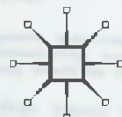




# SHADOW EDUCATION AND THE CURRICULUM AND CULTURE OF SCHOOLING IN SOUTH KOREA

Young Chun Kim



# Curriculum Studies Worldwide

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## PREFACE

Curriculum studies was not a comfortable and pleasing science for my life's work. It has become so, in particular, after I acquired a PhD in the USA and studied postmodern and postcolonial discourse in education. Reading Said, Spivak, and other great figures pushed me to choose a road which was different from that of my senior colleagues in curriculum studies in Korea. One day in the library of the College of Education, I asked myself, "Why am I sitting on the floor here in a strange foreign country? Why do I have to constantly read articles and books on US schooling and its theories?" I did not think that my future goal in Korea would be closely associated with such literature. More importantly, I did not like to think of US knowledge as the source of Korean answers and decided to stop this colonized way of thinking.

Everything seemed clear and different from that day. I swore that I would become a scholar who studied Korean stories and schooling rather than US theories or knowledge and use them for answers for Korean education. I left the USA with these final remarks to my doctoral dissertation committee members in answer to the question, "Young Chun, is there anything you want to say before we end this final defense?" to Rather than teaching US curriculum theories of the great figures such as Michael Apple, William Pinar, and Elliot Eisner in Korea, I will write our own Korean stories on Korean schooling and use them for the Koreanization of curriculum studies. If I do succeed in the task, more scholars will take this postcolonial task more seriously, and our Korean curriculum studies will have more books, knowledge, and theories, unlike the past and even present situation." Since then, whenever, I have felt that I am lost or far

outside the mainstream trend of Korean curriculum studies scholars who are eager to accept US and Western curriculum theories and use them for their practical answers, I have tried to remember my determination that day in 1995.

Since then, I have portrayed Korean scenes of schooling and classroom interactions as the major topics in my articles and books: Korean teachers' professional development, stories of the failure of Korean curriculum revision reform policies at the school level, features of Korean elementary schooling and the culture of the hidden curriculum, and first-year Korean novice teachers' dilemmas and problems. Some of these articles and books were successful and nationally recognized by students of education. I am so happy to know that some books are used as reference books in undergraduate and graduate courses across Korea. Letters and e-mails from the readers of my books, even though I do not know them, have made me think that my decision was right and very satisfying, even though there have been no external rewards for my lonely academic journey.

Doing fieldwork for the last 20 years in Korea has shown me that, together with other Korean curriculum researchers, I was ignoring the importance of our practices and was not recognizing the big gap between theory and practice. From that perspective, to be able to study Korean schools and classrooms with qualitative research paradigms has been a valuable asset and grace for my research journey. Although in comparison with quantitative research, my research effort has been heavier and more difficult. However, what I have learned about Korean schooling is sufficiently valuable and meaningful to make me forget all kinds of barriers and the labor of doing fieldwork. More importantly, along with other qualitative researchers in the curriculum studies and educational research area, I have come to think that more practical and experiential research on Korean schooling and educational practices should be produced and disseminated as the basic data for Korean curriculum studies. It is ironic that no classroom research—such as *Lives in classrooms* (Jackson 1968)—was carried out until 1996, with my first book on Korean classrooms (Kim 1997) published the following year.

This book came out of my long observation of Korean schools based on my postcolonial identity. I tried to pose questions such as: “What kind of phenomena should be selected and researched as the best way to better understand and represent Korean schooling? What do we have in Korea that is not same as Western schooling? What is the most common and general interest of Korean educators, parents, and students? What kind

of research topics could be considered as postcolonial in studying Korean educational issues? What is a major concern among Korean people relating to their education and children?” And most importantly, I asked, “What distinguishes Korean students’ educational lives from those of students in Western nations?”

As a result, I found that hakwon education, sometimes called “Shadow Education,” is one critical characteristic of Korean schooling and educational culture. It is everywhere in Korea and is part of Korean society. It is sometimes called a social evil and sometimes seen as another way to advance our child’s potentiality, which can hardly be taken care of by school teachers alone. In addition to the recurrent discussion on social media about hakwon education in Korea, my longtime fieldwork in Korean schooling, grounded in participant observation and intensive interviewing, has enabled me to take the issue as my postcolonial topic. I have come to study the phenomenon as the one theme related to the questions above and to create a new research space: hakwon education as curriculum studies in Korea and elsewhere.

As a result, I published the first book on Korean elementary students’ extra schooling outside public education: *Rather Let Students Study in Hakwons*. It drew a big social reaction from Korean parents and the mass media and was finally introduced to mainstream society in the Jungang Daily Newspaper in 2008. It portrayed various kinds of hakwon institutes for elementary students and explained how they operate for each student’s academic purpose and level. It included six students’ autobiographies about the use and role of hakwon education. The book’s approach was very different from the mainstream approach to hakwon education at the time as a social evil, and was the first formal acknowledgement of its positive contribution to Korean children.

The second book, *Life of Korean high school students at hakwon*, was published in 2012.

It was supported by the POSCO (Pohang Iron & Steel Co.) Foundation to support the human and social values of Asian countries. My project proposal was based on the idea that hakwon education is accepted and used across the Far East and must be a local and cultural feature of Asian education. The book discussed the role of a comprehensive hakwon for high school students. It described students’ whole life in the hakwon and their educational experience during the three years before entering college. I wanted to encourage educators in both schools and hakwons in Korea to



learn the creative and innovative ideas and the various educational practices and approaches developed by the young CEO of the hakwon.

The third book, *The Seven Best Hakwons in South Korea* (2015), was also published with the support of POSCO. The major purpose of this project was to select the best hakwons in Korea and introduce their advanced practices and programs to Korean educators. I wanted to deliver the message that Korean classroom teachers with tenure as civilian employees of the Korean government should strive for new ideas, programs, and activities for their students as do instructors of hakwon education, whose programs and ways of teaching are better and more effective in certain areas than those of the classroom teachers. From my analysis of the hakwonsa programs and activities, they are ahead of those used by public school teachers, and hakwons have sufficient resources and information to attract students and for their parents to spend extra money for them to study in hakwons.

As my research on hakwon education in Korea proceeded for more than five years, I came to be curious about this phenomenon in an international context and was surprised to learn that more people and more nations are experiencing this educational phenomenon, and that much discussion has been focused on these issues. E.G. Bray (2009) book clearly helps us recognize the importance and seriousness of shadow education in the Far East, Africa, and even Europe. On some points, the phenomenon is not simply a postcolonial topic but a serious, formal topic for all curriculum researchers around the world. The EU Council declaration of the dissemination of shadow education in Europe is a clear example of the worldwide spread of shadow education and should persuade us to study its possible problems and questions and its impact on our children, society, economy, and values.

This book, which will be the fourth one about Korean hakwon education, discusses Korean students' overall experience in hakwon education from elementary school to high school and shows the basic characteristics of their participation and development. In addition, I have identified some positive and negative results of hakwon education for Korean students and society. Traditionally, only the negative outcomes have been discussed inside the Korean research community and disseminated in the mass media. This book could be the first presentation of its positive influence on Korean students. Also, I wanted to advance the issue of hakwon education as one possible topic for future curriculum studies around the world. If other nations, like Korea, are having such experiences, or will

have them in the near future, our global community, like the EU Council, must consider these issues urgently.

From that perspective, I have been very fortunate in being able to bring this Korean phenomenon to global (in particular Western) curriculum researchers and to share my local experiences and findings with them. Furthermore, I am privileged to report my observations and stories to them as new basic data for producing more creative ideas and perspectives on our curricular work. In particular, such may be the case when we all are able to think of our past and contemporary discourse on curriculum studies as partial, incomplete, and based on Western-oriented ways of thinking and researching. I would push curriculum scholars in the West and even in the East to pose one critical question: what are the criteria for assessing curriculum knowledge as possible, acceptable, normal, or academic and others as not? My introduction of the Korean phenomenon may encourage us to think: “Whose practices, values, schools, and research have been omitted and ignored in our Westernized curriculum cultures?”

For this reason, I like the idea of worldwide curriculum studies as a new space where more diverse, multicultural, and ethnic knowledge is encouraged and shared with postcolonial and postmodern perspectives. This book, which is possible only within this new research culture, is intended to invite third-world local research into the mainstream curriculum discourse and to discuss such research gladly with open-minded and non-prejudicial attitudes. I am very thankful for the advancement of worldwide curriculum studies as a new research movement in the West and am particularly thankful for scholars who have paved the way, like William Pinar, Noel Gough, Janet Miller, Bernadette Baker, and Nicholas Fook. Thus, I hope that this book contributes to the expansion and theorization of postcolonial curriculum studies within worldwide curriculum studies by making our present dialogues and approaches richer, more profitable, and more complex.

In addition to my theoretical learning from these scholars, I am also thankful for my academic advisers at The Ohio State University, where I developed as a qualitative researcher in education and curriculum studies through professional training with two faculty members in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. I am methodologically stronger and more professional as a result of their academic teaching and advice. First, Dr. Patti Lather led me into the academic region called “the academic region called Curriculum in social sciences areas. I learned post-modern approaches and ideas related to analysis, writing, and ethics in

doing qualitative research. Second, Dr. Douglas Macbeth introduced me to practical ideas and knowledge for analyzing classroom discourse and observation. His three courses encouraged me to work as a professional qualitative researcher in Korea with a strong identity and became the basis for my ideas about analyzing classroom dialogue and interactions. His analytic frame and methods helped me to approach Korean phenomena with a sense of mission and responsibility. The winters in Columbus, Ohio during my five years were severely cold, but my academic growth was as hot as an Indian summer.

Along with these two scholars, another scholar in my life enabled me to research Korean schooling as its own independent topic for my life's work: Dr. Myung-Hee Kim, professor of education at Hanyang University in Korea. She introduced the existence of qualitative research as alternative methodology in education and encouraged me to study the area in the USA. Her coursework was full of new ideas and the theories of scholars like Michael Apple, William Pinar, and Henry Giroux. Her teaching still plays an important role in my writing and my teaching of graduate classes. Informal dialogue with her about my research and the status of Korean curriculum studies for the last 20 years is even now academically and emotionally rewarding in my decision to take the road not travelled.

This book is also made possible by my graduate students' academic assistance in fieldwork and writing. They gladly collected qualitative data and shared their ideas with me. In particular, their status as elementary teachers in public schools gave me a better position for collecting stories on Korean students' hakwon education. I hope that their fieldwork experience will also help them to be future qualitative researchers in Korea and to study Korean phenomena with a more postcolonial identity. In addition, I am thankful to president Moon Ho Cho and his associates in the Korean Association for hakwon education. Their research funds allowed me to spend money on fieldwork and English translations. As they too wish, I believe that a more positive understanding of the role of hakwon education in Korean society will be born in the future.

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# PROLOGUE: MORNINGS UNLIKE THOSE IN THE USA

7 A.M.

In late February, 2015, it is still cold in the morning. Wrapped in my winter coat and muffler and holding my bag, I am leaving my apartment to walk to my university. On my apartment door on the seventh floor, several fliers are stuck to each other, as some have been there since yesterday and some since last month. The fliers are colorful and each one seems to say, “Please read me.” Most fliers are advertisements for hakwons. I get rid of all the fliers without reading them. My morning always begins like this.

On the street near my apartment, five high school students are waiting for the hakwon bus. They will take morning lessons before school begins. I see some of the students are looking through their vocabulary booklets. I wonder, “Did they eat breakfast? Can they be engaged in study so early in the morning?” A van finally arrives and they get on the van. Most of seats inside the bus had already been taken. The advertisement on the van attracts my attention: “We take good care of your children’s future!”

3 P.M.

I leave the main gate of my university after today’s class. Elementary students from the University Laboratory School are also leaving the school. Unlike me, they are not going home: instead, they stop in front of the gate to wait for something or someone. In a minute, vans arrive and students chaotically find their own hakwon vans. I hear hakwon instructors calling their students’ names. Finally, most students leave for hakwons, and it is

quiet. In about one hour, these vans will return to pick up the upper grade level students.

### 3.30 P.M.

I arrive at my apartment, and wait for the elevator. A child from the sixth floor greets me. She will become a middle school student next year. I ask, "Where are you going?" "I am going to hakwon," she replies. "How many hakwons do you go to?" "Three," she says. She lists them: "3–4 p.m., math Hakwon; 4–5 p.m., English hakwon, and 5–6 p.m., academic writing hakwon." "So when can you eat dinner?" I ask again. "There is a place for snacking near the hakwon, or I eat dinner at home after 8 p.m." I ask her if she is not hungry before then, and she replies that she is fine. "Aren't you tired? You study so much." But she says, "Not at all!" "Then, are they fun?" I ask. "Yes!" she replies. All the answers are the opposite of what I expected.

### 9 P.M.

*News 9* begins. As usual, today's news discusses Korean parents' extreme expenditure on hakwon education. The report emphasizes that hakwon education should be eradicated for students' health and better Korean education. However, the government does not suggest any kind of clear answers or solutions to this very difficult dilemma. I decide to go out for some exercise rather than watching TV. I take an elevator. I see a high school student who lives on the 13th floor in the elevator. I know where he is going this late at night. But I ask him anyway, to break the ice. "I am going to hakwon." he replies. "When do you come back?" I ask. "I will be back around 1 a.m. or 1.30 a.m.," he says. I pat his shoulder for encouragement and add, "So, do your best! Way to go!"

### 11 P.M.

I try to go to bed, but it is hard to sleep because of the thought of Korean students today. "Did the high school boy come home safely? How can the parents of the girl on the sixth floor manage the hakwon education tuition every month? A considerable amount of their salary will be spent on her hakwon education." More important questions arise in my mind. "Did not he fall asleep during the hakwon lesson? How useful was today's

lesson to him? Will he fall asleep during school classes because he did not have enough sleep today? How will the classroom teacher respond to (teach differently) the students who have already learned what he or she will teach in today's class?" All these questions finally converge into this question: "How much do we, major professors in education in Korea and elsewhere on this planet, know about our situation?" The answer is clearly "Not much," and it seems that the existence of hakwon education and its influence on Korean students' academic life and achievement has not been seriously introduced or discussed by education scholars or administrators in other nations. That is the reason we are so embarrassed with US President Obama's frequent citation of Korea as the "exemplar nation with qualified teachers and public education."

Unwanted questions or ideas arise in my mind and I can't go to sleep. Maybe I will stay awake until tomorrow morning or go to bed early in the morning. Whether awake or asleep, it does not matter to me because I have already graduated from high school in Korea and do not need to go to hakwon classes anymore.





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I deeply thank Dr. William Pinar and Dr. Janet Miller, the editors of this book series. It has been my greatest honor to receive a formal invitation to contribute to their series and to be able to introduce my work on hak-won education in Korea as a new topic in worldwide curriculum studies. Their professional advice and direction for my work have been useful and have contributed to a more balanced analysis and critical assessment of my perspectives on Korean phenomena. In particular, a topic that is outside Western academics and culture is hard to publish in the West, and their supportive suggestions for my work have become the most important force in maintaining my long and difficult fieldwork and writing.



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*Young Chun Kim* is a professor in the Department of Education at Chonju National University of Education, South Korea. He was born in South Korea. He graduated from the Department of Education, majoring in Curriculum Studies for his master's degree at Hanyang University. He acquired a PhD in Curriculum Studies and Qualitative Research at Ohio State University in 1995. Since then, he has researched Korean educational phenomena and practices from postcolonial and cultural perspectives.

As of 2016, he has published 39 books and more than 50 articles on curriculum studies, Korean schooling, and qualitative research methods. He is the former president of the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies in Korea and also the regional editor of QSE (International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education) in Asia.

His books, *Tales of Four Schools: Classroom Life and Instructions in Korean Elementary Schooling*, *Ugly Duckling: The First Year Elementary School Teachers' Lives in Korea*, and *The Most Dark Eyes: Sad Portraits of Multicultural Students in Korean Schools* are well received in the field of education. Five of his books have been awarded "Outstanding Book of the Year in the Human and Social Sciences" by the Research Foundation of Korea and the Korean Department of Education and Culture. His article, "Elusive Images of the Other: A Postcolonial Analysis of South Korean World History Textbooks" in the *Educational Studies Journal*, was awarded the best article of the year by AESA (American Educational Studies Association) in 2013.

Since 2005, in relation to the topic on shadow education in education and curriculum studies, he has published three books in Korean on Korean students' educational participation and the resulting educational implications. He hopes to describe and theorize about this cultural and historical feature of Korean education and schooling because this area is of interest to non-Western scholars who research

worldwide curriculum studies. Furthermore, he wants his research to contribute to a mutual understanding of global activities and approaches to education for our children through international collaboration.

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# PISA, Korean Students' World-class Achievements and Dark Side of Korean Schooling

The curriculum is itself an ongoing complicated conversation. (Pinar 2004, p. 187)

Policymakers and planners should not take tutoring as only a negative phenomenon a sort of weed which invades a tidy garden. Rather they should ask why parents are willing to invest considerable sums of money to supplement the schooling received from the mainstream. (Bray 2009)

Korea is well known internationally for its excellence in education: the high academic achievements of its students, Korean parents' enthusiasm for their children's education, its teachers' high levels of commitment, and so on. Of these, Korean students' notable levels of academic achievement in international tests such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) are often cited as evidence that Korea is a model of public schooling and teaching. Indeed, Koreans are proud of how these TIMMS and PISA scores have garnered foreign recognition for the quality of Korean schooling.

According to PISA results in 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, and 2012, Korea has consistently ranked in the top four nations for its students' math, reading, and science abilities. The latest PISA results (2012) also reveal that Korean students rank first in math, first and second in reading, and second, third, and fourth in science among 34 OECD countries;

and third through fifth in math and reading, and fifth through eighth in science among all 65 participating countries, including OECD countries. Similarly, the TIMSS results document Korean secondary school students' high academic achievements in math and science. According to these results, the math performance of grade eight Korean students charted a continuous upward trajectory from 1995 to 2011. In terms of math performance on the TIMSS, Korea ranked third in 1995, second in 1999, 2003, and 2007, and first in the latest (2011) TIMSS test. And in the TIMSS test for science, Korea's students have continuously proven their prowess, ranking fourth in 1995, fifth in 1999, third in 2003, fourth in 2007, and third in 2011. Similarly, Korean elementary school students, who have participated in every TIMSS test since they began in 1995, were recognized in the 2011 TIMSS for their exemplary achievements; as were secondary school students in math and science, where they ranked first in science and second in math among their peers in all participating countries.

Because of these results, leaders aspiring to reform their own countries' education systems often refer to these measures of Korea's academic excellence. President Barack Obama, for example, has praised the Korean education system every time he has delivered a State of the Union address, and the US government has insisted on using the Korean system to create benchmarks for the United States. Obama lavished high praise on Korea for how its teachers' high qualifications and parents' "education fever" have led to students' academic achievements; in fact, he expressed envy of the Korean education system. UNESCO too has regarded the Korean education system as one of the most successful in the world; and in its review of education systems globally, it has favorably assessed Korean teachers, education levels, salary structures, and educational equity. This worldwide interest in Korean educational culture and its success led one American school, the Democracy Preparatory Public Charter School in Harlem, to emulate Korea's educational culture as a way of transforming itself from the lowest performing school in New York City to the highest, according to its students' performance.

However, despite the frequent high praise of Korean education outside of Korea, little international scholarly analysis or discussion exists on the topic of how that country has achieved these educational results. In their simplistic conclusions that these outcomes are the product of rigorous quality control in Korea's public school system, foreign politicians and the mass media may have focused excessively on such statistical results as

TIMSS scores. In fact, Korean students' higher academic achievement may derive at least in part from other causes.

This book is the first academic effort in an international context to search beyond the school system for answers to what makes Korean students achieve higher scores than any other students in the world. Other foreign scholars have noted that Korea's schooling may be at least a major explanation for its students' test scores. However, to complete the picture, cultural, social, and economic influences on these results should also be considered.

In examining causes outside of schooling effects, I focus on the impact of hakwon education on academic results. Like public school, hakwon education is a major part of Korean students' educational lives: even lay people in Korea tend to attribute the prowess of Korean students to their hakwon education rather than to public schooling. In fact, Korean students and parents have recently tended to prefer hakwon education to the public school system, which is often criticized within Korea. Thus, to discuss Korean education without considering the effects of hakwon education on students' academic accomplishments would be to present a partial or erroneous explanation of this phenomenon.

From the Chinese character signifying "place for study," hakwon is a kind of private tutoring system (PTS) that provides students with supplementary, after-school education. In relation to this education, Professor Mark Bray (1999, 2010) introduced hakwon education as a form of shadow education in his famous booklet *Confronting Shadow Education*, and emphasized that shadow education is gaining popularity around the world and has become common in Far Eastern countries (South Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, and Singapore) where, compared to public schooling, it enjoys as much or more favor. Bray also devoted considerable space to discussing how common PTS is in Korea. While a precise definition of "hakwon" is difficult at this point since the concept and the practices of PTS vary, education and curriculum scholars from different countries may at some point arrive at a consensus about how best to define that term. In the meantime, I use "hakwon" to signify a private educational institute where Korean students study after school to supplement or advance their learning. Funded by students' families and privately owned, hakwons are both educational and commercial enterprises. Many hakwons have, in fact, grown into widespread franchises or companies: like Coca-Cola or McDonald's, DaeSung, MegaStudy, Teacher Yun for English, and Top Secret are familiar brands in Korea.

While “hakwon” may be an unfamiliar term to many foreign scholars and politicians, for Korean parents and students talking about education, the relationship between hakwon and hakkyo (public school) education is a central concern. For most Korean students, attending hakwons is an indispensable component of academic life before college. This position will be supported in Chaps. 4, 5 and 6 by a qualitative representation of Korean students’ attendance at hakwons from elementary school through high school.

In Korea, examinations and competition at school are of paramount importance. The ability of hakwon education to help students to improve their performance on the formal entrance examinations for high school and college entrance, as well as in particular subjects, therefore explains the variety of available hakwon courses and levels. Among the many approaches hakwons take, the format of small groups of students studying together at the same level is one successful means by which they encourage students to enroll: hakwon classes typically consist of 10–15 students, compared to school classes of 30–40 students; and students may join hakwon classes that match their level at any point during the year.

### HAKWON EDUCATION IN THE KOREAN CONTEXT

To provide a basic understanding of the effects and influences of hakwon education, I provide statistical data published by two reliable Korean agencies. However, I point out to readers that this statistical information may be open to question because some Korean families and students may have responded to the related questionnaires inaccurately: during the 1980s and 1990s, the Korean government regarded PTS and hakwon education as illegal, so most families still tend not to talk about details of their children’s participation in hakwon education (the hakwons they attend, when they attend, what the tuition fees are), or they under-represent what they pay and how often their children go to hakwon classes. In particular, they tend not want to specify what they pay in tuition, especially if they perceive this cost as being high.

The most broad-based report on Korean students’ participation in hakwon education/PTS derives from a survey conducted by Statistics Korea, “The Amount of Educational Expenditure for ‘hakwon’ (2012).” According to this survey, in 2012 about 69.4% of Korean students, approximately seven million children, engaged in hakwon education of

some sort. Within this group, 80.9% of elementary students, 70.6% middle school students, and 50.7% of high school students attended hakwons.

According to this trend, and given the likelihood that parents underreport their spending on hakwon and other private education, conservatively estimates that of the total current annual expenditure of 1.9 billion US dollars on hakwon and other PTS education (one-on-one tutoring, as well as home schooling guided by commercially oriented companies), hakwon payments for elementary, middle, and high school students total about 77 million, 61 million, and 51 million US dollars respectively. Hyundai Research Institute's estimate of annual hakwon expenses for public school children is considerably higher, at least 1.5 billion US dollars and perhaps as much as 3.4 billion US dollars, one and a half times the total public-education budget (Kim 2010a). In Korea, the total expenditure for private tutoring is 24 billion dollars, 2.8% of the GDP (Kim and Lee 2010, p. 3). Globally, the size of this national expenditure is unique, surpassing even Japan's comparable expenditure.

