



The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>  
Periodic Child Report  
of Republic of Korea  
to the UN Committee on the  
Rights of the Child

<Children Suffering from Academic Pressure>



CHILD VOICE



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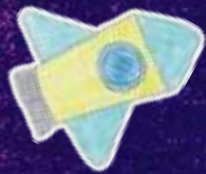
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# I. Who are we?

## 1. About the Project

The “Child Voice” project has served a role as a venue in collecting opinions of children, aged between 10 and 18 from various regions, raising opinions on the Republic of Korea (Korea)’s current child rights situation, under the support of the International Child Rights Center (InCRC), the Korean Committee for UNICEF, and Child Fund Korea.

The project has taken place from 2015 to 2017 in various regions. In 2015, the themes for the metropolitan area and Gyeongsang-do were “non-discrimination” and “non-violence” respectively. In 2016, the activity took place in Chungcheong-do and in Jeju island under the themes of “non-discrimination” and “right to play” respectively. Lastly in 2017, Jeolla-do and Gangwon-doe had the activity on “non-discrimination”. Over the 3 years, the results have shown that the world children most wanted was “world without discrimination”. 173 children in 2015, 129 in 2016, and 102 in 2017 participated in the “Child Voice” project. Several children who wanted to continuously participate in the activity have done follow-up activities for 1 to 2 more years (29 children in 2016 (1st term), 10 (1st term) and 13 (2nd term) in 2017).

Opinions of 394 children<sup>[1]</sup> who have participated in the nation-wide project from 2015 to 2017 have been reflected in the “Child Voice” project. The children have been involved in various activities on the subjects they have chosen independently, including campaigns, policy proposals, interviews, and surveys. Through community-based workshops, they have also helped people better understand the challenges children encounter in Korean society.

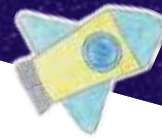
## 2. About the Authors

The authors of the Korea Child Report, on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, are children who have written the report based on their personal participation in the “Child Voice” project. 23 children among those involved in the “Child Voice” project for 1 to 3 years who wanted to write the report have been selected as the authors. The children have led every decision-making process from selecting topics, planning activities, to writing the final report. The authors have made utmost efforts to explicitly expose snapshots of the sufferings of Korean children and the country’s current child rights situation by collecting as many views from children with different characteristics in varying situations as they could.

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[1] children who finished 5 months of activity and awarded the activity certificate





## 3. Why these topics matter

The authors collected different cases of child rights violation by comparing the “Child Voice” project report from 2015 through 2017 with the the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Child Report of Republic of Korea to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child of the government of Republic of Korea (the government periodic report). Case studies have been conducted under 11 subtopics, focusing primarily on “discrimination based on academic achievement”, which had been covered the most in the “Child Voice” project. However, the topics had limitations in assessing the whole situation of Korea’s education system and its problems. Therefore, the authors selected “children suffering from academic pressure” as the final central topic. 11 subtopics were recategorized into 5 subtopics of health · rest · leisure, civil rights and freedoms, public education, education gaps, and the country’s college admission system. Then, the authors wrote the report after conducting follow-up researches. Main reasons for the authors to include 5 subtopics in their report are as follows:

### 1) Health · Rest · Leisure

“

*“I feel like killing myself.”*

In a year, a middle school or high school student in Korea studies longer than average working hours of an adult. Long hours of study never allow Korean students to enjoy their pastimes, and this harsh schedule does not give children enough time for physical activities like exercising or sleep, both of which are essential for growth. In addition, there are not enough facilities where children can spend their pastimes and rest. Children have only few options to relieve their mounting stress and tiredness. In severe cases, not enough relaxation, coupled with enormous stress may cause depression and suicidal thoughts among children. To give them enough time to play and relax, a thorough review whether the right to health, rest, and leisure are ensured for children should be conducted.

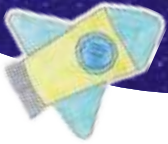
### 2) Civil Rights and Freedoms

“

*“You should remember of your role as a student. Go study right now!”*

Korean children are often denied civil rights and freedoms that everyone is entitled to. Studying always comes first for students, while civil rights activities including assemblies and social participation, or poster postings are considered insignificant. In addition, qualifications for student council members or class representatives are mostly based on academic achievement. This report therefore is going to describe the social prejudices; through which children’s civil rights and freedoms are denied, voices of children not being heard to, opinions of children only valued based on their academic achievement.

# I. Who are we?



## 3) Public Education

“

*“Schools producing ranks of test scores”*

In Korea, most primary schools are public, enrolling 90% of all children. The country’s public education, however, has only become a means for students to go to one of prestigious universities. Schools focus only on the so-called “core subjects” needed to get into university, ignoring subjects such as art and physical education as well as the integrated curriculum<sup>[2]</sup>. Access to various educational opportunities are being provided differentially based on the level of academic achievements. Coupled with a private education industry, Korea’s public education system is creating its own social problems such as enormous academic pressure and excessive private education. Career education mostly carried out in the perfunctory manner is in fact useless. Therefore, this report is going to describe how Korea’s public education system has been failing to achieve its objective of respecting each child’s uniqueness and developing their full potential.

## 4) Education Gaps

“

*“No matter how hard I try, I can never make it.”*

Education gaps are widening across less advantaged children who live in rural communities or multicultural families, those with disabilities, and out-of-school juveniles. This inequality in education can lead to social and economic inequalities as adults. Measures should be taken to ensure Korean children’s right to have equal educational opportunities.

## 5) College Admission System

“

*“Adjust your dream to your score.”*

Korea’s current college admission system is the biggest barrier for students to realize their diverse dreams. Under this highly meritocratic system, traits or potential of individual students are being neglected. In other words, the article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Goals of education, “Children’s education should develop each child’s personality, talents and abilities to the fullest”) is being violated. Another problem is inadequate support for out-of-school juveniles or children who attend alternative schools.

[2] a curriculum consisting of topics and activities beyond traditional relationships among subjects. designed to develop students’ interest and talents





## 4. About the writing process

### 1) Publishing timeline

Jan	The 1st authors' workshop (Jan 23~Jan 26 / 4 days)
Feb	Survey subgroup workshop (Feb 26)
Mar-Apr	Online & offline survey for the report
May	Authors' interim check-up (May 12~May 13 / 2 days)
Jun	Editors' workshop (Jun 13)
Jul	The 2nd authors' workshop (Jul 24~Jul 27 / 4 days)
Aug-Oct	Report editing, submission, and publication
Nov	Report publication ceremony

### 2) Survey method

① Review of the "Child Voice" project report

② Online & offline survey

- Survey papers and questionnaires prepared and distributed by authors
- Online: Survey links distributed via SurveyMonkey website
- Offline: Authors distribute written survey papers to their neighbor (schools, private cram schools, homes, etc.)
- Total of 1,472 responses used in survey result analysis (1,359 offline, 113 online, sloppy responses excluded)

③ Interview

- At authors' discretion, more in-depth information based on survey results were carried out.

④ Other sources

- Other research papers, news articles, statistics from governments and specialized agencies



# II. We are suffering from academic pressure



## 1. Health•Rest•Leisure

### 1) Problem

Korea's continuing social pressure and its educational system coupled with parents and teachers' obsession with the country's top ranked universities are costing children's youth and forcing them to spend most of their time on studying. While sacrificing their time as an investment for their future, most Korean children are not given their right to proper rest and leisure.

Firstly, study hours are excessively long. On average, Korean children study 40~60 hours per week, which is at minimum 7 hours and at maximum twice longer than that of the average study hours of OECD member states (33 hours). (Chang-su Lee, Seung-jin Ahn, 2018.03.07). The average study time per year stands at 2,097 hours for middle school students and 2,757 hours for high school students. This is even more than 2,069 hours, the average working hour of South Korea, a well known country in terms of working overtime. (Seo-ho Seong, 2018.05.28). Excessive private education and the so-called "nighttime self-study", which is still enforced under the supervision of a teacher at some schools are often to blame for long hours of study. Study hours are also on the rise for elementary school students and toddlers. The lack of sleep and physical activities that resulted from increased study time could lead to problems in children's physical and mental health.

