

**Thematic Session  
Children and Youth**

## **Reality of Education Inequality in School**

**BAEK Byeongbu**

**[Senior Researcher, Gyeonggi Institute of Education]**

## 1. Introduction

Education has a significance in realizing equality. The more educated people we have, the stronger our aspiration for equality gets. Our society could become more equal with a growing possibility of mobility between classes through education. In the past, those who led the movement in favor of modern public education emphasized the involvement and responsibility of the nation in education. It was because they viewed that only in that way education could be realized in a manner to be fitted for the ideology of spread equality since modern civilization. What they insisted that education entrenched in private sector needed to be driven to public sector in order to make sure more people to be educated not constraint from economic conditions, social status and gender. The arguments of H. Mann and those who led the Common School Movement represents their belief.

Unlike the expectation, however, there are accumulating researches on the status of educational inequalities. Those researches empirically proved the theory of researchers who paid attention to educational inequality according to attributive characteristics and the reproduction of social hierarchy. Specifically, those researches put its focal point on various capitals that were conceptualize in various theories in association with education inequalities. They include economic capitals represented by economic condition of households such as income and assets, social capitals represented by parents' social networks and educational involvement, and cultural capitals represented by cultural activities, reading and certain languages enjoyed by ruling class.

Most researches on the status of educational inequalities funded by those capitals conclude that those capitals have impact on the process of obtaining academic and social status with other conditions under control. For instance, family background affects the trend of owning cultural and social capitals as well as the trend of early childhood education and caring. It also influences on the degree of educational engagement in out-of-school education including private one.

Also, the family background has impact on the admission rate at certain types of high-schools such as special purpose and autonomous private high-schools and its consequential educational gap among classes. Eventually, it wields independent influence on the degree of academic performance ultimately to impact on the results of university admission rate. Furthermore, family background reportedly is related to the raking of universities and independently affects the performance of labor markets.

Recently, with various series documents disclosed, there have been researches published dealing with status of educational inequalities in diachronic perspective.

For example, some studies revealed the generational changes in social mobility, changes in relations between parents' social economic status and the results of children education, and changes of universal education influence on the performance in labor market on the bases of Status Obtaining Model composed of parents' social economic status(origin), children education(education), and children's social and economic values(destination). Some of those researches argue that the co-relations between parent social and economic status and that of children has weakened. It also suggests that it is difficult to say that the impact of family background on academic achievement and that of the academic achievement on performances in labor market have grown bigger compared to the past. Such results imply that Korea is an open society in terms of social mobility to which education has certain contribution. Also, that is quite different from the voice of concerns on intensified educational inequalities.

In the meantime, several researches point out that there have been some changes seen in those trends. If the results have projected a situation in which labor market growth and educational expansion due to a remarkable economic growth, different trends could be unfolded from the previous results because decent jobs are decline with economic condition changes and influence of family background is strengthening on academic performance. Moreover, there is a growing concern on educational inequalities in early childhood education. It means that we have to pay attention to the early educational phase not only to higher education and labor markets that have a significance as the phase of establishment and reproduction and educational inequalities are explicitly laid bare.

On top of all, an argument that the faiths that mislead the existence of educational inequalities has widespread are getting momentum. Those are meritocracy that makes justification by making people recognize the existing inequalities as the results of capability or just competition, reductionism that reduce inequalities existing in multi-dimension to those in just a single dimension, and libertarianism that recognizes equity and freedom something as confronting each other while exclusively emphasizing the value of freedom. With spreading discourse of 'justice' narrowly determined, 'individual survival' based on neo liberalism could pose a threat to the pursuit of equality or well-being of community.

Those faith schemes allow us to recognize the trend of educational inequalities that was caused and established according to attributive characteristics as gaps in personal capabilities and efforts, which forces us to reduce and understand it as differences that could be changeable at any time. To more worse, those beliefs make those placed on top of educational inequality structure feel pride on their achievement and those placed on the bottom of the structure feel ashamed, which plays a role to ultimately justify existing inequality. Once when social mobility through education was possible, there was a saying 'rags to riches'. However, that expression has been disappearing, but still we are forced to neglect the current status. Indeed, when there is a 'fair' chance once, inequalities after that could be justified as something that individual has to bear with, which makes it difficult to proceed with further discussion.

Such a situation sends a signal that analysis on the difference between existence and recognition is as significant as the analysis on the current status of educational inequalities. In particular, we need to analyze ideological implication that cause and solution of inequalities are attributed to individuals even when they are in unequal situation in objective view. We could come up with fundamental solution to the cause of inequalities only when such analysis is conducted. In this regard, this research was designed to analyze the current status of educational inequalities in life cycle by employing the latest available documents. More specifically, this research intended to analyze on the current educational inequalities manifested from the late 1990s to 2020 by educational phase of early childhood to life cycle. During the period, economic inequality continued to spread leading to downsize of the middle class, however, private education costs were on a constant increase. Also, the research attempted to deep dive into how teachers, students, and parents recognize and aware inequalities. Understanding how the involved in schools recognize inequalities especially with a prevalent ideology justifying inequalities is as significant as analyzing the current status of educational inequalities in order to figure out solutions to inequalities.

