

# Country Report : Korea

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## 1.1 The system of Korean Higher Education

Institutions of higher education in Korea are established in three ways. National institutions are founded, administered, and financially supported by the national government, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development. Public institutions are founded, administered, and financially supported by local governments. Private colleges and universities are founded and administered by individuals or organizations. Financial resources for this type of institution come from individuals, organizations, and tuitions fees as well as government funds. Higher education institutions in Korea can be categorized into 10 groups: 1) universities, 2) industrial universities, 3) universities of education, 4) junior colleges, 5) Air and Correspondence Universities, 6) Cyber colleges and universities, 7) technical colleges, 8) Colleges in company, 9) graduate school colleges, and 10) other miscellaneous institutions. Table 1 presents number of institution, faculty, and enrollment by types of institution as of 2004.

It can be said that the higher education system in Korea is rather centralized in that important matters regarding administration of higher education institutions including criteria for the foundation of colleges and universities, the establishment of academic department, student quota, faculty hiring, credit hours, and degree conferring, follow the laws and ordinances of education. Other matters usually follow school regulations of individual institutions. The ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is the major government agency that plays a significant role in overseeing and coordinating higher education policies.

**Table1. Summary Statistics of Higher Education by Types of Institution**

	Institutions	Enrollments	Faculty	Student-Faculty Ratio
<b>University</b>				
National	24	376,413	11,974	31.44
Public	2	20,939	529	39.58
Private	145	1,439,297	34,502	41.72
Sub-total	171	1836649	47005	39.07
<b>Univ. of Education</b>				
National	11	23,335	756	30.87
<b>Air &amp; Corr. University</b>				
National	1	290,728	123	2363.64
<b>Industrial University</b>				
National	8	86,892	1399	62.11
Private	10	102,143	1144	89.29
Sub-total	18	189,035	2,543	74.34
<b>Technical College</b>				
Private	1	196	0	
<b>Miscellaneous School</b>				
Undergraduate Course	4	1,064	30	35.47
Junior College Course	1	89	5	17.80
Sub-total	5	1,153	35	32.94
<b>Cyber College &amp; University</b>				
Undergraduate Course	15	36,716	276	133.03
Junior College Course	2	2,734	21	130.19
Sub-total	17	39,450	297	132.83
<b>Junior College</b>				
National	7	14,721	374	39.36
Public	8	24,026	357	67.30
Private	143	858,842	11,141	77.09
Sub-total	158	897,589	11,872	75.61
<b>College in Company</b>				
Private	1	62	0	
<b>Graduate School College</b>				
Private	28			
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>3278197</b>	<b>62631</b>	<b>39.53**</b>

The Korean Council for University Education (KCUE) is another agency in charge of coordination of higher education. The Korean Council for University Education, which is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, is a national advisory body established in 1982 in order to promote cooperation among membership universities in Korea. Currently, two hundred and three 4-year universities in Korea are members of KCUE by the law mandatorily. Major functions of KCUE are: 1) to conduct institutional and program assessment of universities, 2) to coordinate and hold consultations of college admissions policies and practices and to provide information of college admissions to the public, and 3) to develop and conduct in-service programs for faculty and administrative staffs. KCUE also play a crucial role in mediating between the central government and the university community with regard to formulating higher education policies.

## 1.2. Recent reforms in higher education policies and higher education institutions

### *Backgrounds of recent reforms in higher education policies*

During the last several decades, Korea has made tremendous strides in its higher education. The number of higher education institutions in Korea increased from 142 in 1970 to 411 in 2004. During the same period, the number of students in colleges and universities increased by about 17.7 times (from 201,436 to 3,555,115). The number of faculty in post-secondary institutions also increased greatly from 10, 435 in 1970 to 62,631 in 2004 (Please see Table 2).

