on developing its educational system, beginning with primary education in the 1950s, secondary education in the 1970s and 1980s, and higher education in the 1990s and 2000s. The first goals pertained to meeting demand for the quantity of education provided. The universalization of primary, secondary, and higher education was achieved in 1957, 1999, 2000 respectively. Now, Korea has started to invest in factors that aim to improve the quality of education, using metrics such as pupil-teacher ratios, class size, students' satisfaction with school, and research and development outcomes of higher education institutions (HEIs).

Figure 1 Korea's Educational Development Model



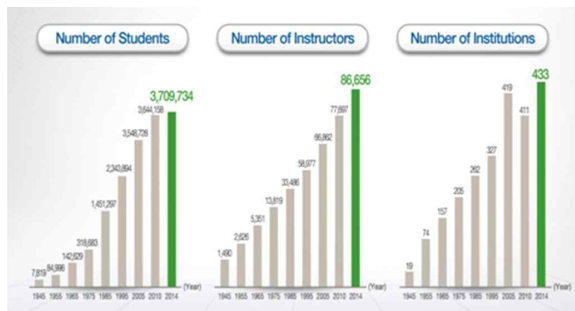
Source: Korean Educational Development Institute, 2014.

This sequential development strategy of Korea is distinguished from those of countries in LAC and Africa, which were at a similar stage of development as Korea in the 1960s, but invested at every level of education simultaneously. As a result of the unique approach, Korea

has accomplished education development in quantity as well as quality in a relatively short time. Korean students have consistently achieved high scores on international academic assessments for more than a decade. In addition to high academic achievement, the Korean educational system tries to nurture the development of non-cognitive skills of students, such as compassion, communication, responsibility, creativity, passion etc., to enable them to work collaboratively and effectively in the increasingly global, technological and knowledge-based economy.

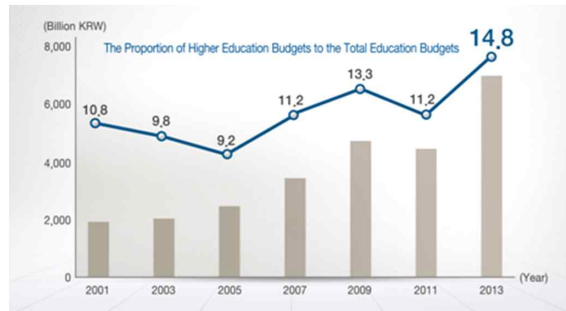
At the higher education level, attention is directed to the global competitiveness of universities internationally and governments continue to increase their investments in higher education in an attempt to raise the research and development capacity of their country. Korea also makes enormous efforts to improve its education system to better meet the demands of the ever-evolving society. Due to the government's sequential approach to educational development, investment in higher education really only began in the 1990s. In the last two decades, tax money has been poured into this sector in an effort to improve the quality and competitiveness of universities and colleges. The number of institutions increased dramatically in this time period. In 2014 there were 433 higher education institutions in Korea. In 2013, the higher education budget increased to almost 15% of the total education budget from 9.2% in 2005.

Figure 2. The Expansion of Higher Education in Korea (1945-2014)



Source: KEDI (2014)

Figure3. Budgets for Higher Education in Korea (2001-2013)

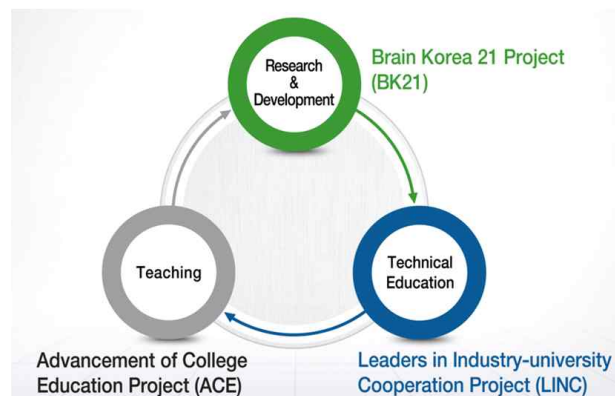


Source: KEDI (2014)

With the sector expansion having thus been achieved, efforts are now focusing on quality improvement. Two particular policies are the specialization of higher education, and industry-academy cooperation. Specialization of higher education is a strategy that allows the higher education sector to respond to challenges that the country is currently facing, such as the oversupply of graduates in a specific area, or skills mismatches. The three pillars of specialization are research, teaching, and technical education. The Korean government has implemented diverse funding projects, tailored to the needs of each university and their

specific areas such as the Brain Korea 21 project (BK21), the Advancement of College Education project (ACE), and the Leaders in Industry-university Cooperation project (LINC). An example of the major accomplishments of those funding projects is the drastic increase in research papers published in international journals after implementing the Brain Korea 21 project.

Figure 4. Three Pillars of the Specialization of Higher Education in Korea



The Industry-Academy Cooperation policy is also an important policy initiative for the innovation of higher education in Korea. Such cooperation in Korea matches the educational and research activities of universities to the demands of industry. It does this through the development and transfer of technology; special programs for industry-academy cooperation; curricular reforms; the provision of facilities for laboratory education and experiments; and institutional reforms to facilitate the cooperation. One representative government-funded project to promote cooperation between industry and academia in Korea is the Leaders in Industry-university Cooperation project, which aims to establish a growth system for regional universities and industries; and expand and reorganize universities' Industry-Academy Cooperation system. The governmental R&D expenditure for the higher education sector and the intellectual property rights and technology commercialization by higher education institutions has also rapidly increased. Given those accomplishments, Industry-Academy Cooperation is judged a successful policy that stimulates the development and open innovation of the higher education sector in Korea.

In sum, the analysis of Korea's experiences and continuous endeavors to help its students lead happy and productive lives, and contribute to building a better nation would provide insights and meaningful lessons to the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, too. LAC countries are also invited to share their educational experiences with Korea, given their own strengths in education, including the high satisfaction with school that students in LAC countries report. This type of knowledge sharing between Korea and the LAC countries would

contribute to improve the education systems of both sides, which ultimately supports them to raise their students to be happier and more capable adults.



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