## **2. Current Status of Education Inequalities**

### A. Synchronic and diachronic analysis of lifetime education inequality

As described earlier, with various serial data accumulated, some researchers have conducted muti-dimensional researches on the current status of education inequality. However, they have failed to secure consistency in their results. For instance, the latest research on the education inequality according to parents' academic and income background with using the college admission rates as an index argued that it was difficult to find out evidence that the inequality worsened these days. On the other hand, there is

some research that pointed out the inequality recently worsened on the ground of estimation of impact of family background on academic performance among middle and high-school students. On the other hand, even though using the very same materials and sources, there is an argument of a researcher that inequality was not intensified with the index of proportion of variance that could be explained by social economic background. Some other research designated the group of students of high academic performance overcoming a poor family background as ‘index of opportunity inequality of ‘rags to riches’ and analyzed its trend. As a result, the researcher identified a trend in which gaps in educational achievement according to social and economic background have widened. As such, preceded researches diagnosed the current status of education inequality of the Korean society in different perspective depending on data, educational phase, and inequality degree. Still, they have failed to provide a comprehensive analysis on the trend of spreading and establishing inequality throughout the whole life cycle. Under the circumstances, this research aims at providing synchronic and diachronic but comprehensive analysis on education inequality using the latest data resources.

### 1) Selecting indexes for the analysis on education inequality

This research selected ‘widening gaps among groups’ and ‘decline mobility’ as indexes to analyze the current status of education inequality. In so doing, it intended to compare the results gained from different groups of samples or provide them in an easy form for series data analysis. First of all, ‘widening gaps among groups’ could become a basic index for the judgement on whether the inequality has worsened. That index is deeply associated with the presentation of what kind of trend comes out with regard to the differences between achievement indexes in terms of social and economic background of the upper and the lower classes. Meanwhile, the OECD suggested that what was noticeable was the phenomenon expressed as ‘sticky floors and sticky ceilings’ rather than the phenomenon itself of widening gap among classes when it comes to social inequalities (2018).

The index of ‘decline social mobility’ seems to present relevant information, too. The ‘Index of Inequality in Opportunity of ‘Rags to Riches’ conceived by some researchers and the concept of ‘Academic Resilience’ of OECD are being used as indexes to analyze the educational inequality in this regard. In both indexes, if there is absolutely no gap in academic achievement between upper and lower classes based on family background, that state would be given the value of 100. Then, the higher the value grows from 100 or the better family background gets, the higher academic performance gets, too, which could be interpreted that the inequality in education according to family background gets worsening.

<Table 1> Index for status analysis on education inequality

Factors causing inequality	Equation
Growing gaps among groups	(Average of achievement index of upper n% groups in terms of family background/ Average of achievement index of lower n% groups in terms of family background) X 100
Mobility decline	$1/(\text{Proportion of lower n\% groups of family background among higher n\% groups in academic achievement} / \text{Proportion of lower n\% groups of family background among the total groups})$

## 2) Data and analysis subject

This research conducted synchronic and diachronic analysis in order to understand the trend of generating, manifesting, and spreading education inequality from different phase of life cycle from the late 2000s until now. The followings are the criteria employed in selecting data. First, the data needs to clearly determine the achievement index. Second, the data enables us to grasp on the information related to family background. Third, the data needs to provide a comprehensive coverage from the late 2000s to the recent. <Table2> shows the selected data organized according to those criteria.

In the beginning, in the phase of middle and high-school, the ‘Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)’ and ‘Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)’ meet all three criteria mentioned above.

‘The Korean Children Panel’, ‘the Graduates Occupational Mobility Survey (GOMS), or ‘Survey on Status of Individuals in Life-long Learning’ comply with the first and the second criteria, but not with the third one. Therefore, we employed all possible latest data that we could use.

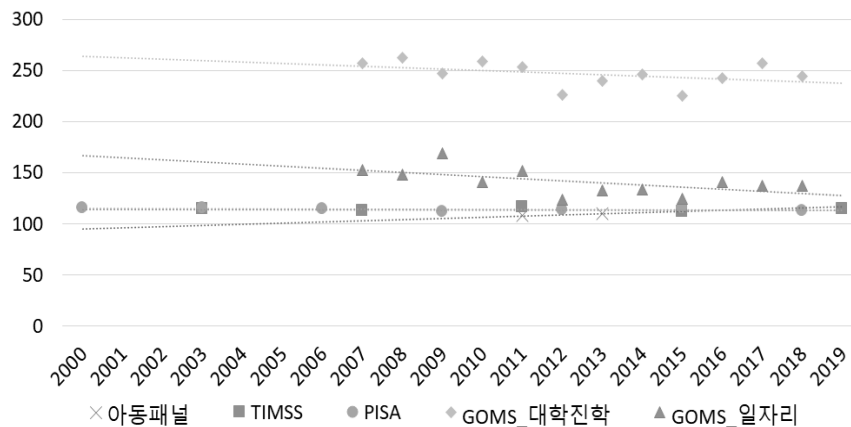
TIMSS was conducted on the 4th grades at elementary schools and the 2nd grades at middle schools at the same period, however, we were not able to acquire the data for analysis at the phase of elementary school education because the data of 4th elementary school grades did not meet the second criteria.