Secondly, infrastructure for rest and leisure is inadequate. Korea's social pressure that "the main duty of a student is studying to achieve high grades"<sup>[3]</sup> and "playing doesn't give you good results"<sup>[4]</sup> have kept children away from playing. Along with limited free time, there are not enough youth facilities and infrastructure that meet the children's needs (report authors, 2018). In their scarce leisure time, most children do not play along with other children but only use smartphones as means of recreation and have difficulties in creating their own culture of playing.

[Figure 1] shows 50.5% of Korean children were under academic stress in 2013. Enormous academic stress can even lead to child suicide. According to the comprehensive study of Korean children's current situation (Ministry of Health & Welfare, 2013), 3.6% of children aged between 9 and 17 had seriously considered killing themselves. Most children cited school grades as the main cause of their suicidal thoughts, regardless of their gender, type of school, place of residence, academic achievement, or financial conditions.

### 2) Words on the report vs. reality

Paragraph 159 of the country report says in 2014, juveniles' average leisure time was 4 hours and 33 minutes a week, a 12-minute decrease compared to that in 2004. The "free time" group of "Child Voice" suggested through its report that 235 of 450 children said they do not have enough pastimes (123 for "lack of leisure time" 112 for "severely lack of leisure time") (International Child Rights Center, Korean Committee for UNICEF, Child Fund Korea, 2015). Looking more closely, 68.9% of children were denied their right to play, and the proportion increased as they move from elementary school (43.9%) through middle school (68.8%) and high school (80.9%). It implies that Korean children are not provided with enough time to rest through their educational transition to upper schools (report authors, 2018)<sup>[5]</sup>.

[3] refer to survey questionnaire 5

[4] refer to survey questionnaire 7

[5] refer to survey questionnaire 6

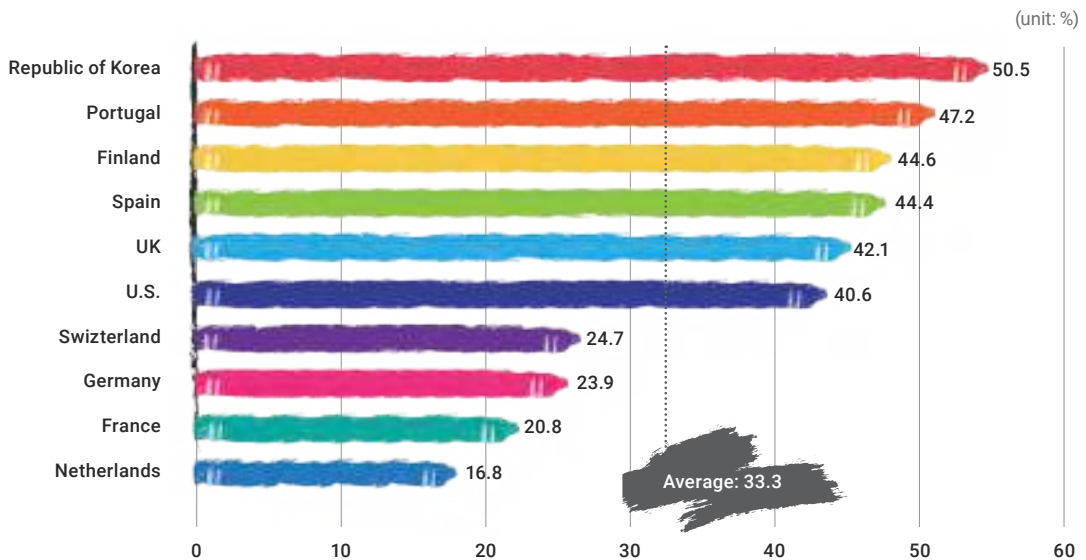


## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[1. HEALTH · REST · LEISURE]



### Academic stress



[Figure 1] Global academic stress ratings for Children (Yeong-seok Park, 2015.03.11)

To ensure children's right to play, the Korean government has offered a plan to expand infrastructures including youth facilities and playgrounds with children's participation in designing process. However, the point of why the right to play is being violated is not being accounted in the government's measures. The survey (report authors, 2018) indicates 50.8% and 34.6% of students cited "excessive education fever" and "social pressure not to play" as the main reasons. Only 3.0%, 4.4% complained about insufficient education and facilities for leisure and cultural activities<sup>[6]</sup>

“

*"I have no space to create enough time for leisure while preparing for exams and performance evaluations, managing my school grades, and attending cram schools."*

*"No matter how hard I try, I can never make it."*

Survey questionnaire 7

When asked about "the first thing to do to ensure children's right to play", 50.9% of children said that "Korean adults' stereotypes" needed to be broken. Children at higher schools were more likely to think of "introducing new education policies" (report authors, 2018)<sup>[7]</sup>.

[6] refer to survey questionnaire 7

[7] refer to survey questionnaire 9

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[1. HEALTH · REST · LEISURE]  
[2. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS]



“

*“Not to fall behind, I should follow other people who work or study.”*

*“Parents’ high expectations for better results, and the pressure to really stand out for arts and sports major students who should also practice hard are the reasons our right to play is never fulfilled.”*

Survey questionnaire 7



Paragraph 40 of the country report says the government is making utmost efforts for the prevention of student suicide by establishing legislations, running the Korea Suicide Prevention Center and cyber counseling centers, and promoting Wee projects. However, each government agency’s budget on suicide-related preventive policies shows the country’s financial investment in preventing suicide is not at a sufficient level to tackle the country’s suicide rate, which is the highest among OECD member countries. For suicide prevention, more programs should take place to educate juveniles and raise public awareness.

## 2. Civil Rights and Freedoms

### 1) Problem

Unequal opportunities based on academic achievement, privacy invasion, Student Human Rights Ordinances<sup>[8]</sup> that have not been effectively implemented, and Teacher Appraisal for Professional Development with no guarantee of anonymity are the reasons Korean children’s civil rights and freedoms are being violated. Especially adults posing academic pressure are not allowing children to enjoy equal civil rights and freedoms. Every child deserves basic rights, and the children also know the opportunities to participate in school activities should be given equally. However, they know less about the government’s efforts to reflect children’s opinions.

Here are some examples of situations where Korean students are discriminated based on their academic achievement. When electing student council members, some schools preferentially give opportunities to those with better grades. They do not even ask other students’ intention to participate. Academic achievement also determines speaking time during student council meetings, and the opinions of students with better grades are mostly reflected. Civil rights and freedoms should be universal and should be applied to every children, regardless of any other factors like grades.

[8] ordinances that 4 local education offices (Seoul, Gyeonggi-do, Gwangju, Jeollabuk-do province) voluntarily established to ensure and realize students’ dignity and value in school curriculums (PMG knowledge engine research center, 2017.11.01)





### 2) Words on the report vs. reality

#### ① Freedom of expression, assembly, and association

Paragraph 52 of the country report says under the Enforcement Decree of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, school governance committees may listen to students' opinions when they deliberate matters relating to school operation. However, methods and applications of these measures are not clearly stated. To reflect children's opinions, 4 local education offices have established, but these measures not mandatory. It is also difficult to see if these ordinances are properly implemented by each local offices. Vague criteria on selection of participating students and reflecting their views is another problem.

Paragraph 63 of the country report says in principle, schools are not allowed to make rules that limit students' right to freedom guaranteed by law, including their right to participation in politics. However, "the 2016 survey on the realities of students' human rights at school" conducted by the country's human rights council revealed 92.6% of schools surveyed do have rules that violate students' right to express their unique personality<sup>[9]</sup> and the protection of privacy. 83.1% made rules to limit freedom to assembly (Jun-ho Park, 2018.02.19).