This rapid growth of high education has contributed to the national development enormously. Access to higher education has been expanded greatly, which is reflected in the remarkable progress in the entrance ratio of general high school students to colleges and universities (Figure 1). More than anything else, quality workers who benefited from higher education played a significant role in developing Korea, which was trying

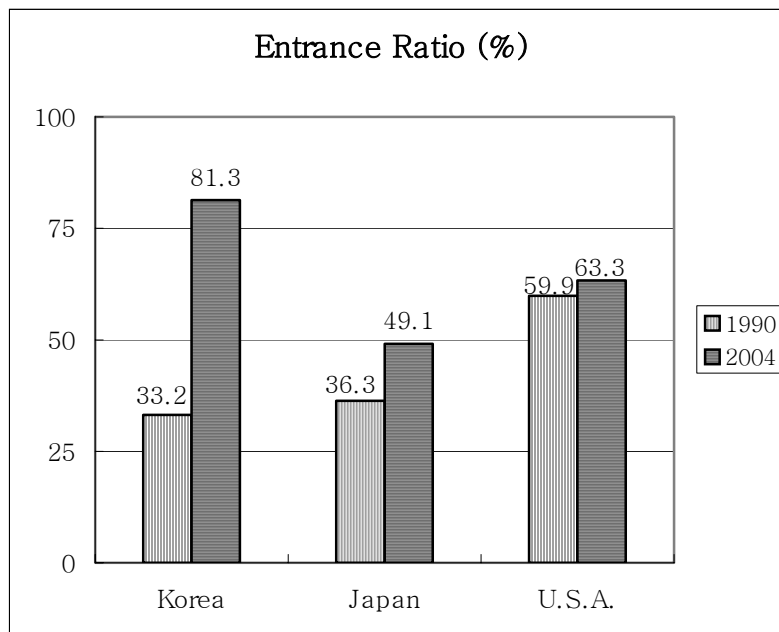
to making a transition from a agricultural country to an industrialized one.

**Table 2. Growth of Higher Education from 1970 to 2004**

Year	No of Institutions	Enrollment	No. of Faculty	Student-Faculty Ratio
1970	142	201,436	10,435	19.30
1975	205	238,719	11,416	20.91
1980	343	601,494	20,900	28.78
1985	262	1,277,825	33,895	37.70
1990	270	1,691,681	41,920	40.35
1995	333	2,343,894	58,977	39.74
2000	372	3,363,549	56,903	59.11
2004	411	3,555,115	62,631	56.76

Source: Educational Statistics, KEDI

**Figure 1. Entrance Ratio of High School Students to College By Nation**



However, the rapid growth of higher education brought several problems. A major drawback of the rapid growth is that a quantitative expansion was not accompanied by a qualitative advance in higher education. While colleges and universities sprang up across the nation, backed by public and private expectations about higher education, conditions of higher education has not been improved. It has

been pointed out that contrary to our expectations, some indicators such as student-faculty ratio show that conditions of higher education have been rather deteriorated (Please see Table 2). The Korean higher education community is now faced with public criticism that Korean higher education is not responsive to public demands any longer, nor is it internally competitive. In particular, the advent of informationalization and globalization invites new challenges to colleges and universities. As the world moves on from an industrial society to a knowledge-based society, colleges and universities should provide such education that can equip students with knowledge and capabilities required for an informationalized society. Globalization requires higher education to provide such education that meets the global standard. In a globalized society, colleges and universities have to compete with institutions not only in their home country but also in other countries around the world.

Continuing decrease in the college-bound population is another major challenge to colleges and universities in Korea. According to recent population growth projections, college-bound population (age 18-21) will drop from 3,278,000 in 2000 to 2,336,000 in 2020. The number will go down further to 1,511,000 in 2030. This huge drop in college-bound population means that colleges and universities will undergo fierce competition with each other in order to recruit students. Decrease in college-bound population is a huge threat to Korean colleges and universities, especially for private institutions and institutions located outside the Seoul metropolitan area; because these types of institutions have disproportionate difficulties in recruiting students and securing their financial conditions.

#### *Recent Reforms of higher education at the national level*

Recent reforms of higher education at the national level can be summarized by the following four projects: 1) The Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project; 2) The NURI Project;

3) The Study Korea Project; 4) The Plan for Restructuring higher education institutions.

(a) Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project

The Brain Korea (BK) 21 Project is a governmental funding project for enhancing the international competitiveness of Korean universities. The BK 21 project focuses on nurturing highly qualified R&D manpower through concentrating governmental funds on education and research activities at graduate schools. Specifically, the BK 21 project aims to develop world-class graduate schools by boosting research capabilities. It also aims to develop specialized regional universities and to increase collaboration between universities and industry. Finally this project aims to reform university system including admission system, faculty review system, and university management system. This multi-year funding project is planned to allocate \$1.2 billion over 7 years (from 1999 to 2005).