<Table 2> Overview of data and analysis subject

Phase	Early childhood	Middle school	High school	Higher education	Life-long education
Period	2011-2014	1995-2019	2000-2018	2007-2018	2012-2019
Analysis data	Korea Children Panel	TIMSS	PISA	GOMS	Survey on Status of Individuals in Life-long Learning
Types of data	Longitudinal data (3 years old in 2011)	Repeated cross-sectional data (2nd grade at middle school)	Repeated cross-sectional data (15 years old, 1st grade at high school)	Repeated cross-sectional data (Graduates in the year)	Repeated cross-sectional data (25~64 years old)

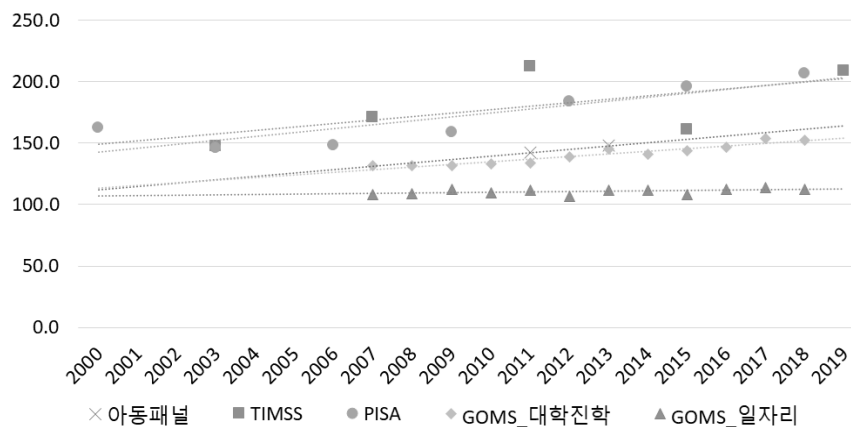
### 3) Analysis results

Even though the index of ‘widening gaps among groups’ has fluctuated over time by time and class of school, the trend suggests that the inequality is either alleviated or at least not aggravating recently in every phase excepting the early childhood education. When we look at the degree of ‘difference among groups’ by phase, the inequality seems wider in the college admission rate rather than in the level of intellectual achievement in the phase of early childhood and middle school education. If this kind of comparison is reasonable, the analysis results imply that there might be some possibilities; accumulated inequality in the process of elementary, middle, and high school education was exploded at one time at the phase of college entrance or undermatching phenomenon played out in the process of college entrance. That is to say, differences in capability of taking burden of tuition or ability of gaining information depending on family background in the process of choosing university to apply may affect the result.



[Figure 1] Synchronic and diachronic analysis of index 'widening gaps among groups'

Looking at [Figure 2], the gaps in children's educational achievement depending on parent's academic background is not widening. However, what it implies that students whose parents both have high school diploma or less are less likely to achieve as similarly high academic achievement as students whose parents both have college degrees of higher. In other words, we are moving towards a society where the 'rags to riches' story is not valid any longer. Furthermore, the trend demonstrates the possibility that awareness on worsening educational inequality was attributed to the trend of widening social mobility ladder gaps.



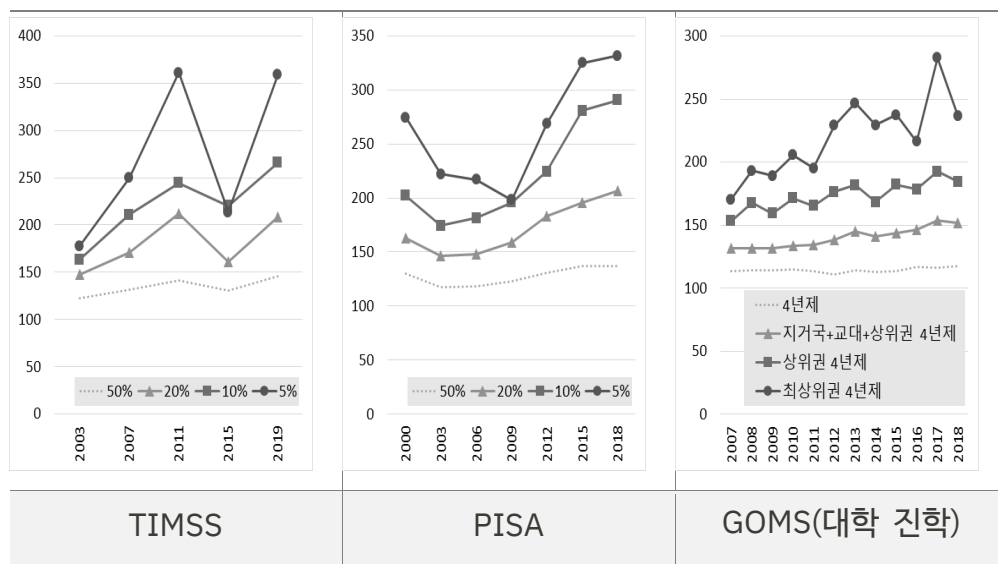
[Figure 2] Synchronic and diachronic distribution of 'mobility decrease' index

Meanwhile, there is a growing awareness that inequality distribution is moving toward an extreme direction. There are many who think that our society is heading for a society of 10:90 and even 1:99 beyond 20:80. There is an analysis suggesting that the 10% of income bracket accounts for 40 to 50% of GDP around the world and the top 1% income earners earn more than that of the lowest 50% income bracket all combined in the use.