At school, children express their perspectives mostly through student councils, class meetings, and meetings of student representatives. At these venues, children deserve equal opportunities to share their ideas freely and gain respect. However, the participation to these representative bodies are not given equally, but is based on the individual's academic achievements. 7% of students surveyed said they were discriminated in such activities (report authors, 2018)<sup>[10]</sup>. At times, there were rules that academic achievement limited students' access to the activities. If not, students became reluctant to participate as teachers were more favorable to children with better grades, agreeing or paying more attention to their opinions.

#### ② Freedom of privacy and protection of personal information

“

*“I was nominated and elected as the president at middle school,  
but was soon disqualified due to poor grades.”*

*“My teacher asked about each candidate's grades at the class  
president election.”*

*“In most cases, “good grades” is one of the qualifications for student  
council members.”*

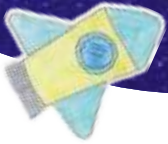
Survey questionnaire 11

[9] “The right to express personality” is included in student human rights ordinances of all four local education offices. While the specific contents slightly differ from ordinance to ordinance, it is commonly stated that “Students have the right to decide one's appearance including clothing and hairstyle and school must not restrict students' freedom to do so.”

[10] refer to survey questionnaire 11

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[2. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS]



Paragraph 64 of the country report says according to student human rights ordinances, schools are not allowed to arbitrarily read or handle students' private records, including diaries without individual consent unless there is an urgent need to do so for safety. Nor are they allowed to disclose student information including grades or records of punishments. However, the research on Korea's human rights situation of children•juveniles (Yeong-ji Kim, etc., 2015) indicates 21.6% of elementary, middle, and high school students said their schools keep disclosing grades without the student's consent. Disclosure of grades happened more frequently for students at upper classes or with lower grades.

“

*“I feel humiliated when I get called along with poor grades on certain subjects. Then, I become so worried that other students would laugh at me being sent to the special class because they all know that grades are used as a of criteria of special classes for low-performers. I am stressed out when classmates gossip about the rise and fall in our class rankings based on subject grades.”*

OOO of “J” women's high school (Eun-ji Kim, 2015.10.12)

Since student human rights ordinances are implemented voluntarily under 4 distinct local education offices, whether or not and how students' grades are disclosed show difference among districts. Therefore, the declaration of the ordinances is never enough to protect privacy and personal information. Even in Gyeonggi-do where the ordinance article 13 clearly states students' right to protection of personal information including school grades, 25.7%, 17%, and 14.7% of high, middle, and elementary school students said “no” when asked if “their grades are disclosed only to themselves” (Yeong-ju Lee, 2017.01.30). In Jeollabuk-do province, another region that established the ordinances, 38.4% of 290 respondents said they have felt embarrassed with the disclosure of grades. It turns out the protection of personal information has not been properly realized (Hyeok-il Kwon, 2014.10.29).

### ③ Respect for the views of the child

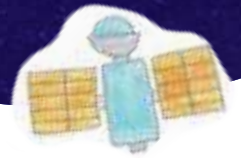
Paragraph 52 of the country report says school governance committees<sup>[11]</sup> may listen to students' opinions when they deliberate matters relating to the students' activities in school. The students' involvement is, however, not a mandatory requirement. Another big problem is that these committees consist only of teachers, parents, and local bigwigs, while students are unable to become member of the committee. In other words, for students who cannot be official members, the only option is to participate 'voluntarily' in the committees. As a result, only few students continuously participate in the activities of School Governance Committees. the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Child Report of Republic of Korea to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child says, “Student human rights ordinances established by some local education offices

[11] A school governing committee, consisting of teachers, parents, and local bigwigs is a deliberation and advisory body of public and private elementary, middle, and high schools that deliberates a school's decisions on budgeting, selecting optional subjects and extra-curricular activities and advises other matters of the operation including school meals. In principle, students are not allowed to be committee members.



## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[2. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS]



have set an institutional guarantee of student participation in the school steering committee". However, student human rights ordinances are applicable in only 4 cities and even these, due to their non-binding nature, have not been effectively implemented in most cases.

In addition to these institutional issues, there are cases where prejudices against children make them reluctant to share ideas freely. A survey conducted by the authors of the report reveals 18 out of 78 participants who said Korea's education policies do not need to reflect more views of children added that "adults have better insights than children"<sup>[12]</sup>. It turns out social stereotypes that children are still immature discourage some of them to even realize or express the rights they have.

“

*“Adults always make better choices.”*

*“Reflecting more children’s opinions is not the right thing to do because most children will want to study less.”*

*“Children are immature in making decisions.”*

*“Reflecting children’s views are not much of a help in policy decisions.”*

Survey Questionnaire 13

In contrast, a staggering 90.3% of children believe Korea's education policies should “reflect more children’s views”. They say only few opinions have been reflected to existing education policies and wish more children’s views to be considered to make child education more satisfactory (report authors, 2018).

“

*“Children, not adults, are the ones involved in the education policies. Children can have their own views by a certain age, and they can participate in policy decisions. It is unfair to tell them to blindly follow what adults say.”*

*“We do respect what adults think, but more of teenage voices must be heard. Otherwise, we will become the puppets of education authorities rather than getting education for ourselves.”*

Survey Questionnaire 13

[12] refer to survey questionnaire 13

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[2. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS]



### ④ Other matters

i. Teacher Appraisal for Professional Development is an annual performance review of students and parents on teachers' attitude and competency, which is under governmental legislations and guidelines. It serves a role as a venue of communications where students can provide both praise and constructive criticism about their teachers. To avoid distorted reflection of children's opinions, full anonymity should be preserved for participants. However, the survey (report authors, 2018) conducted by the authors revealed some students (5.9%) have experienced trouble due to absence of anonymity<sup>[13]</sup>.

Children said they suffered because in revenge, the teachers became sarcastic, vented their anger on the students, threatened, discriminated the students, and openly complained about their poor compensation and criticism on them. There were cases where teachers called the students separately after class or gave disadvantage to their grades after monitoring or intentionally checking written responses (report authors, 2018)<sup>[14]</sup>. This is a clear violation of rights in terms of hindering quality improvements in public education, suppressing freedom of expression, and ignoring children's views.

“

*“Teachers whether silently or verbally threatened us that they would give poor grades, in return of bad reviews they got from us.”*

*“Our class teacher called one student out and humiliated him by reading his review out loud.”*

Survey Questionnaire 15

ii. According to the research on Korea's human rights situation of children•juveniles (Yeong-ji Kim, etc., 2015), most survey participants said they do not know about student rights ordinances (39.5%) or they have only heard of the name, not the details (44.0%). The survey conducted by the authors (report authors, 2018) revealed 70.3% of children were not aware of the article in the ordinances limiting the disclosure of school grades<sup>[15]</sup>. In other words, the establishment of student rights ordinances might be good in theory, but seemed to have not been effectively implemented due to lack of efforts in publicizing it.

[13] refer to survey questionnaire 14

[14] refer to survey questionnaire 15

[15] refer to survey questionnaire 16



### 3. Public Education

#### 1) Problem

Public education play an important role in determining child's quality of life and future. Paragraph 142 of the country report says in 2016, elementary, middle, and high school attendance was over 90%. However, Korea's public education is focused solely on the importance of getting good grades, while keeping children away from developing their innate talents. Korean children are suffering from enormous academic pressure. The problems of Korea's public education are as follows:

Firstly, students are forced to study more hours on five mandatory subjects (Korean, Mathematics, Science, English, and Social Studies) of the country's annual college entrance exam. Moving to upper schools, less of art or physical activity classes are carried out, or these lessons are often replaced with hours of "self-study sessions" or "supplementary classes". Students then lose opportunities to develop their true talents. Students who fail in major subjects are not respected, and they are often discriminated because of their poor grades. Students might have difficult time adjusting to this highly meritocratic public education system that evaluates and treats students based on academic achievement as they move to upper schools. Some even drop out of school due to increased pressure.

Secondly, the current public education curriculum is poor in its quality and, moreover, its structural issues make Korean parents resort to excessive private education. Many schools are taking written tests and handing out assignments that are too difficult, encouraging the so-called prior-learning and private education. This is a clear violation of child rights stated in the article 6 (survival and development) and 31 (leisure, play and culture) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is hard for students who learn things in advance to stay focused during regular classes. The quality of public education cannot be improved because the teachers assume all students learn things at cram schools and do not try their best in teaching. This vicious cycle continues and also make students who take private education get even better grades.

