

The Evolution of Education in South Korea: Cultural Influences, Historical Context, and the Rise of Smart Learning

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Annotation. *This thesis explores the intricate relationship between culture, language, and education in South Korea, tracing the historical development of its educational system from the Joseon Dynasty to the present day. It highlights the pivotal role of education as a guarantor of cultural preservation and societal advancement, particularly during periods of crisis and transformation. The study examines the evolution of educational policies, the impact of foreign influences, and the emergence of private educational institutions, including hagwons. Furthermore, it delves into the contemporary shift towards smart learning, driven by advancements in information technology, and its implications for individualized education. By analyzing the socio-cultural context and the ongoing reforms in South Korea's education system, this research underscores the importance of education in shaping the nation's intellectual capital and fostering a competitive workforce in the global arena.*

Key words: *South Korea, education system, cultural influences, historical development, smart learning, information technology, hagwons, educational reforms, language, societal advancement.*

INTRODUCTION.

The culture of a society is the result of a long history. The moral, intellectual, economic, and cultural potential of a society significantly depends on the state of the educational sphere and the possibilities of its timely and sustainable development. Culture influences the education system's development, reform, and improvement, especially in times of crisis in certain historical periods. In modern conditions, education plays a special role as a guarantor of the future, a decisive factor in preserving culture, and developing all spheres of life. Realizing its communicative and value function by transmitting existing knowledge and spiritual values to a person through language, in which fundamental cultural and historical values are accumulated, education communicates a system of special knowledge and communicative competencies that ensure his or her vital stability and harmony with society. The role of language in the cultural educational process of South Korea is quite large. Knowledge of the Korean language is considered mandatory for foreign students, who are additionally allocated one year to study it, although a significant part of educational programs in Korea involves teaching in English. The historical interaction of language, culture, and education in the history of an ethnic group should generally be considered in a comprehensive diachronic aspect. Changes in culture in the process of development of Korean society led to the

emergence of the institution of education - a certain sphere of society with its own institutions, charter, officials - teachers. Korea has a long history of a formal education system that preserves and develops the national language and culture. Education in Korea has traditionally been given great importance, since for many centuries it was the main means of increasing social status and a successful career [1]. During the reign of the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), despite the lack of a state-supported primary education system, the government established a system of schools in Seoul and the provinces. The quality of education provided in such schools had shortcomings and in the 16th century they were replaced by academies - "sowons". Higher education was only available at the capital's Confucian National University, Sungkyunkwan Daehakkyo (성균관대학교). Its annual intake was 200 students who had passed the lower civic duty exam and were ready to take subsequent exams. Students from both private and public schools actively participated in the country's political and cultural life [2].

The social privileges of Korean students at that time were similar to those of students today. In particular, students were exempt from military service. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, private schools were organized by both Koreans themselves and Christian missionaries. The missionaries spread Western social and political ideology and promoted education for women [3: 98-100]. Since the end of 1910, the education system has been focused on teaching subjects that develop technical skills, which was a consequence of the Japanese educational policy pursued at that time. In 1923, a national university was opened in Seoul, similar to Tokyo Imperial University. A strict ratio of 40% and 60% for Korean and Japanese students, respectively, was established [4]. During the occupation of southern Korea by US troops in 1945, the American education system was adopted: students spent six years in elementary school, six years in junior and senior schools, and four years in higher education. Education was compulsory up to the ninth grade. The American government pursued a policy of introducing a Western education system similar to that of Japan. Since 1948, under the regime of Syngman Rhee (이승만), many of these reforms were cancelled, and education became compulsory only up to the sixth grade. During the rule of Rhee and Park Chung-hee (박정희) (1963-1979), the functions of education control were transferred to the state Ministry of Education [2]. Until the mid-1970s, so-called social education was actively practiced in South Korea. Social education implied independent paid classes for students with tutors to review the material covered, engage in art, sports, learn how to count on an abacus, etc. In the late 1980s, the Ministry of Education was given responsibility for funding schools, managing them, issuing quotas for admission to educational institutions, certifying teachers and schools, developing curricula, etc. The state, represented by local administrations and institutions, took control of the social security of educational institutions into its own hands. Thus, the state began to participate positively in the educational process. The reforms of 1990 basically returned to the order established during the American occupation [5].