Economically significant as this statistic is, the more serious problem related to hakwon education is that most Korean families regard it not as one form of supplementary PTS, as Bray defined hakwon schooling, but as an indispensable component of their children's education. Korean students take it for granted that throughout their public school years, every day or every other day they will spend several hours at their hakwons. For many, hakwons are simply their second schools; for some, they are their most important schools, making "I am going to hakwon now" just as common a statement as "I am going to school now." While parents of elementary students hear that sentence in the early afternoon, those whose children are in middle school or their first years of high school hear it in the late afternoon or early evening; and those of senior high school students may hear it at 10 or 11 p.m. Not surprisingly, parents are often to be found waiting outside hakwons to bring their children home in the dark, or staying up to greet them when they return late at night.

The importance of hakwons directly influences the lives of Korean parents, especially of mothers, who traditionally oversee children's education. They try to collect reliable information about good hakwons, talking to fellow parents or comparing the websites of famous hakwons. The choice of a hakwon becomes more important as children advance in school. Koreans even have a saying that finding the best hakwon for her child is a mother's way to show her ability and affection as a parent.

Given this social pressure in favor of hakwon education, most mothers gladly anticipate that they will spend much of their incomes on hakwon classes throughout the years their children are in public school. Although some families are less able than others to afford the tuition, the majority of mothers think that even though it may entail some economic hardship, they should find money every month for hakwon fees, and so they may take on additional work or borrow money. Of course this monthly expenditure increases with the number of classes their children take, the amount of personal attention their children receive there, and the reputation of the instructor or the hakwon; hakwon expenses thus can easily compete with mortgage and car-payment costs. Koreans wryly say that hakwon costs are such that if you have two children, you cannot think of saving money for the future. In fact, this long-term financial burden has indeed resulted in social problems: some Korean families do not have enough money for other purposes, most importantly for the parents' retirement.

This economic burden is particularly heavy for families whose children are in their last three years of academic (rather than vocational) high school. All academic-stream and some vocational-stream high school seniors write a November college-entrance exam. In preparation, they must master all of their courses in their second year of high school so that they can spend their final year memorizing and reviewing everything they have learned. Throughout these three years, students may supplement their public school education with hakwon classes in a range of subject areas, including the Korean language, mathematics, and English (this topic will be explored in further depth in Chap. 3). One more saying, "All is used in gambling," applies to how Korean parents make economic and psychological sacrifices for their children's welfare.

### THE BEGINNING OF HAKWON EDUCATION: DISCONTENT WITH PUBLIC SCHOOLING

Since the Korean educational situation is complex, the need for hakwon education should be discussed from historical, social, cultural, psychological, and economic perspectives; and each of these angles deserves systematic analysis utilizing existing literature and various perspectives. The most familiar scholarly approach to the topic of Korean hakwon education has been based on the idea that Korean society is very



competitive, and that the drive to earn prestigious university degrees has led families to enroll their children in hakwons from the start of their education. Before examining the validity of this approach, however, let us consider the larger topic of the roles and rewards of schooling in capitalist countries.

One obvious explanation for the popularity of hakwon education in Korea is the increasing dissatisfaction worldwide with the quality of public schooling. Korean criticism of public schooling is commonplace and has become increasingly blunt. Many education scholars have observed that in Korea, as the quality of public schooling has declined, interest in hakwon education has grown. Various researchers (Choi 2009; Je 2002; Kim 2003b, 2005, 2007; Kwon 2004; Nam 1999) have concluded that Korean students attend hakwons because of their many attractions: intensive review of course material; preparation for upcoming courses; patient and encouraging instruction; and individual feedback. Je's (2002) survey of 500 students attending hakwons located in Gangnam District, Seoul, revealed that hakwon teachers earned higher scores than school teachers in the following categories: demonstrating teaching ability; communicating scholarly enthusiasm; caring about students; and providing individual guidance and counseling. Similarly, Jonghan Kim's (2003b) survey of 379 Seoul students attending hakwons to prepare for college entrance found that most of these students rated their hakwon teachers higher than their school teachers in every area, including their classroom management and their ability to motivate and provide feedback to students. In short, Korean parents and students alike consistently recognize the benefits of hakwon schooling (J. Lee et al. 2010, p. 195).

Even the government-funded KEDI (Korean Educational Development Institute), the major role of which is to support national public-education enterprises, found in its study "Learning environment and culture analysis of high school students" (Choi 2009) that high school students evaluated hakwons as providing higher-quality education than public schools. According to the quantitative results of this study, which targeted the 6,600 students also receiving hakwon education from among the 13,000 students in the country's 107 high schools, hakwon teachers outranked high school teachers in every area: demonstrating subject expertise; understanding students' intellectual needs; and providing satisfying classes. In other words, high school students think that hakwon teachers are better communicators and educators than

**Table 1.1** Korean students' evaluations of public school and hakwon teachers (seven-point rating scale)

<i>Category</i>	<i>Public school teachers</i>	<i>Instructors at shadow education (Hakwon teachers)</i>
Demonstrating subject expertise	4.34	4.97
Understanding students' needs	3.55	4.65
Providing satisfying classes	3.62	4.72

public school teachers, and that hakwon education provides a more useful preparation for their college-entrance exams.

Specifically, in such areas as class quality, consideration of individual differences, and motivational ability, the high school students responding to this KEDI survey gave hakwon teachers an average of 0.6 points more on a seven-point scale than they gave their school teachers (see Table 1.1). In terms of understanding students, including showing respect for students' opinions, communicating clearly, and helping students gain confidence, while school teachers were rated 3.55 on average, hakwon teachers scored 4.65, more than one whole point higher. And in regard to class satisfaction, which included such measures as teachers' enthusiasm and class preparation, improvement of students' creativity and comprehension skills, and usefulness of classes for college-entrance exam preparation, hakwon teachers achieved an average of 4.72, while school teachers scored only 3.62.

Not surprisingly, as students become increasingly convinced of the value of hakwon classes, they participate in those classes more actively (Kim 2005, p. 130), a tendency that can be closely linked to their remarkable PISA and TIMSS test scores. Jinyoung Kim (2007) observed that although hakwon-style education exists in other countries, Korea's hakwons have been seen to most clearly and significantly raise academic performance and test scoring above what they would otherwise be. At the same time, this increasing appreciation for hakwon education causes students to lose interest in their public schooling (Kim 2007, p. 119).

Thus, while the demonstrated effect of Korean hakwon education on test scores is undeniable, in Korea, the general public, education researchers, and teachers worry about the state of public schooling; "the collapse of the classroom" is a phrase that has been widely used. These words reflect students' new disregard for their public schools, which they see as being

unable to educate them satisfactorily. Various studies have documented how school teachers have trouble controlling students and getting them to pay attention in class, and how students are eager to go to hakwon as soon as they have finished for the day with “boring” school classes (Kim 1999; Lee 1999; Jeon 1999a). A consequence of this public school culture for teachers is diminished enthusiasm for their work, and for those considering the profession, increasing skepticism about teaching as a career (Kim 2003a). In short, hakwon education, once thought of as “shadow education”—merely an adjunct to school education (Lee and Lee 2008, p. 223)—is now widely regarded as being at least as important as school education (Bray 1999, 2010).

## DOMAINS OF INQUIRY IN REGARD TO HAKWON EDUCATION

This book explains why Korean students consider hakwon education to be an effective educational practice that in many cases surpasses school in importance; it then addresses the ramifications of hakwon education for international curriculum studies, a topic which has received little attention internationally or within Korea. The overall goal is to examine the roles and meaning of hakwon education in an era when PTS, including hakwon schooling, is increasingly being sought throughout the world. For this purpose, the book considers the following research topics, which comprise the book’s table of contents.

First, drawing on document analysis and participant observation of Korean hakwon education practices, it describes eight kinds of Hakwon education which are generally offered in Korea: (1) English language hakwons; (2) mathematics hakwons; (3) logical writing hakwons; (4) comprehensive hakwons; (5) Special Purpose High School hakwons; (6) gifted-student-centered hakwons; (7) Internet-based hakwons; and (8) boarding hakwons.

Second, the book offers a historical overview of how Hakwon education has developed. Since its emergence in the early twentieth century, this phenomenon has changed quantitatively and qualitatively. Despite its best efforts at different times to diminish or even abolish PTS and hakwon education, the Korean government has been unable to do so. Today, public schooling is struggling to maintain its significance in the face of the growing importance of alternative education.

Third, and most importantly, this work uses qualitative research to portray the lives of Korean students attending hakwons. As a Korean curriculum

researcher, I believe that Western readers, who are likely unfamiliar with the educational experience of such Korean students, will value these efforts to contribute to the internationalization of curriculum studies by investigating postcolonial and multicultural attitudes. The stories arising from this research testify to the many kinds of formative educational learning experiences that Korean students have, mainly outside public schooling. Using interviews, pictures, and observations, in this section I clarify for Western readers how Korean students' unique educational development relates to their hakwon education.

I turn then to the pedagogical significance and problems of hakwon education, since although it is a cultural and social phenomenon, hakwon schooling is also an educational and curricular practice. Certainly, hakwon classes have many positive effects, as Bray excellently summarized and as this chapter documents by examining why Korean parents and students have increasingly favored hakwon education over public schooling. This chapter thus challenges curriculum scholars and educational reformers inside and outside of Korea to ponder what causes students to believe that private education is better than public schooling.

The last chapter raises issues for future research in the context of global curriculum studies, primarily the question "What does the indispensability of hakwon schooling in Korea imply for students elsewhere in the world?" These chapters develop a theoretical approach to hakwon education from social, cultural, geographical, and pedagogical angles. As a curriculum researcher who has studied the hakwon phenomenon for several years, I see future possible research topics to include the following:

- the quantitative/positivistic effects of hakwon education versus public schooling
- the social and economic implications of hakwon education
- a comparative analysis of curriculum design and instructional methods in hakwon education and public schooling
- hakwon education as a place for individualized instruction
- problems within hakwon education, including reliance on rote memorization
- hakwon education as a *currere*/educational experience
- hakwon education as an agency reinforcing the given social order

## THEORIZING ABOUT HAKWON EDUCATION AS A POSTCOLONIAL ENDEAVOR

The book is based on the assumption that even though hakwon education is a Korean phenomenon, its rising profile in the Far East and Europe suggests its scholarly potential for curriculum studies in other countries. In other words, the fact that it is not possible for curriculum scholars to discuss schooling without considering hakwon-style education means this topic will inevitably become a topic of international scholarly conversation.

From that perspective, this work can be seen as a contribution to the international development of curriculum studies, which is increasingly diverse with complicated conversations. The story of Korean hakwon education in itself offers curriculum scholars throughout the world useful material with which to formulate questions or to reflect on concepts of curriculum and curriculum studies. Even more importantly, this study of hakwon schooling challenges curriculum scholars everywhere to compare Korean students' educational lives to those of children in other countries. In that process, readers may ponder various important topics, including issues that have been overlooked in the field of curriculum studies, aspects of curriculum studies that must be reconceptualized so as to include the phenomenon of hakwon education, and ways in which hakwon education might enrich the ongoing development of curriculum and curriculum studies as international academic fields.

Finally, this book has socio-political implications for curriculum scholarship inside Korea. To describe the hakwon story as a new international topic is also to challenge the status quo of Korean curriculum studies, which have been shaped predominantly by American and Canadian curriculum discourses. Historically, Korea's curriculum theory has strongly resembled that of the USA. Kim (2010b) argued that in fact curriculum studies in Korea have been so delineated by Western knowledge and discourses that any effort to escape from those parameters was felt to be unscientific and unacademic, and therefore illegitimate (see also Said 1979). According to this colonized notion of Korean pedagogy, uniquely Korean practices and experiences were invisible, neglected, or dismissed as unimportant. Yet for Koreans, hakwon education is a strong presence that poses urgent curriculum and educational questions. North American theories or ideas may shed some light but cannot in themselves solve or even clarify these problems. I therefore hope that at the same time as this study contributes to international conversations among those in the field of curriculum studies, it will also spark new, postcolonial conversations in Korea's curriculum-studies community.

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## History of Shadow Education in Korea

Since the 1950s, private tutoring for college admission exams has spread widely in Korea, raising social controversies and tension within society that the government has consistently implemented policies to reduce (Ko 2013). However, in spite of these policies, the place of hakwons in Korean education has increased sharply in numerous aspects, for example, the number of hakwons, the expenditure on hakwons, the number of enrolled students, and the number of teachers. According to Lee et al. (2010), participation rates in hakwons have increased rapidly, totaling 6.23% in 1979, 14.9% in 1980, 59.4% in 1997 and 75.1% in 2008. Hyundai Economic Research (2012) estimated that black market expenditure related to hakwons would exceed 15 trillion Won in 2010 and that the total real expenditure on hakwons would be more than an astronomical 36 trillion Won. This chapter shows how hakwons have been consolidated and generalized in the Korean society by exploring their historical development.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF HAKWONS

The beginning of hakwon education dates back to the late Joseon period in the early twentieth century when Korea began accepting Western culture. The first hakwons were Youth Schools, institutions like schools, Youth Academies, and various part-time hakwons in Jongro 1, Seoul, which were founded by the Hwang-Sang Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), established in 1903. Math and English were taught separately in those institu-



tions, along with Bible study. Modern music and art with hymns were taught, especially in the middle school course. YMCA institutions helped social leaders contribute to Westernization and globalization in the arts and social science fields, as well as to develop international awareness through English education. That is, Youth Schools and Youth Academies, which are regarded as the origin of hakwons, played significant roles as educational institutions in every aspect of society, liberal arts, technology, and art (Ha 2004).

As Japan strengthened its colonial rule over Korea, hakwon education separated into two paths. The characteristic of one was to resist Japanese colonialism; this path emerged as the necessity for education had increased after Korea began adopting Western culture. The characteristic of the second path of hakwon education emerged as Western materialism and its nurturing ideology spread among middle-upper class women who had received a modern education. First, we explore hakwons as educational institutions for citizens to resist during the Japanese colonial period. Many private hakwons were established, in greater numbers than regular public schools, since the establishment and management of hakwons was more flexible compared to regular public schools. Those institutions strived to strengthen their power and develop the level of consciousness of the Korean people under Japanese control by adopting developed Western culture (ChonNam University 2004).

Japan had relentlessly and harshly suppressed educational activities based on the YMCA-sponsored institutions. After the Japan-Korean Annexation Treaty in 1910, these YMCA educational institutions experienced severe financial hardships, as they were unable to receive funds from the government under Japanese control. The Japanese Governor-General of Korea announced decree No. 3, which controlled private educational lessons. The background for the decree was an increase in lessons and night classes in educational institutions that were relatively free of government control, a situation that the Japanese government recognized as a potential threat to its regime. Until 1950, private hakwons were restricted by decree No. 3 without any legal reasoning (Shin 1988). In this context, many night classes and educational institutions led by national leaders went underground or disappeared to escape from suppression.

At that time, the most representative forms of hakwon were academic lectures, academic learning centers, and night classes. These types of education could be seen as the origin of the current types of hakwons. If we consider that academic learning centers and private academic lectures were managed by individuals, not by the government, they can be regarded as preliminary forms of the current hakwons (JeonNam University 2004).

The private lectures reached their peak in the 1920s and 1930s. For instance, 50 series of lectures were introduced in the *Dong-A Daily News* between 1921 and 1925, the number of night classes for women was almost 50, and the number of night classes in rural areas increased to 317 in 1927 (JeonNam University 2004).

The second type of hakwon education is the one that emerged as the modern education system was established during the Japanese colonial period. According to Kim (1997) and Kim (2007), a new understanding and social concern for children's education increased in Korean society throughout the twentieth century. Children were recognized as fragile and naïve human beings at a unique developmental stage where they needed to be protected and nurtured by parents, to receive school education, and to be isolated from the world of adults as they prepared to be grown-ups. Therefore, the educational movement for children developed actively, along with other socio-cultural changes, and new middle class families vigorously adopted modern education and enthusiastically let their children participate in it.

For middle and upper class families, one of the most significant tasks for their children was to study hard. They even called a child's bedroom a study room. In Confucianism and the old-people-oriented family culture, being admitted into prestigious and elite schools was one way of showing filial piety and also of stepping into the upper class. Hakwon education has prospered from this educational fervor. Students focused wholly on textbooks and received individual tutoring. There were "elite" schools even in the Japanese colonial period, and the competition to enter them was fierce. Some school teachers helped students prepare for the entrance exam, and prospective students for elite schools remained after school to receive private tutoring. This type of private tutoring was quite common at that time. Students packed two lunch boxes in the morning and studied in the school until 9 or 10 p.m. Some students who failed to be admitted into elite schools (called retakers) retook the entrance exam the following year. In wealthy families, private tutors lived in the student's house.

### FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE EARLY 1950S

It is very difficult to find documents about hakwon education during the three years of the US military administration between independence from Japan in 1945 and the establishment of the Korean government in 1948, up to the period right after the Korean War in 1950 (Ha 2004). However, it is estimated that hakwon education prospered consistently. Since there

was no legal regulation of hakwons until the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction enacted and announced the “Private Learning Center Law,” most hakwons were managed without any affiliation.

As the number of learning centers and hakwons started to increase after independence, the various types of hakwon education continued, such as learning centers, lecture classes, and research labs. After the Korean War, numerous hakwons, mostly located in Seoul, were unable to continue their business and some of them moved to Busan and opened up a new type of hakwon. For example, Cho-Ryang Hakwon was founded as a liberal arts hakwon, employing English and math teachers. Also, Seo-Ra-Beol Cloth-making Hakwon was popular for turning out many needle workers. After the Korean Armistice Agreement in 1953, many institutions and people returned to Seoul. The majority of hakwons taught technical skills for women like cloth-making, beauty care, and typing. However, the liberal arts type of hakwons, including English hakwons, also emerged: Jeil hakwon for high school, Jongro English-math hakwon for high school, Seongsim institute, Korea-France cultural hakwon, Seoul Hyoseong hakwon, ALI English hakwon, and Jeil hakwon, to name a few, were founded. Among these hakwons, the EMI English hakwon, the first admission test prep hakwon, was founded in Jongro, Seoul, by the late An, Hyun Pil, who was a big name in the field. He published the book *Basic Lessons for English* for middle and high school students. The book was a best-seller that sold more than five million copies (Munhwa Ilbo 2013).

In the late 1950s, divided and comprehensive types of hakwons for test prep and foreign language increased gradually, but their numbers surged in the 1960s. Also, since the qualifying exams for college entrance had been implemented in 1948, the preliminary test system became very active starting in the late 1950s, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of related hakwons. According to the data in 1955, admission to higher educational institutions was fiercely competitive, as the enrollment ratio to middle school and university remained at 28.9% and 4.9%, respectively. According to Lee (2001), admission rules for middle school changed six times every three to four years from 1945 to 1968 because of the number of primary school students preparing for middle school entrance exams. In 1954, the government recommended that schools not administer an entrance exam to relieve the fierce competition among students, and many schools accepted the recommendation. But the issue of the credibility and fairness of school records was raised strongly nationwide. As a remedy for the problem, a common test system was implemented; however, it worsened the situation because of the surprising differences in test scores

among schools. As a result, primary school students competed madly for admission to middle school, so the government was forced to change the admission regulation. In 1963, when the test was confined to only two subjects, math and Korean, the admission competition became fierce.

In the context of the increasing difficulty of being admitted to colleges and the increase in the number of students preparing for the school test for high school and university, many hakwons were founded, including those for preparation for entrance tests, government officer employment tests, promotion tests, qualification for immigration, and the national tests to be a diplomat, lawyer, and high rank officer (Ha 2004). Around 1960, as hakwon education was greatly expanding, management problems related to hakwons began to arise frequently (Na 2007). At that time, it was known that some hakwons on an upward trajectory were managed in a non-educational way, striving only to increase profits by charging excessive fees, and encouraging competition. These problems affected society and gradually attracted the concern of the government. As a result, the Supreme Council for National Reconstruction announced the “Private Learning Center Law” on September 18, 1961.

#### INCREASE IN SCHOOL-AGE POPULATION AND FIERCE ADMISSION COMPETITION (MID 1960s–1970s)

The Private Learning Center Law was enacted by the May 16 Military Government. Hakwons were permitted legally according and the government strengthened its control and supervision over them. Basically, the law was intended to control, supervise, and regulate hakwon rather than support and foster them. Nonetheless, the number of permitted hakwons, and along with them, a large number of unlicensed hakwons, surged sharply. The Korean Association of Hakwons voluntarily strengthened its inspection and regulation of unlicensed hakwons.

One of the reasons for the expanding influence of hakwon education was the increasing competition for admission to middle schools, even though the government made an effort to implement restrictive policies. The number of primary school graduates was approximately 0.61 million in 1965, increasing to about 0.8 million in 1970. But the share of primary school students going to middle schools remained around 50% during the whole of the 1960s, rising to more than 63% in the 1970s (Lee 2001). While the size of the school-age population increased sharply with the baby boom after the Korean War, the number of prospective students who

wished to advance to middle school in 1960 was increased by the compulsory primary education policy of the 1950s. As a result, admission to middle schools was extremely competitive in the late 1960s.

On July 15, 1968, the then Minister of Culture and Education, Kwon Oh-Byung, abolished the middle school entrance exam system and announced the July 15 Reform Program for Entrance Examination, which implemented a lottery system by district. The main purpose of the program was to reduce the harmful effects of private tutoring that arose from the middle school “examination hell” and ease the financial burden of private tutoring by standardizing middle schools, thus eliminating the preference for top schools (Lee 2001). Consequently, the primary school education system was normalized and was able to promote the development of a well-rounded person. With the disappearance of preference for top schools, the issues of the private tutoring of primary school students and inflow into urban areas were settled.

However, the policy was merely a temporary remedy for the private tutoring fad. After the adoption of the no-exam policy for admission to middle school, admission to high school became competitive, as the number of middle school students suddenly increased. The choice was frequently seen to be either to receive private tutoring or to go to hakwons in order to be admitted into the top high schools, since only 40% of applicants for the academic high schools could obtain admission. Up to the mid-1970s, most attendees of the entrance exam prep hakwons were middle school students preparing for high school admission (Na 2007). Around 15,000 people per year moved to Seoul from other provinces to attend the well-known schools in Seoul and 90% of middle school students received private tutoring for four hours a day. Contrary to the initial purpose of the middle school standardization policy, which was to alleviate the demand for middle school admission, the fierce competition for high school admission and the retaker problem worsened as the number of middle school students increased.

Overheated fervor for private tutoring and the retaker problem arising from competition to be admitted into high school were serious social issues. To resolve those issues, the Minister of Culture and Education announced the standardization of high schools, on February 28, 1973. As with the middle school standardization, the entrance exams for high school were abolished, a unified entrance examination was introduced, and students were accepted to nearby high schools randomly. However, competition for college admission became fierce because of the control of university capacity implemented in 1965 and an increasing number of high school students as a result of the standardization policy for high schools.

Therefore, high school students began to be immersed in hakwon education. Many retakers, especially, rushed into prep hakwons for the college entrance examination—so many that they had to take a test to get into well-known hakwons. The existing hakwons were unable to accommodate the number of students under the strict regulations that limited admission to test prep hakwons. As a result, private tutoring prospered (Na 2007).

In this circumstance, hakwon education grew rapidly, as the number of students who were preparing for admission to high schools and universities had risen from the late 1960s. In the 1970s, the phenomenon became more conspicuous. In 1974, the Plan for Normalization of Education and Remedy for the Overheated Demand for Private Tutoring was announced to settle the social issues caused by the excessive demand from middle school students for private tutoring by prohibiting all private tutoring. As competition for admission to universities remained very strong and private tutoring was prohibited, students rushed into entrance exam prep hakwons. The number of hakwons was limited to a certain number by the government's strict control, so the existing hakwons ran their business illegally: rather than improving the quality of their facilities, they focused only on increasing profits by accommodating many more students and even hiring unqualified teachers indiscriminately (Na 2007).

Admission test prep hakwons became larger and more specialized, with sometimes several hundred students being taught in one classroom. Hakwon education enjoyed a boom period. Big comprehensive prep hakwons were created, for example, Jongro, Daesung, and Yangyoung hakwons. Some big-name English and math teachers earned a large amount of money by publishing textbooks for entrance exam prep. It was not uncommon for them to use the funds from selling textbooks to build a new hakwon or a regular private school (Ha 2004). Of 9.8 million students, around 1.5 million were estimated to receive private tutoring in 1980, and the total expenditure on private tutoring fees was approximately 330 billion won a year (Lee 2001).