Thirdly, academic achievement decides the level of opportunities of learning and access to learning facilities at public schools. This is often considered "a reasonable cause for different opportunities" or "one of the factors that motivate students". However, this is a clear example of discrimination that widens the gap between high and low academic performers, rather than respecting individual's diverse talents and developing them (Ji-hye Kim, 2016). As a result, low performing students who do not have access to quality education feel like they are discriminated and slighted. Also they become disengaged and demotivated at school, and this negatively affects their mental growth, making them feel inferior, and distracts academic development.

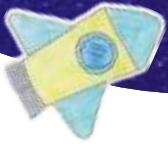
Lastly, career education in Korea does not reflect children's interest and views, and it is mostly carried out in a perfunctory manner. New measure such as free semester system<sup>[16]</sup> have not shown much effectiveness in terms of student satisfaction, and also students' opinions are not being sufficiently taken into account in its structure and operation.

[16] Middle schools nationwide introduced the free semester system beginning in 2016. The free year system is an extended version of the free semester system from 1 semester to 1 year. In 2018, the free year system started to be implemented in full swing at approximately 1,500 schools nationwide.



## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[3. PUBLIC EDUCATION]

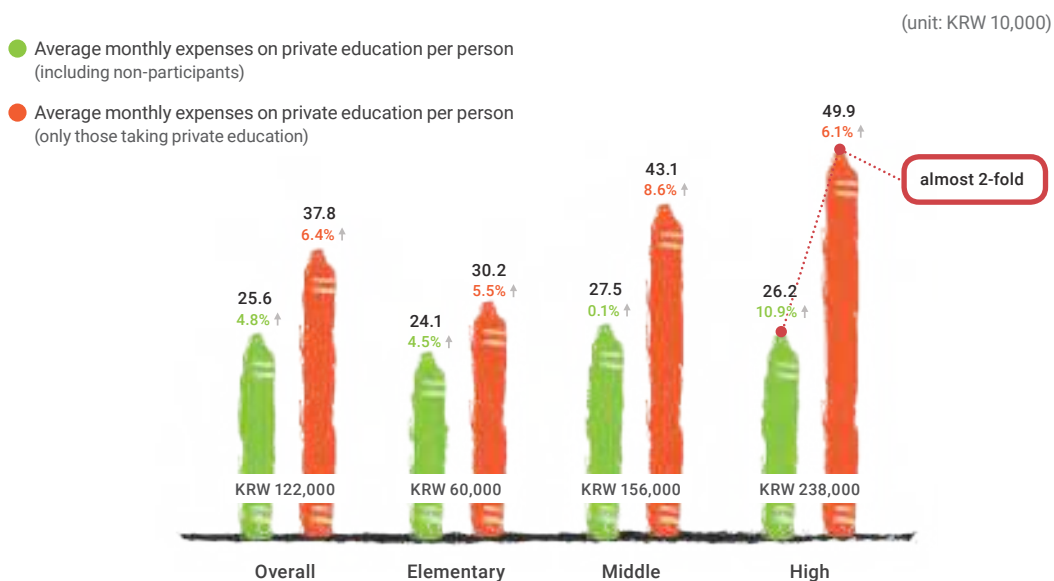


### 2) Words on the report vs. reality

#### ① Private education

Paragraph 147 of the country report says in 2016, the average monthly private education expenses among elementary, middle, and high school students were KRW 256,000 per person, marking a slight increase since 2011, while 67.8% of the students were taking private education, marking a continuous decrease since 2011. However, the table below shows that the statistics in the report also include students who do not engage in private education. Only counting those education, such as cram schools, the average monthly private education expenses surge to KRW 378,000, and to almost KRW 500,000 for high school students. It turns out financial burden of private education is still on the rise, showing difference from the analysis provided in the country report.

### Private education expenses per person



[Table 1] Private education expenses per person (World Without Worries About Private Education, 2017.03.14)

\* Data : Ministry of Education-Statistics Korea Survey on Private Education Expenses (2016), recalculated by this group

According to paragraph 148 of the country report, the government established the Special Act on the Promotion of the Normalization of Public Education and Regulation of Prior Learning<sup>[17]</sup>, and the “measures for private education reduction and public education normalization” in order to achieve the normalization of school education and reduce private education expenses by eradicating the prevalent practice of prior learning. However, 261 out of 660 students said private education is still needed because teachers assume most students have already finished their prior learning (report authors, 2018)<sup>[18]</sup>.

[17] This act is intended to achieve educational objectives stated in the 「Basic Education Act」ensuring the healthy development of students' mental and physical growth by regulating prior learning carried out at educational institutes.

[18] refer to survey questionnaire 23

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[3. PUBLIC EDUCATION]



“

*“Only basic things are covered during classes because teachers assume the students had already been doing prior learning, but at the same time the tests are still hard. That is why there is no option other than attending cram schools to manage difficult exams.”*

*“Private tuition is probably the only option to attain exam success, and not to fall behind in class.*

*Looking at my friends who engage in private education, knowing difficult English vocabulary which I have not even seen before, teachers assume that everyone in the class know them too. This is what bothers and frustrates me.”*

Survey questionnaire 23

There are so many doubts whether the act on regulating prior learning can bring about real change. Children still suffer from mounting stress and insufficient sleep, apparent violation of their rights, while the government has done little to curb excessive private education.

“

*“It somehow feels as if getting private tuition is normal because the majority of the students do get them, but as a matter of fact it has led to many problems such as increase of stress and lack of time to sleep.”*

*“Private education does not allow us to get deep with our own thoughts in solving various problems, which is one of the most important skills that we actually need.”*

Survey questionnaire 23

According to Paragraph 152 of the country report, the government is vitalizing after-school programs and TV lectures on the Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) that have been found to be effective in reducing private education expenses according to private education expense surveys. To improve the quality of the EBS lectures, the government has said to strengthen in-depth and supplementary content. The EBS can be an effective educational tool that all Korean children can have access to, free of charge.

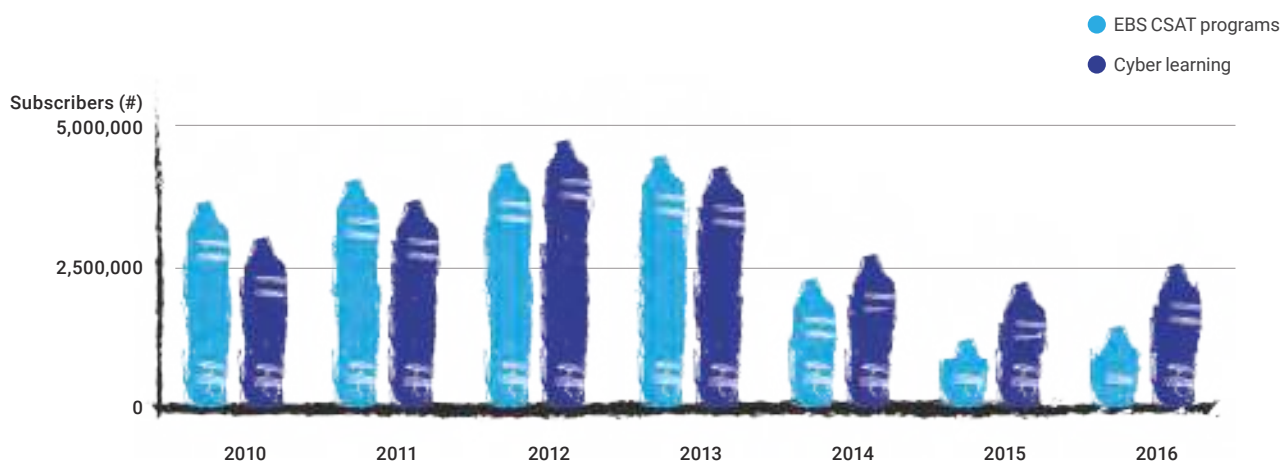
## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[3. PUBLIC EDUCATION]



But despite government measures, the table below shows the number of students who benefit from cyber learning by watching EBS CSAT(College Scholastic Ability Test) programs has rather been falling. Also, the survey conducted by the authors (report authors, 2018) revealed 52.2% of students said EBS programs are “not much of help” or “not helpful at all” for them to prepare for school exams<sup>[19]</sup>.