Nowadays, the Ministry of Education and Personnel Management is responsible for education issues in South Korea. In 2001, priority was given to citizens receiving a quality education, harmonious development of the individual, and the powers of the ministry were expanded. The government's priority direction of investment in "human resources" has resulted in outstanding

economic and technological achievements of South Korea. The national education program has achieved significant success over the years of its existence. Thus, if in 1945 22% of citizens were literate; by 1970 - 87.6%, then in the 1980s - 93%. If government spending on education in 1975 amounted to 220 billion won, 13.9% of the budget, then in 1986 they grew to 3.76 trillion won, or 27.3% of the budget [6]. The traditional respect for an educated person, preserved from Confucian times, has reached the present day, and today in South Korea it is enjoyed by scientists and workers in various technical professions. The breakthrough in economic development can be almost entirely attributed to highly educated technocrats and economists who have had access to the country's governance since the 1960s [7]. South Korean students perform well in international competitions in mathematics and the exact sciences, which is a consequence of the traditional preference given to scientific professions, which have been considered the most prestigious in Korea since the 1980s. A high-quality education of a citizen is of decisive importance for successful career growth. The Korean state builds and controls the educational process of the child. Priority is given to the Korean and English languages, mathematics, the exact sciences and social sciences, physical education is not considered an educational subject. In public schools, education is provided on a budget and contract basis. Schools offer free singing, dancing and drawing courses. Along with public elementary schools, private schools successfully operate in South Korea. They have a larger teaching staff for a smaller number of students, have additional subjects and somewhat higher educational standards and relatively high tuition fees. Supplementary education in private educational institutions - "hagwons" (Korean: 학원) is very popular.

Some hagwons specialize in only one subject, while others specialize in all major subjects. In 1996, the government introduced the name chodeung hakkyo (Korean: 초등학교?, 初等學校?), which translates as "elementary school," replacing the previous name gukmin hakkyo (국민학교, 國民學校), which translated means "civil school." The renaming served as a gesture of restoring national pride. The word, 국민학교, is an abbreviation of "hwangguksinmin hakkyo" (황국신민의학교, 皇國臣民의學校), "school of imperial subjects" which remains from the time when Korea was under the control of Imperial Japan [7: 105-111]. Children attend elementary school from the ages of 7 to 13. General education subjects are taught by a class teacher, but individual specialized subjects may be delegated to other teachers (for example, physical education or foreign language classes). In middle school - "chunhakyo" (중학교, 中學校) the education lasts 3 years. The requirements for middle school students are much higher compared to elementary school. There are strict rules governing the dress code and hairstyle. Students spend most of the day in one classroom, as in elementary school. All subjects are taught by different teachers, who move from class to class. Teachers teaching "special" subjects have their own classrooms. Homeroom teachers (Hangul: 담임선생님, "tamim seongsaengnim") play an important role in the lives of students and have great authority. Lessons last 45 minutes. Before the first lesson, students are given half an hour for personal matters or class activities, as well as for self-study, watching educational programs on a special channel (Educational Broadcast System, EBS). The school week ("shayut") lasts from Monday to Friday, as well as the first, third and fifth Saturdays of the month. On Saturdays, children engage in additional creative activities [8]. Many children attend additional

education courses after classes - “hagwons” (circles), or study with private tutors, priority is given to mathematics, Korean and a foreign (English) language. Higher education plays an important role in the lives of South Koreans. Upon graduation, students receive licenses that allow them to take up high-paying jobs. Students enter kodeunghakkyo (고등학교, 高等學校) high schools as freshmen at the age of 17 and graduate after the third grade at the age of 19.