### PROHIBITION OF PRIVATE TUTORING AND THE SURVIVAL OF HAKWON EDUCATION: THE 1980s

The policies of no entrance examinations for middle school and high school standardization had two consequences. Even though those policies were implemented to alleviate the demand for private tutoring, they only resulted in the demand moving from private tutoring for middle

and high school admission to private tutoring for university admission. As many students competed fiercely for college admission, competition for the top universities spread down through the whole period of primary and middle schooling. The second consequence was that while the standardization policies normalized public education temporarily and relieved the fervor for private tutoring, the policies also resulted in the deterioration of public education and thus caused an increase in hakwon education. Under the standardized system, regulations for public education became so numerous that freedom of education was suppressed. Since students were randomly distributed to schools, their right to choose schools and the schools' ability to recruit students were limited. Also, the Ministry of Education set up the same school fees regardless of the teaching quality in the school. Obviously, there was no incentive for teachers to improve their teaching since they always received the same salary. Accordingly, the standardization system weakened educational competitiveness. The standardization of education made it hard to teach students based on individual characteristics and caused discrimination for high-performing students given the limited autonomy of private education (Lee 2010, pp. 157–163).

In this situation, the demand for private tutoring was intense, to the extent that private tutoring was discussed as a national peril. This mismanagement of Korean education caused some social and political problems. Receiving a character-enhancing education and a well-rounded education in school seemed impossible, and the education system was focusing almost entirely on memorization for the entrance examination. As students concentrated on private tutoring, focusing on the entrance examination and seeking a well-rounded education, they disregarded public education. Also, the excessive fees for private tutoring negatively affected household finances and social disharmony formed between distinct groups according to their capacity to pay private tutoring fees. At that time, political stability and social harmony were required, and these issues had to be settled (Lee 2001).

On July 30, 1980, the Special Committee for National Security Measures announced a plan for educational stabilization and a remedy for the excessive demand for private tutoring. The plan mainly introduced the school academic report as a part of university admission, abolished individual university admission exams, and introduced a graduation quota for universities. The government declared a comprehensive abolition of private tutoring with the powerful will to eradicate the phenomenon that had prevented the development of public education in a positive way

and that had been a chronic illness in Korean society. According to the announcement, private tutoring, including extra classes in school, was completely abolished except for high school graduates taking classes in *hakwons*. The penalties for private tutoring were strengthened and high school students were strictly prohibited from receiving private tutoring or taking classes in *hakwons*. Such a comprehensive abolition of private tutoring by the Education Reform Measure of July 30th was a desperate decision and its success relied on the authoritative control of the powerful government (Lee 2001). In this era, as the government restricted approval of new entrance exam prep *hakwons*, academic *hakwons* were greatly damaged. Along with the control policy for high school students in terms of private education, the government required *hakwons* nearly to freeze the tuition fee, which was the primary source of profits, based on a policy of controlling prices. It was the harshest period for *hakwon* education. The restrictive policies continued until 1987 when the establishment especially of entrance exam prep *hakwons* among academic *hakwons* was eased as a democratization measure. The entrance exam prep *hakwons* had been on an upward trajectory (Na 2007).

However, the government's changes to the university admission system for normalization of public education and as a remedy for the excessive demand for private tutoring instead increased demand for the entrance exam prep *hakwon*. In 1981, after the implementation of the Educational Reform of July 30, universities abolished their own admission exams. From 1982 to 1993, one characteristic of the admission system was the expansion of academic reports in high school and the scholastic ability test. The academic report was based on attendance rate and academic scores (10% and 90% of the report, respectively). Accordingly, academic scores were significant in university admission, so the demand for admission prep *hakwons* increased, which fostered the development of *hakwons* (Na 2007). In reality, with the comprehensive abolition of private tutoring implemented in 1980, *hakwons* could not handle the sharply increasing demand successfully. Rather, the abolition of legal private tutoring created new types of illegal, secret private tutoring such as secret tutoring, tutoring in the car, and phone tutoring (Lee 2010, p. 13). Comprehensive and authoritative restrictions by the government induced a creation of the black market for private tutoring and high fees because of the high risk. At first, only students from wealthy families could receive secret private tutoring as if it was an exclusive property of the wealthy. As it spread toward the middle class, many citizens participated in illegal actions.



Publishing home schooling materials for private education reached a turning point in the 1980s after the abolition of private tutoring. It is estimated that nationwide at least 80 publishers issued more than 200 series of home schooling materials. Major admission prep hakwons took advantage of their reputation to enter the market for home schooling materials. Home schooling materials that covered all subjects in the 1980s became specialized in specific subjects in the 1990s. This trend, along with younger students consuming home schooling materials, accelerated multiple purchases. In the 1990s, parents purchasing home schooling materials liked the way guidance teachers visited each subscriber's house and taught the students. It was a very popular system and so had spread quickly. With the high unemployment rate, highly educated women were involved in the home schooling material business, which made a huge impact on its development. There were early and advanced study booms for foreign languages, especially English; therefore, companies publishing home schooling materials expanded this business market sharply by targeting preschool children and elementary school students, producing high-quality materials and a systematic logistic system and using modern selling techniques (Kim 1994).

Some issues about the justification of the policy to abolish private tutoring were raised continually. As it was argued that the purpose had never been to abolish private tutoring to supplement regular studies, the comprehensive abolition policy gradually allowed specific types of private tutoring activity. After one year of the abolition policy, in July 1981, students were permitted to take classes in arts, physical education, and technology hakwons and in 1982, supplementary classes in school for underachieving students were revived. Two years later, in 1984, overall school supplementary classes were permitted. Since the late 1980s, few changes relating to hakwons have been promoted for the purpose of democratization and liberalization. The Law on the Establishment and Management of Hakwons was modified. The framework of the policy for private tutoring was revised in such a way that, in principle, private tutoring was prohibited but actually was partially permitted. In February 1989, all private tutoring by college students was allowed, and middle and high school students were able to take classes in hakwons for summer breaks (Kim 1994). At that time, the hakwon education business was growing very quickly. According to Kong and Chun (1990), the hakwon education field was established as a gigantic, independent business with a market value of 9 trillion won.

## RELAXATION OF THE ABOLITION OF HAKWON EDUCATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF HAKWON EDUCATION: THE 1990s AND 2000s

In the 1990s, the private tutoring abolition policies from the 1980s were substantially relaxed or cancelled because of the limitations on those policies. In an environment where private tutoring was prohibited, highly paid private tutoring for the wealthy was a problem in Korean society since the lower-income classes had relatively no chance to receive such tutoring. Many parents had constantly complained to the Ministry of Education about this paradox of the abolition policy. In this context, permitting hakwon education was regarded as a practical alternative to resolve the problem. At that time, an officer in the Ministry of Education claimed that “permitting hakwon education had the purpose of giving students an opportunity to supplement instruction in their weak subjects in public education relatively inexpensively” and also expected that “a significant number of students receiving the highly-paid private tutoring would be absorbed into hakwons”, In May 1992, the restriction on registering hakwons for middle and high school students was completely lifted and the number of students taking classes in hakwons surged.

On August 22, 1997, the government enacted Act No. 5368, the Framework Act on Administrative Regulations, to increase citizens’ quality of life and promote constant improvement in national competitiveness by boosting creativity and the autonomy of social and economic activities, abolishing unnecessary administrative regulations, and suppressing the establishment of inefficient administrative regulations. As the Establishment and Management System Improvement part of the Comprehensive Plan on Regulation Maintenance (May 1998) was a priority project every year, acts and regulations related to hakwons were relaxed in many aspects. In April 2004, the Constitutional Court judged the measure to abolish private tutoring to be a violation of the constitution and the regulations were changed such that tutors could engage in private tutoring legally by submitting a voluntary report.

While abolition of private tutoring had been relaxed, the college admission framework had been modified to suppress hakwon education. After 1994, the existing academic assessment was changed to the college scholastic ability test. Different from the previous test that included only Korean, English, and math, the college scholastic ability test covered various subjects. Recently, the hakwon education and private tutoring market has increased

even more, since the test score in each section of the scholastic ability test plays a pivotal role in college admission. Moreover, as the school academic report has taken a larger share in college admission, the test scores in all subjects have become more important, which has led to an expansion of hakwon education. On May 31, 1995, the Educational Reform Committee abolished individual university admission exams and introduced an essay writing test to relieve the expenditure on private education and normalize public high school education in the name of The College Admission System To Alleviate Citizen's Pain. The government changed the school academic report system to the comprehensive school record report and diversified the methods for using screening materials according to the characteristics of each major. However, the frequently changing college admission system and admission systems that differed according to each university and major increased the mental burden on students and parents.

In 1998, the Improvement Committee for the College Admission System in the Ministry of Education announced a new college admission system with the purpose of education to respect each student's aptitude and characteristics. The newly announced system adopted various admission factors instead of focusing on test scores in pursuit of diversification and specialization. In this context, the scholastic ability test was set up as an easier way and performance assessment was heavily used for calculating the school academic report. However, the easy scholastic ability test made study through repetition in the hakwons more successful, which led to the development of academic hakwons for the tests and resulted in the establishment of various hakwons for aptitude and characteristic. In addition, in 1998, as additional and voluntary classes in high schools were abolished, so many middle school students rushed into the market of hakwon education that the number of the admission prep hakwons greatly increased (Na 2007).

Although a number of changes in the college admission system were intended to suppress hakwon education, hakwon education had instead expanded significantly. In 1980, 14.9% of elementary and middle school students nationwide took private tutoring, as did 21.8% of middle school students nationwide. In 1997, 51.3% of elementary and middle school students nationwide received private tutoring, which induced a sharp increase in the participation rate in hakwon education. The expenditure on hakwon education also continually increased. In 1997, the total expenditure on hakwon education was 94,296 billion won, which amounted to 2.2% of the then GNP, 13.9% of the government budget, and 51.5% of the budget of the Ministry of Education (Han 2001). In addition, the number of aca-

demographic hakwons for admission prep and foreign language increased—379 in 1981; 2,359 in 1990; 5,630 in 1995; 14,043 in 2000 (Ha 2004, p. 72).

### DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION OF HAKWON EDUCATION TO VARIOUS TYPES: THE 2000S

Entering the 2000s, hakwon education became specialized in various types, different from the 1990s which focused on the gigantic hakwons, with the goal of customized learning fitted to the individual level. The background of the development of hakwon education was the increasing demand for such education and the diversification in admission measures. More people recognized that public education was not sufficient to prepare students for the scholastic ability test introduced in 1994. Moreover, as mentioned above, many middle school students began attending hakwons after the additional and voluntary classes in schools were abolished in 1998. In April 2000, the constitutional court decided that the ban on private tutoring was a violation of the constitution because it might infringe on freedom to choose a job, the right to free expression, and the right of parents to educate their children. Private tutoring was permitted for elementary school students, who had previously been unable to have tutoring in subjects taught in school, like Korean, English, and math, as could middle and high school students (Na 2007).

On the other hand, during the International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial crisis of 1998, the income levels of a significant number of households fell, and their buying power was weakened. Consequently, hakwon education based on the Internet (hereafter “online tutoring”) saw a sharp rise in the late 1990s; however, as IT skills up to 2002 had not been developed fully, it was hard to satisfy learners’ desires. Also, an increase in the number of double-income families increased the demand for hakwon education. This demand, and the necessity of taking care of the children of the double-income families, resulted in teachers in the gigantic hakwons establishing comprehensive hakwons and the specialization of hakwons in specific subjects, leading to the establishment of a number of hakwons in every town. Since 2001, the number of hakwons has increased sharply. Online tutoring services, which have expanded quickly through sufficient development of IT skills since 2002, have become a distinct type of hakwon education in Korea. Most prominently, the total revenue of the Mega Study (Co., Ltd.) increased from 20.4 billion won in 2002 to 70.1 billion won in 2005.

Special-purpose high schools (SPHSs)', independent high school (IHSs), and the Scholastic Ability Tests implemented to stabilize public schooling induced a new type of demand for hakwon education. The government analyzed the motivation for hakwon education and concluded that it came from the poor quality of public schooling. Government officials expected that the demand for hakwon education could be reduced by strengthening public education and enhancing its credibility. In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources announced a plan, the Measure for Reduction of Expenditure on Private Tutoring through the Normalization of Public Education, and then implemented some important policies to stabilize public education, such as the Measure for After School, Schools without Private Education, the Policy of School Liberalization, and the Replacement of Private Tutoring for the Scholastic Ability Test with the Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Lectures. To implement those policies, schools needed to manage various educational programs. Some educators raised the criticism that EBS had damaged general educational schemes. In other words, it was argued that the policies to suppress hakwon education instead resulted in a poor quality of public education. Han (2005) thought that the EBS harmed the general education course in public education and called it "National Private Tutoring." In fact, most classes for 12th grade students focused on the problem-solving education provided by the EBS, neglecting public education. Though the government announced that 70% of the SAT would be linked to the EBS lectures in order to reduce dependence on private education, the reduction effect of the EBS on the expenditures for private education was not remarkable, since a significant number of students continued receiving private education in addition to the EBS lectures. After 2004, the Ministry of Education implemented a policy between the EBS and SAT for more than 10 years, and since 2010 has maintained 70% of the similarity between the EBS and SAT (The Kyunghyang Shinmun 2013). In 2011, the authorities tried to control private education by lowering the difficulty of the SAT. However, the top students gathered in hakwons to reduce the number of mistakes because the score for the SAT relied on just one or two questions, since decreasing the difficulty of the test reduced the assessment function of the SAT. Moreover, the major top universities implemented a difficult writing test to assess applicants more critically since they were unable to assess applicants with only the SAT. Most students went to a writing academy to prepare for the writing test.

The 2008 college admission scheme, which mainly fortified the school academic report, the relative evaluation of the school academic report, and the leveling of the SAT increased the educational burden of students and failed to control hakwon education properly. The 2008 college admission scheme was implemented as the 2004 Improvement Plan of the College Admission Scheme after 2008 School Year for Normalization of Public Education was ending. Consequently, students had to go to hakwons to receive higher grades on the tests than other students. Actually, the leveling of the SAT, which categorizes the score of the SAT into nine levels for the purpose of alleviating the excessive competition for the SAT score, was intended to control hakwon education by lessening the burden of the SAT. However, some universities required a specific level on the SAT, so students were still burdened by it. All in all, implementation of the 2008 college admission scheme had the negative effect that students needed to take care of both the school academic report and the SAT (Edaily 2014).

The fad for SPHSs, which has popped up since 2000, increased the demand for hakwon education, which prospered greatly quantitatively and qualitatively. That is, admission to SPHSs was considered a stepping stone to being admitted to prestigious universities. As competition became fiercer, even elementary school students as well as middle school students started to prepare for admission to SPHSs. According to a report in March 2007 from the Ministry of Education about the status of private education, the upward trend in private education expenditure surged right after the expansion of the establishment of foreign language high schools (FLHSs) in 2002. In 2002, when the Participatory Government was launched, Yoon Jin-Sik, the vice minister of Finance and Economy, told a radio show that the “Ministry of Finance and Economy consulted with the Ministry of Education to improve educational circumstances through establishment of SPHSs in the metropolitan area except KangNam in order to suppress the demand for KangNam real estate”. The demand for hakwon education increased greatly as SPHSs expanded and were established in each town of the metropolitan area. Gyonggi-do (province), in 2004, announced a plan, Support for Educational Innovation, to strengthen the ability of elite education to identify and educate outstanding students. According to that plan, Gyonggi-do would be divided into eight zones and then would establish up to 26 SPHSs and FLHSs before 2010.

Students could not obtain good test scores on the SPHSs admission tests with only public education. The test was too difficult for the level of the normal public education. Elementary and middle school students

studied what they would learn in high school. Also, English was a big share of the admission test, so English tutoring by native teachers, English Camps, and English institutions targeting primary school students were expanded. According to a Ministry of Education report about the status of private education in 2007, more than 60% of elementary school students started to receive private education for English in the lower grades and 30% of the parents of 6th grade students hoped their children would go to an SPHS. It was said that 94.2% of elementary school students who aimed to attend SPHSs received private education and 87.6% of middle school students did. Specifically, more than 97% of top students who wanted to go to SPHSs were receiving private education. The trend of hakwon education was that elementary school students took English and writing, middle school students received private education for SPHS and the college admission prep, and more than 60% of elementary school students, especially, had private education lessons for English beginning in the lower grades.

In 2008, the Lee government implemented the following policies to reduce private education expenditure: the High School Diversification 300 Project; English Concentration Education; and the 3 Stages for College Admission Liberalization Plan. The High School Diversification 300 Project was a plan to build many more IHSs and specialized high schools (SPSs), up to 300, in order to diversify public education and increase the right of choice. It was believed that the fierce competition for SPHS admission came primarily from the small number of SPHSs, so that increasing the number of IHSs would relieve the competition for admission. However, at that time, even though 100 additional IHSs were built, since they were a mere 10% of the total number of high schools in the whole nation, the competition among middle school students became more intense to go to 10% of high schools in the circumstance where competition for private education was fierce in order to get admitted into the total of 55 elite high schools, including 49 SPHS. The practice of ranking high schools from SPHSs and IHSs to normal public high schools made admission competition intense, which resulted in the development of hakwon education. The English Concentration Education policy, which was intended to repress private education for English, also provided a reason for most students to take hakwon classes for English, which further encouraged the development of hakwon education. In the case of the 3 Stages for College Admission Liberalization Plan, as admission procedures for high schools were diversified with the restructure of the high school system and the admission system became more complex with the school

choice system, the demand for consulting services for high school selection and admission procedures increased and hakwon education began providing systemized career consulting services to students with quicker preparation than public education.

Companies providing tailored one-on-one consulting services from the upper grades of elementary school to university admission emerged. With the demand for SPHSs and the ranking of high schools, lower grade elementary school students began participating in hakwon education, resulting in the specialization and qualitative development of hakwon education. That is, while hakwon education had centered on the gigantic hakwons up to the 1990s, the comprehensive hakwon was a primary type of hakwon focusing on the school academic report up to the early and mid-2000s. However, because of the intense interest in SPHSs, hakwons professionally teaching specific subjects like English, math, or science were developed.

We can recognize that hakwon education had been developing gradually into the 2000s. Participation rates in hakwon education increased greatly, from 59.4% in 1997 to 71.7% in 2011, and the total expenditure on hakwon education in 2010 was about 20 trillion won (Hyundai Economic Research 2012). The recent trend of hakwon education in Korea is toward hakwons that specialize in math and English and are franchised businesses based on outstanding learning methods and know-how. Online tutoring has been combined with offline hakwon education, or the offline hakwon education established the online system. Hakwon education has been developed in a way that adds to its strong points or supplements its shortcomings. On the other hand, while company-like hakwons such as the franchise hakwons have the advantages of powerful financial strength, big name teachers, and various curricula that small and mid-size hakwons cannot copy, small size hakwons have recently expanded as they provide one-on-one individual coaching, which is hard to provide in the big size hakwons. Small-size hakwons, like study rooms, responsible for day care as well as individual coaching for learning, have been developed, combining the home schooling material with hakwon education. In 2010, seven home schooling material companies, including Dae Gyo and Woongjin Think Big, managed 6000 self-directed learning centers which combined the merits of hakwons and visiting tutors and replaced the visiting service of the homeschooling material companies. Self-directed learning centers have been established as a new type of hakwon education. Hakwon education has consistently evolved to satisfy students' diverse requests efficiently.



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## Types of Hakwon Education

An overall introduction to the kinds of hakwons in Korea will be helpful to better understand Korean students' participation in hakwon education and its general features. This chapter discusses eight major kinds of hakwons in Korea: (1) English language hakwons; (2) mathematics hakwons; (3) logical writing hakwons; (4) comprehensive hakwons; (5) Special Purpose High School hakwons; (6) gifted-student-centered hakwons; (7) Internet-based hakwons; and (8) boarding hakwons.

The first three hakwons are related to subject areas taught in the school curriculum in Korea and reflect the importance of those subjects as major determinants of students' academic status and in admission to upper-high schools and colleges. The fourth kind of hakwon provides instruction in many subjects in a single hakwon institute. It is more similar to a school because there are many teachers and many subject areas, and also students receive various educational services and support in important subjects areas based on their academic records. The fifth and sixth kinds of hakwons are focused on teaching students in advanced classes or with higher levels of academic ability who plan to enter prestigious high schools and colleges. Since public schooling does not meet their academic needs, they rely on hakwon education to achieve their goal.

The seventh kind of hakwon, Internet-based, is a recent form. Thanks to the development of Internet technology, students do not need to visit the hakwon building every day. They can listen to the hakwon instructor's lesson through their computer. Also, students are able to take lessons from famous instructors in Korea less expensively and without leaving

their homes. The eight kind of hakwon, boarding hakwon, is the hakwon for Korean high school graduates. Students can save their time for commuting every day and can be more indulged in studying by controlling their private and social lives in the boarding hakwon.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE HAKWONS

The first type of Korean hakwon is the English (as a subject) hakwon. As the name implies, only the English language is taught to the students at this hakwon. However, not only Korean students who are preparing for college entrance exams but also college students and adults attend because English is a very important skill for getting a job or traveling to foreign countries. English proficiency is also considered an important criterion in evaluating a Korean person's academic and cultural capabilities. Thus, college students and senior citizens sometimes study English at hakwons. For this reason, this type is divided into two categories, hakwons for students from elementary to high school and hakwons for general citizens, and the latter is categorized as lifelong education rather than as part of the hakwon education industry.

It is not difficult to understand why there are so many English hakwons in Korea if we think of its history. Korea was colonized by Japan for 36 years (1910–1945); it was emancipated by American troops in 1945 during World War II. After emancipation, Korea rapidly became Americanized and English became the second mother tongue for Korean people and students. All knowledge in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences was imported from the USA through the English language, and the American lifestyle has become the new model for modern life in Korea. Korean students who wanted to learn more “New Science” had to go to the USA for their MA and PhD, and for this reason, English was the academic tool to realize their personal life goals. In this social and academic atmosphere, English was regarded as necessary for reading English texts during college and later.

The English language was chosen as a required foreign language from middle school to high school in Korea (1946), becoming an important subject along with Korean language and mathematics. More importantly, it became a crucial test area in the Korean Scholarly Ability Test (KSAT), and thus for college admission. Without acquiring a high score in English, students were not able to apply for admission to prestigious universities. The Admission Test administered by each university focused on examining a student's reading comprehension abilities. The test items were more

difficult than Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) questions. Thus, high school students needed to study English harder and they learned it through hakwon education after school.

The Admission Test policy was abolished in 1981 and high school students prepared for English language exams through multiple-choice questions. Thus, the academic burden of learning English became lighter than before 1980, but English is still regarded as one of the most important subject areas for college applications and future jobs. Since a TOEFL score is usually recommended when applying for jobs after college graduation, students submit their scores with their resume when they apply for positions with famous Korean companies such as Hyundai Motors Group or Samsung Electronics. These companies have branches in foreign countries and the English language is required for applicants. Even for students who do not go on to work in multinational companies, the English language is considered one of the academic and intellectual abilities by which job applicants are evaluated. Also, sometimes Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) or TOEFL scores are submitted as a basic requirement in applications for higher positions, even though the work is not related to English language skills.

For these reasons, the English-centered hakwon industry has spread throughout Korea, and there are many huge, franchised English-centered hakwons. For example, Pagoda English has more than 100,000 students nationwide. Also, C and C English, in the wealthy areas of Seoul, has 5,000 students and employs more than 100 English language teachers. Hakwon buses come and go every hour to take students from hakwons to their homes. These companies develop their own educational materials, and since their curriculum and teaching methods are recognized as better than those in public schools, most Korean parents send their children to hakwons for English language.

In this educational and social atmosphere, the importance of the English language in Korea can be seen in the establishment of English language hakwons for kindergarten students. Hakwon educators and parents believe that language education should be implemented as early as possible; thus, English language-centered kindergarten hakwons have been established around the metropolitan areas in Seoul, Pusan, and Taegu. At these hakwons, native speakers of English are hired as instructors, and they and Korean children have to use only English at the hakwon. The tuition fee for these hakwons has become a social problem because the monthly payment can reach \$1,500–2,000. The fee is almost equal to the monthly salary for the average person.

## MATHEMATICS HAKWONS

Along with English-centered hakwons, math hakwons comprise a big part of hakwon education. As the name indicates, math is taught intensively. In Korean education, math, along with English and the Korean language, is a core subject for college admission and has a big role in the college entrance exam. Without high scores in mathematics, students are not able to apply for prestigious colleges.