### e-Learning Usage-Subscribers



[Table 2] e-learning (EBS CSAT programs, cyber learning) usage (Ministry of Education, 2017.08.11)  
\* Data : Ministry of Education (Internal)

### ② Problems in school curriculum

Paragraph 154 of the country report says the government began arranging creative experience activities consisting of autonomous activities, club activities, volunteering, and career activities in all grades in elementary, middle, and high schools from 2013. However, when asked about public education, the reasons for it not being helpful for getting good grades and developing talents, the most common answer from students (20.4%) was that “the students are forced to memorize information than to participate in debates or presentations during class” (report authors, 2018). The next most common answer was that “the curriculum was only concentrated to subjects related to school grades leading to less and inadequate number of subjects like art or physical activities<sup>[20]</sup>. The results show albeit government efforts to combat chronic problems of Korea’s highly meritocratic education system based on rote memorization, problems are still prevalent.

Public schools should reflect each child’s different interests and views, and the curriculum should ensure enough time needed for resting and developments appropriate at given ages. However, art and sport lessons are mostly carried out in a perfunctory manner or even replaced with major subjects needed for the college entrance exam. Only 25.8% of high schools provide 150 minutes of physical activity lessons per week as recommended (Jan-di Kim, 2018.02.02), which means high schools in Korea do not even allocate 3 hours a week on sports classes. Upper schools are more likely to replace art and sport classes with self-study sessions, and this happens more often during examination periods.

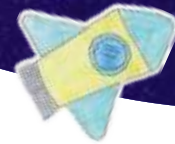
[19] refer to survey questionnaire 24

[20] refer to survey questionnaire 19



## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[3. PUBLIC EDUCATION]



### ③ Unequal learning opportunities

Paragraph 142 of the country report shows kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high school attendance have increased while the number of students per teacher have decreased. However, using this as evidence for high level of provision of education, is an overlook at the discriminatory provision of opportunities among students within the public education, based on their academic achievements. Each group participating in “Child Voice” (2015~2017) collected cases of “ongoing discrimination in learning opportunities” (International Child Rights Center, Korean Committee for UNICEF, Child Fund Korea, 2015; International Child Rights Center, Korean Committee for UNICEF, Child Fund Korea, 2017).

#### i. Unequal learning opportunities (list below are for high performers)<sup>[21]</sup>

- ✓ special lecture on major subjects only for top 40 performers
- ✓ nighttime intensive classes on Korean, English, and Mathematics
- ✓ essay interview lessons from outside instructors (3 times / month)
- ✓ KRW 100,000 of financial support to attend online lectures
- ✓ study abroad in Russia
- ✓ access to more information about exams

#### ii. Discrimination in access to learning facilities

- ✓ better self-study rooms for high performers (carpet, water purifier, partitions, heating & air conditioning)<sup>[22]</sup>
- ✓ nighttime self-study room seats given priority to high performers<sup>[23]</sup>
- ✓ high performers take better seats in class<sup>[24]</sup>
- ✓ middle•high school assigned based on grades, not distance from home to school<sup>[25]</sup>
- ✓ dormitories provided only to high performers<sup>[26]</sup>

#### iii. Discrimination in other activities

- ✓ high performers get school meals first<sup>[27]</sup>
- ✓ restrict low performers from participating in competition<sup>[28]</sup>
- ✓ visits to city landmarks including the Blue House, the National Assembly, and Seoul National University only for high performers<sup>[29]</sup>
- ✓ school grades are set as requirements to run as class president and vice president candidates<sup>[30]</sup>

Some cases have been reported to the National Human Rights Commission of Korea. However, many students still suffer from these discriminatory practices. This is clearly against “equality”, which is one of the core elements of public education and should thereby abide to. Failure of such acts as a major cause of widening academic gaps. It would also encourage discrimination among students, which in turn would give emotional damage to those with low performance. When comparing “the impact of bad results” to “the impact from discrimination due to academic achievement”, students feel more unhappy and depressed by experiencing discrimination, than just low grades itself(Ji-hye Kim, 2016).

[21] data collected by 2017 “the Animal Kingdom” group

[22] data collected by 2015 “Su-ah” group, data collected by 2017 “the Animal Kingdom” group

[23] data collected by 2015 “Ji-su Foundation” group

[24] data collected by 2015 “Ji-su Foundation” group

[25] data collected by 2015 “Ji-su Foundation” group

[26] data collected by 2017 “the Animal Kingdom” group

[27] data collected by 2015 “Su-ah” group

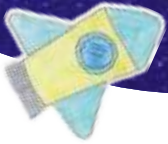
[28] data collected by 2015 “Su-ah” group, data collected by 2015 “Ji-su Foundation” group

[29] data collected by 2017 “the Animal Kingdom” group

[30] data collected by 2015 “Ji-su Foundation” group

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[3. PUBLIC EDUCATION]



### ④ Career education

34.3% of out-of-school juveniles drop out of school for the reasons related to their future path or career interest. In other words, they do not see the currently run education system helpful for their future career or in helping them explore their talents (In-jae Choi, Gyeong-sang Lee, Jeong-suk Kim, Geun-young Chang, Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, 2015). Juveniles are leaving their school because "the current education system does not help them realize their career goal". Therefore, education authorities should better understand the reasons why out-of-school juveniles are showing dissatisfaction towards public education, and practical measure must be introduced.

According to paragraph 155 of the country report, "middle schools nationwide introduced the free semester system beginning from the second semester of 2016". Under the system, students are allowed a semester during the middle school years to be free from the burden of examinations and have various experiences that can help with career exploration. However, students have a different story.

i) When asked if the free semester system helps relieve exam stress and pressure (report authors, 2018), students scored 2.61 on average, which is in between "disagree (2)" and "agree (3)". It is hardly possible to see the effectiveness of the system in relieving stress from taking exams<sup>[31]</sup>.

“

*"The free semester itself was not long enough for us to think about our future or to explore our interests, but also stress from exams were substituted with numerous other performance evaluations."*

Survey questionnaire 33

ii) Most free semester programs were not well organized and were mostly carried out in a perfunctory manner. Therefore, the programs have not been substantially helpful for students to choose and develop their career. Moreover, the system that only lasts for a semester is not enough to observe the progressive changes in career interest among students.

“

*"Free semester should be able to provide wide range of opportunities in experiencing diverse field of jobs and careers but what we have now are mostly just lectures, and the elective activities are also poor"*

*"Under ongoing career activities, it is very hard to get relevant information when we change our career path."*

Survey questionnaire 33

[31] refer to survey questionnaire 34

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[3. PUBLIC EDUCATION]



- iii) The survey conducted by the authors (report authors, 2018) revealed that some activities were divided based on gender, had limited number of student capacity or variety, had students do rock paper scissors or even worse, gave priority to students with higher grades in choosing which activity they wanted take part in. (report authors, 2018)<sup>[32]</sup>. Such experiences lead to restricted participation for students and their career exploration, and also pulls free semester system back from reaching its primary goal.
- iv) The gaps in career education between cities and rural communities have been widening. Survey results by National Assembly member Eun-hye Yoo revealed that most middle schools in Seoul (24 out of 29) have more than 16 locations for career experience activities. In Gyeonggi-do, students at 11 out of 20 middle schools got the chance to look around more than 16 locations. However, many middle schools in rural communities had fewer than 5 career education sites. Resources for the free semester, having various career experiences as its core element, had practical differences among the urban and rural areas. (Su-beom Lee, 2015.10.02).

Overall, there are many problems with the free semester system. There is urgent need to reflect the views of children in designing and implementing free semester programs because they are the ones who are directly affected by the system.

