

Youth

Multi-dimensional Inequality and Democracy of Youth

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Background

The Article 2.1 of the Framework Act on Youth enacted in 2020 stipulates that “the fundamental concept of this Act is to ensure that all youths realize their dignity and values as human beings, enjoy the guaranteed right to a happy life, and fulfill their civic responsibilities as an ordinary citizen. The Korean government has implemented youth-related policies in earnest based on the findings of researches on the current status of employment, housing, and education of youths since the legislation of the act. However, it turned out that the policies have barely impacted on the statistics related to youths. The underlying causes of the issues relevant to youths are lack of jobs derived from a low-growth trend without job creation and sluggish household income (sourced from the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs 2016). Also, they are deeply linked to complicated issues of the social and institutional system in which the wealth succession and asset inequality are prevalent. To make matters worse, the current Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated those issues as well. Moreover, they boil down to economic and democratic crises at the same time. Additionally, Korea is not alone in this phenomenon.

Some cases in other nations which earlier started implementing youth policies could give us an opportunity to take a look at the issues and current status of the Korean youths in an objective perspective. For instance, Germany, France, and Finland have recognized youths as a subject to social policy early on and pushed for reform in extensive education and employment service through the EU. As a result, comprehensive and inclusive policies have been implemented with all EU member nations joining in. Therefore, we would like to expand the perspective to cover the democratic view while dealing with the current status of the youth suffering from the multi-dimensional inequality such as deteriorating employment rate, housing instability, education inequality, and the vicious cycle of debt. By doing so, we will seek for a democratic solution to make youths fulfill their dignified values as human beings and lead a happy life as prescribed in the Framework Act on Youth.



Objectives

1. To understand objective conditions and subjective recognition on the multi-dimensional inequality of the Korean youths
2. To seek for ways to address inequality with the goal of realizing the youth rights
3. To share other countries' youth policies implemented based on the democratic perspective
4. To expand discourse on youths by reinterpreting youth policies in the perspective of human rights and democracy

Main Agenda

First, to clearly define dimensional inequality facing youths

Even though it has passed three years since the enactment of the Framework Act on Youth, the youth policies have been under criticism that the basis of them lies in populism and also provided the source of controversy between government agencies and private sectors. In this regard, this session will identify why the youth need to become beneficiaries of the policies and delve into the inequality structure that the youth lie in.

Second, to analyze the structure of multidimensional inequality by sector

Youths are considered being in a period of transition to adulthood. Once they fail to follow a given trajectory which is recognized as normal by society at a certain time frame, it makes it difficult for them to get back on track. In particular, inequality in this transitional period plays as a negative factor to the youth. So, we will take a look at the structure in the view of income and assets, education and labor market, and housing and family formation.

Third, to reinterpret multidimensional inequality of the Korean youths in a democratic perspective.

The session will critically review the discourse that confines the youth issues to just economic ones or a matter of individual capabilities. Also, the session will redetermine the issue by shifting and expanding our view from the economy to democracy. In addition, we will review the discourse on justice and meritocracy, which is popular these days, in the view of youths and democracy.