That argument demonstrates that the public awareness well matches with the reality.

This research also confirmed that the index of ‘mobility decrease’ goes up as time goes by closely to recent when we narrow down the criteria in terms of base line of academic achievement; “top 50% of academic achievement or entering university(56.9~66.7%)”, “top 20% of academic achievement or entering national, educational, or prestigious universities(18.5~21.4%)”, “top 10% of academic achievement or entering prestigious university(10.3~12.7%)”, and “top 5% of academic achievement or entering top 3 university(3.8 ~ 4.2%)”. As seen in [Figure 3], the chances of students lower classes to reach the highest academic achievement are getting slim in terms of their academic performance at middle and high school and university admission rates.



[Figure 3] Results of calculating ‘mobility decline’ index by cut-off point for the top group of achievement indicators

## B. Longitudinal analysis on educational inequality

The synchronic and diachronic status of life-long education inequality analyzed by using the Korea Children Panel, TIMSS, PISA, and GOMS presented macro demonstration on the trend in which inequality status changes at certain time and phase. By doing so, the analysis was significant in that it could provide a comprehensive perspective of discussions separately presented by various precedented researches. Such results, however, lay bare the limit that fails to directly explain how the experiences of inequalities by phase could be different. With the awareness on the limitation, this session analyzed cross-sectional research materials accumulated through a long-term trace research on

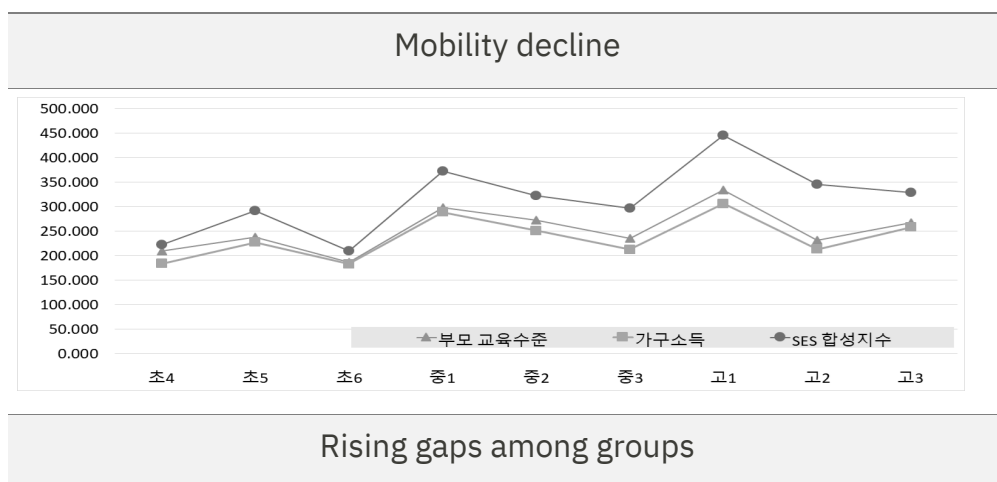
individuals while combining all previous discussions. In particular, this study analyzed the changing trend of education inequality experienced by the 4th graders at elementary school at the time of 2012 throughout the process of graduating high school and entering university using the 4th graders panel data of Gyeonggi education longitudinal research.

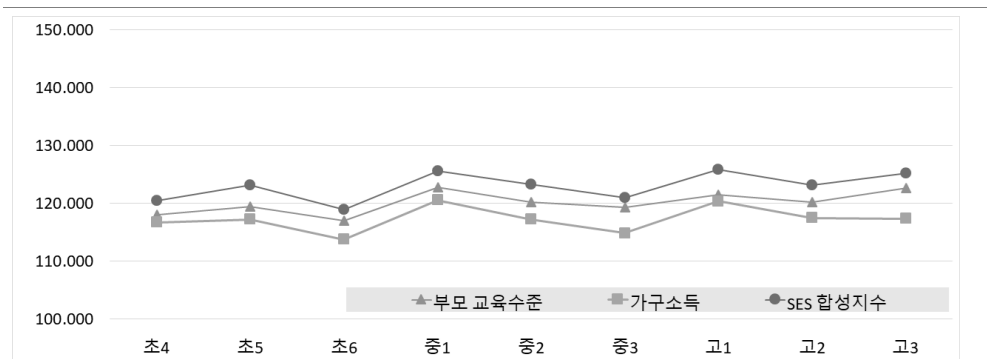
In the beginning, the academic achievement gaps according to family background such as parents' education level, monthly household income, SES composite indexes were summarized in [figure 4].