Paragraph 153 of the country report says in 2011, the government developed the “School Career Education program(SCEP)”. In 2013, the government announced plans for the vitalization of career education that are intended to realize customized career design support for individual students and in 2015, established “the Career Education Act”<sup>[33]</sup> to build up career education support systems. However, students know little about these government efforts and how the system is being put into practice. Effectiveness of such implementation needs feedbacks from students and check for its practical usage.

The survey conducted by the authors (report authors, 2018) revealed 88.1% of students vitalization of career education is needed. High school students who have not experienced diverse career education showed the highest score(3.21)<sup>[34]</sup>. When asked about the areas for improvements, most children said diversification (42.5%), followed by better quality (27.6%), and more occasions (26.8%)<sup>[35]</sup>. Other than field trips and career counselling, new measures of career education should take place to meet children’s needs.



[32] refer to survey questionnaire 33

[33] The purpose of this Act is to provide students with various opportunities to receive career education in order for them to adapt actively to the changing occupational world and to capitalize on their talents and aptitudes, thereby increasing the happiness of people’s lives and economic and social development.

[34] refer to survey questionnaire 35

[35] refer to survey questionnaire 36





### 4. Education Gaps

#### 1) Problem

Education gaps limiting children's educational opportunities pose difficulties for them from reaching their full potential. Educational gap is an important issue that needs to be addressed considering its long-term, influence through elementary, middle and high school periods. According to paragraph 143 and 144 of the country report, the government announced the comprehensive measures for educational welfare and extended the Social Integration Admission System, where schools are required to fill a certain proportion of their admission quota with students in vulnerable classes. However, precise policies that reflect the needs of children under various circumstances based on their location, culture, income, disabilities, academic performance, and whether they dropped out of school should be introduced. The following are the reality of education gaps and things that need more considerations.

#### 2) Words on the report vs. reality

##### ① Children in rural communities

Students living in rural communities are more likely to receive relatively fewer educational resources such as the number of classes per school (Korea Educational Development Institute, 2017). Typically, schools in remote villages have fewer resources to educate students than their suburban neighbors. Also the quality of education students are expected to receive are relatively lower in small and mid-sized cities than that of big cities due to their relatively higher number of student to number of school ratio. Within the budgets of cities and provinces, different amount of financial support is provided for children in vulnerable classes based on policy priorities. City and provincial education offices allocate their budgets seeking for balanced development between regions by using subsidies for educational welfare. However, different policy priorities in different regions result in unequal distribution of budgets for each city and provincial education office (Ministry of Education, 2016). Different proportions of subsidies for vulnerable children can be another factor in widening education gaps.

##### ② Children from different cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds

The number of children from minority cultural background in Korea is now 109,387, with an annual increase of 10,000 over the past 5 years and bucking the trend of decreasing overall number of children (Statistics Korea, 2018). According to Paragraph 167 of the country report, the ministry of education offers customized education for children from minority cultural background to help them enter and adapt to public education through facilities including regional multicultural education support centers. However, facilities that support children from minority cultural background including these support centers are mostly clustered in the metropolitan area. 57 out of 131 facilities that run programs to support early adaptation and 26 out of 42 foreigner schools are located in Seoul and Gyeonggi-do.

Children from minority cultural background either do not know about these facilities or barely use them, and the number of facilities decreases for upper schools. Only 9.6% of the whole were found to attend preparatory schools while 7.9% attended

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[4. EDUCATION GAPS]



rainbow schools<sup>[36]</sup> and 7.2% attended multicultural alternative schools. In addition, less than half of children from minority cultural background use support facilities for juveniles and social welfare centers (Statistics Korea, 2016.08.17). The results indicate that existing government measures to support them have not been effective and has not been publicized well.

### ③ Undocumented children

Majority of approximated 20,000 undocumented children in Korea are not receiving public education. Paragraph 167 of the country report says the right of unregistered immigrant children to education has now been ensured as the government has exempted public officials' obligation to report to the immigration agency. Institutionally, undocumented children are allowed to go to elementary school if they have records on their entrance to Korea or residence<sup>[37]</sup>. Also, the MOE's "manual for multicultural children's academic records" states that unregistered immigrant children can go to high school, which is not included in Korea's compulsory education. However, there are cases where school principals use their discretion to reject unregistered immigrant children and suggest them to go to other schools with special classes than accepting these children to their own school<sup>[38]</sup>. In other words, undocumented children have no other options but to go to schools that offer special classes. Most children have to take long trips to and from school, as the number school with special classes are limited, it is hard to find one close enough to their homes (Seol-hee Yoo, 2018.05.06)<sup>[39]</sup>. Even for unregistered immigrant children who are accepted can be excluded from services across administrative procedures, scholarships, financial support for school meals, and insurance for field trips because of the procedural difficulties in registering in the NEIS without ID numbers or registration numbers that can verify their identification. Deportation of themselves or their family members is another factor that could greatly increase the risk of discontinuation of education.

### ④ Children with disabilities

Paragraph 116 and 117 of the country report shows that the government seems to be focusing on increasing educational resources for children with disabilities by expanding special schools and special education teachers. However, even if there is a plot of land where special education schools can be established, negative perception towards children with disabilities and special schools drive local residents to express strong opposition towards construction of special school within their district. The sharp opposition keeps many regional authorities from establishing special schools, as shown in the case of Seoul's education office that has not been able to push through its plan to build a school for the past 15 years. Existing facilities are mostly located in the metropolitan area, widening the gaps for most areas (Korea Disabled People's Development Institute, 2017).

Paragraph 118 of the country report says the government has developed and disseminated various materials for example, teaching and learning materials for integrated and audio/video-aided textbooks that take into account the types and characteristics of disabilities those children have. However, children with disabilities who want to attend regular schools are still not receiving quality education because they are denied admissions or suffering from prejudices. There are cases where some private schools either reject admissions or advise children with disabilities to give up their attempt to get

[36] Korean language and specialty educational programs to help immigrated juveniles (including North Korean defectors born in one of 3rd countries) adapt to Korean society.

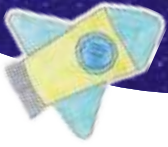
[37] Article 19, Enforcement Decree of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Presidential executive order # 28686 (2018)

[38] Paragraph (4) of Article 19 of the Enforcement Decree of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act states "Children who have returned to the Republic of Korea from abroad may, notwithstanding paragraph (1), enter or transfer to elementary schools which have established special classes for returning students, as prescribed by the Superintendent of an Office of Education"

[39] In France, all children are automatically assigned to the nearest public schools once the applications are submitted. There is no procedure to verify a child's identification. Through education-related legislations, countries like France, the UK, Italy, and Spain guarantee compulsory public education for all children living in their sovereign territory.

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[4. EDUCATION GAPS]



into regular schools (Young-min Lee, 2018.05.03). Other schools assign children with disabilities in the classes of low performance even though they do not have any issues with their cognitive ability (Ha-na Chang, 2017.10.29). On the other hand, some of the students with cognitive difficulties have said to have been taught with less advanced materials during class hours but later on tested at the same level of regular students (Seo-ho Seong, 2018.07.23).

Children with physical disabilities have only few options in choosing schools because they need access to facilities such as elevators and ramps and even if they do have such access, availability of (special education) assistant teachers also act as a key factor. Going to a school far from home cannot be an option either. People with disabilities often need to wait 2 to 3 hours to use taxi services catered to people with disabilities (Sang-hyeon Park, Seung-gu Kim, 2018.08.01). While there's nothing different about disabled children getting ready for school compared to children without disabilities, they need to wake up much earlier in order to use the taxi services. As a result, they give up going to schools distant from home because they might be late for school all the time. Assistive listening devices are given to support children with hearing impairments but even this has been of no help to individuals with severe hearing impairments.