The KSAT has a total of 500 points: 100 points each for Korean language, math, English, social studies/science, and a second foreign language. From a superficial point of view, each subject has the same level of importance. However, the subjects have different levels of difficulty. For instance, social studies, science, and the second foreign language are regarded as relatively easier than English and math. English and math consume much of the study time, but it is hard to answer all the questions on the KSAT in time.

In addition, a high math score is necessary to produce a high GPA in middle and high schools. There are many subjects related to mathematics at the upper levels of high school. Korean students take a greater number of courses related to mathematics than high school students in the USA or any Western country. Also, the scores in math classes are part of college applications. Generally, students who apply for colleges of natural sciences, engineering, and medicine should have higher scores in math-related subjects because college admission evaluators consider mathematics scores in their decisions.

In addition to the portion of math on tests in school testing and the KSAT, an important reason to go to a hakwon is to acquire the math knowledge for one's current grade, which will become the foundation for the math in the next grade. If a student's academic performance in a math course at a certain grade level is not good, it is likely that the student's performance at the next grade level will also be poor because school math is based on stages or degrees of difficulty. That is, students who do not know the concepts at level 1 are not able to understand the concepts at level 2. For this reason, Korean mothers push their children to study math hard at a hakwon in order to keep up with the math level at school. There is a saying that if a child lags behind other students in math classes, he or she will not be able to follow them the next year.

Another reason for the pressure to study math at a hakwon is the difficulty of the school math textbooks. Students have to spend extra hours and

energy to pass the course, which means that hakwons help them meet the standards of the school math course. Different from an English-centered hakwon, the curriculum design of a math-centered hakwon is based on the contents of school math at each grade level. That is, third graders are taught to better understand the contents of the third grade textbook.

For this reason, math hakwons are very popular in Korea, like English language hakwons, in particular because parents think that if a student lags behind peers or coursework, he or she will not be able to follow the school math curriculum and will not be able to achieve a high score on the KSAT. Thus, most hakwons are focused on helping students master the required knowledge in math and receive better grades on school examinations. Unlike school teachers who have to follow the school curriculum schedule (what to teach each week), hakwon instructors are kinder and gladly help the students master the concepts which they did not understand at school. Sometimes, hakwon teachers use more efficient methods and strategies to lead students to better understand without difficulty.

This approach is possible because there are fewer students per class in hakwons, 7–15 students compared to 30–40 students in school classrooms. In the hakwon classroom environment, students speak up more freely and ask questions of the instructors, who recognize their responsibility to help students solve problems which they did not understand at school. For this reason, Korean students rely heavily math hakwons when they enter a higher grade.

Even though we may say that the main purpose of the math hakwon is to increase school test scores, by teaching math based on textbook knowledge, some particular types of hakwon fall outside this category. They are hakwons that teach mathematical thinking and problem-solving skills. One example is Kim Sam hakwon, which originated in Taegu but has 74 branches nationwide. It employs various teaching and assessment methods to increase students' mathematical thinking. For example, it has developed approximately 900 textbooks in a total of 10 areas (School Curriculum, Advanced Curriculum, Math in-depth, School Exam, Summer Break Special Lectures, Gifted-student-Focused Program, Creative Thinking, Comma Special Lectures, Special Lectures, descriptive type textbooks, and others). It also provides an online system to communicate with students using cyber technology. In considering the fact that math is taught only with textbooks developed by the Korean Ministry of Education, it attracts Korean mothers and students to learn more about school math and to

advance their mathematical level through more effective methods which are not offered in school classes.

### LOGICAL WRITING HAKWONS

The logical writing hakwon helps students get a high score on the critical writing section of the college entrance exam. Logical Writing was added as a new test area for the Admission Test in 1994 by the Ministry of Education. The basic idea was to increase Korean students' ability to develop logical ideas and to defend their positions in an open-ended paper and pencil test. The test includes various abilities like reading comprehension, identifying problems and developing perspectives, and eliciting a judgment.

This new test policy was chosen because of the recognition that the KSAT as a preparatory test for college entrance was a multiple-choice test and did not give the students an opportunity to show their personal and open thinking abilities in a paper and pencil test. They recognized that Korean high school students who prepared for the KSAT for three years in high school tended to memorize textbook knowledge and to choose answers from a limited number of responses. They were afraid that this multiple choice test would not motivate high school students to think more divergently and open-endedly. As a result, they expected that legalization of the Logical Writing test as another requirement for the Admission Test in each college would change the learning culture of the public high schools, and students would be able to advance their critical and logical thinking skills by preparing for the test.

After the Logical Writing test was enacted in 1994, as expected, it changed the learning culture for Korean high school students preparing for college entrance exams, and it has emerged as a new determinant for successful admission to the desired college. The first reaction of Korean society was "What is logical writing?" and "How should it be taught and learned?" Mass media, educational journals, and school teachers had to learn about this unfamiliar domain of study in high school education. Each high school, and classroom teacher (mainly, Korean language teachers) had to take responsibility for developing curriculum or lessons in this new test area as a direct response to the strong request of students and their parents.

The positive result of this new test was that Korean students had to read more books and to experience writing. Except for reading the textbooks, Korean students did not need to express their ideas and thoughts in writing because of the nature of the KSAT test. In the logical writing curriculum,

they had more opportunities to read a variety of materials such as newspapers, foreign magazines, and essays, and to write about their feelings, positions, and attitudes. Among the many reading materials used, the main one was editorials in the daily newspapers around the nation in order to expand students' critical knowledge of society, human life, and the earth. For this reason, topics in which students had to choose one alternative in a dilemma situation were used for discussion in logical writing classes. The following topics are recurrent themes: human welfare, the role of technology, pollution, equity, the economic crisis, and human rights.

However the unexpected harmful effect of this new test was big: the national emergence of new type of hakwon called the Logical Writing hakwon, and more reliance on its role. The Logical Writing test area was unfamiliar to educators and classroom teachers, and thus the high school Korean language teachers had to study for the class and develop new courses or lessons for the senior students. However, they had never studied this area intensively, and it was not included in the Korean language textbooks selected by the Korean Ministry of Education.

The subject "Logical Writing" did not exist in the high school curriculum structure at that time, and some teachers may have thought it would be the students or their parents' responsibility to prepare for the test. When students think that they are not helped to prepare for the test at school, the easiest way for them to receive academic assistance is from hakwons. In addition, they believe that it takes a long time to develop logical writing skills and abilities and thus they need to take lessons for a long time. For this purpose, there are two options. The first is to regularly take lessons at a logical writing hakwon or through Logical Writing courses in comprehensive hakwons during high school. However, some students take lessons beginning in elementary school because their mothers think that reading more books and developing logical thought through writing will help their thinking ability and school learning in general.

The second option is to take special lessons for two months in their senior year after they take the KSAT, usually in November of each year. Students with the KSAT and high school grade point average (GPA) decide on which university to apply to. If students choose a university that requires the writing scores, they take special lessons for two months at this hakwon.

To prepare for writing test, students try to find the best instructors in their area. Some parents send their children to a metropolitan area, where there are more recognized instructors and logical-writing-centered hakwons. Sometimes, these hakwons provide room and board. The general



cost for a month of lessons is about \$2,000. Each class has five to seven students, and if the parents are capable of paying more, the number of students per class decreases. On the other hand, the cost of lessons decreases if the number of students per class increases.

Students receive three to five hours of hard training every day. Most lessons consist of an instructor's explanation of the structure of good logical writing, after which students write their own writing sample based on the lecture. The instructor corrects some problems and mistakes in each student's work. This process continues until the instructor feel satisfied with the results. During the two months, the instructor discusses various themes and topics, covering as many as possible because students respond more confidently to the questions on the test if the topic has already been discussed or studied in class. Instructors and students discuss issues that may be possible questions on the Logical Writing test and try to relate their writing exercises to current social and cultural topics in Korea and foreign countries. If instructors are lucky, a topic taught or discussed in class or similar topics are chosen as the test questions for a particular college Logical Writing test and their students will have good scores and enter the college. If the college is very prestigious, these instructors can become renowned across the country (most information and news in Korea is circulated to Internet users faster than in any other country). Next year, they may well have more students and eventually may become rich: the hakwon instructor lottery.

### COMPREHENSIVE HAKWONS

The three major hakwons in Korea based on school subject areas were explained in the previous sections. They are independent areas of study and each is taught as the only subject in the hakwon, known as a single hakwon. Math and English language in particular are taught in single hakwons because parents believe that such hakwons have specialized and professional methodologies and curricula. However, for Korean students to take more than one subject and to move from hakwon to hakwon at night is not easy or efficient. Thus, hakwon educators developed a new form of hakwon called a comprehensive hakwon, meaning that all courses taught at school are taught in the same hakwon.

The basic purpose of this hakwon is to help students to perform well on school tests and evaluations. Since Korean mothers think that it is important to keep up with understanding each grade's major subject areas

for success in the next grade, her child should master all required course knowledge in each grade. As a result, the child would have a higher GPA, which would lead to entrance into a prestigious high school and college. Since the goal of hakwon education is higher scores in major subject areas, hakwon education emphasizes review skills and test preparation based on the school testing schedule.

The following is a more detailed look into the advantages of comprehensive hakwons. First, students can study all subjects in one place. These hakwons enable students to save time by not traveling from one hakwon to another. The comprehensive hakwon can be called a second school because its curriculum, activities, and schedule are based on the monthly and yearly school schedule. Thus, the phrase “School during the day and hakwon at night” can be best applied to this type of hakwon.

Second, comprehensive hakwons also offer specialties and well-structured systems for each subject. There seems to be a misunderstanding that comprehensive hakwons are less professionally run than single hakwons. However, many comprehensive hakwons also employ talented instructors and have well-organized curricula for each subject. Comprehensive hakwons can be regarded as a combination of single hakwons.

Third, students also have the option of taking the classes they need. Especially in high school comprehensive hakwons, students do not need to take all the subjects. Instead, they can take just one or two subjects according to their personal need and schedule. If students are weak in Korean language and English, they can take just Korean language and English; moreover, they can select their favorite instructors. In this way, students can optimize their study plan and spend their time efficiently.

Fourth, comprehensive hakwons provide total preparatory treatments for the next grade. They offer total high school/college entrance preparation: courses in all subjects, consulting, individual road maps, high school/college briefing sessions, and writing application forms. Students can establish individual aims and improve study habits by attending regular counseling. In comprehensive hakwons, all the data regarding each student’s academic achievements and extra-curricular activities are stored and managed so that students can prepare for high school/college entrance systematically. Hakwons also provide current information regarding school entrance requirements. With the hakwon’s management, students can spend time studying without being disturbed by other high school/college preparatory activities.

Elementary and middle school students generally go to a comprehensive hakwon every day or every other day (three times a week) and study there for two to three hours per day. However, as a test date approaches, they study longer in the hakwon library or take extra lessons for the test. Because a student's GPA is a crucial component for high school entrance and college admission, students and parents focus on keeping a high GPA.

Most classes in comprehensive hakwons are 40–50 minutes long, almost the same as school classes. In hakwons, major subjects (especially English and math) tend to be taught more often than other subjects. However, students can study every subject within a week in this hakwon. High school comprehensive hakwons tend to open classes late at night on weekdays or on weekends because most high schools in Korea finish their schedule after 10 p.m. Usually, high school students take classes from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekends.

### SPECIAL PURPOSE HIGH SCHOOL (SPHS) HAKWONS

The SPHS hakwon was established and designed for students who are preparing for the entrance exam for a special purpose high school (SPHS). These SPHSs were established after the Regulations for Education Act by the Department of Education in 1980, especially to develop foreign language skills or scientific talent. Later, independent private high schools (IPHSs) were added to the category, with the idea that students with special talents or abilities could be educated more quickly and effectively by receiving a more focused curriculum and instruction. Also, the idea of homogeneous grouping was based on the philosophy behind the founding of these schools. Thus, in 1983, science high schools were established to educate students who excelled in science, followed in 1984 by foreign language high schools; in 1988, international high schools were added as special purpose high schools.

Currently there are 27 science high schools (including seven science high schools for the gifted), 31 foreign language high schools, and six international high schools in Korea. More specifically, Table 3.1 shows the purpose and some characteristics of those schools.

The purpose for establishing those schools was beyond reproach in that Korea aimed to prepare high school students to become professionals in those areas in order to compete with other nations. However, the results were unexpected and different. First, graduates of these schools entered prestigious, elite universities and were in the national spotlight,

**Table 3.1** Purpose and characteristics of special purpose high schools

<i>Types</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Science high schools	To teach students with special talent and abilities related to science. Established by the Korean government
Foreign language high schools	To teach students with special talents and abilities related to foreign languages. Majors are as follows: English, French, German, Spanish, and Japanese. Students majoring in English are considered the most superior
International high schools	To teach students with talents and abilities related to global leadership and attitude

resulting in the popular notion that entering these high schools guarantees admission to prestigious colleges like the Ivy League colleges in the USA. Second, since there was no regulation that the graduates of these schools must major in the same areas they studied in high school, they were able to enter departments or majors which were not related to their majors in those high schools; for example, graduates of foreign language high schools chose majors in the natural sciences, liberal arts, and even medicine, while science high school graduates applied for programs like medicine, pharmacy, and even law and business management.

Because graduates of these schools could apply for any major in college, the original purpose of these schools was defeated and they became a new way to bring smart middle school students together, and effectively prepare them for prestigious colleges to which only the smartest high school students were accepted. Before these schools were built, Korean students had to study together in the same classrooms and at the same schools. However, after these schools were built around the nation and produced good results in sending their students to colleges, they were differentiated from the general public high schools, and Korea came to have a two-track system for high school education based on students' academic abilities: public (including private) high schools and SPHSs. The majority of high school students (73%) go to general public and private high schools, while the remaining 27% of students go to SPHSs and IPHSs (independent private high schools).

At the beginning of this new educational policy, some students may have wanted to enter these schools in order to develop their academic abilities related to science or a foreign language (English, French, German, Spanish, and Japanese). However, as time passed, most applicants seemed

to enter these high schools simply because only the smartest students were accepted as freshman, and only they, as homogeneous groups, were able to receive the high level of teaching for three years. The final result of establishing these high schools was excessive competition around the nation among Korean mothers to send their children to these schools. The SPHS hakwon emerged as a commercial response to meet the educational request of Korean mothers to prepare their children well for the entrance examination to those schools.

The birth of this new type of hakwon was expected because there were no special programs or plans to prepare middle school junior students to apply for these high schools. The applicants were numerous and admissions were limited. Also the admission test was notably difficult for general ordinary middle school junior students. For example, the math level was almost at the high school junior level, and English comprehension was at a high school junior or senior level. Thus, children who hoped to enter these schools must be ready to learn directly after entering middle school. Students were not able to achieve good test scores if they only followed the school curriculum plan. Most test items and questions were not drawn from the middle school curriculum.

Thus, for effective and early preparation, children needed to register at SPHS hakwons and study there for at least two years with professional instructors who were very knowledgeable about the test. Since middle school teachers do not think that it is their duty to help a small number of students in their classrooms prepare for the test, they do not offer any academic assistance at school. Thus, this preparation is the responsibility of the student and his or her parents. Their easiest and final choice is to find a hakwon for SPHSs and design a systematic plan for three years of middle school life.

### HAKWONS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

In Korea, the parents' desire for the educational development of gifted students cannot be fulfilled in school. Korean hakwons for gifted students swiftly provide curricula according to students' needs. It has become inevitable that gifted students need hakwons. In each province, school classes for gifted students have propelled the establishment of hakwons for the gifted. In practice, most hakwons for the gifted were founded in the late 2000s.

Presently, there are over 1,000 hakwons for the gifted nationwide and more than 50% of them are located in Seoul and Gyunggi Province. This

is because there is a need for a higher quality of education in Seoul and Gyeonggi Province. There are especially a great number of hakwons for the gifted in Seoul. Hakwons armed with excellent curricula and methodologies are in great demand and sometimes students have to wait for admittance to these hakwons.

Hakwons for the gifted usually design the curriculum for students who want to get into special purpose middle schools and high schools. Therefore, the main subjects are math and science. They have a curriculum for elementary school students to high school students, and classes are tailored to each student's academic purpose, not just to the student's level and grade. For example, the hakwons provide preparation classes for the KMO (Korea Math Olympia: math qualification test), special purpose preparation classes, and common high school classes. So, students can take classes according to their need and condition. Most hakwons have curricula for various Olympia and contests. Also, during summer and winter vacations, the hakwon gives special preparatory classes for school classes the following semester.

Specifically, hakwons for the gifted use the following methodologies. Firstly, hakwons provide differentiated curricula. Gifted students need tailored curricula and hakwons are aware of this. Still, they do not devise a brand-new curriculum. Differentiated curricula for the gifted reconceptualize the existing curricula's contents, knowledge and philosophy. Accordingly, hakwon curricula adapt different time periods and curricula in accordance with each student's developmental stage.

Secondly, hakwons run flexible curricula. Hakwon staff are not the only principal agents in devising curricula. Hakwons want to reflect the needs of teachers, students, parents and their region in order to improve their programs. Specifically, hakwons are sensitive to students' needs and figure out possible approaches after discussions with other teachers and staff. It is similar to the Deliberation Model of curriculum theory. In the Deliberation Model, the coordinating and compromising process is central to developing the curriculum. It is comprised of natural and past-oriented traits. At a hakwon, a student's present condition is accounted for far more than the determined curriculum. Contents, methodologies, and process can be changed according to the student's needs.

Thirdly, hakwons run individual programs. Gifted students are unique and have separate developmental stages. Students each have different grounded knowledge, and pace of achievement. So, these hakwons have to adapt various grouping strategies to teach each of them individually.

This kind of grouping strategy is one of the methodologies for gifted students who have similar levels of studying competence (Davis et al. 2014).

Lastly, hakwons provide in-depth study. In-depth study in hakwon focuses on providing in-depth curricula considering each student's traits and level. Actually, the hakwon curriculum is hard for normal students, but it is a common thing to deal with in hakwons for the gifted. Sometimes, content from high school and college level has adapted for elementary and middle school students. Even though this is difficult content, students can enjoy their inquiry process because they can realize original principles from studying, not just memorizing facts. For in-depth study, hakwons retain lots of materials by themes and then utilize those materials in their practical classes.

Students take detailed hakwon entrance exams and participate in multiple programs to maintain their learning habits after entrance. Most hakwons are modern and equipped with cutting-edge materials. Students can learn in a blended learning system, combining Internet lectures with offline classes. Hakwons also provide classes for preparing for regular school exams and curricula, so that students are not left behind after getting into the upper levels. Special purpose schools cannot use students' Olympia contest results as valid data for entrance. Instead, the prior school's regular exam score is the main reference. Therefore, hakwons design curricula centered around the school exam period and schedule so that students can achieve high scores on school exams.

### INTERNET-BASED HAKWONS

Internet-based hakwons (IBHs) are the newest type and have strongly influenced the current hakwon education industry. This hakwon type was selected as an independent category for this book because it influences Korean students' hakwon education in a new way, and it will become a major part of the future hakwon industry in Korea. This hakwon type was made possible in Korea because Korea has established a world-class Internet system that covers all homes, and access to advanced IT is very easy for most students and consumers of the educational industry.

As the name Internet-based implies, these hakwons use advanced IT technology for learning. Since the idea that students do not need to visit a particular physical place for study is appealing, its acceptance was positive, and many IBHs have been established recently. Among the many reasons for favoring IBHs are the following. First, students do not need to

go to hakwon every day but instead take lessons at home or other places. They can even take lessons at school during free learning time (in general, after school hours). Also, students can study with a smartphone, PMP, and other small gadgets wherever they want. The features of online learning attracted Korean mothers and students very much, and registration of Korean students in this new type of hakwon increased, in particular because Korean students are very busy even at night with extra study. They sometimes need to study English at one hakwon and mathematics at another hakwon at the same time. It is physically and psychologically tiring. However, if students choose to learn at an IBH, these problems may disappear. They do not need to spend extra time out on the street at night. In particular, if the child is a girl, the mother does not need to worry about her safety.

The second benefit of using this hakwon is a free choice of lessons based on the children's schedule. They can take lessons when they want to and also finish when they want to. They can manage their personal and academic schedule based on their personal schedule rather than on the hakwon's predetermined plans. When they are not tired, or when they have a strong motivation to study a particular subject, they just press a button on the computer. A more interesting situation is that they can increase the effectiveness of the lesson by using different kinds of functions that are not available with off-line lessons. Since courses at an IBH are already recorded, students can adjust the lesson for their individual situation: replay the past content or skip a particular session of the lesson because the information is not new to them. Learning can be very personalized, individualized, and therefore effective. Third, students can take lessons from instructors at the IBH without leaving their living area. In the past, students who wanted to take lessons from certain instructors had to go to Seoul, where those people's lectures were available, during summer or winter vacations. However, now, they just register at the IBH where those instructors are, and take lessons from them less expensively. Thus, they can choose a particular instructor based on his or her teaching expertise. They may choose Instructor A for Korean language, Instructor B for mathematics, and Instructor C for social studies. These three instructors may be at the same IBH or each instructor may have his or her own online site. Thanks to this nationwide new type of hakwon, students around the nation (islands, mountains, or rural areas) can take lessons via the Internet. Korean students and mothers have lists of "good courses and instructors at IBHs" and use these lists when they need to choose an IBH.



Fourth, because of the benefits of online classes (called an “Ingang” in Korea), their uptake has spread quickly among students. As a result, the market for online education has become heated. According to the 2013 Current Trends in the E-Learning Industry report by MOTIE (the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy), the volume of e-learning sales increased sharply, by more than 50 billion won, from 336 billion won in 2005 to 389.4 billion won in 2006. Recently, e-learning has been developing quantitatively and qualitatively to the extent that various learning materials and software are used. Hakwon education based on the Internet is divided into two types: hakwons that focus only on online classes and hakwons that merge off-line and online classes (Kim 2013).

There are two major IBHs. Megastudy was the first IBH in Korea and began its work in 2000. It has great influence with students, so most KSAT takers enroll for Megastudy lectures. In practice, more than 100,000 students attend Megastudy. This service provides lessons in many different subjects. Top level, famous teachers are recruited by hakwons and record their lectures. Megastudy became a member of KOSDAQ (Korea Securities Dealers Automated Quotation) as the leading company in the education business in Korea and in the world. Most Korean students think of “Megastudy” when they think of an Internet-based hakwon.

The second major IBH is Daesung My Mac. Originally, Daesung was not an IBH but a famous KSAT preparatory hakwon. However, Daesung started to provide Internet-based lectures, adapting to new currents in education. Based on its previous resources (instructors, curriculum, etc.), it became second in this business. Now, it employs more famous instructors than Megastudy, which means that more students around Korea attend this hakwon than attend Megastudy. Daesung My Mac has its own broadcasting system in Seoul and televises the lectures of the instructors every day. Unlike the off-line lectures, the main instructors hire junior instructors to monitor their teaching style and customers’ responses. Also, the hired assistant instructor takes charge of answering all questions related to the lessons.

## BOARDING HAKWONS

The boarding hakwon (BH) is the newest type of hakwon for Korean high school graduates. Since it is important to be admitted to prestigious colleges in Korea, some graduates from high schools who are not admitted to those colleges prepare for the KSAT for the next year rather than apply-

ing to another college in the year of their high school graduation. They believe that being able to attend a prestigious college is worth spending another year to acquire a higher score on the KSAT. About 53% of the freshmen at Seoul National University were graduates of previous years (2014).

Traditionally, students who were not admitted to a prestigious university stay at home and take lessons in hakwons for a year. In the past, high school graduates registered in high school graduate-centered hakwons where they took either a single course which they thought they needed to study in greater depth or all the courses for the KSAT. Graduates who did not use this type of hakwon studied at home or at a library. However, as the industry for high school graduates became bigger, boarding hakwons were developed and have spread over Korea. From the early 1990s, boarding hakwons similar to boarding schools have emerged.

The basic reasons to register for this kind of hakwon are that students do not need to commute every day and can control their private and social lives. They are not allowed to leave except for holidays, so they think they can focus more intensively on their preparation for the KSAT. Also, the social recognition that boarding hakwons are more effective than other kinds of hakwons for high school graduates pushes high school graduates to choose this new form of hakwon. Most of these hakwons are located in rural areas, away from the metropolitan cities such as Seoul, in order for the students to pay attention only to their studies.