Discussion.

High schools are divided into public and private, divided into specialized departments that correspond to the interests of a particular student and coincide with his or her career path. There are "science" high schools, foreign language schools, and art schools, which require passing fairly difficult entrance exams. Such schools do not provide specialization and are designed to prepare children for college. The schedule of higher education institutions is extremely busy, the curriculum includes up to eleven subjects. The list of core disciplines includes Korean and English languages, mathematics, natural and social sciences. Specific subjects and the level of their teaching vary in educational institutions depending on their specialization [9]. Obtaining a higher education in South Korea is not compulsory. For students who are unable to study in college, there are vocational schools specializing in agriculture, finance, etc. Students can enter vocational schools immediately after high school. The highest priority is given to admission to a prestigious educational institution, and the entrance examination process itself is quite intense. According to OECD estimates, 97 percent of young Koreans graduated from high school in 2005. This is the highest percentage among other countries [10]. There are about 400 higher education institutions in South Korea, which attract students from all over the world. There are both private and public educational institutions, among which several of the best and most prestigious universities in Asia stand out. Seoul National University emphasizes social, natural and technical sciences, environmental and engineering programs, veterinary science and music. Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology specializes in mathematics, engineering, chemistry, physics, electrical engineering. There are “science” high schools (Science), foreign language schools and art schools, which require passing fairly difficult entrance examinations. These schools do not provide specialization and are designed to prepare children for college. The schedule of higher education institutions is extremely busy, with curricula including up to eleven subjects. The list of core subjects includes Korean and English languages, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences. Specific subjects and the level of their teaching vary in educational institutions depending on their specialization [9]. Higher education is not compulsory in South Korea. For students who are unable to attend college, there are vocational schools specializing in agriculture, finance, and other fields. Students can enroll in vocational schools directly after high school. The highest priority is given to enrolling in a prestigious institution, and the entrance exam process itself is quite intense. According to OECD estimates, 97 percent of young Koreans graduated from high school in 2005. This is the highest percentage among other countries [10]. There are about 400 higher education institutions in South Korea, which attract students from all over the world. There are both private and public academic institutions, among which several of the best and most prestigious universities in Asia stand out. Seoul National University emphasizes social, natural, and technical sciences, environmental and engineering programs, veterinary science, and music. Korea Advanced Institute of Science and

Technology specializes in mathematics, engineering, chemistry, physics, electrical engineering, biotechnology, IT, humanities, journalism, political science, and intellectual property management. Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH), a private university, conducts research and scientific activities in the field of technology and technical disciplines – POSTECH's priority. Yonsei University is a private elite research center, with many English-language educational courses, including an MBA business program. Ewha Womans University is a non-governmental women's university, where students study humanities, social and natural sciences, engineering, music, pedagogy, law, and design. Applicants are required to provide certificates confirming their level of language proficiency: TOPIK – Korean, and TOEFL or IELTS – English. Most universities in Korea use liberal educational standards, there are no strict curricula, and students independently choose both general and specialized disciplines, and the volume and level of acquired competencies depend on the student's priorities and responsibility. There is no seminar form of classes in the curriculum. However, Russian seminars largely resemble the formats of lectures in South Korean universities. Thus, in order to quickly learn, briefly present information and prepare students for effective public speaking, students prepare and present speeches on specific issues of the topic being studied. During the lesson, such speeches form a general picture of the lecture. Another lecture format is a lively scientific discussion of students, where the teacher, as a moderator, sets and identifies topics for discussion, asks leading questions, illustrates situations with examples, and encourages statements. As a result, the educational material is firmly learned. Strong emotions contribute to long-term memorization of one's thoughts, arguments, and the opponent's logic. The level of preparation is assessed not by the amount of information learned, notes and attendance, but by the ability to apply the acquired knowledge in practice: real projects, solving cases, demonstrating the ability to use theoretical knowledge in various situations. There are three government programs to support students in the country: Korean Government Scholarship – a long-term scholarship aimed at foreign students, monthly scholarship holders receive from 800,000 won to 900,000 won (Scholarship includes payment for travel and language courses for students from other countries); Support program for Self-financed students – designed to help foreign students with high academic performance adapt to local realities. The annual scholarship offers monthly payments of 500,000 won; the Korean Government Support Program for Foreign Exchange Students is designed for six months or a year with a monthly payment of 800,000 won, payment for air tickets (about 2,000,000 won) and medical insurance. With the increasing speed and unpredictability of technological changes, the growing influence of urbanization on the socio-demographic structure of society, problems of national and linguistic identification, universalization in the way of life and performance of labor functions, a change in priority political and social values, an increase in the population, life expectancy, etc. is predicted. At the same time, it is assumed that the apprenticeship period will lengthen. Growing up, children and young people will largely acquire social experience, using the achievements of the information-network society, and competition between people will mainly focus on the right to work in the cyberspace of cities. In this regard, the changes taking place in all areas of the education system are primarily based on the use of information technology (IT) in education. A carefully organized education system in South Korea provides favorable conditions for the successful implementation of a set of