### ⑤ Out-of-school juveniles

The number of dropout students had steadily decreased from 2011 through 2013. As of 2014, about 52,000 children have left school and were looking for career opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2015.09.09). Meanwhile, measures taken by the government had only been focusing on the preventive efforts for school dropouts and not much have been done to support out-of-school juveniles in terms of their career. Career support is mostly provided at school, so dropout children have very limited access to such opportunities to career development. More than one fourth of out-of-school juveniles have said they were facing difficulties in both planning their future career and also seeking actual jobs (In-jae Choi, 2015).

Paragraph 145 of the country report says “to resolve the juvenile school dropout issue, the government has established support systems, offering customized career guidance”. However, the support measures mostly through nationwide juvenile support centers (dream centers) have not been sufficient enough to help out-of-school juveniles (Ji-hye Noh, 2018). When comparing the services juveniles requested and that of those dream centers actually offered, the services provided have mostly not been enough to meet the demand in the areas such as GED test, counseling information (psychological counseling or career advice), school admission information, career plan counselling, vocational training and support, and certificate or license information (Cheol-gyeong Yoon, Seong-ki Kim, Hyeon-mi Kim, 2016). In addition, out-of-school juveniles either do not know much about who they should ask for help or become hesitant to reach out to the right person, in terms of career advice or plans for further studies (Cheol-gyeong Yoon, Jeong-ah Seo, Seong-ryeol Yoo, Ah-mi Cho, 2014).

Paragraph 146 of the country report also says the government is currently running alternative classes in schools and expanding commissioned alternative education institutions. However, the survey conducted by the authors (report authors, 2018) revealed only 17.8% of students were aware about these alternative classes and schools<sup>[40]</sup>. It turns out the government has failed to give enough information about the programs and had only few effects in preventing school dropouts. Therefore, educational facilities and support systems should be established to help students in choosing right types of education for themselves, have various career experiences, and get themselves ready for future career.

[40] refer to survey questionnaire 38





### 5. College Admission System

#### 1) Problem

There are 2 ways to get into college in Korea; regular and early admissions. Through non-scheduled admissions, universities accept students early, in consideration of various characteristics and experiences, for example, their school records, cover letters, and interviews in addition to their college entrance exam scores. Through non-scheduled admissions, universities select students using various admission systems including the admission officer system, the integrated or curriculum school records system, essay tests, and the special talent-based admission. Through regular admissions, students apply during a certain period after the non-scheduled admissions process. The entrance exam results matter the most with regular admissions. Although Korea's college admission process has changed in many aspects over the years, the admissions still rely heavily on test results and individuals' talents are being overlooked. 61.6% of students has said that they think the admission system is unfair, and 91.2% among the previous respondents have also said that the process were being highly "grade-based" and "doesn't take unique talents/characteristics into account" (report authors, 2018)<sup>[41]</sup>. Colleges that should respect children's interest and nurture their talents are rather using admission systems that undermine diversity.

30.5% of Korean children had experienced discrimination based on their "poor grades", showing that "academic achievement is still a major cause for discrimination among Korea's children and juveniles (Kyeong-jun Kim, Hee-jin Kim, Min-hee Lee, Yun-na Kim, 2014). Different from other types of discrimination that are often mentioned in the International community, discrimination based on academic achievement reflects Korea's unique social and cultural characteristics, which can be explained through the country's highly meritocratic college admission system that children must set as their life goal.

Under the current system, children are forced to participate in volunteer work or fill out their cover letter with meaningless activities they were once engaged with. Also, students are missing opportunity for self-realization or suffering from enormous pressure to get into a good college. Existing college admission policies in Korea that are violating the article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Goals of education, "Children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest") must be reformed to promote and protect child rights.

[41] refer to survey questionnaire 39 & 40



### 2) Words on the report vs. reality

Paragraph 144 of the country report says the government extended the “social integration admission system”, where schools are required to fill a certain proportion of their admission quota with students in vulnerable classes, to Meister high schools<sup>[42]</sup> and general high schools in non-normalized areas in 2017. Plans were also to continue to improve the tertiary education admission system with the aim of providing equal opportunities for students with disabilities, students from non-urban villages, students from low-income families, and working individuals who graduated from specialized high schools. However, some students who are not the residents of farming and fishing towns are abusing this special admission process and taking advantage of relatively less fierce competition to get into one of the country’s prestigious universities, failing the system’s initial purpose of providing more opportunities for students from non-urban villages. House prices have also soared in some non-urban areas after people got to know that type of houses (in this case apartments) were not a factor of disqualification for this admission process. It has resulted in children living in remote villages who are in actual need being secluded from such opportunities.

Vague criteria for qualifications and classifications of districts qualified as “non-urban villages” and the discrepancy between targeted sector and individuals who actually benefit from it all add to the problems this system entails (Yeong-un Kang, 2016.06.03).

Another problem is that there are cases where policies designed to help out socially disadvantaged are being violated, for example children without disability illegally fabricate their certificate and disguise themselves as being disabled to get into college (Yeong-mi Baek, 2018.01.25), measures to root out such misuse have never been covered in the country report.

Paragraph 150 of the country report says the government introduced the college admission officer system and the school-report-oriented screening system for college admission to reduce students’ reliance on private education and address inequalities in college admissions. These government measures are intended to select students who have faithfully finished their education rather than relying on private education by selecting students in consideration of various characteristics and experiences, for example, their school records, character, abilities, talents, and potential in addition to their admission test scores.

However, these measures are not enough to reduce children’s pressure and address issues in the country’s college admission process. In most cases, students with good grades are given opportunities to receive awards that can give advantage under the admission officer system. Teachers also write reference letters for these children. Therefore, children are still suffering from Korea’s highly performance-oriented culture despite the measures above. According to the survey conducted by the authors (report authors, 2018), many children (64.7%) said their character, abilities, talents, and potential are not being considered or respected during university admission processes<sup>[43]</sup>.

When asked whether they are satisfied with the admission officer system, children’s answer was somewhat neutral (2.65), which is in between “not satisfied (2)” and “satisfied (3)”<sup>[44]</sup>. Followings are the reasons they feel dissatisfied (report authors, 2018).

[42] a high school intended to nurture technical expertise in various areas through both vocational and regular education. There are Meister high schools in the technology areas including bio, semiconductor, automobile, electronics, machinery, robots, and communications. Inspired by Germany’s Meister-related systems, Meister high schools began operation starting on March 2nd, 2010 (Ministry of SMEs and Startups, 2010.11).

[43] refer to survey questionnaire 41

[44] refer to survey questionnaire 42

## II. We are suffering from academic pressure

[5. COLLEGE ADMISSION SYSTEM]



“

*“The ways to assess students’ personalities and talents are through paper applications and interviews. Interviews are all prepared around given questions priorly, and the required paperwork is merely just for the admission. Therefore, college admission systems are not for students to express and show their true self but to fit in to the standards that are given.”*

*“Vague standards that even differs from school to school; desired school records made through private education and big amount of investments; social structure vulnerable to corruption; and colleges expecting too much from students.”*

*“Better test scores could be attained through hard work. However other things (cover letter, interviews, etc.) depend heavily on your accessibility to information, the name of the school you go to and the help you get from private cram schools.”*

Survey Questionnaire 43

The results of the survey conducted by children authors (report authors, 2018) revealed many children are suffering from college admission policies obsessed with good test results and feeling discriminated. A staggering 47.7% of respondents said they are distressed<sup>[45]</sup>. The number of children experiencing discrimination increased<sup>[46]</sup> as they moved to upper schools (5.4% in elementary school, 19.4% in middle school, and 31.5% in high school).

The country report misses some important points that practical measures should take place to help out-of-school juveniles and children attending alternative schools wanting to get into college. It has become even harder for out-of-school juveniles to get into college through General Equivalency Diploma (GED) due to growing implementation of school-report-oriented screening system. Passing the qualification exam is the only way for children attending alternative schools to go to college. Ye-ji Kim, a 14-year-old girl interviewed by report authors attends an alternative school in Jeju island. She complained that her diploma is not recognized by the government, so she must take GED exams to go further in her studies.