First of all, the distribution of indicators suggests that inequality according to SES composite indexes are the worst in both 'mobility decline indicator' and 'gap rising index among groups'.

Next, when we take a look at series change of indicators, education inequality by family background worsened at a time of the very fresh year of entering higher education facilities, then, modestly eased just before graduating the school.

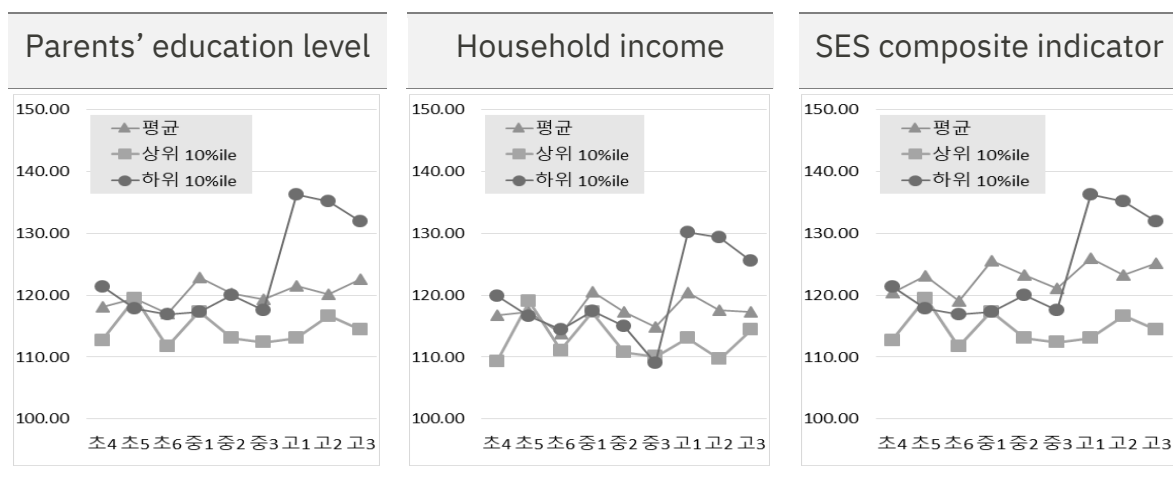
For elementary school students, that phenomenon does not seem to be noticeable because the youngest targets of the study were the 4th graders. It is, however, comparable clear among middle and high school students. We could guess that the difference gets obvious in capability to getting adjust to new class and school because of the degree of prior learning, the gap is likely to get narrower while maintaining school life.





[Figure 4] Gaps in academic achievement depending on family background:  
Gyeonggi Education Longitudinal Research, 2012 -2020

The traits discovered during the process of observing education inequality trend according to individual growth from Gyeonggi Education Longitudinal Research could be summarized in [Figure 5]. Here, again, as seen in other materials, when getting narrow down to 50%, 20%, 10%, and even to 5% achievement level, it was found that students were getting less likely to be included in the groups of higher achievement level overcoming poor condition. In the meanwhile, when comparing the indicators of ‘rising gaps among groups’ between top 10 percentile and lowest 10 percentile, the gaps in academic achievement between the higher and lower groups were remarkably rising at a time when students got into high school. The results remained consistent regardless of what indicator we chose among parents’ education level, household income level, and SES composite indicator. The results allow the guess that the decisive time, when drop-outs decide to give up their school life, is the time when they enter the high school.



[Figure 5] ‘Rising gap among groups’ indicator depending on family background,  
2012-2020

## **2. Awareness on education inequality**

The material used was an only survey on teachers, parents, and students of middle and high schools in Gyeonggi province conducted in Sep 2020 by Baek Bengbu. The material includes responses of 3,211 teachers, 4,703 parents, and 20,572 students.

### A. Awareness on the current status of education inequality

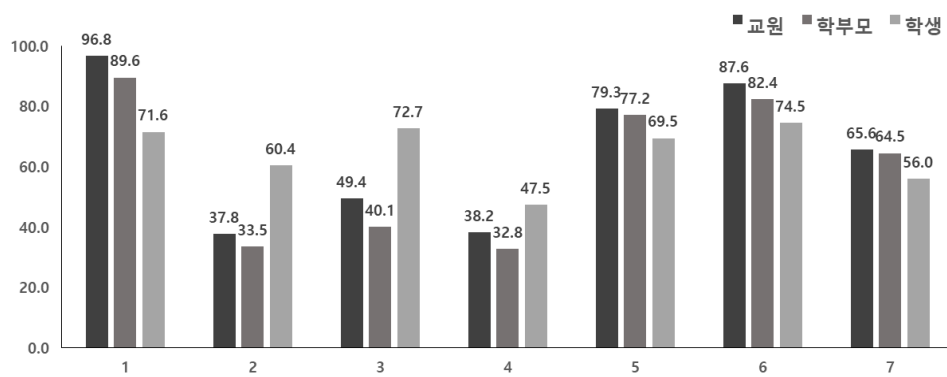
More than half of teachers and parents appeared to think that our society is unequal related to chance-related questions such as “Economic power of parents significantly affects their children’s chances to get admitted by prestigious universities” and “People from poor family background could achieve success when they try hard” and the questions related to income(reward) such as “Anyone could get guaranteed for the minimum level required for a dignified living” and “Anyone is getting rewards as much as they worked”.