information technologies in education. The education system quickly responds to such changes and easily cultivates them. IT is successfully integrated into various aspects of the education system (policy, budget, curricula, advanced training, scientific research). The traditions of Korean education include a desire to integrate society's knowledge into work and education. Thus, access to knowledge is open to the general public. In order to improve the work of the education system, its response to the society's needs for knowledge, in 1999 the information service (KERIS) was founded, and changes were made to the education system [11: 100-101]. Over the past years, KERIS has developed large educational and academic projects in South Korea, such as "Edunet" - information and educational services for students in primary and secondary schools. Until now, the main educational function of the school was to convey the knowledge accumulated in the course of historical development, as well as social knowledge preserved in the culture of the people. Generalization of the experience of using IT in education begins to cultivate a new intelligence necessary for successful, knowledge-based activities of society [12: 89-92]. The next change is the focus on the process of educating students. In an industrial society, standardized textbooks and methods are used to teach students with different abilities and inclinations. In a knowledge-based society, the focus of education should be on the individuality of the student. The third change is the introduction of creative and independent methods. The new knowledge-based society lives by knowledge that takes into account many factors, such as real life with different situations and problems. The IT complex is aimed at a social paradigm shift to the level of top managers. The government supported the decision to adopt a long-term plan for IT in education, which led to the active implementation of IT in the field of education. The most frequently mentioned problem that arises when integrating IT in education is the insufficient number of computers. Countries that allocate significant budgets for the development of the information component in education, as a rule, have developed technological infrastructures. Such countries successfully overcome budget constraints and are able to provide a modern educational infrastructure. However, in addition to sufficient financial resources for IT, there must be expertise in identifying the appropriate hardware and software requirements to maintain an adequate infrastructure as a whole. The introduction of IT in education was carried out under the three-year IT Infrastructure Construction Plan (1997-99) and was revised in accordance with the plan for the use of IT in elementary and middle schools (1998-2002). Under the Cyber Korea program (1999-2002), personal computers were supplied free of charge to all schools in the country, and digital services were also provided to socially vulnerable groups of the population: pensioners, housewives, military personnel, the disabled, and prisoners [14]. In 2000, the Ministry of Education adopted a budget for the implementation of a comprehensive plan for the use of IT in education. As a result, for the first time in the world, all elementary and middle schools were connected to local area networks and the Internet, and more than 13,000 computer laboratories are used by teachers and students in these schools. Computers are provided to each of the 340,000 teachers. All 222,000 classrooms are equipped with personal computers and multimedia equipment, thanks to which primary and secondary schools use the Internet as a teaching and methodological resource [13]. South Korea became the first country in the world to provide high-speed Internet access to all educational institutions in the country, from primary schools to universities. Universal connection of schools, universities and libraries to the