Currently in Korea, graduates who want to apply for college the following year look for a boarding hakwon which they think best fits their purpose. Also, they think that studying with restricted living rules and systematic plans under the supervisors and instructors at the boarding hakwon solves problems such as learner laziness and too much free time after high school graduation. Also, they think it will be interesting to study with classmates with almost the same purpose: entering the college to which they want to apply.

This type of hakwon is popular among high school graduates even though the annual cost is very high. The general cost per year is 2–2.4 million won (\$20,000). The first advantage of this hakwon is that it is comprehensive, in that all high school subjects included in the KSAT are taught. Thus, students do not need to find another hakwon for a particular subject. The hakwon hires instructors who are renowned in their subject area, and thus, students can study with the best instructors in each subject. To be able to take lessons in all areas for the KSAT in the same

space for a year before the KSAT date without changing hakwons or finding a hakwon for a particular subject area is a physically and emotionally positive feature of these hakwons.

The second advantage of this type of hakwon is the systematic management and control over a student's personal and academic life. Every day, the student lives under the rules of the hakwon, like in the army. They follow the rules and regulations about waking up, eating, studying, exercising, and going to bed. Even though there is some free time during the day, they must follow the hakwon schedule every day until they take the KSAT. Most students are advised to visit their homes once a week. With the precise control of the student's time and space, the student's desire to rest and to feel free can be monitored and controlled. Mothers of students at this type of hakwon like the idea that their children are not allowed to meet their friends or to drink alcohol or play games in a PC Room Café. The thought that their child must stay in a limited space for a year may make them feel happy that the student is safe.

The third advantage of this type of hakwon is the focus on solving KSAT test questions. During the year, students are provided with lots of questions and topics which will probably feature on the KSAT. Since most students have finished three years of high school education, they have already learned the content. Thus, they are taught how to solve problems or find the correct answers to the questions which tend to make them confused. Since instructors in each subject area bring the questions for students to prepare for the KSAT and gladly demonstrate effective ways of solving problems or finding answers, the burden of time, energy, and other effort by the students decreases. Instructors who have been teaching their subject areas for a long time, and thus are recognized as professional teachers, know the subject area very well and, through long-term analysis of previous test questions and the high school curriculum, can guess what kinds of questions will be asked in their subject areas. Thanks to this assistance, students' preparation for the KSAT is much easier than in the classroom because the classroom teacher is busy teaching the textbook content and there is no opportunity for high school seniors to receive further extra academic support from school teachers.

Fourth, this type of hakwon employs many kinds of motivational strategies to lead students to focus on preparation for a year. It is not easy for young high school graduates to pay attention only to studying for a year, particularly when their friends have already gone to college and are enjoying free adult time on college campuses. Also, it is not a good

image to be called a second-year high school graduate. The psychological stress can be overwhelming and sometimes negatively influences their yearlong motivation. Their self-esteem can be very low, and sometimes they become depressed. In this situation, BHs use effective strategies to increase students' self-esteem and motivation to succeed. Mind control, meditation, self-reflection, and in-depth interviewing are regularly used.

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## Elementary School Years

### IN 1968

*Our classroom was cold during winter. I went out with other classmates to collect dead trees and dried plants on the street and in the mountains. They were the fuel for the classroom heater. I had to rub my small hands together for heat during the lesson. In 1969, Korea was a very poor country: there were no modern heaters in the classrooms and no fuel was provided by the school. It was fun to wait in a long queue for cornbread from the US government for every lunch.*

*Thirty years later, Korea has become a member of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). The Korean people regard themselves as middle-class people. Most elementary students at my university lab school look healthy and happy. Some are quite fat because of overeating. They like McDonald's hamburgers and Pizza Hut pizza. This year, the US movies the Avengers and Mission Impossible 6 are required viewing for them to participate in their social dialogue. Korean girls still wear Elsa's long dress as in the movie Frozen, which was a big hit with the Korean younger generations. As US president Obama always states admiringly (even though I think that he is clearly wrong), we have the fastest computers and internet systems in all schools in Korea. Now we are planning to replace hard copy textbooks with electronic textbooks in the near future.*

*(Author's personal memory)*

Can you imagine how Korean elementary students spend their life after school? Can they wrap up a day when they are done with classes in school? The answer is “No.” Another day starts right after school. This chapter discusses the after-school life of Korean elementary school students. Specifically, it sheds light on hakwon education, which makes up the biggest share of after-school life. Most elementary school students, in fact, begin going to a hakwon as soon as they enter elementary school and continue studying in hakwons until they graduate from elementary school. After introducing the general schedule of Korean elementary school students’ after-school lives, I discuss the types of private education for elementary school students, and then describe the characteristics of hakwon education for Korean elementary school students.

### GENERAL SCHEDULE OF KOREAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AFTER SCHOOL

Before discussing the hakwon experiences of Korean elementary school students in depth, we need to look at an elementary school student’s general daily routine, given that the after-school life of Korean elementary school students is closely related to their educational experiences in a hakwon. Consider what elementary school students in Korea do after school. Are they to be found in twos and threes in alleys, just like 20 years ago, playing hide and seek, and Korean hacky sack until the sun sets and going home when mom yells for them—wishing they did not have to stop playing!—having dinner with the family, and going to bed after doing their homework? The answer is “No.” Then what do current elementary school students in Korea do after school? The following two stories help us to understand the typical schedule of Korean elementary students.

*Seung-Yup’s Daily Routine* A fifth grade student, Seung-Yup, starts his day at 7 in the morning. He washes up, has breakfast, and prepares to go to school. Officially, he starts his school life at 8.40 a.m. He studies in school for six hours, to 3 p.m., and then goes directly to a preparatory hakwon. He takes classes for about two and a half hours in the hakwon. When he returns home, it is almost 6 p.m. and the sun is slowly sinking. After he watches TV for a few minutes on the couch, he has dinner. Though his school or hakwon friends sometimes call him to play, he just soothes his mind since he must go to the taekwondo hakwon. At 7 p.m., the commuting bus for the taekwondo hakwon arrives in front of his house. Of course, he started going

to taekwondo because he wanted to. Even when he is depressed, he feels better after getting sweaty. But sometimes when he is tired, he is reluctant to go to the taekwondo hakwon. He comes back home around 8.30 p.m. Now he wants to rest but he must do his school and hakwon homework. He must also prepare materials for tomorrow, so he checks his homework diary. When he is done, it is almost 11 p.m. Even on a lucky day when he does not have any homework, he has no choice but to read a book so he does not have to listen to his parents' nagging. Finally, he can go to bed after a busy day.

*Hyo-Jin's Routine* A fourth grade student, Hyo-Jin, is starting her day with a jump rope. She talks with her best friends as she goes to school after having breakfast and doing morning exercise. She takes classes in school up to 2 p.m. and then cleans up the classroom for 30 minutes. After school, she goes to the English hakwon by bus. During the 30-minute commute to the hakwon, she can relax. She sometimes dozes off on the commuting bus and if her arm accidentally falls off the seat, she suddenly wakes up. When she is in a good mood, she chats with her friends on the bus, but that is not very often. She is usually in a hurry to memorize the assigned words because at the English hakwon she has a word test almost every day. After the English hakwon, she goes to the math hakwon, which is close to the English hakwon. After the math hakwon, she goes to the piano hakwon. When she finishes at the piano hakwon, she has dinner at home. Then, twice a week, she goes to the arts hakwon. On weekends, she goes to the swimming and reading/writing hakwons. As you can see, Hyo-Jin consistently follows a tight routine. Figure 4.1 summarizes Hyo-Jin's daily routine during the school year.

While looking at the daily schedule of Seung-Yup and Hyo-Jin, you might wonder whether it is really the daily schedule of elementary school students—or of university students or middle and high school students preparing for important exams. These two students spend more than four hours daily at hakwons. They even go to hakwons on weekends when public school is closed. The schedule remains the same on breaks. Now you might wonder whether this is a common schedule for Korean elementary school students or whether it represents a special case of one or two students.

Surprisingly, 8 out of 10 elementary school students in Korea go to private educational institutions like hakwons along with public education. There is not much difference in the participation rates by grades: 81.7% for the first grade, 86.2% for the second, 83.7% for the third, 82.5% for the fourth, 80.1% for the fifth, and 77.4% for the sixth. Overall, elementary school students in Korea receive private education from entrance to

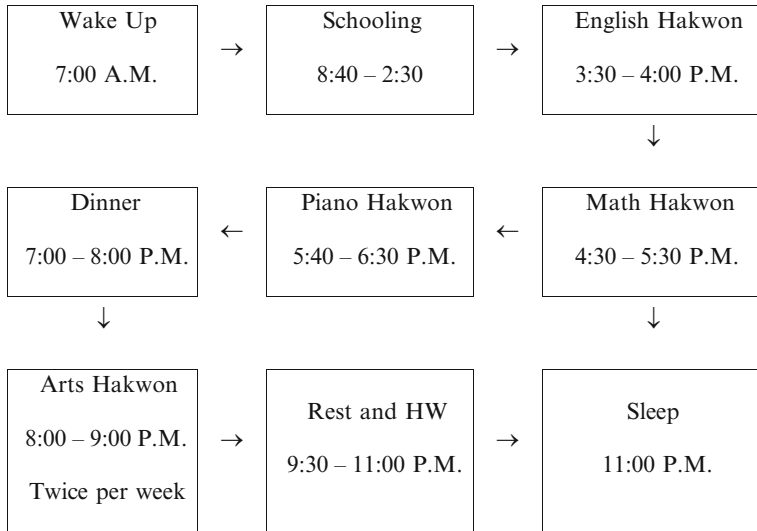


Fig. 4.1 Hyo-Jin's daily routine during the semester

graduation of school at similar rates. Most elementary school students, as well as students in the same age group as Seung Yup and Hyo Jin, follow a similar daily routine.

## TYPES OF PRIVATE EDUCATION OF KOREAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

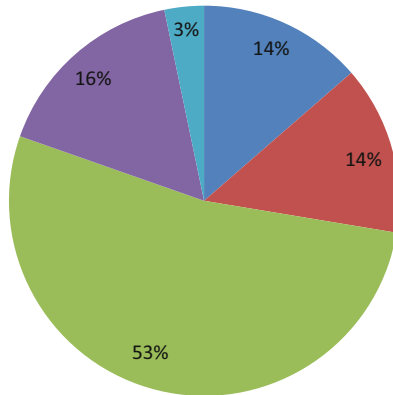
In this section, I explore in depth the types of private education that Korean elementary school students take after school. See the following data from Statistics Korea (Table 4.1).

According to the data from Statistics Korea (2013), private education in Korea can be categorized into individual or group private tutoring, hakwons, home-school materials, or e-learning. Hakwons and private tutoring have the biggest share. After-school classes are another type of private education that many students experience, but since this type is usually regarded as public education, it is not included in private education. However, because most teachers in the after-school classes show characteristics that are closer to those of hakwon teachers than those of schoolteachers, after-school classes obviously represent the characteristics



**Table 4.1** Types of private education and participation rates

■ Private Tutoring ■ Group Tutoring ■ Hakwon ■ Home School Materials ■ Internet



Source: Adapted from National Statistical Office (2014)

of private education. In the following sections, we carefully examine three types of private education: hakwons, private tutoring, and after-school classes.

### *Hakwon Education*

Hakwon education is one of the most popular types of private education for elementary students in Korea. Hakwons are usually classified into two types: general academic hakwons and arts, music, and physical education hakwons. General academic hakwons can be further categorized into hakwons for one subject, preparatory hakwons, or study rooms (Table 4.2).

Compared to other types of hakwons, hakwons for one subject are highly rated in terms of the structure of the curricula and the professionalism of the teachers. However, fees are high because the hakwons offer classes only for one subject. Also, moving to other hakwons to take classes in other subjects is inconvenient. Preparatory hakwons, on the other hand, offer classes for various subjects, the commuting distance is relatively short, and the teachers are also specialized in each subject. Thus, preparatory hakwons are more economical than single-subject hakwons.

**Table 4.2** Characteristics of hakwons by type

	<i>Type</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Examples</i>
General academic	<b>One subject</b>	Can study only one subject	Math English
	<i>Preparatory</i>	Can study various subjects Different teachers for each subject	All subject hakwon
	<b>Study room</b>	One or two teachers for diverse subjects Guidance for various subjects depending on students' demand	Math Korean English
Arts, music, and physical education		Only classes related to arts, music, and physical education New type of hakwon combining arts, music, and physical education parts	Taekwondo Piano hakwon Art class

The last type is called the study room. It is hard to find the origin of the word *study room* in Korea. Also, strangely, study rooms for middle and high school students are rare; that is, the study rooms are almost exclusively for elementary school students. Study rooms have relatively flexible curricula, courses, and teaching styles compared to hakwons for one subject and preparatory hakwons. Instead of specific subjects, the study room offers individual tutoring services for registered students based on students' needs. For instance, in the study room, students receive help in grasping important concepts they did not understand in school and guidance in completing the homework they are unable to complete alone. In terms of learning materials, the study room uses materials according to students' needs that can be easily purchased in the bookstore, different from those used in franchise hakwons, or specific materials not available for all. Also, class time in the study room is usually not fixed. The fee is relatively cheap compared to that of hakwons, as one or two teachers cover all subjects.

In the second category, physical education hakwons teach taekwondo, Hapkido, Kendo, soccer, swimming, and others skills; music hakwons offer lessons in classical music like piano and violin and in applied music like guitar and drum; and arts hakwons help students experience various fields of art such as painting, sculpture, and design. Recently, a new type of hakwon combining art, music, and physical education has emerged.

So far, we have looked into the types of hakwons for Korean elementary school students. Hakwons can also be sorted into two types by management—franchise hakwons and individually managed hakwons—that show different curricula and class management. In the franchise hakwon, an individual hakwon is registered as a franchise and follows the system of the headquarters exactly—for example, Cheongdahm Institute, whose headquarters is located in Gangnam. Every Cheongdahm Institute franchise has the same building aspects, signs, curricula, and programs as the headquarters. Even the hakwon buses have the same appearance. Another type of franchise hakwon is one where the learning materials of the franchisor are purchased and used on the basis of a contract with the franchisor. Since hakwon classes are based mostly on learning materials, hakwons using the franchisor's learning materials naturally follow the system of the franchisor. However, there are some differences between the franchise-contract hakwon and the franchise hakwon: those under contract cannot use the name of the franchisor and the owners of hakwons using only the franchise learning materials can choose their own curricula and programs independently.

An individually managed hakwon provides its own programs and curricula. In this type of hakwon the curriculum is flexible and is determined by the requests or needs of registered students and the owner's preferences. In terms of financial aspects, the franchise hakwon fees are relatively high because they cover all expenses like the value of the brand and marketing costs, while the fees for individually managed hakwons are rather low compared to those of franchise hakwons. Consequently, the large, franchised hakwons usually prosper in areas with many people who are less concerned about money and more so about their children's education, while individually managed hakwons are successful in areas where people are concerned about their children's education but have a tighter budget.

There are also similarities between these two types of hakwons. They all are members of a private organization, the Korea Association of Hakwon, that is in charge of hakwon education in Korea. The association establishes hakwon networks at the national level, makes regulations for hakwon management, and requires that all hakwons follow those regulations. For instance, standards related to fees and the recruiting and training of teachers are universal and the association helps each hakwon manage itself based on those standards. They also basically follow the five-day work-week, although some hakwons are open on weekends. During public school exam periods in particular, they have classes on Saturdays and open the classrooms until Sundays for the convenience of all registered students.

### *Private Tutoring*

Private tutoring mostly follows a one-on-one lesson style. There are no specific requirements to be a private tutor, but prospective tutors should acquire permission from the provincial office of education and should voluntarily report their income from private tutoring, on which they have to pay appropriate taxes. However, not all private tutors are registered in the provincial office of education. In the case of private tutoring by college students majoring in various subjects or talented in special areas, they find students who want private tutoring through flyers, newspaper ads, or acquaintances. Most of these tutors do not have permission from the office because the procedure is inconvenient. Of course, some tutors who are not college students offer private tutoring without permission or reporting their income. Strictly speaking, all private tutoring without permission from the office is illegal, but it is hard to uncover illegal private tutoring unless someone reports it. As a result, private tutoring is secretly done under informal consent between parents and private tutors.

Private tutoring is divided into two types: special talents and academics. Students who wish to major in art, music, and physical education or develop a special talent look for this type of private tutoring. For example, classes for cello or gymnastics are not usually offered in regular hakwons. Academic private tutoring is chosen by students who feel more comfortable in one-on-one tutoring than in the group study of regular hakwons or who can be more efficient at home than outside. There is a distinct difference between private tutoring and hakwons. While hakwons target a number of students, private tutoring has extremely individual and special-purpose aspects. Also, while hakwons have uniform curricula, private tutoring cannot be standardized.

### *After-School Classes*

After-school classes were initiated to provide education to students inexpensively by opening public school educational facilities to more qualified external teachers. That is, the purpose was to attract many students who had previously taken classes in hakwons and offer them a better education at a relatively low cost. Students take after-school classes in the classrooms or school facilities right after public school without needing to go to a different location, which has a great appeal to many students in terms of the easy accessibility. For instance, according to Statistics Korea (2013),

the participation rate of primary school students in after-school classes was 58.2%, or 6 out of 10 primary school students.

Someone might wonder why after-school classes are categorized as private education, considering that they are held at school. As mentioned above, most of the teachers are external teachers, not schoolteachers. While schoolteachers must pass rigorous standards and procedures, the qualifications for after-school teachers are less demanding. Moreover, public schooling is almost free for all students, but students pay a fee to participate in after-school classes, except for students who receive national basic living assistance from the government that includes free vouchers for after-school classes. Various after-school classes like English conversation, violin, computer, and sports classes are open for students based on the specific demands of students and parents. In addition, more advanced classes are held for students not fully satisfied with regular schooling: clay arts, mathematical logic, science experiments, reading and writing, and Chinese characters.

To understand the origin of after-school classes, we need to examine the Korean government's policy of suppressing private education. Educational fervor in Korea is centered on private education like hakwons. Expenditure on private education in Korea is astronomical. In this context, the Korean government has worried about the side effects of overly expanded private education and the collapse of public education. The government judged that public education could not be managed normally, as students relied more and more on private education. Also, students from affluent family backgrounds could be better educated with private education, which resulted in social disharmony. All in all, the government felt an urgency to suppress private education. As an alternative, after-school classes were widely implemented to absorb into schools students who were taking private education by opening school facilities. However, there are still some issues in after-school classes. They are usually managed by external hakwons and they offer a lower-quality education compared to external hakwons.

### ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AT HAKWONS (CHRONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS)

A primary school student, Eun-Ji, started her hakwon life in the first grade. After school, she took various classes such as piano, arts, writing, and pop dancing. Though she took a number of classes, she was never

bored because the classes were active or interesting. In the second grade, she took piano, vocal music, and writing lessons. From the first grade, she found books interesting and would read many books by herself. Also, she understood fundamental arithmetical operations well in math class. As she did not have any problems keeping up with the regular curriculum in school, her hakwon life was composed of her favorite art, music, and physical education activities. However, when she was in the third grade, she began English and math lessons in a hakwon and decided not to take art and writing lessons. Her parents forced her to go to a math hakwon in order not to fall behind at school, as mathematics was getting harder and English was introduced in the third grade. When she was in the fifth grade, she went to a preparatory hakwon teaching all subjects. The preparatory hakwon she attended is a franchise hakwon with branches nationwide. It particularly specializes in English and math while also teaching other classes: Korean, social studies, and science. Many parents and students have great confidence in the hakwon. Look at Eun-Ji's hakwon life during elementary school through pictures (Fig. 4.2).

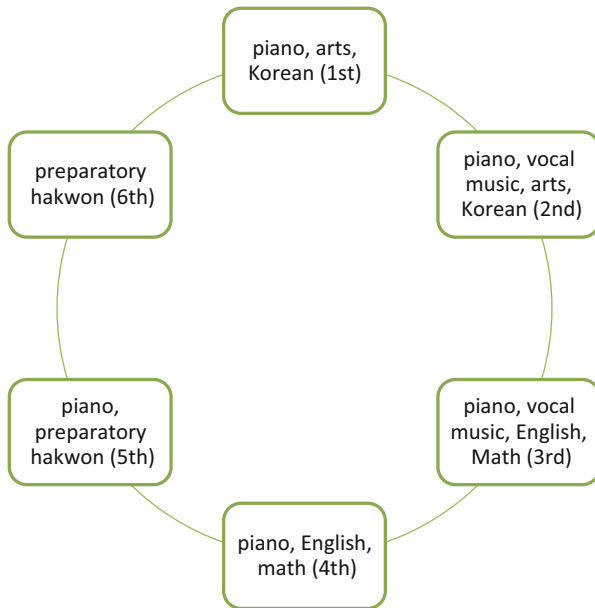
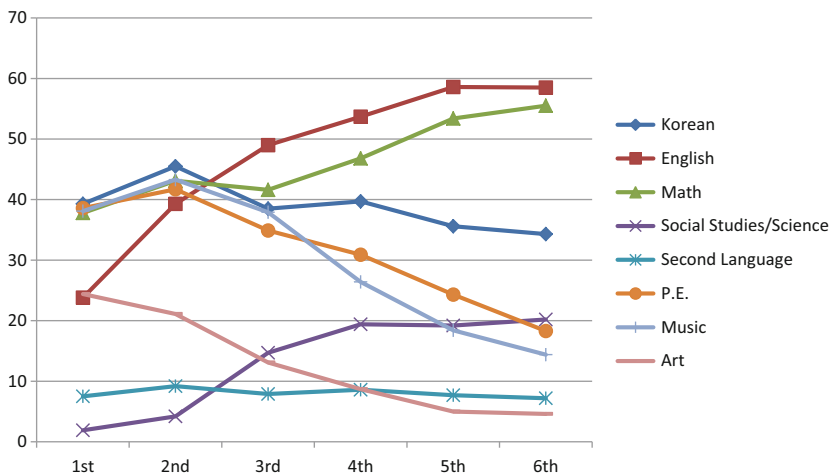


Fig. 4.2 Eun-Ji's life during elementary school

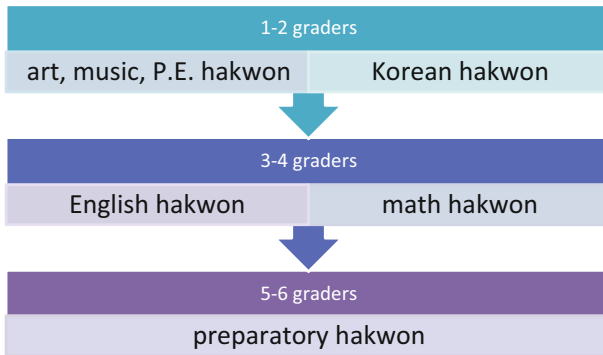
As in the case of Eun-Ji, the type of hakwon to which most students go differs from grade to grade. Analysis of the pattern of classes taken by Eun-Ji in hakwons reveals that she went to hakwons for piano, pop dance, creative arts, vocal music, and other subjects in the lower grades while she took English and mathematics lessons in the preparatory hakwon in the upper elementary grades. In this context, we examine what kind of private education Korean elementary school students have from grade to grade (see Table 4.3).

As Table 4.3 shows, there is a certain chronological pattern in the type of private education taken by Korean elementary school students. In general, Korean primary school students go mostly to hakwons relating to Korean, arts, music, and physical education in the first and second grades. However, when they are in the third grade, they go to the English and math hakwon the most. The proportion of students taking art, music, and physical education classes decreases to 7% and keeps on decreasing in the upper grades. Conversely, the proportion of students taking English classes in hakwons rises sharply between the first and third grades and is at its highest in the third grade. Korean is the most popular subject for first and second grade students, but the share of students taking Korean classes in hakwons gradually decreases. The ratio of students taking social studies and science subjects in hakwons surges more than 10% from the second grade to the third grade and ranks fourth in the sixth grade.

**Table 4.3** Hakwon participation rates by grade and subject



Source: Adapted from National Statistical Office (2014)



**Fig. 4.3** Most popular hakwon subjects by grade

The next section describes and analyzes elementary students' hakwon and daily life in three groups: first and second graders; third and fourth graders; and fifth and sixth graders. It describes in detail the hakwon experience of the most popular subjects for each group: Korean, art, music, and physical education for grades 1–2; English and math for grades 3–4; and the preparatory hakwon for grades 5–6 (see Fig. 4.3).