The BK 21 project has been implemented based on the following principles: 1) allocating fund based on “selection and concentration,” 2) more financial support for advanced applied fields, 3) university reform as a prerequisite to funding, 4) investing more than 50 percent of funding to graduate students, and 5) strengthening the tie between universities and industry. In addition, it is notable that the BK21 fund is allocated primarily base on ‘research team’ rather than individual university. This team-based feature of the BK21 funding makes it easier to clarify the goal of the program and to assess the performance of the beneficiary of the BK21 fund.

With the announcement of the project in June 1999, the fund has been invested in the field of science and technology, plus in the field of humanities and social science. The BK 21 money has been also allocated to regional universities and to facilities for the exclusive use of graduate schools in the BK 21 project. Eleven specialized graduate schools and 317 project teams were selected to receive financial support. These groups

currently undergo annual and interim assessment. Summary of research teams selected for the BK 21 project is as follows:

- ▶ Science and Technology  
: 26 Primary Project Teams from 14 universities (22 cooperative groups)
- ▶ Humanities and Social Science  
: 18 Primary Project Teams from 11 universities (2 cooperative groups)
- ▶ Leading Regional Universities  
: 13 Primary Project Teams and 29 cooperative groups from 38 universities
- ▶ Professional and Graduate Schools  
: 11 Professional Graduate Schools from 11 universities

**Table 3. Selected Accomplishments of the BK 21 Project**

<b>A. SCI Papers (Science &amp; Technology)</b>						
Classification	Before BK	2000	2001	2002		
	# of papers (per researcher)	# of papers (per researcher)	# of papers (per researcher)	# of papers (per researcher)		
Science/ Technology	3,842 (2.74)	4,545 (3.24)	4,657 (3.27)	5,698 (3.72)		
<b>B. Impact Factor per Paper (Science &amp; Technology)</b>						
Classification	2000	2001	2003	Average		
	1.71	1.78	1.82	1.77		
<b>C. International Patent (Science &amp; Technology)</b>						
Classification	2000	2001	2003	Total		
Science/ Technology	145	138	174	457		
<b>D. International and Domestic Journals (Humanities &amp; Social Science)</b>						
Classification	Before BK	2000	2001	2002		
	# of papers (per researcher)	# of papers (per researcher)	# of papers (per researcher)	# of papers (per researcher)		
Humanities/ Social Science	288 (1.10)	303 (1.13)	555 (2.02)	624 (2.3)		
<b>E. Number of Students &amp; Researchers supported by BK 21 Project</b>						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
M.A/Ph.D students	8,414	12,083	11,403	11,808	13,173	56,681
Researchers	474	1,136	1,218	11,277	1,406	5,511

The BK 21 project, which is greatly different from previous governmental support for universities, has brought innovative changes in universities. The funding principle of “selection and concentration,” together with the financial support closely

linked with universities' own efforts to reform, has spurred universities to reform curricular, admission policies, and faculty review systems, and so on. More than anything else, the creation of research-centered environments in universities is one of the most remarkable results of the BK 21 project. Table 3 highlights the accomplishments of the BK 21 project.

(b) New University for Regional Innovation (NURI) Project

The New University for Regional Innovation (NURI) Project is another innovative governmental funding project for strengthening the capability of colleges and universities located outside the Seoul metropolitan area (Seoul, Incheon, and Kyunggi-do). The NURI Project, which is aligned with the major national policy of "Balanced Development of the Nation," focuses on: 1) reinforcing capabilities of local colleges and universities and 2) linking capacity-building of local colleges and universities to promoting and facilitating the development of regional economy. Specifically, the NURI project aims to develop college curricular by specialized areas, which is closely aligned to characteristics of the regional economy, thereby improving competitiveness of colleges and universities. The NURI project also aims to promote regional development by training high quality manpower; this project will cultivate college graduates through various educational programs reflecting demands of labor market as well as needs of regional industries and these highly qualified college graduates are expected to invigorate the regional economy. Another essential purpose of the NURI project is to establish a collaboration system, called the Regional Innovation System (RIS), in which higher education institutions, local governments, research institutes, and corporations build partnerships for mutual development and improvement (Please refer to Table 4).