Internet contributed to the implementation of the e-education system. The university network of centers for such education has been significantly expanded, providing the opportunity to study using modern information and communication technologies in any place at any time. The country has adopted the National Standard of Information Metadata in Education, which is the basis for the content of e-courses. E-learning is actively used in all educational institutions: 83% of universities have implemented a distance teaching system, 17 online universities (cyber universities) have been created, with 40 thousand students studying. The Republic is one of the world leaders in the use of information and communication technologies in education [15; 16]. The management of the information infrastructure in these universities is centralized: a single technical support service, centralized network administration, and uniform rules for all users. The universities use modern equipment: server stations, communication nodes, backup and failure protection systems. This approach seems convenient and effective. Students have remote access to all educational resources, free unlimited Internet access. To identify a student on the territory of the universities and to access various resources, a single student/employee identification card with a bar code is used, which functions as a bank card, a library card, a pass to restricted areas, a means of payment, including in payment machines, etc. [17: 68-70]. The libraries of universities that support electronic education are equipped with reading rooms with a large number of computers providing access to electronic resources, audio and video materials, and a high level of automation of reader services. Availability of special equipment for students with disabilities, video surveillance and protection from unauthorized access. All of the above indicates the introduction of completely new technologies in the field of education in South Korea. This has led to a qualitative change in the content of education and, consequently, its forms and methods. Professional mass classroom education, with its stages (primary, secondary, higher) thanks to technology functionally covers the entire society, which, due to its focus on a person, is increasingly taking on the features of individual learning, allowing for a harmonious combination of the student's personal goals and socially significant goals of society. Thus, in modern conditions, when educational activity captures almost all spheres of life, extending to free time and leisure, conditions are created to ensure a harmonious combination of the student's personal goals and socially significant goals in the interaction of culture and education. The main competencies of a student of the third millennium will be the skill of self-organization of activities, and of a teacher - the ability to build an individual trajectory of the student's education and support his development. In this regard, there is a need for new methods and forms of education that preserve the best of the accumulated traditions and create adequate principles for the younger generation to enter a new era. It is assumed that the structure and structure of educational institutions will change completely. They will turn into year-round educational and information centers. Virtual schools, universities, and academies based on distance learning technologies are already emerging. The most experienced, highly qualified teachers with unique knowledge in individual subjects will teach the population. The main principles of future education will be individualization and self-education. Priority will remain for the development of a person's ability to continuously learn throughout life. A person at any age will plan their education program, being both a teacher and a student. The child's health will be regularly monitored, their vision, hearing, and other organs will be maintained in constant readiness to learn new things, and the children's