Especially, 96.8% of teachers and 89.6% of parents agreed that parents’ economic power significantly affected the chances of children of getting admitted by prestigious universities. The result implies that teachers and parents acknowledge that educational opportunity, achieving social status, and rewarding system do not work depending on capabilities what people have and efforts that people make. Also, it was found out that they consider educational achievement due to family back ground as the main cause. Like teachers and parents, 71.6% of students agreed that economic power of parents affected the university admission of children. However, 60.4% and 72.7% of student respondents said yes for the questions “People from poor family background could achieve success when they try hard” and “Anyone could get guaranteed for the minimum level required for a dignified living” respectively.

The result signifies that although students acknowledge educational disparity derived from family background, they seem to estimate that our society secures social safety net higher than a certain level and regard it a place with a window open for success through efforts. That is, most students recognize our society a place where meritocracy still works. Among students, however, less than half, just 47.5% responded that our society was where people got rewarded as much as they work hard. All those results suggest that most students like teachers and parents think that rewarding system of our society is distorted.

Asked whether distribution inequality leads to inequality in recognition and engagement, teachers, parents, and students mostly seemed to agree. Specifically, nearly 70% or more

of the three groups, teachers, parents, and students, agreed that an attitude of people in treating others could be dependent on ‘money’ and ‘occupation’. Such a trend could be seen much stronger in the questions related to occupation than money. To the question “voices of the poor or powerless is not taken into account when a decision is made”, 65.6% of teachers, 64.5% of students, and 56.0% of teachers agreed. Such a result implies that teachers, students, and parents admit that inequalities in economic resources and social status in our society lead to inequalities in recognition, representation, and engagement. Additionally, the result implies that efforts to address inequality in the Korean society need to be made in a way to enhance sensitivity on ignorance and exclusion for the social and economic underprivileged going beyond just to provide equal chances.



## B. Awareness on meritocracy

In Korea, egalitarianism could be specified as a belief on meritocracy because the society has had experiences of social mobility through education. Such a belief allowed people to recognize differential treatment depending on individuals’ educational achievement as something just and natural. That awareness is based on a premise that with equal opportunity given everyone could achieve social mobility through efforts since educational achievement is determined by individual intelligence or efforts rather than an external environment.

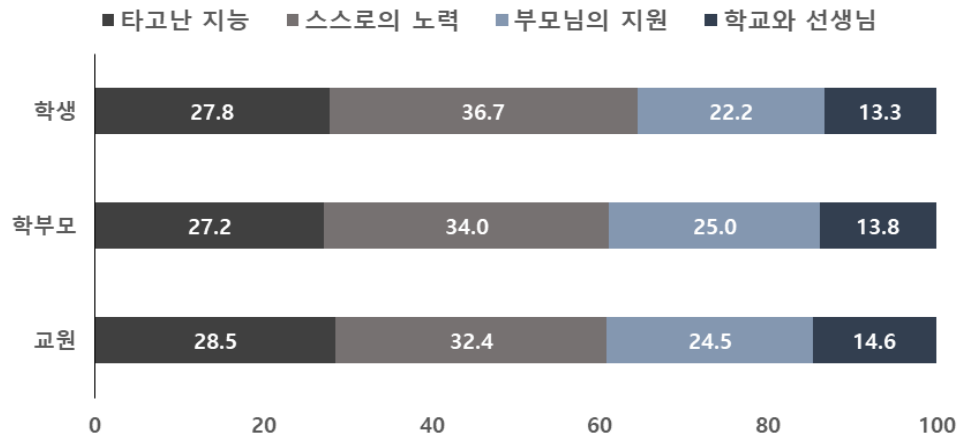
However, in recent years, various studies have demonstrated that class entrenchment is deepening through wealth accumulation and transfer rather than social mobility through individual efforts.

Recently, however, several researches have proven that the entrenchment of class dependent on wealth accumulation and transfer is strengthening rather than social movement backed by individual efforts. Indeed, educational achievement has still played

as a critical factor for an individual to obtain social and economic status, however, the influence of external factors has gradually grown in achieving that status. That awareness has grown further in Korea as well in that most teachers, students, and parents think economic condition of parents could affect college admission rate of their children and 40% of student respondents think that hard work does not lead us to social success despite of hard working.

Nevertheless, there is a robust belief that the educational achievement itself is affected by individual's intelligence and efforts rather than external factors. [Figure 7] describes the survey result on the question "How important do you think each of items in order for a student to study well in Korea" to teachers, parents, and students. Especially, that belief is seen stronger among students than teachers and parents. In the survey, respondents were asked to give weight to the factors of natural intelligence, efforts, parent's support, school and teachers to make sure the values of each factor to be 100. The result shows that 60.9% of teachers, 61.2% of parents, and 64.5% of students consider individuals' internal factors (natural intelligence + efforts) could have more impact on academic achievement than external environment. The result suggests that entering prestigious university or achieving social success may be affected by parents' economic power aside from individuals' ability, however, respondents think that individuals' efforts play a critical role in enhancing 'capability' represented by academic performance. As such, those results could be viewed as wishful thinking or expression of resolution that individual efforts could help a person overcome a poor social and economic background, or viewed as self-serving bias that tend to attribute credit to natural talents for academic achievement.