**Table 4. Evaluation and Selection Process of NURI Project**

1	Planning the NURI Project and Announcement	MOE&HRD
	⇩	
2	Submission of Project Proposal by Project Team	Project Team in Each Region
	⇩	
3	Review of Proposals by Regional Innovation Council	Regional Innovation Council
	⇩	
4	Evaluation of Project Proposal	MOE&HRD
	⇩	
5	Selecting Project Teams	MOE&HRD
	⇩	
6	Report to ‘Ministerial Meeting for HRD and Committee for Balanced National Development’	MOE&HRD
	⇩	
7	Annual and Interim Evaluation on Performance Indicators set by Project Team	MOE&HRD

Note: MOE&HRD refers to Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

The NURI project is implemented by the following strategies. First, the project is planned and implemented in region-led, decentralized, and bottom-up manner; for instance, a project team consists of various stakeholders in the region and a project plan is reviewed by ‘Regional Innovation Council.’ Second, to enhance investment efficiency, the NURI fund is distributed in lump-sum package including wages, operation costs, equipment purchase fees, scholarships, and repair cost. Third, the project is managed by the performance-based management system. That is, annual and interim evaluation of the project is implemented, based on key performance indicators set by the project team.

Through the NURI project \$ 1.4 billion will be allocated over 5 years (from 2004 to 2008).

#### (c) Study Korea Project

The Study Korea Project is a comprehensive plan to attract foreign students to

Korean colleges and universities, launched by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development last December 2004. As globalization emerges as a key issue, colleges and universities have begun to take a growing interest in meeting global standards by recruiting foreign students. Accordingly, the focus of Korean governmental policies regarding international education is geared to 'recruiting foreign students to Korea,' rather than sending Korean students abroad. Recognizing several shortcomings in previous policies regarding foreign students recruitment, the Korean government set up a renewed policy on attracting foreign students to Korea, named "Study Korea Project." This project plans to invite about 50,000 foreign students to Korea by 2010.

The Study Korea Project can be summarized as the following six aspects: First, Korean government scholarship program will be expanded and reorganized through the Study Korea Project. For instance, it is planned to increase the number of government-invited foreign students to about 150 per year on a gradual base (Currently, the government invites about 55 foreign students to Korean colleges and universities each year). The Study Korea Project will be implemented with close ties with the government, higher education institutions, and the industrial sector; the industrial sector will present its demand for foreign workforce, based on which the target countries and areas of study will be selected. And the industrial sector will provide foreign students with internship opportunities and consider them for employment after graduation.

Second, the Study Korea Project aims to set up overseas network for attracting foreign students and activate it. To this end, the Korean government will utilize embassies or governmental agencies stationed overseas as a center for inviting foreign students. It is also planned to increase the number of Korean Education Center in regions such as China, Vietnam, or the Philippines, where students have great interest in studying in Korea.

Third, the promotion of ‘Study in Korea’ will be strengthened. The government will utilize collaborative networks among agencies to disseminate systematic and strategic information about studying in Korea.

Forth, the Study Korea Project also includes the plan to improve the study and living conditions for foreign students, thereby alleviating difficulties encountered by the students. Specifically, it is planned to increase the number of university lectures taught in English as well as Korean language programs to facilitate foreign students’ study in Korea. To improve living conditions, dormitories for foreign students at a number of universities are under consideration with the collaboration between local governments and universities.

Fifth, the Korean government will make multi-pronged effort to disseminate Korean language programs and cultural events. The government will provide preparatory courses for the Study Korea Project scholarships through overseas Korean Education Centers and Korean schools. The administration of the Korean Proficiency Test will be expanded in southeastern Asian countries as well. In addition, both online and offline contents for learning Korean language and culture will be developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Finally, it is planned to establish an efficient administrative support system to formalize policies to attract foreign students. The Ministry of Education will continue to cooperate with the Ministry of Justice for simplifying procedures to issue student visa. Currently, the Ministry of Education is considering to set up a ‘responsible school system,’ under which schools with good records (accepting qualified students and low percentage of illegal residents in their foreign students body) will be granted incentives whereas schools with bad records will have disadvantages.

(d) Restructuring the system of higher education institutions in Korea

In conjunction with the increased number of institutions over the last thirty years, decreasing college-bound population causes less competitive colleges and universities to suffer from severe financial constraints. This situation leads to deteriorated quality of higher education in general and ultimately to the closure of such institutions. In the midst of growing concerns about quality in higher education, the call for restructuring colleges and universities emerged. To induce restructuring colleges and universities, the Korean government announced the plan for restructuring colleges and universities last December 2004. Main element in the restructuring plan is to provide financial support to university merging. This active involvement of the government in restructuring colleges and universities sparked great controversy, and discussion and criticism over this issue are still under way.