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*“Since the government does not recognize an alternative school diploma, we must take the GED. It is very difficult to get into high school and college, and find a job.”*

Author group interview

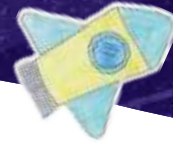
It is even harder for children outside the institutional education system to find information about university admission or academic counseling.

[45] refer to survey questionnaire 44

[46] refer to survey questionnaire 45



# III. Our wish list



## 1 Health · Rest · Leisure

### <What we hope for>

- ① A world where we can play at playtimes and rest at rest times.
- ② A world where we can have dinner with our families, not studying until late at night.

### <Recommendations>

- ① Educate adults to ensure Korean children's right to play and rest, which are being violated.
- ② Build local communities that can ensure children's leisure time, establish legislations and institutions to help children play safely.
- ③ The Government effort to build leisure facilities that match children's development level and help them enjoy active and energetic leisure activities, maintain safety of the facilities.
- ④ Realize the importance of emotional stability as well as physical health. The government needs to create and implement training programs for children's emotional cultivation and stability.

## 2 Civil Rights and Freedoms

### <What we hope for>

- ① A world where children are ensured and encouraged to exercise civil rights.
- ② A world where rights to participate are ensured regardless of academic achievement.
- ③ A world where children's personal information including school grades and privacy are protected.

### <Recommendations>

- ① To protect students rights, please amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to establish legal base of student human rights ordinances.
  - ✓ Encourage local governments to establish student human rights ordinances.
  - ✓ Specify obligations of schools and teachers in the articles of student human rights ordinances.
  - ✓ Regularly review the implementation of student human rights ordinances (disclose and record how students participate in school activities, do not disclose children's private records (including grades) without individual consent).
  - ✓ Raise awareness of student human rights ordinances through training and publicity efforts among children, teachers, and parents.
- ② Ensure student participation in school activities.
  - ✓ Ensure child participation in the process of regularly monitoring school rules.
  - ✓ Appoint students as school governing committee members.
- ③ Strictly protect anonymity of evaluators of the teacher appraisal.

### III. Our wish list

#### 3 Public Education

##### <What we hope for>

- ① A world where excessive private education violating child rights disappears.
- ② A world where rote memorization is replaced with the education system that reflects students' diverse interests and views.
- ③ A world where students are not discriminated in educational opportunities based on academic achievement.
- ④ A world where career education under the public education system is not carried out in the perfunctory manner, and it helps students choose and develop their career path.
- ⑤ A world where children can learn based on balanced curriculum rather than only focusing on major subjects.<sup>[47]</sup>

##### <Recommendations>

- ① Enhance monitoring on the implementation of article 8 section 3 "prohibit prior learning and activities that encourage prior learning" in the Special Act on the Normalization of Public Education and Regulation of Prior Learning<sup>[48]</sup>.
- ② Improve efficiency of the Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) and afterschool programs that the government is vitalizing to normalize public education.
- ③ Reorganize school curriculums to keep the class hours of certain subjects that are being neglected.
- ④ Come up with specific implementing ordinances for the articles prohibiting educational discrimination stated in the 「Basic Education Act」, article 4<sup>[49]</sup>.
- ⑤ To vitalize diverse and quality career training that reflects children's views, create new plans for career education.
  - ✓ Reflect children's views in designing and running free-semester programs.
  - ✓ Create measures to address the widening gaps among regions in running free semester systems.
  - ✓ Help make career training sustainable by expanding unidimensional free semester systems into entire career training programs.

[47] In general, Korean, English, Mathematics, Science, Social studies, and Korean history are considered mandatory subjects for the college entrance exam.

[48] No school shall engage in the following acts:

- ① Including questions for an examination, such as a written test or performance test, from any content beyond the scope and level of the curriculum of students in ascertain grade to assess such students' scholastic achievements;
- ② Including questions for any of internal competitions from any content beyond the scope and level of the curriculum of students in a certain grade to assess such students' scholastic achievements;
- ③ Other acts specified by Presidential Decree as similar to those specified above.

[49] ① No citizen shall be treated with discrimination in education for reasons of gender, religion, faith, race, social standing, economic status, or physical conditions, etc.

- ② The State and local governments shall prepare and implement policies for minimizing gaps in educational conditions, such as achieving a balance between supply of and demand for teachers among regions, to enable learners to gain access to equal opportunities in education.



### 4 Education Gaps

#### <What we hope for>

A world where all children in Korea are given equal opportunities for education regardless of cultural backgrounds, parents' nationality, disabilities, and school attendance.

#### <Recommendations>

- ① To improve education quality in less-advantaged communities, distribute sufficient human / material resources and narrow regional education gaps by increasing subsidies on education welfare for less-advantaged areas.
- ② Increase educational facilities nationwide to ensure educational opportunities regardless of parents' background or nationality, and raise public awareness of the facilities.
- ③ Trim down admission procedures to provide equal educational opportunities for undocumented children, and ensure their right to compulsory education by amending legislations.
- ④ Establish special education schools nationwide by creating positive perception toward children with disabilities and continuously supporting human / material resources, ensure welfare of children with disabilities at regular schools.
- ⑤ Build more alternative schools nationwide for out-of-school juveniles, raise public awareness, prepare measures for these students' career development and follow-up support to ensure educational opportunities for them.

### 5 College Admission System

#### <What we hope for>

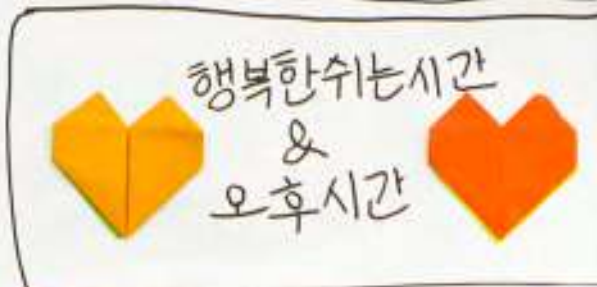
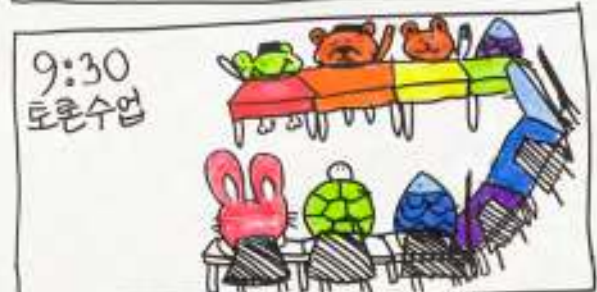
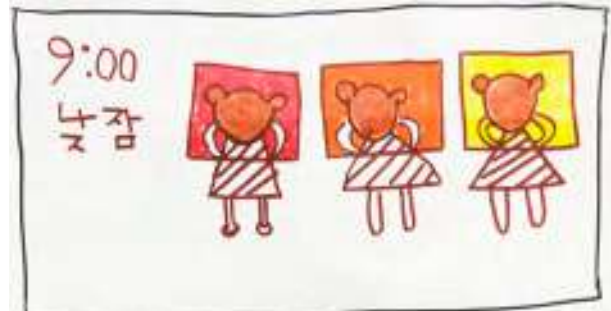
- ① A world where children's individual talents and characteristics other than test scores are considered in college admissions.
- ② A world where the college admission process meets children's needs, not children adjusting themselves to existing admission policies.
- ③ A world where children do not suffer from college admission policies or are being discriminated based on academic achievement.

#### <Recommendations>

- ① Prepare measures to ensure children's right to participate in the process of designing admission policies and to express their opinions.
- ② Introduce and amend measures and legislations to address the issues of existing admission policies that cannot consider all children (unregistered children, students attending alternative schools, disabled children, children living in rural communities)'s personality, abilities, talents, and potential.
- ③ Enhance monitoring on the social integration admission system to make sure it is not being abused, investigate into current situations whether the system is being implemented as planned.
- ④ Actively monitor whether child rights are being violated due to existing admission policies, create a system where children can raise problems when their rights are being violated.



### III. Our wish list



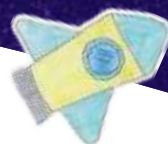
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# CHILD VOICE