The issue here is that this perception could serve as a factor reinforcing meritocracy by attributing superiority or inferiority in academic achievement to factors such as innate intelligence or individual efforts. Rather than innate intelligence, efforts, and differences derived from school or teachers, gaps in parents' support could have a substantial influence in a very decisive moment of entering university or social success. Even in that case, however, people's recognition justifies that most of such gaps are driven by the lack of efforts of individuals.



<Table 3 > shows the results of regression analysis on the weight of natural intelligence and effort among factors affecting academic achievement as dependent variables. High school student viewed natural intelligence and one's own efforts are more important than middle school students. That perception appears to be stronger among students residing in a larger area. Even if it is the case, it does not mean that parent's support affects less on superior academic achievement of students in cities. Instead, since they value more on innate talents and own's efforts, they judge the supports from school and teachers are less significant. In other words, middle school students in smaller regions have a little higher expectation on school and teachers. What we need to pay attention is that people's attitude on meritocracy could vary depending on the subjective awareness or public awareness on our society's hierarchy. As seen in <Table 3>, those who subjectively recognize being in a higher class, they put more values on natural intelligence and efforts for individual achievement. Accordingly, they appear to value the influence of parents less.

The more people perceive social hierarchy inequality more intensified; the stronger such a trend plays out. The result could be interpreted that when people have a better social and economic background and recognize social hierarchy less equal, they think that individual's achievement is attributed to one's own efforts and capability rather than external factors. Additionally, the result implies that meritocracy has existed in our society as well to mislead 'privilege' as 'one's own efforts and talents' as Khan(2012) and Sandel(2020) argued. Especially, this trend is unfolded much stronger at higher classes, which is highly noticeable. In other words, people have a strong faith that justifies 'privilege' as being backed by individual's talent and efforts not being granted coincidentally. In addition, this phenomenon appears to imply that it is quite difficult for the efforts to ease inequality caused by luck to gain social support.

	Teachers		Parents		Students	
	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.	coef.	s.e.
School and class (ref. middle school)						
High school	0.687	0.572	-0.166	0.272	1.239***	0.240
Region (ref. rural areas)						
Larger city	0.358	0.828	0.120	0.424	1.357***	0.368
Small and medium sized city	0.343	0.798	0.302	0.410	1.117*	0.328
Types of school (ref. others)						
Innovative school	1.157	0.802	-	-	0.066	0.285
Innovative open school	0.149	0.727	-	-	0.431	0.300
Recognition on social hierarchy (ref. ① a society where the minority upper class and the majority lower classes are polarized)						
②	0.355	0.861	1.137**	0.400	1.398**	0.438
③	4.334***	0.767	3.333***	0.406	2.412***	0.428
④	4.529***	0.781	3.403***	0.350	2.934***	0.363
⑤	2.022	1.082	2.669***	0.692	1.170	0.623
Subjective recognition on hierarchy (ref. a group recognizing themselves in 'lower class')						
Upper class	-	-	5.635***	0.644	5.457***	0.701
Middle class	-	-	3.780***	0.442	3.262***	0.529
Years of career of teaching	0.354	0.364	-	-	-	-

Note: ① A society where the minority upper class and the majority lower classes are polarized

② A society where the lower the class, the larger the population

③ A society in a pyramid structure but a relatively small population at the bottom

④ A society with the largest middle class

⑤ A society with a large population in the upper class and decreasing population in the lower class



### C. Awareness on inequality experienced at school

The awareness on inequality at school could be confirmed through 5 survey questions as seen in [Figure 8]. In terms of inequality in chance to be given according to academic performance, there were a big gap in recognition between teachers and students; only 32.8% teachers recognized the inequality while just 52.1% of student did. Simply put, a larger number of teachers thinks that they treat students regardless of their academic performance or family background, however, more students think that treatment on them is dependent on their academic performance. The survey result suggests that students could more sensitively perceive the inequality caused by academic performance than teachers.

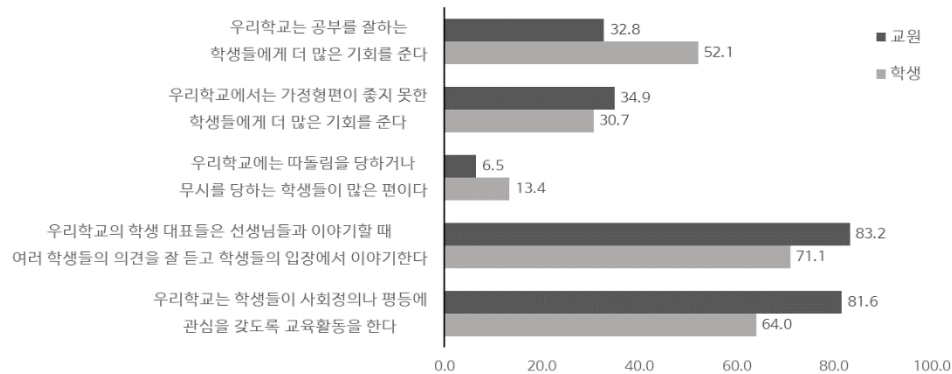
When it comes to consideration on students of the socially underprivileged, not many students (30.7%) and teachers (34.9%) think that they are considered and cared by school. Also, there were not many respondents from both teachers and students who thought that there were many students bullied or ignored at class. As a result, it could imply that both teachers and students think that there are not many students especially excluded and school does not give a special consideration to students in need. Such a recognition implies that the reason of formal fairness properly works at school.