### FEATURES OF HAKWON EDUCATION IN THE FIRST AND SECOND GRADE

After school, I learn the clay arts in after-school class. And I go to the writing, piano, and taekwondo hakwons once a week. On weekends, I also go to the English reading club. (Myung-Hun, Jung, 1st grade, October 8, 2014)

After school, I take the arts lesson two times per week and the cooking class once a week in after-school class. Every day, I go to the piano hakwon and study room. On weekends, I take the vocal music and swimming class. (So-Myung, Jung, 2nd grade, October 8, 2014)

First grade students are full of curiosity and everything is new to them. Though they are not familiar with class time, lunch hour, picnics, and field days at first, they soon feel happy with them. Students go to school at 8.40 a.m. For 20 minutes of a morning activity time, students do activities guided by the homeroom teacher, for example, reading books or doing



origami. The first class starts at 9.10 a.m. and each class lasts 40 minutes. First graders usually take four classes every day but they take five classes once a week. The fifth class is at 1.00 p.m. after four classes and their lunch hour. Finally, school finishes. Although they take only four classes a day, it is not that easy for first grade students to manage school life, where they all stay in the same place, away from their mothers and the comforting care of kindergarten teachers. One frequently sees a student vomiting in the classroom or teachers changing students' underwear, as some are not fully potty-trained. To help the first grade students adjust to the new circumstances, the textbook *We are the happy first graders* is used in elementary school. The book tells students how to find the classroom and their seat, become familiar with new classmates, say hello to teachers and friends, and follow regulations in school. It also teaches them about school lunch etiquette. Likewise, the book gives practical advice for adjusting to the new environment and life. Beginning in April, first graders start to study Korean, mathematics, and an integrated curriculum consisting of Moral education, Pleasant life, and Life for wisdom. However, the textbooks guide students to move into the world of knowledge smoothly by letting them experience things through real activities using all their senses. Energetic first graders like to play on seesaws, playground slides, and swings. They are also fascinated by building a sandcastle, jumping rope, and playing hide-and-seek.

Second graders have a similar curriculum. As students get used to school life, the teachers' burden of caring for them is significantly reduced. However, students still have strong mental attachments to parents and teachers. They naturally hug and kiss parents leaving for work and whisper to teachers like their father and mother, hugging them frequently. They are happy to hear the simple words "You did well" from parents or teachers. So they study hard to get more compliments. They become interested in a wider variety of activities. They dream about being a swimmer, a ballerina, or a football player like people they see on TV. They try to express their own world freely through painting, origami, and clay in the art class. As they become more interested in reading books. They read funny comic books and fairy tale books with pretty illustrations in their free time, such as during lunchtime or after school.

This daily life has a significant impact on choosing hakwons. Of the various hakwons, first and second graders show the biggest enrolment rates at arts, music, and physical education hakwons and Korean hakwons. There can be at least two possible explanations for this. First, they volun-

tarily build up interest in the arts, music, and physical education. At this age, they are curious and interested in new things. They want to learn and experience various subjects in the arts, music, and physical education hakwons in addition to the subjects they study in school. They want to be a celebrity like the glittering football player, pianist, or figure skater they see on TV and receive thunderous applause and cheers from people.

Second, students have relatively fewer problems learning subjects in the first and second grade compared to the other grades. In other words, less-difficult subjects mean more time to explore one's aptitude in various fields other than the core subjects. Parents strive to provide opportunities for them to experience various things through real activities rather than studying hard. Therefore, parents let them have diverse experiences through the arts, music, and physical education hakwons. As one parent said,

I think that Ji-Na should experience various things as much as she can in the lower grades. Since her workload in school is not that heavy, she doesn't have any serious problems if I give some advices on her studying in the house. Rather, I let her learn piano, taekwondo, and Gayageum, in which she is interested, in hakwons. She might have no time to learn those things when she comes to a period to study hard. So I think that she should experience new things when she is relatively free. Also, there is a limitation to learn various things systemically so that I have no choice but letting her go to hakwon. I hope her to have hobbies for her entire life and relieve some stress through these activities. (Mother of Ji-Na, Kim, fifth grade, January 12, 2015)

Along with the arts, music, and physical education hakwons, most first and second graders go to a Korean hakwon, also for two reasons. Parents recognize that Korean is a primary basis for learning all other subjects in school. As Korean is known to be one of the most essential subjects for daily and academic communication, most hours in school are assigned to it. Moreover, many Korean parents put a lot of time and work into improving their children's Korean language skills at home. Parents read books to their children before they begin school and teach them Korean with various methods and materials. In fact, the language ability of first graders depends on the time and work parents spend on teaching them Korean at home. For example, *We are the happy first graders*, the textbook used for one month at the beginning of the first grade, includes the most basic elements of Korean, like consonants and vowels, and some students are very comfortable with the contents, while those who lack basic Korean

skills complain about the difficulty of the textbook. Once this pre-period passes, all classes are based on the premise that all students have no problem communicating in Korean. Accordingly, when students lack the ability to use Korean, they want to improve their overall Korean skills in a Korean hakwon to avoid problems in studying other subjects in the future.

Moreover, Korean students go to hakwons to develop basic study habits. There is an old saying, “A leopard can’t change its spots,” which implies that habit formation in young children is quite important in life. The purpose of going to the Korean hakwon is not only to improve one’s Korean language ability; many logic/speed reading hakwons and reading/writing hakwons also help students shape reading habits and train them how to do abdominal breathing, write neatly by hand, and think comprehensively, skills which enhance study habits. They also help to promote overall learning ability. The following is a more detailed look at an arts, music, and physical education hakwon and at a Korean hakwon.

### *Arts, Music, and Physical Education Hakwon*

For the lower grades, arts, music, and physical education hakwons show a high registration rate, as they are recognized as broadening the world of experience. It is believed that arts, music, and physical education, which are centered on practical skills and physical experiences, have a positive effect by relieving stress and developing recognition and emotion; therefore, arts, music, and physical education are considered important subjects.

*Physical Education* The physical education hakwon includes various types of sports like taekwondo, aikido, kendo, swimming, golf, table tennis, dancing, figure skating, and football. Korean students watch diverse sports like the Olympic Games, the World Cup, and the Asian Games through mass media. Also, they witness remarkable performances of Korean sports celebrities like Shin-Soo, Choo (baseball), Ji-Sung, Park (soccer), Heung-Min Son (soccer), and Dae-Ho Lee (baseball), which leads more and more students to dream of being a sports superstar. A recent survey revealed that being a sports player is one of the most popular dreams of elementary school students. Thus, physical education is growing in popularity in Korea. Of the many sports hakwons, the taekwondo hakwon displays the highest registration rate. One reason is that the taekwondo hakwon not only teaches taekwondo but also meets various educational demands through its diverse programs. Taekwondo is the most representative of

the traditional Korean martial arts and also is widely known over the world. Since taekwondo was adopted as an official program at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, it has attracted more people both at home and abroad. However, at the taekwondo hakwon, students experience other activities like jumping rope with music, football, and swimming. Also, the programs in the taekwondo hakwon depend on the demands of parents and students. Below are some programs that are available in taekwondo hakwons by categories. (1) There is poomsae training, which is considered the most basic and unique educational activity in the taekwondo hakwon. Poomsae training, which originated in the Three Kingdoms of Korea around the third century A.D., is indispensable. Students learn the basic movements, poomsae, as a group or by grades. (2) Taekwondo hakwons provide a person-centered education. It helps students stay away from selfish attitudes through education in courtesy, which has a close relationship with the humanistic education emphasized in Korean society. (3) The hakwon offers training relating to school physical education. It analyzes the school physical education curriculum thoroughly and tries to include the requirements in its curriculum. (4) This hakwon also focuses on strength enhancement programs. Because hard training is required to improve strength, students easily become tired of the training unless it has fun factors. (5) The hakwon has a childhood obesity prevention program. Students in their growth periods have a great concern about their appearance. (6) The taekwondo hakwon also offers programs to develop various talents and aptitudes, to meet the demands of parents and students. Students interested in football or swimming and not taekwondo can also participate in these programs.

*Music* The music hakwon is divided into two types: one teaches the classical instruments like piano, violin, and flute and the other teaches musical instruments such as the guitar and drums. Between the two groups, most students go to the classical music hakwon. Usually, the skill lessons run parallel to the theory class. For skills, students mainly practice the Basic Piano and then move on to the Expert Piano exercise, which gets harder as it goes from 10 to 100. It is estimated to take almost five years to complete the Czerny 50. Once a student reaches the level of the Czerny 30, he or she is given a chance to play the instrumental music of other famous composers. Mozart, Bach, Brahms, Beethoven, Liszt, Chopin, and others are the most widely known musical sheets for elementary school students in the piano hakwon.

*Arts* The arts, one of the most popular hakwons, helps cultivate sensibility and creativity. In the past, the arts hakwon has focused on teaching drawing and painting. Recently, hakwons such as fashion illustration, 3D design, idea and expression, clay art, origami, form art, and ribbon art have been created to stimulate students' emotions and raise curiosity and interest about various arts. Idea and expression is one of the hottest issues in the current admission to schools of art. Even elementary school students think that developing the ability to embody their own story with creativity is more significant than just drawing well. The following are some of the themes from an idea and expression hakwon: "a transportation system using a watch," "Describe your story with circles (indicating only 4 circles)," "Express what is seen and what is not seen with a pecan," and "a monster fighting with Santa Claus as in a game environment." Since such themes have no designated solutions, students can express their own ideas freely and creatively in the form of art. Compared to public school, few students develop artistic techniques and sensibility when they receive professional lessons.

Moreover, hakwons specializing in arts, music, and physical education are in high demand from students who plan to major in art, music, or physical education. Such hakwons train students to fit the criteria of schools that students want to go to and offer information regarding admissions.

### *Korean Language Hakwons*

When I read a book or article in the past, I just looked through without thinking. Now I'm reading something while drawing circles around important words like I learned in hakwon. Then I divide paragraphs and find out the main theme and thoughts. As I get used to it, I know that this process will be done naturally. Also, as it becomes habitual, the speed of reading and understanding articles gets faster. (Eun-Jung, Park, second grade, December 17, 2014)

The Korean hakwon for elementary school has two purposes: reading guidance and formation of study habits. Of the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic), which refers to the most basic abilities for study, two Rs (reading and writing) are relevant to Korean. That is, the student's ability to read and understand Korean plays an instrumental role in studying all subjects, not only the subject of Korean. A large part of the KSAT depends

strongly on the reading habits learned in childhood. Therefore, elementary school students take lessons in the Korean hakwon to develop their ability to think critically and deeply through constant reading and study habits. Among Korean hakwons, the two most representative types are the reading/writing hakwon and the logic/speed reading hakwon.

The reading/writing hakwon refers to hakwons that help students improve their ability to think critically through reading and writing. But students obviously study Korean and even read at home. Then why do students go to a Korean hakwon? First, they go because it has a system that enables students to read books consistently. Figure 4.4 illustrates this type of system.

For students who have a hard time and are bored by reading books constantly, book selection is crucial. The reading/writing hakwon releases a monthly recommended reading list to catch students' interest and matches books to the level of the students according to time and theme. If the textbook used in school includes only part of a book that has great literary value, the hakwon makes students read the whole book. For the lower grades, the list focuses on fairy tale books with many illustrations; for the upper grades, it includes history books, humanities books, news, and other materials in addition to fairy tale books. As the class is based on discussion, four or five students as a group participate in class together. Students read one book from the recommended list per week on average and discuss the book in the hakwon. The system is that students must read the assigned book because they cannot participate in the discussion if they have not read the book. After the teacher, as the host, leads the discussion, he lets students write their thoughts about the book. The type of writing varies from a book report to a book review to a newspaper article. The hakwon teacher comments on the structure and logic of the writing and

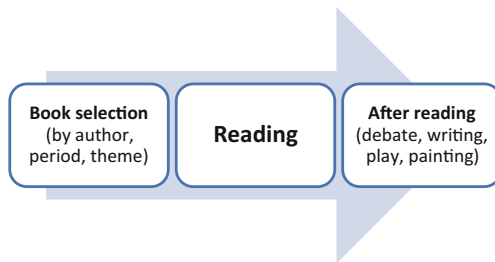
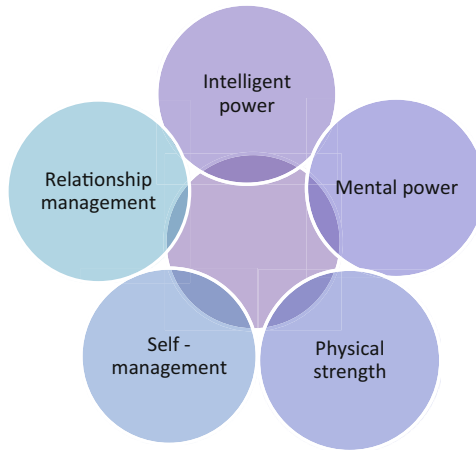


Fig. 4.4 Reading/writing hakwon system



**Fig. 4.5** Human resource development categories of D hakwon

students broaden their thoughts about the theme of the book through repetition of the discussion. Along with the reading and writing activity, students participate in various activities like theatre and drawing. All in all, the reading/writing hakwon guides students by emphasizing the formation of the right study habits and the development of critical thinking and writing through reading books.

The second type of hakwon for Korean language is the logic/speed reading hakwon. Among the many logic/speed reading hakwons nationwide, D hakwon offers an educational program that focuses on five areas of development (Fig. 4.5).

First, this program helps to improve mental strength, which relates to mind power, clear purpose, self-esteem, and positive thinking. The institution makes students come up with a vision and a clear purpose to improve their mind power. To recognize a clear purpose, it guides them to write a self-management report and build detailed plans.

### FEATURES OF HAKWON EDUCATION FOR THIRD AND FOURTH GRADERS

When I'm done with regular schooling in school, then I take the computer after school class. Then I go to the English hakwon and the math study room. After finishing those hakwons, I come home and have dinner. Then

I go to the taekwondo hakwon. (Hyun-Woo, Kim, third grade, November 12, 2014)

After school, I go to the piano, English, and math hakwons. Once a week I learn the *samulnori*, Korean traditional percussion music, and go to the history and writing hakwons. (Jun-Suh, Park, fourth grade, November 13, 2014)

As students become third graders, the number of hours in school increases: five classes every day and two more hours of school than for the first and second graders. The third graders are considered to have learned the basic rules for school life and the fundamental skills for learning subjects; therefore, they start the basic subjects. Rather than the integrated curriculum (Moral education, Pleasant life, Life for wisdom) centered on experience, they study more diversified subjects: ethics, social studies, science, physical education, music, and art. The new structure and management of the curriculum makes students think that they are now beginning to study, which implies a heavier study burden. Accordingly, students focus more on the general subjects than on art, music, and physical education subjects.

English is first introduced in the third grade. Although it is a new subject to the third graders, their knowledge of English varies greatly. English is one of the subjects that shows great individual differences in terms of performance level. Some have lived in an English-speaking country for long time or have studied English in advance in an English kindergarten. When students with no knowledge of English take classes with students who speak English like a native, the beginners feel disharmony and a lot of stress about studying English. As a result, students go to English hakwons offering customized English lessons for each student. Like math, English has a spiral structure where students encounter more words and sentences as they go to the upper grades. Consequently, parents think that their children should build up English skills thoroughly from the very first stage, so they look for private education for this purpose.

Fourth graders have more stress from tests and a larger study burden. When they prepare for the tests, they sometimes think, "It would be very great if the school burned down so I would not need to take the test," or they make a deal with their parents: for example, if they get a good score on the test, they will get a new cell phone. On the day when the test results are released, students who got a good score call their parents to deliver



the good news. But students who got bad results cry and heave a big sigh of regret, worrying about mom's scolding. In math, as the content of the textbook increases sharply, so the amount of study required also increases greatly. At this stage, the number of students getting behind in the math class starts to increase. Table 4.4 shows the math curricula for the first and second graders and for the third and fourth graders.

While only fundamental arithmetical operations, reading time, and basic study of geometrical figures are the tasks in the first and second grades, students learn more difficult calculations, complex figures, fractions and decimals, and probability in statistics in the third and fourth grades, creating differences among students. In math hakwons, students strive to be more competitive by learning new mathematical definitions and techniques for solving complicated calculation problems using fundamental arithmetical operations. For mathematics, which is sequential, failure to

**Table 4.4** Math curricula, grades 1–4

<i>Elementary school</i>		
	<i>1st and 2nd grades</i>	<i>3rd and 4th grades</i>
Numbers and calculations	Four-digit numbers, addition, subtraction, multiplication of two-digit numbers	Five-digit numbers, addition/subtraction/multiplication/division of three-digit numbers, mixed calculation of natural numbers, decimals, addition/subtraction of decimals and fractions
Geometry	Shapes of solid figures and plain figures and components of plain figures	Fundamentals of figures, movement of plain figures, components of circles, various triangles/quadrilaterals/polygons
Measurement	Comparison of amounts, reading time, length	Time, length, height, weight, angles, rounding, region of numbers
Regularity	Finding regularity	Finding regularity, rules and correspondence
Probability/Statistics	Sorting, Making tables, drawing graphs	Arrangement of data, bar graphs and line graphs

learn the appropriate skills in each grade is likely to have a negative effect on future math study. Therefore, many students go to a math hakwon for advanced study to avoid an unfavourable scenario. Next, I examine the English and math hakwons to which most third and fourth graders go.

### *English Language Hakwons*

The word *English* has different meanings for the Korean people. Every day, the mass media introduce new books and programs to improve English, and both young elementary school students and old people with gray hair use online tutoring services or hakwons to obtain a higher score on the official English test. Even kindergarteners who cannot speak Korean well go to English kindergartens, which cost almost 2,000,000 won per month, to learn English, and some elementary school students get on the plane to study abroad in the name of language study, missing mom's love. In Korean society, having good English skills implies that you can keep one step ahead of others in getting into the top university, a well-paid job, promotions, and other aspects of so-called "social success." Therefore, Korean parents have a great desire to give their children a good English education beginning in elementary school.

As the government realized the importance of English education in the globalized world, it included English in the curriculum beginning in the third grade in 1997. However, the polarization in the English ability of elementary school students has become more serious and two to three hours per week of English education class time in public school is not considered enough to master English appropriately in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment. The demand for English education is not met sufficiently because of the lack of educational infrastructure for English, large class sizes, polarization of abilities among the students, and old-fashioned teaching methods. Consequently, students and their parents look for other places to meet their needs for English education.

One of the fastest ways to learn English is to stay in an English-speaking country. Children who are seriously exposed to foreign language in elementary school, called the "critical period" by linguists, have a higher probability of becoming bilingual. Nonetheless, it costs a lot to study abroad, regardless of the duration, and parents are very nervous about seeing their children live independently in unfamiliar circumstances in a period when they still need their parents' meticulous care. Although students may acquire excellent English skills by living in an English speaking

country, if they fail to pass other subjects and are not good at speaking Korean, then the reason for studying English in the foreign country fades. Considering all possible cases, parents seek out places to learn English efficiently while staying in Korea. That is the English hakwon. When students are newly exposed to English in the third grade, the registration rate in English hakwons surges.

The high demand for English education has resulted in fierce competition among English hakwons, which has led to the establishment of hakwons with various systems and programs. Besides the franchise hakwons and those that contract with the franchises, there are many individually managed English hakwons in every corner of Korea that have built up their own unique educational system. Below is a discussion of the educational aspects of various English hakwons.

First, there are hakwons where students can acquire English as a language. For this purpose, they set up a system where students are naturally exposed to the English-speaking environment. All classes are taught in English and teachers are either native speakers or bilingual Koreans. That is, they have a reason to represent the USA in Korea.

Six third and fourth graders are already sitting in class. A native English-speaking teacher says hello to the students coming into the classroom: “Hi Steve, you look good today,” “Hi, Jessica. How was your trip to Jeju last weekend? I saw your pictures on Facebook.” The approximately ten students in the class are quite familiar with this routine. Next, they have a conversation about Halloween because Halloween is coming next week. First, the teacher displays the words to the song “Spooky Spooky – Halloween Song,” on the projector screen. “Spooky, spooky, very spooky. Oh no, it’s a monster.” Students laugh out loud as they watch monster, witch, and vampire characters along with the lyrics on the screen. Then the teacher introduces various costumes for Halloween and shows people walking along the street dressed up as vampires, skeletons, spiders, Spider-man, Shrek, Wolverine, and Iron-man. The teacher lets students read the article in the textbook describing the origin and meaning of Halloween and checks how well students understand the article through a pop quiz. Finally, the teacher assigns the project. The task is to “decorate your Halloween costume.” Students should write in English about what costume they would wear in the Halloween parade, what made them choose that costume, and how they would decorate the costume distinctively. Every student presents his or her own concept in front of the classroom. During the presentation, the teacher checks for grammatical errors in the

script. After the presentation, the teacher corrects important grammatical errors.

(Part of a participation observation log of a math hakwon, June 5, 2015)

Rather than categorizing language into speaking, reading, listening, grammar, and vocabulary, this type of hakwon exposes students to an overall English-speaking environment. In a class taught entirely in English, students naturally listen to English conversations, speak English, read the English script, and write what they think in English. Although grammar and vocabulary classes are taught in Korean, students basically accept English as English. Students are encouraged to speak and write their own thoughts and feelings freely in various circumstances and not to learn English passively. Students who do not yet have enough English structure in their brain to express their thoughts in speech and writing can express them with their bodies. As their English gets better, they can speak and write simple words and sentences in English. In the very first stage, maybe they can speak only one sentence. However, being exposed consistently to the English environment, they become able to speak and write more words and sentences. They can even make a presentation about a theme. The highest level of students can have debates and discussions in class with their classmates. At first, students can express their thoughts in writing with few words; however, as they learn English in this system, they are finally able to write an essay with a logical structure. Since English is the most important subject for elementary school students, the hakwon lets students learn appropriate expressions matched to their level naturally. Franchise hakwons usually use their own textbooks along with additional original books in an agreement with the textbook company.

Public schools also regard an English-speaking environment as one of the most important factors in English education. They use English in chants, games, and activities. Also, students are given many opportunities to speak in English, focusing on fluency rather than accuracy. The teacher guides students in repeating useful expressions assigned in each chapter in a group activity rather than explaining them individually. Compared to English hakwons, English classes in school have the physical and psychological shortcomings of large classes, such as having 30 students in a class, with classes not being organized by level, lasting only two or three hours per week, and being taught in Korean. Accordingly, parents prefer the natural English-speaking environment offered in English hakwons.

In the English hakwons, classes are usually taught by a native speaker of English, different from public schools, where the native English-speaking teacher plays a supplementary role. Hakwons hire native teachers because students maximize their efficiency in learning English in English immersion education. Moreover, English hakwons where the classes are taught by native-speaking teachers have more credibility with parents. Native teachers are in charge of the whole class or teach with Korean teachers in the class. According to Entry/Exit information from the Ministry of Justice, more than 20,000 native teachers were in Korea and most of them were working in English hakwons. Native English-speaking teachers working in hakwons are either employees or freelancers, depending on their work agreement. Whether a native teacher is an employee or a freelancer depends on the employment agreement between the owner of the hakwon and the employee in terms of work, time, place, and contract. English hakwons hire native teachers living in English-speaking countries through recruiting companies or native teachers currently in Korea by publishing job posting on websites. Most native English-speaking teachers are from the USA, Canada, the UK, South Africa, and the Philippines and their mother tongue is English or they use English as a second language. In terms of the contract conditions, English hakwons mainly offer a place to stay and pay a fixed salary. After the contract is finalized, franchise hakwons train native teachers in their educational system and teaching methods at the franchise headquarters. Then the teachers receive training in other important aspects related to teaching at their work place. For the case of individually managed hakwons, native teachers start to teach after a certain period of training by the owner of the hakwon.

Students study English in hakwons, feeling satisfaction and achievement through the diverse educational programs that are not offered in the public schools. Students taking a class in an English hakwon said the following.