abilities will develop taking into account their psychophysical characteristics. Confident use of information and communication technologies becomes key for a student, and for a teacher - the ability to develop electronic teaching and methodological complexes and effectively use digital educational resources. Education is becoming digital, like IT and communication, requiring further strengthening of the education system based on consumer demands. An innovative reform of the South Korean education system to solve problems in this direction is smart education technology. Smart learning is interpreted as a new education system that arose from the development of IT and one of the reforms in the education system that arose from the development of IT. It was preceded by electronic (E-Learning), mobile (MLearning) and ubiquitous (U-Learning) learning, developed at the beginning of the 21st century. Smart education implements the goals of inclusiveness and differentiation, the highest levels of understanding of content, motivates students to build and activate their knowledge. The modern world of digital information makes smart education independent of spatial or temporal limitations. There is a certain transformation of the educational process itself into a product demonstrating knowledge. The main aspect of smart education is the creation of an open and flexible educational environment, which implies the use of open educational resources and management systems, the use of various specialized gadgets. Smart education implies a new concept of education: the teacher ceases to be the main source of information for the student, he takes on the functions of a coordinator and leader of the educational process. Students can access instructional content anywhere and at any time. The educational materials include media files, mobile applications, presentations, electronic manuals, etc. Smart learning is based on “emotional technologies” that focus on the qualitative and quantitative effects of learning, using the curiosity and activity of students. The technological platform for smart learning is the “cloud computing” model, which provides ubiquitous and convenient network access to a common pool of configurable computing resources: data networks, servers, data storage devices, applications and services [18]. The development of innovative educational technologies in South Korea began in 1997. Today, the Republic of Korea ranks first in the implementation of a web-based intelligent environment in terms of educational services received by consumers. This means that a world-class information infrastructure has been created, which contributes to the country's leadership in the field of smart learning and makes education digital and effective. The Korea Education and Research Information Service is contributing to the opening of the first smart school. The work of the KERIS organization is aimed at strengthening the informatization of school education, increasing the competitiveness of scientific research by expanding it in the academic sphere, raising the level of educational institutions based on information technology support and strengthening the educational brand of Korea, its status in the context of globalization. KERIS builds a cloud infrastructure, initializes smart educational platforms, creates intelligent systems for distributing educational content, forms and servicing cloud infrastructure, etc. Various educational content has been developed, like a service platform by both public and private organizations. It is planned to replace existing teaching methods with the functioning of selective specialized systems. This will entail personality-oriented education based on the level of competencies and interests of the student. The government has created an information strategy plan for the dissemination of smart education based on the cloud environment as the largest project in South Korea. Twenty-one

Korean universities are already practicing some of the best cyber lectures in the world. The KERIS Center operates ten Open Course Ware (KOCW) centers across the country to support them. In addition, KOCW operates a free website (www.kocw.net) for viewing online lectures by domestic and foreign scholars.

Along with promoting smart learning, the importance of digitalization of information and promotion services, the security of teaching methods using content and databases is becoming increasingly apparent. There is a shortage of materials used by teachers in preparing lessons, forcing them to rely only on the Internet. At the same time, the EBS Education Channel has established and actively promoted the production of diverse educational and cultural contents to improve the quality of education, develop human potential, and lead the country to further progress. The channel aims to create high-quality content that is accessible for active and lifelong education. Their intellectual property covers children's programs such as Pororo, secondary education in addition to national educational and cultural programs such as documentaries. EBS also plans to provide around 40,000 additional clips this year to accompany the curriculum with five-minute clips that will be included in the Educational Digital Resource Bank (EDRB).

The implementation of IT actively contributes to the production of diverse educational and cultural content to improve the quality of education, develop human potential and lead the country to further progress. Its goal is to create high-quality content that is accessible for immediate and continuous education. Work is actively progressing on the project "School of the Future 2030", within the framework of which the design of models of smart education institutions is being developed. Students can choose the type of activity and time of study. Education is becoming more and more individualized, knowledge is becoming generally available to everyone. The student becomes an active consumer of knowledge. Here, schoolchildren can flexibly use their knowledge and skills and create products through innovative thinking. There are various types of classes, such as media classes, where students can create and share numerous media materials. Virtual classrooms where you can conduct experiments that are difficult to implement in reality, and experimental production spaces where you can study art, literature, natural sciences, etc. in an integrated manner.

Conclusion.

Thus, having gone through a long historical path of development, at the present stage of public life, education in Korea creates the most important social sphere of culture, requiring careful planning and significant public investment, playing a decisive role in the accumulation and development of intellectual capital in all areas of human activity. Smart learning is implemented in almost all areas of education, so it can be attributed to the anthropocentric-oriented approach in educating the priorities of students, it gives them the opportunity to study without restrictions. As an innovative system, smart education, which arose from the development of information technology, meets the prospects of the twenty-first century. Motivating students to rationally build and activate the acquired knowledge, it largely implements the goals of inclusiveness and differentiation of learning, provides high levels of understanding of the content. The main factor in the successful implementation of the new educational system is the desire of Koreans to receive high-quality education.

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