Also, students view that the representative group of them well projects and represents opinions of total students in communicating with teachers. Of course, taking a look at a specific response distribution, teachers have a more positive judgement on the situation than students. What the result suggests is that student representatives have communicated with teachers based on the given power of representative. With 30% of student respondents thinking negatively, it was confirmed that some students did not think their opinions were not represented enough by their representatives.

A wide opinion gap between teachers and students was also confirmed with regard to whether school runs education program on social justice and fairness with 81.6% of teachers and only 64.0% of students responding yes. The results above imply that teachers and students have a quite different evaluation on the trend of inequalities manifested at school life. That is to say, more teachers recognize that school is an equal space and a place to teach and practice justice and fairness than students.

The results go against our assessment on the trend of our society's inequality described above. As looked into earlier, teachers appear to think that inequalities in our society is

much more intensified than students think. Again, the results, the degree of inequalities experienced in daily life is affecting our recognition and, at the same time, teachers are much less sensitive on micro inequalities at school than students are.



### 3. Conclusion and proposals

The results explained above signify that educational inequality is a lasting phenomenon that students experience from the cradle to grave, not a temporary trend that remains just during their school life. Despite various efforts made to ease inequalities in education, that the inequalities stably remains means that it makes it difficult to assess the effects of social and educational policies to address educational inequality. Under the circumstances, we could say that educational inequality has not aggravated because relevant policies were come up with and budgets were allocated with a growing attention to inequalities since the 1997 financial crisis. Nevertheless, however, the educational inequality has not been addressed at all as the survey results suggested.

What should be noted is that equality in education opportunity does not lead to equality in outcomes. With implementing related polices and allocating budgets, a certain level of outcome could be gained to enable everyone could equally enjoy opportunities in education despite gaps in family background. However, that strategy could have a limit in achieving outcomes based on quality of education and experience.

For instance, in efforts to address low birth rate and aging society since the mid-2000s, public investment on education and caring for preschoolers. As a result, hierarchical gaps on experiences of child care center and private education during early childhood have been narrowing. However, gaps in language ability and learning attitude of young children based on family background and, further, their impact on academic outcomes for elementary schoolers have still remained.

Similarly, public support has been strengthened for the students up to high school and there have been efforts made to cope with inequalities in higher education through national scholarship programs and dedicated university application programs for the social disadvantaged. Despite those efforts, however, gaps in the quality experienced by students in each learning process have still existed and there are not changes in those trends that have still led to the outcomes in labor market and university admission rate. With various policy supports, students become highly likely to achieve quite a good academic performance compared to poorer family background. Even in that case, however, it is likely to see a declining possibility of obtaining educational achievement helpful to acquire social and economic status determined as a story of 'rags to riches' amid intensifying polarization all across the society.

Such a trend provides an explanation that the efforts to address life-long education inequality need to go beyond the school level. It is because educational inequality tends to play out during school life, at the same time, it could be passed down to and affect the outcome after graduation, quality of life, and further, the experience of their children education. In addition, the trend has repeated and aggravated, however, a certain ideology has spread to make sure people not able to take to terms with the exact cause. Also, students have incorporated that trend based on 'optimistic hope' despite gaps in family background. In the regard, policy efforts need to enhance to go beyond just expanding learning opportunity or enhancing quality of programs.

As confirmed in various studies including effective school, there are some cases of school that have achieved high academic performance among students by enhancing capabilities of teachers with improved teaching technics and creating positive learning environment for students. In this regard, policy efforts to recognize the success of those schools, understand the key to success, and spread that exemplary cases to other school are truly imperative. For instance, some Innovative Schools have contributed to addressing academic performance gaps derived from family background through bringing in innovation in classes and building trustworthy relations between teachers and students. Based on those achievement, we are able to have all schools follow suit to bring innovation in their system, too.

In order to make those efforts more meaningful, it requires more changes exceeding the level of efforts required to just duplicate a success of schools or programs. It is because the outcomes could vary depending on what meaning is granted by members of school on those efforts or the value of fairness. As explored earlier, this research intends to

determine the phenomenon in which gaps from attributional factors could lead to the educational outcomes or experiences as the problem that we have to solve. At the same time, it emphasizes that we need to focus on not only the current status of life-long education inequality but also ideology as a cause of lasting inequality despite the efforts with a pursuit of equality. By doing so, we could take terms with inequality derived from structural traits of members of society and also policy response to address inequality could go beyond the level of general policy.