All different levels of students study in the same class in [public] school. I am bored when I am in the class since the class is easy for me. But the class in hakwon is not that easy and just right for me. Since the level of the class in hakwon is appropriate, I can't be bored when I study English. And the [public] schoolteachers ask a question to one of the classmates. If he is not good at English, we must wait till he answers the question. Sometimes it wastes so much time. But I can solely focus on studying in hakwon without noticing the time. Also, I can receive various trainings in hakwon. It seems

that my listening ability and pronunciation get better while doing a shadow speaking through which I repeat the CD record of the reading textbook. I had a hard time getting used to the class taught in English at first but now I can almost understand what the teacher says as I take classes. Sometimes the teacher highlights important sentences and lets us do a recitation. It is sort of burdensome. Once I do it, I feel so satisfied. (From the interview with Eun-Jae, Lee, fourth grade, August 14, 2014)

### *Math Hakwons*

In math, Korean students are the best in the world. In the International Mathematical Olympiad, where math-talented students from all over the world compete with each other, the Korean team ranked first in 2012 and second in 2013. Unlike students in Western countries like the USA, Korean students do not use calculators in the tests. Also, US math teachers frequently compliment Korean students who have just emigrated to the USA on their good performance in the math class, even for those who worried about their low performance in math in Korea before emigrating. The question is whether public school is the sole factor in Korean students' good performance in math.

Math hakwons are one of the popular types of hakwons for elementary school students in Korea, starting in the third grade, when the level of math is intensified. Math is considered a core subject along with English and Korean because these subjects play a significant role in the Korean SAT and admission to Special Purpose High Schools. Accordingly, parents and students put more and more weight on early study of math. The math curriculum is like a spiral, where students study the same topics but with more complex problems as the curriculum proceeds. If students do not know how to do simpler problems, they are unable to tackle more complex problems. Therefore, students who do not have a good foundation in math have a hard time. This spiral characteristic of math makes students lag behind and even give up studying math in the upper grades. Therefore, it is common for students to go to math hakwons in order not to get behind and also to study in advance for math classes in school. Below is a description of a class in an individually managed math hakwon.

Though it is winter break, a number of students are studying hard in several classrooms. In one classroom, 10 third graders are studying addi-

tion and subtraction of fractions, which is part of the first semester of the fourth grade. When the class starts, students take the homework given in the previous class and the main textbook from their backpacks. Listening to their teacher calling out the answers, students draw circles around the right answers and slashes through the wrong answers. A student asks a question about a wrong answer he did not understand. The teacher politely explains how to solve the problem. After problem solving, they move on to the next chapter: mixed calculation. The teacher explains the important principles for calculation while writing them on the blackboard. The teacher does not just explain the concepts but also frequently presents problems and asks tricky questions. Then the teacher gives the students some time to solve problems. If a student asks a hard question, the teacher comes to the student and explains the answer. At the end of the 50-minute class, the teacher assigns homework for the next class.

(In the observation log of the math hakwon, July 3, 2015)

So far, the typical math class in a hakwon seems not much different from a math class in school. But the math class in a hakwon has its own characteristics. First, the teacher offers numerous problems. Students solve diverse problems in school through the main textbook and supplementary workbook; however, the number of problems students solve in school is less than half the number students solve in hakwons. Around the third or fourth grade, some students go to a math hakwon worried and anxious after getting a bad score on a math test. However, students who study in hakwons usually perform well on the math test. It is believed that their success comes primarily from the repetition of solving problems. While the textbooks used in school mainly explain the mathematical concepts, those used in hakwons help students grasp the mathematical concepts through various types of problems after a brief explanation. Also, these textbooks include more complex problems that require higher thinking ability than the textbooks used in school.

Second, the math hakwons provide classes for learning the prerequisites. During summer and winter breaks, students learn what they will study in the next semester or a year later. Students complete one main textbook and one supplementary book on average during a break before a new semester and review by solving problems in two workbooks in the new semester. Math hakwons have a 3-3-3-3 academic system: preparation for the first semester from December to February; advanced study from

March to May; preparation for the second semester from June to August; and advanced study from September to November.

Third, the math hakwon provides classes tailored to each individual. The classes in hakwons have around 10 students, so the teacher can take care of each student separately. If a student gets wrong answers on a specific type of question, the teacher assigns another workbook or lets the student solve numerous problems from other resources. The math hakwon educational system helps students fully understand the mathematical concepts.

Fourth, the math hakwon has various levels of classes. There is a difference among elementary school students in terms of performance in math. After their academic performance is reviewed, students are assigned to a level. Generally, the math hakwon has the three levels: advanced, normal, and basic classes. Students who lack a foundation for math only move to the next level after building a solid foundation, even studying the topics from lower grades. Students in the advanced class solve math competition problems or study the next grade's math.

It is said that only 10% of tenth graders like math while almost 90% of first graders do. In fact, the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) 2012 survey measures many items in various fields. When scales were constructed on which the average OECD student was given an index value of zero, the score of Korean students in "interest and motivation in mathematics" was  $-0.20$ . In addition, the score of Korean students in "stress from mathematics study" was  $0.31$ , which is one of the highest scores among OECD countries. The two scores imply that Korean students perform well in math but they do not enjoy math study. It is argued that low interest and motivation in math results from focusing only on solving techniques and only on answers, not procedures.

After the government introduced the 7th National Curriculum of Korea and switched to the Korean SAT from the academic achievement test in the mid-1990s, a new type of math hakwon, "math hakwon with thinking ability," emerged. This type of hakwon has adopted a new educational method to increase students' interest in math and raise students' ability to think critically, avoiding the previous cramming method based on intensive memorization. The following is a discussion of the educational characteristics of one of the most popular of these hakwons, Soma hakwon.

First, Soma hakwon aims at discovery learning. The classroom is full of a wide variety of learning tools: pattern blocks, geocubes, dominos, math



balance scales, fraction circle boards, a hundreds number board system, a Hanoi tower, rapid blocks, and others—around 300 learning tools.

Elementary school students, who have a short concentration span, have fun in activities to help them understand mathematical concepts and principles using these learning tools. For example, students are able to develop a sense of space through formulating space concepts, division of surface areas, characteristics of polygons, and angles of figures by organizing pattern blocks made of six pieces into an equilateral triangle, a square, a trapezoid, and a parallelogram. Also, various tools enable students to understand the angle of regular polyhedrons. Students can make a duo polyhedron and understand Euler's theorem, which is taught in the middle school curriculum, by using the tool Zonodome. Manipulating these learning tools broadens the thinking ability of students who have difficulty in abstract thinking.

Second, a discussion-based class is offered. Lower elementary school students with interest in logical thinking in math developed through activities using the learning tools participate in a discussion-based class where they organize their own thoughts and freely make speeches in front of their classmates. As a group or in pairs, they discuss a problem and present their logical thinking process for solving it. When one has a different opinion, he can ask a question or go against the others with logical reasoning. Through these discussion-based classes, students increase their ability to think critically and logically. This type of class is possible in hakwons because classes are small and the students are at a similar level.

Third, Soma hakwon offers a class for each topic. The curriculum is based on the coverage and steps of the public school textbooks and students' interest in each period. Table 4.5 shows part of the curriculum.

In the D stage of step 3, one topic is "Pattern." Here is a sample question.

There are 10 marbles.

Each player takes one or two marbles at a time by turns.

The player who takes the last marble wins the game.

Behind this question is the division rule with remainders. Even students fully skilled at division with remainders cannot easily connect the mathematical principle to this real problem. However, as students play the game repeatedly, they understand intuitively that to win the game, three marbles must be left in the opponent player's turn. Moreover, going

**Table 4.5** Soma math curriculum

	<i>B stage</i>	<i>C stage</i>	<i>D stage</i>
Step 1	1. Patterns and Soma cube 2. Sorting and even/odd numbers 3. Space sense and finding a place	1. Reflector and similarity 2. Sequence of numbers 3. Number puzzle	1. Unit measures and diagram division 2. Magic square 3. Number and parity
Step 2	1. Watch and calendar 2. Pentomino and dice 3. Pattern block and matrix	1. Enhancing space sense 2. Puzzle and game 3. Solving various problems	1. Reflector and block 2. Consecutive numbers and distribution of inheritance 3. Handshaking and the shortest distance
Step 3	1. Origami number board 2. Math game	1. Blocks 2. Number puzzle 3. Time and calendar	1. Geoboard 2. Logic and passwords 3. Pattern study

backward making groups of three marbles using the same methodology, there should be left one marble. Therefore, they come to realize that the winning strategy is to start first, take one marble in their first turn, and make nine. Even though students keep practicing division with simple calculation problems, it is not that helpful for development of thinking ability. Through the class in the hakwon, students can think of division as repeated subtraction. If students are trained with bigger numbers in this way, they begin to recognize that it takes a long time to do subtraction with big numbers and they can save time with division. With these experiences, the math hakwon teaches the concept of division with remainders and increases thinking ability.

An example of the expansion of the pattern class is the following:

There is a number, 3791379137.....

- (1) What number comes next?
- (2) What is the number in the 10th place?
- (3) What is the number in the 50th place?
- (4) What is the sum of all digits to the 50th place?

At first, students can answer question (2), filling in the rest of the number. However, it is impossible to write down all the numbers to get the number in the 50th and 100th places. To do so requires knowledge of

division with remainders. While solving those problems, students begin to understand that it is much easier if they use division with remainders.

Finally, Soma math hakwon focuses more on descriptive problems. The mathematical thinking process is considered one of the significant factors in studying math, so students are heavily exposed to descriptive problems rather than to short problems. Students do not just try to get an answer, and while describing their thinking process, they are able to find weak points and errors in their logic flow.

### FEATURES OF HAKWON EDUCATION OF FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS

Right after school, I take a class of creative science in the after-school class. After that, I directly go to the preparatory hakwon and study there until 7 p.m. before coming home. During the test week, I have to go to the hakwon after school and I also should go to the hakwon on weekends. (From, the interview with Seung-Mok, Lee, fifth grade, November 12, 2014)

I study in the preparatory hakwon after school. I have dinner at home after the hakwon. Then I go to the taekwondo hakwon. I take a swimming lesson on weekends. (Jun-Suh, Park, sixth grade, November 13, 2014)

Fifth graders gradually present adolescent behaviors. They are increasingly interested in the opposite sex and put more weight on peers than on parents or teachers. They also care about their status in a peer group and are on their way to building up an identity including merits and shortcomings. As they think independently, they have a tendency to stick to their own opinion and try to persuade others through debate. They start to defy school regulations or teachers' instructions and are under much stress from the increased amount of study. They develop a fear of middle school and an increased number of subjects and expanded class time. Beginning in the fifth grade, students usually take six classes a day and school finishes around 3 p.m. Moreover, practical courses are introduced and there is one more hour of English class per week.

Fifth and sixth graders have similar class times. However, sixth graders are proud that they are the highest grade in elementary school and reach the peak of adolescence with a consciousness of power. They are very sensitive to others' assessment and keep thinking: "Who am I?" In this period, many students regard TV stars as role models for their life, think-

ing that everything else has no meaning in their life. They strive to mimic an idol's fashion style and practice dancing and singing to attract people's attention and love, like celebrities. Males with talents in studies and sports lead a group and others tend to follow the leader.

As students become fifth and sixth graders, studying the core subjects becomes a top priority because parents regard studies in this period as a significant factor in academic performance in middle school. Both class time and workload are increased. The workload in social studies and science increases, and students have difficulty handling the work alone. Some fifth graders cannot keep up with the Korean history class, which is newly included in the social studies curriculum. In addition, some sixth graders complain about the difficulty of the topic of physics relating to the nature of light and to acids and bases in chemistry. Accordingly, fifth and sixth graders prefer preparatory hakwons where students can study all subjects including science and social studies.

### *Preparatory Hakwons*

Preparatory hakwons teach many subjects in one place. Specifically, a preparatory hakwon has classes of Korean, English, mathematics, social studies, and science. Thus, it combines all the characteristics of the single-subject Korean, English, and math hakwons. Since it teaches all subjects, it tends to lack the specialty in each subject compared to hakwons teaching only one subject. However, because of the benefits of the preparatory hakwon, many fifth and sixth graders move from the hakwon for one subject where they studied in the lower graders to a preparatory hakwon. There are three reasons to choose a preparatory hakwon. First, it saves time. Fifth and sixth graders who think that study is important recognize that this is a pivotal period—moving from one hakwon to another wastes time, and requires physical strength. Second, students can prepare for all subjects taught in school. The preparatory hakwon is a good place for students who have difficulties in social studies and science. If a student goes to English and math hakwons, he must study other subjects like social studies and science by himself. However, if students have not been much exposed to those subjects from the lower grades, they are likely not to know how to study and obtain a good test scores. Because the overall average score of all subjects is another assessment standard for elementary school students, even if students perform well in English and math, they might lose confidence if they get a lower average score in all subjects due to low perfor-

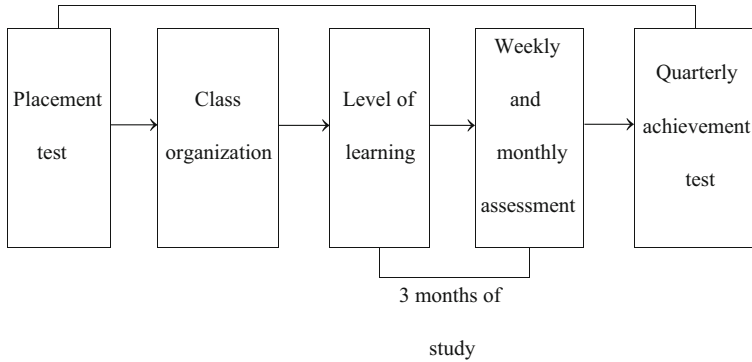
mance in Korean, social studies, and science. Third, parents can save some money if their children go to a preparatory hakwon rather than the hakwons for one subject. For example, while the hakwon for each subject like English and math costs 150,000 won, the preparatory hakwon costs only 250,000 won. Usually, preparatory hakwons do not to expand their business region to the national level. However, they generally use franchise textbooks or educational programs for English, math, social studies, and science. The following is a description of a class in a preparatory hakwon.

The S preparatory hakwon is a normal type of hakwon easily seen in the residential areas of a large city. Elementary, middle, and high school students study here. As the bell rings for class, 10 fifth graders in class A enter the classroom along with a native English-speaking teacher. The first class is English. The new native teacher, Richard, is a man in his 40s. Once a week, they read an English book or play a game with the native teacher using the expressions they have learned. The theme of today's class is the K-Pop fad. It is said that K-pops and Korean food are getting more and more prevalent in the USA and Europe, as well as in Asia. The teacher tells the students that the only thing that he knew was "Gangnam Style" (the famous Youtube Song) before he came to Korea last year. He suddenly begins following the dance moves of PSY, and the classroom is filled with students' applause. The teacher then starts asking students what Korean things make them proud. Ji-Min comes up with "cultural heritage" and Sung-Kyoung answers, "fast internet." The 50 minutes of class end as they are talking about Hallyu (power of Korean culture) and Korea. The students say goodbye to the teacher and start to prepare for the next class, science.

When students enter a preparatory hakwon, they take a placement test, which usually has two subjects, English and math, and are assigned to a class matched to their level based on the test results. After the classes are organized, students study in classes tailored to each level and are assessed on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis. Figure 4.6 shows the process of classes tailored to levels.

The curriculum in the preparatory hakwons is composed of four semesters rather than the two-semester system in the public school academic year. See the details of the curriculum of the preparatory hakwon (Table 4.6).

In preparatory hakwons, a new semester starts in December at the beginning of winter break. Students study in advance what they will study in the first semester of the next academic year. They focus primarily on math, Korean, social studies, and science. After the winter break, they



**Fig. 4.6** Flow of differentiated classes

**Table 4.6** S hakwon curriculum

	<i>Q1</i>	<i>Q2</i>	<i>Q3</i>	<i>Q4</i>
	<i>Dec, Jan, Feb</i>	<i>Mar, Apr, May</i>	<i>Jun, Jul, Aug</i>	<i>Sep, Oct, Nov</i>
<i>Placement test</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>February</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>August</i>
Class	Prerequisite study for 1st semester of public school	Review of 1st semester topics	Prerequisite study for 2nd semester	Review of 2nd semester topics
Special class	Prerequisite learning	Advanced learning	Prerequisite learning	Advanced learning
Tests in public school	Permanent class for math competitions, class organized by section, special lectures for diverse tests Placement test (pre 7th grade)	Midterm Apr	Final Jun	Midterm/Final Sep/Nov

review and study in depth what they had studied during the winter break. In addition, after the final exam of the first semester, students study the second semester curriculum in advance until the end of the summer break. After September, they take advanced classes in what they studied up to the summer break.

Students go to the preparatory hakwon daily. English and math classes are held every day and Korean, social studies, and science classes are held

**Table 4.7** Sixth grade schedule in a preparatory hakwon

	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>
15:30~16:25	Math	Korean	Math	Social studies	Math
16:30~17:25	English	English	English (Native)	English	English
17:30~18:25		Math		Math	Science

one or two times a week. The following is a weekly schedule for the sixth grade in S hakwon (Table 4.7).

S hakwon uses franchise textbooks for English and math; for social studies, science, and Korean, textbooks sold in any bookstore are used. English and the thinking ability math class have their own franchise system, different from the public school curriculum. Students learn phonics in the first stage and gradually formulate various English sentence structures. Then they are trained with diverse English books, TOEIC, TEPS (Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University), and debate. Specifically, at the phonics stage, students are trained to read English words and sentences fluently without phonetic symbols. In the next stage, the basic level, they learn past tense, progressive tense, future tense, imperative sentences, declarative sentences, and other topics so that they can read, write, listen, and speak in all tenses. In the intermediate level, they study interrogative sentences, comparative/superlative, prepositions, and emphasis/inversion/insertion. In addition, they build a foundation for the TOEIC, TEPS, and TOEFL. In the advanced level, they practice grammar topics like the subjunctive, auxiliary verbs, passive sentences, relative pronouns, and gerunds. They study to obtain a high score on the TOEIC, TEPS, and TOEFL tests and discuss English books they have read.

S preparatory hakwon combines school math and thinking ability math. For school math, students learn the next semester's curriculum in advance. Then they take another placement test. Qualified students study advanced materials beginning in March; however, unqualified students repeat the basic level. In pursuit of active learning, "teaching" and "learning" have separate notions in this system. A teacher explains the core concepts and solving techniques on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, while students solve problems by themselves on Tuesdays and Thursdays. One floor in the hakwon is decorated as a comfortable learning area like a fancy café. Four students per table can study, facing each other. Students solve prob-

lems tailored to their own level and weak spots, and grade their solutions. If they get the wrong answer on a question, they redo or think deeply and solve questions repeatedly until they can confidently explain the questions they answered incorrectly to the assistant teacher. A class for talented students in math is also offered. In this thinking ability math class, students use diverse educational tools like Cuisenaire color rods, wooden blocks, and a Geoboard, and strive to solve real-life problems.

Korean, social studies, and science follow the school curriculum without modification. The textbook is composed mainly of problems in addition to a summary of the core contents. Since the class is based on the textbook, students first memorize the contents through the summary and then practice what they have studied by solving problems. The problem-based-textbook in the hakwon is a major difference between hakwons and school. As hakwon education needs to cover various types of problems in a short period, there is no option but to emphasize memorization and solving techniques.

Among the fifth and sixth graders, some students want to enter special purpose middle schools or international middle schools in the near future and, later on, special purpose high schools such as science high schools, foreign language high schools, independent high schools, and international high schools. The hakwons have special classes for them. International middle schools are known to have a favorable educational environment: all classes are taught in English, students can learn Chinese, Spanish, French, or other languages, and students live in the school dormitory. Also, since international middle schools offer some advantages in being admitted to special purpose high schools, many parents show a strong interest in these schools. As of 2015, there are four international middle schools nationwide—Daewon, Younghun, Chungsim, and Busan—and the total quota for the four schools is around 480. Chungsim international middle school can recruit students from any location; other international schools have a limitation on recruiting; Daewon and Younghun international middle schools can recruit only students from Seoul, and Busan international middle school only from Busan. According to the general plan for admission to the international middle school in Seoul in 2015, announced by the Seoul metropolitan office of education in March 2014, the application review process for admission to Younghun and Daewon has been completely abolished and all applicants are selected by public lottery beginning in 2015. In the first round of the admission process, Chungsim international middle school selects three times the quota based on a personal



essay, reference letter, and school report, and the final group is determined through an intense interview. Busan international middle school initially selects two times the quota of students by lottery and then recruits the final group through application screening and an interview.

Hakwons enhance students' ability to enter international middle schools in several ways. First, they have reading and writing classes and a reading program to develop reading habits. Hakwons also emphasize the study of English. Although the official English test score is not included in the admission process, studying for the TOSEL (Test of the skills in the English language) and the junior TOEFL in hakwons is helpful in developing skills that have an impact on admission to international middle schools because awards, academic reports, and school records play a significant role. Students practice under the guidance of the hakwon teacher when they participate in English speech contests and studying at the hakwon enables students to obtain a high score on the school tests. In the case of the math hakwon, students develop a way of studying that improves critical thinking ability and creativity rather than focusing on solving techniques. Moreover, the hakwon provides opportunities to participate in external competitions like KMO (The Korean Mathematical Olympiad) and KMC (Korean Mathematics Competition) to accumulate diverse experiences. Hakwon classes also help students prepare for the personal essay and intense interview.

However, since international middle schools recruit only a small number of students and their locations are limited, only a small number of students receive the benefits. It is much more common for students to try to get into a foreign language high school, an independent high school, or a science high school, which have larger quotas and a direct impact on admission to the university. The hakwons open special classes like classes for talented students in math, advanced math classes, advanced science classes, and TOEFL/TEPS classes for the top students who wish to be admitted into top universities.

## SUMMARY

This chapter describes the general features of Korean elementary students' hakwon education using statistical data and qualitative data from the researcher's fieldwork. It helps us understand the practical situation of Korean parents and of students' strong and deep involvement in hakwon education, even though it has been criticized by the Korean government.

In the earlier grades, Korean parents want their children to develop artistic abilities and talents and physical development through hakwon classes, and in the later elementary grades (fourth grade and beyond), Korean students' hakwon education is more focused on academic learning such as English language, mathematics, and Korean language.

From my personal experience and observation of Korean society, Korean mothers and fathers want to provide their young children with increased, safer free time before they begin to participate in the education war beginning in middle school. This educational ethos of learning for students' freedom and development is also found in Korean public elementary schools, which use various teaching and learning methods for their students to enjoy life, learning, and inquiry. That is the main reason that educational objectives such as creativity, aptitude, and moral character are continually emphasized in Korean school life.

Another crucial point to be noticed from the analysis of elementary hakwon education is that the consumers of hakwon education, young Korean elementary students and their parents, evaluated their experiences as positive and meaningful because such experiences or activities either were not provided or not emphasized in public schooling. Even though the monthly payment for hakwon education is financially burdensome to some parents, they gladly plan such an expenditure for their children because it is educational and beneficial. Korean traditional culture of respecting and emphasizing learning and being educated as the most important value seems to influence their decision and positive interpretation of the experience. This cultural feature of extra learning after school causes a new culture of play and social gathering among Korean students who go to hakwons to meet their friends or to make friends. A child cannot find friends in the playgrounds in apartment areas because most of his or her friends have gone to hakwon institutes.

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## Middle School Years

### STORY OF 1975

*My free life of elementary school ended at the beginning of my middle school freshmen year. In order to enter a good high school, I had to study hard for the high school entrance examinations. The cold reality of Korean society was waiting for this boy with an average ability, and there was no other choice but to study well like my other classmates. Our final goal was to successfully pass the exam in order to be placed into one of the following high schools: (1) Superior; (2) Average; or (3) Poor. Entrance to the first-level high school (Level A) was designated to only some students at each middle school. Each school used many different kinds of management and rewards to increase the number of students entering level A and level B. Continuous school exams were taken each semester, and positive and negative compensation to the students were utilized as a major part of school policies. We stayed late at school until 9 p.m., in preparation for the high school entrance examination during our senior year. Our classroom teacher checked our attendance every night. Two different kinds of feeling existed in every student: a joy of learning, and a fear of failing.*

*One year later, my friends and I met on the street, but in different colored uniforms. The students of Level A wore blue uniforms, Level B wore white, and Level C wore grey uniforms. We were all still the same friends. But, social acknowledgement and attitudes towards our different uniforms had changed. I could feel the sentiment of the pedestrians around us.*

*(Author's personal memory)*

This chapter, I would like to illustrate the experiences of Korean middle school students at hakwons. After primary school, Korean students also head to hakwons as they enter middle school. Moreover, middle school students spend more time and study harder at hakwons than they did as elementary school students. From now on, I will describe a prototype of middle school students' three-year long lives at hakwons. Through this, we can understand how Korean middle school students experience hakwons as their learning/living spaces compared with their school lives.

### THE DAILY LIFE OF YEJIN, A SECOND GRADE MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

In this section, we will look into the lives of middle school students' after school. For this, we will examine one middle school student, Yejin, who is in the second grade of middle school and lives in a metropolitan city. Yejin studies until late at night after school. This is a common theme for middle school students. As well as Yejin, a great portion of middle school students study at hakwons after school. According to 2014 National Statistical Office records, the private education participation rate of middle school students is about 70% and 50.3% of those enrolled at hakwons.

At 6.50 a.m., the abrupt noisy cell phone alarm wakes Yejin from a deep sleep. She frowns and barely comes out of her soft bedding and heads to the restroom. After washing and brushing her teeth quickly, she runs out of the house without eating breakfast. After entering the school gate just in time, she arrives at her classroom at 8.10 a.m. From this time, her school life begins. At 4 p.m., after having seven periods of classes, she departs through the school gates while constantly chatting with friends. Yejin says goodbye to friends who are taking a hakwon shuttle bus. Then, Yejin goes directly to her house and eats a delicious dinner, which was prepared by her mother. Having had dinner, she changes her clothes from a school uniform into something more casual. After that, she lies down on the couch and switches TV channels for a while. However, it does not last that long. At 5.30 p.m., a hakwon shuttle bus arrives and waits in front of her house. The shuttle bus is on its way to a comprehensive hakwon, which starts at 6 p.m., and teaches English, math, and Korean language classes today. On the hakwon shuttle bus, Yejin continuously practices daily allotted English vocabulary lists in her mind. Even though she has a math test today, it is not a problem because she has already studied for it at school during the self-studying period and at lunch time. Arriving

at the comprehensive hakwon classroom to which she belongs, three to four students have already arrived and have been studying hard. Some students desperately lie face down on their desks saying, “Today, I give up.” At 6 p.m., the classroom door opens and the English comprehension teacher comes in. Saying hello slightly, she distributes the English vocabulary test sheets to students. Students take their paper and directly fill in their answers to the test sheet blanks almost without breathing. After filling in the blanks, students switch their papers and check their partners’ answer sheet by looking at the teacher’s answers. Then, students take their own paper back and check their score. Today, Yejin gets 45 points out of 50. She tells her score to the teacher and the teacher inputs the score into her computer. There will be an additional test after classes for those who scored under 40 points out of 50. In today’s English reading comprehension class, two articles will be dealt with. Students have already read and solved questions about the articles, so the teacher just has to explain essential contents and grammatical points. Then, students ask questions about what they need to be explained in detail. It is 10 p.m. After finishing math and Korean language classes, Yejin doesn’t need to stay at the hakwon because she passed all of her English and math daily tests. However, she heads to a self-study room to prepare next month’s midterm exam. At the self-study room, she recognizes some familiar faces. After studying, she takes the 12 a.m. hakwon shuttle bus back to her house. Arriving at home, her parents are still watching TV, waiting for her. She greets her parents, washes her face, sends some cell phone messages to her friends, and then goes to bed. The following is a diagram that represents Yejin’s daily life (Fig. 5.1).

Yejin finishes her school classes at around 4 p.m. However, Yejin’s day does not end at that moment. Rather, Yejin’s real day begins at a hakwon. Moreover, Yejin’s additional self-studying has also taken place at a



Fig. 5.1 Yejin’s daily life

hakwon. Studying at a hakwon continuously can last from weekdays to weekends, and even during vacation. Is Yejin the only student who utilizes a hakwon as their main place to study? Of course not. Numerous middle school students in Korea use hakwons for studying. It has been revealed that most students in Korea enroll in hakwons during their elementary school period. This is the reason why so many middle school students are already familiar with the hakwon lifestyle. However, it is a plausible notion that middle school students have a different experience depending on curriculum and studying atmosphere. What concrete experiences do middle school students face at hakwons? How do students think and feel about these experiences?

When middle school students first visit a hakwon, the student and parent are guided to a counseling room. Sitting in this quiet counseling room, the director of the hakwon or the counseling teacher comes in. While sipping green tea that was given by the director of the hakwon, the student fills out an application form which includes their home address, current school, school academic achievements, and so on. Then, the hakwon director asks a few questions regarding the student's daily study habits, such as, "Why did you visit our hakwon?", "How do you study, regularly?", "What's your target score or target high school?" Then, the teacher explains additional information, which includes the tendencies of current school tests, lists of high-scoring students, a necessary studying method for achieving a target score, and the hakwon's educational curriculum/methodologies, and explains about their pool of excellent instructors. Furthermore, the process of the student being designated into a class level has been initiated. Although methods of assigning classes vary according to each hakwon, the most common way is to use a school academic performance paper as well as each hakwon's own level performance test. Student aptitude tests and deep counseling methods can be useful in helping to uncover a student's hidden potential. After the classroom designation process, a student's real hakwon-life begins.

At a middle school hakwon, each classroom generally consists of only a few students. It is common for hakwons to comprise a classroom with 5 to 10 students, and maximum of 15. In the same classroom, there are students from different schools. Amongst them are students who consider each other very close friends, while others are less friendly in the early stages of the semester. However, after spending some time together, they easily become more open-minded towards each other and become close

friends. Sometimes, they escape from the hakwon to go to the nearest convenient store to eat snacks together and study all day long together during test preparation period weekends. Consisting of similarly leveled students, they not only feel competitiveness and tension but also reliance on each other at times. Studying with similarly leveled students allows them to reduce their time explaining to others concepts they feel are unnecessary. Schools do indeed have level-based classes in subjects such as English and math. However, level gaps still exist amongst students as one class is made up of more than thirty students. Let us see what students think about these classes.

Hakwons have several levels of classes, so the teacher can give us more adequate and necessary knowledge. In contrast, at school we only have two or three differentiated classes, and there are lots of easy and unnecessary lessons taught in these classes. Therefore, I cannot focus that much at school in these classes. I think that hakwon classes with many differentiated classes and less students are more efficient. (From the interview of Soo-jin, 2nd middle school, October 7, 2015)

At hakwons, students take formative assessments every month or quarter. Usually, math and English are the major subjects that need formative tests. Students take tests regarding previously learned content, and certified tests like Junior TOEFL and TEPS are also used for checking performance at times. If a student passes the level test, then he or she can advance to the next level or have an opportunity to study the next curriculum. Otherwise, if a student fails to pass the test, he or she does not advance to next level and studies the same curriculum again. High-performing students' scores are sometimes attached to the hakwon bulletin board and they can sometimes get a scholarship according to their high academic performance. This kind of level advancing system can motivate students to study harder or sometimes become a reason for quitting a hakwon.

Studying with similar leveled students make me feel competitive. This would be a kind of competition in good faith. Studying alone never made me think that way before. However, studying together with other students at a hakwon put myself into having passion for academic achievement and working harder. (From the interview with Joon-sung, Kim, 1st year of middle school, July 21, 2015)

Continuous assessment makes me feel burdened and that was the reason why I quit studying at a hakwon. I was the only person who could not pass the level test, so I came apart at the seams and I quit the hakwon. (From the interview with Eun-young, Lee, July 21, 2015)

Usually in December, after the final exam of sixth grade elementary school, students enjoy a pleasant time with their homeroom teachers having cooking time, playing soccer or dodgeball games, watching movies, or making Christmas cards. In contrast, hakwons have a different atmosphere during this period. At the hakwon, after this final exam of sixth grade, official middle school curriculum begins. Preparatory programs for pre-middle school are provided to sixth grade students and these students have to move into classrooms shared with their middle school seniors. The current elementary level hakwon teachers are exchanged with new middle school teachers and the students are expected to say goodbye. If the hakwon is only for elementary school curriculum, students change their hakwon to a new middle school specialized hakwon.

New middle school hakwon teachers sometimes frighten students by describing middle school as the beginning season of real hardship and explaining how students should be equipped with a strong mindset. Additionally, teachers ask students to study hard before entering middle school, and emphasize that learning before entering each middle school period is critical. Moreover, students are told they need to study three to four times more than what was expected during their elementary school periods. Students then start with a new middle school curriculum and new textbooks. The middle school preparatory curriculum is mainly made up of math and English. The following table is the annual curriculum of a hakwon (Table 5.1).

This type of curriculum system is adapted to math, rather than to English. Specifically, English has a separate language training program, so the constitution of the curriculum is a little bit different from the above table. However, preparatory programs in vacation periods are adaptive to both English and math. This kind of preparatory curriculum is not unfamiliar to students. Even in elementary school, students preview the upcoming contents of school. However, this kind of accumulated lesson-previewing allows students to have different levels of background knowledge. In general, students study the entire curriculum of their first year



**Table 5.1** Annual curriculum of hakwon

	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>
School test	D					A		B			C	
Preview		A, B above							C, D above			
Review, In-depth study	D			A			B			C		D

(A—1st semester midterm exam, B—1st final, C—2nd mid, D—2nd final)

of middle school before even entering middle school. Top-level students preview more advanced second year middle school content before entering middle school. Additionally, students with a lack of basic knowledge review key knowledge of elementary school and preview some of the fundamental content of middle school. Hakwons especially highlight sixth grade math, because of the strong connection between the sixth grade curriculum and first grade middle school curriculum. Without thorough studying of the sixth grade curriculum, there would not be sufficient effectiveness in previewing middle school curriculum. In the case of English, hakwons usually do not follow the school English curriculum. However, we can presume the level of content taught at a hakwon by considering the student's level of vocabulary and sentences. Intermediate-level students usually deal with textbooks of second year level in a preparatory program. Top-level students have varied competence, and they may be placed at any level from second year of middle school to above high school. The following table shows what students learn in hakwons according to their level (Table 5.2).

After previewing the courses of middle school at a hakwon, students begin their real middle school classes in March. Students feel awkward in their initial middle school days, which are different from elementary school days. There are lots of restrictions at school, such as hair, school uniform and personal property. Moreover, there are studying manner assessment systems, which measure students' daily attitudes and are graded as Blue Point (good-mannered attitude) and Red Point (bad-mannered attitude), which will be delivered to their parents to check students' school life. In contrast to grade school, each subject has a different teacher, and it is hard for students to meet with their homeroom teacher except during morning or afternoon meeting time or the subject time their homeroom teacher is

**Table 5.2** The contents of differentiated classes

<i>Class</i>	<i>Learning contents/level</i>	
	<i>Math</i>	<i>English</i>
Basic	Ss' present grade~ Ss' -1 year	Ss' grade +1
Intermediate	Ss' grade + 0.5 year	Ss' grade +2
Advanced	Ss' grade +1	Ss' grade +2~3
Top	Ss' grade +2↑	Ss' grade +3↑

in charge of. Students should go to school earlier and return home later than when at elementary school. These kinds of changes can make students feel burdened and some students suffer from fatigue. Other than that, studying and test scores are the main themes of school life. From the very first time that students meet their homeroom teacher, the teacher usually brings about the assignment test score first to advise students to study harder to fulfill the students' goal. Every subject teacher also tells students that if they want to be accepted into a higher quality school or university, they should be more engrossed in studying. Additionally, teachers tell students that if they score highly on a test, they can apply for special purpose high school, such as a science high school, a foreign language high school or a school of gifted children. The number of subjects and tests increases and test rank and grades are exposed in public. From these shifts, students' interest in studying and test scores increase a lot. There are some students who did not study enthusiastically at elementary school but change their attitude and begin to study earnestly. Furthermore, staying overnight for studying is also a common theme during middle school. As well as at school, hakwons are also busy preparing for the new semester with new programs and are crowded with new students and parents. In general, for math and science, in-depth studying based on problem solving classes is provided. They are equipped with basic textbook concepts, while students can study in greater depth through various problem solving experiences. In the case of English, hakwons run both separate language training programs and school test preparation classes. Students study for both school and hakwon combined. However, students usually learn the same content of a hakwon repeatedly at school. Here is how the students respond.

This will make me more self-reliant. I learn the same content with different methodologies which expand my understanding of content and enable me to compare both school and the hakwon to each other. I feel proud of myself when I grasp the meaning of content quickly because I worked hard at the hakwon during my vacation period. (From the interview with Eun-soo, Kim, 2nd year of middle school, December 13, 2015)

Students acquire the kind of studying pattern of previewing at a hakwon and reviewing at school for three years until their graduation.

In the second year of middle school, students become adaptive to changing to the school's system. Students' naive attitudes have faded and they separate into two groups: the studying group and the non-studying

group. Although most of the students make an effort to excel at studying, after one year, the number of students who give up on studying increases, mainly because of poor grades. Besides, there is another type of students who wishes to advance to a music, art, or P.E. high school. However, there are students who do not belong to any area, studying or music, art, or P.E. and end up on the streets. Students who do not care usually make fun of friends or sleep in school classes. Amongst the advanced students, there exists fierce competition to achieve good grades on school tests. Hakwons focus more on privileged students who can apply for SPHS. With the present university application system, most students from SPHS can enroll into prestigious universities. The high school to which a student goes impacts greatly on their future university. As a result, most advanced middle school students want to go to SPHS. Moreover, middle school hakwons' abilities are estimated by the number of students who enroll in SPHS. Therefore, middle school hakwons strive to get more students accepted into SPHS. Because of this, hakwons can be criticized for providing unequal educational opportunities, favouring advanced students, and not giving educational chances to all students equally.

School grades are critical factors when applying for special purpose high schools. Recently, the foreign language high schools and international high schools assess students with an absolute evaluation score (A–E) during their second year and then give a relative evaluation score (1–9 rating) during their third year. Students who wish to apply for a special purpose high school should get score of B or rating of 2 at the least. For that reason, hakwons focus more on school test grade management. Students who want to go to a foreign language high school are prepped for English tests, while students who want to enroll in a science high school or a school for the gifted are prepared for math and science tests in hakwon.

Let us see what students think about the grade management system of a hakwon.

Hakwons give us thorough preparation for school exams through accurate analysis. We study TOEFL regularly but it's not related much to our school exam. Sometimes, students with 100 TOEFL points do not get 100 points on the school exam. Those students did not study hard enough to solve the detailed grammar questions asked on our school test. However, in hakwon special classes for school exams, the teacher pinpoints the essential elements of the school textbook that can be asked. Studying TOEFL during regular classes is like looking at a forest of English; on the other hand, the special

classes for school tests are like having a good look at a specific tree. Hakwon teachers point out the important issues of each lesson in the textbook and possible questions. (From the interview with Chan-Young, Jung, 2nd year of middle school, November 28, 2015)

Hakwons also provide a personal career management program for those who want to apply for special purpose high schools. Hakwons help students with various outdoor activities, volunteering, contests and reading experience careers, amongst others. These careers can be attractive traits for students when writing their self-introduction paper, and when interviewing with judges on the process of entering a high school.

In the third year of middle school, their future career is the main focus of students. Students think over and over again about their desires, future job and potential talents. Sometimes they talk with teachers, or friends and parents as well. Some teachers tell students that SPHS might not be a conclusive choice when deciding which high school to go to. Students are also told that it is hard to achieve high scores at SPHS, so going to a regular high school and studying hard there provides a better opportunity for entering a prestigious university. However, students with high grades are eager to apply for an SPHS. For those students who want to go to SPHS, the first semester of third grade is tough. Normally, school grades are evaluated until the first semester of third grade for SPHS entrance, and a relative evaluation system is adapted in the first semester of third grade. Therefore, students strive to win 1 to 2 ratings out of 9 by studying late at night, staying overnight at hakwons or studying on weekends as well. Moreover, an SPHS interview preparation program is initiated from the third grade. Through thorough analysis of pervious testing, interview-specialized teachers provide expected question lists for the interview and real training experience. Hakwons set up virtual interview settings and makes students answer expected questions as if in a real situation. Then, teachers give them feedback to correct their errors. Here are some of the students' thoughts about the program.

Writing a letter of self-introduction is one of the most important documents for applying for SPHS. When doing that, I need to include three years' worth of experiences. When I first tried to write that paper, I was confused. However, after receiving help from my hakwon teacher, I could arrange all of my activities; school prizes, club activities, etc. After arranging my activities, I wrote about my feelings and thoughts about how I was affected

from these experiences for the past three years. The hakwon teacher told me that a letter of self-introduction has to show my “real face” to the judges. From that advice, I tried to verify that all the activities I wrote about are real by giving concrete descriptions and materials. (From the interview with Da-Sol, Kim, 3rd year of middle school, December 23, 2015)

While students are busy preparing, the second semester approaches, which is the high school application season. Hakwons analyze each high school’s required qualifications, and provide adequate materials to each student. Then, students apply for high schools on the basis of the materials provided by the hakwons. Students who apply for SPHS should take two steps; document evaluation is the first step and the interview as the second step. Then, students will be informed of their acceptance by the high school. If a student is accepted in an SPHS, a banner with the students’ names will be listed and hung on the hakwon walls.

After middle school graduation, some students still go to the same hakwon. Some of these middle school hakwons also provide lessons for high school curriculum. However, some students stop enrolling at their hakwon and switch to another high school specialized hakwon. Students who are accepted to SPHS usually quit hakwons altogether, because these students use their separate school dormitory and cannot afford to go to hakwon on weekdays. Nonetheless, middle school students spend their time at the hakwon until their graduation.

### TYPES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL HAKWONS

In this chapter, I will focus on the types of middle school hakwons. Students study hard not only at school but also at hakwons. Teachers teach students enthusiastically both at school and at hakwons. When we think of the ballet *Swan Lake*, we might be reminded of the white swan princess, Odette, dancing to the music of Tchaikovsky, in an elegant, white costume. However, not only is there the white swan, Odette, but also the black swan, Odile. The main actresses have two aspects; one is Odette, with fragile emotion and a good-looking appearance, while the other is Odile, with provocative and sensual attraction. One cannot determine which one is better. The white swan and the black swan coexist like two sides of the same coin. It can be said that the white swan is more beautiful, or the black swan is more attractive, depending on the viewpoint. Just as with this, we can regard schools as more beautiful or hakwons as more

attractive depending on different viewpoints. Schools and hakwons coexist like two sides of the same coin for students. From now on, I would like to describe hakwons as a more attractive place than a school for some points, much more like a charming black swan than a white swan.

*Comprehensive Hakwons: Raising Self-Directed Study Ability  
through Study Coaching*

The comprehensive hakwon is one of the most popular hakwons for middle school students. It can be explained that the comprehensive hakwon is cheaper than a single-subject hakwon and has the advantage of reducing travel time to study all subjects. Students can receive holistic management for their study condition and career. The comprehensive hakwon does not mean they teach all subjects including Chinese characters, engineering, art, music, P.E. or others. These hakwons only deal with major subjects: English, math, Korean language, science and social studies. The following is the weekly time schedule of a comprehensive hakwon (Table 5.3).

At a comprehensive hakwon, the time allotted for dealing with English and math is greater than time for other subjects. That is different from the school curriculum system. At school, Korean language has the most classes in a week, followed by math ÷ science, English ÷ social studies. The following table shows the total amount of instructional time at middle school (Table 5.4).

This can be understood, as students especially feel difficulties in studying English and math. The comprehensive hakwons not only provide intensive English and math learning programs but also additional Korean language, social studies and science classes.

Of late, comprehensive hakwons that drive students to be self-directed learners are popular amongst students. They helps students to study

**Table 5.3** Weekly timetable of a comprehensive hakwon

	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
1st period	English	Math	English	Math	English	Math
2nd period	English	Math	English	Math	English	Math
3rd period	Korean language	Science	Social studies	Korean language	Science	Special class

**Table 5.4** Middle school totals of instructional time

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Instructional time</i>
Korean language	442
Social studies	340
Math	374
Science	374
English	340

themselves by not just giving one style of instructions. This can be achieved by a thorough diagnosis of each student's study condition, traits and talents. *Eduplex* and *Educoach* are two of the major hakwon brands adapting these self-directed systems.

Second grader Hyunji is now with a study manager to make study plans together. The study manager asks various questions to Hyunji: what time Hyunji gets up, when the school test is, what Hyunji usually studies after school, what is Hyunji's study plan is, how Hyunji's homework is going, and so on. Then, the study manager sets up an upcoming monthly study plan for Hyunji, who cannot make a concrete study plan for herself yet. After consultation, Hyunji goes to a self-study room to follow a study schedule. One hour later, Hyunji heads to a math study room to meet a tutor. There, Hyunji attends math classes with two more students and ask questions about unsolvable problems. (Part of a participation observation log of *E hakwon*, December 31, 2015)

The *Eduplex Hakwon* does not adhere to existing lecture-centered classes. Instead, this hakwon encourages students to become self-directed learners. There is an accurate diagnostic tool, the VLT 4G test. Based on this test, the hakwon can analyze holistic traits of their students: gender, age, interpersonal relationships, responsibilities, study motivation, study attitude, and school grades. The following is a table of VLT 4G test tool (Table 5.5).

The *Eduplex Hakwon* also provides a consulting system which helps to recognize students' self-identity, study habits, test anxieties, and personal relationships. Through this kind of test tool and consulting, the hakwon categorizes students into 16 types (Table 5.6).

From these student-type categorizations, the hakwon treats students with different strategies (Table 5.7).



**Table 5.5** VLT 4G testing tool

<i>Traits</i>	<i>Sub items</i>	<i>Testing tools</i>
Developmental traits	Gender, age	Developmental traits test
Characteristic traits	Interpersonal relationship attitude	Characteristic traits test
	Responsibility	»
Studying traits	Study motivation	Studying traits test
	Study attitude	
	Academic performance	
Environmental traits	Relationship with parents	Environmental traits test
	Relationship with friends	

The hakwon provides consultation, management, and tutoring programs on the basis of each student's personal traits. The consulting program aims to use mental reinforcement and emotional management to enable a student to become a self-directed learner. Students can be open-minded with the counseling teacher because the teacher will bring up an adequate theme for students and will try to communicate well with them. The themes of the consultations vary: self-observation methods or sharing consoling stories, as well as others. The management program is an observation program that modifies students' emotional turbulence during the process of pursuing self-directed study. The hakwon recognizes the decreasing efficiency of the self-directed consultation program, because the period of adolescence is very fragile to outer impacts. To make up for these variations, the hakwon runs a management program to check on daily life obstacles. In doing so, the hakwon uses Portfolio, Team scheduler, and Self-leader tools. Portfolio is used to help students create a long term plan, from six months to one year. Team scheduler is used to set up a short term plan, which is usually for a test period or vacation of one to two months. Self-leader is a study diary used to manage daily study goals and achievements.

**Table 5.6** 16 student types

1. Golden boy	2. Model student	3. Hakwon kid	4. Puppet
5. Negotiator	6. Bluffer	7. Outsider	8. Bullhead
9. Glass beads	10. Meddlesome man	11. Faithful man	12. Study room keeper
13. Sensitive man	14. Out-of-body	15. Maniac	16. Indifferent man

**Table 5.7** Student characteristic, precaution, management strategies on student types

<i>Type</i>	<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Precaution</i>	<i>Management strategies</i>
Golden boy	Extraordinary at studying, passionate character, motivational Everyone envies him/her	Confronts a slump when they realize they are at top When going through a slump, scores do not decrease but times are spent feeling bored and weary	Preventing a slump is the best strategy Need to stimulate student with higher goals than they have already achieved Make student recognize long-term aims; meaning of life, purpose of life, future job, university, etc.
Model student	Is faithful with every single action Rounded personal relationships, a good friend, a desirable student, a good son or daughter	Has a strong tendency to focus on specific contents of studying Fragmented understanding of chapters rather than catching the context and principles of the chapter. Weak at essays and SAT type tests because of a lack of creative thinking Has stress and discomfort for not being in the top group.	Train student to have broader perspective on lessons Improve concept structuring ability by training to hide key themes, additional content. Weak with stress because of short-term aims (e.g. academic performance) Needs role of strong supporters and management to stimulate long-term goal and vision
Hakwon kid	Has high intelligence and has an exemplary image at school Relies more on the hakwon rather than studying oneself Has a misconception subconsciously of “Good grade = good instructor”, “going to hakwon = studying”	Lack of reviewing lessons Lack of perseverance, passion, elaboration because of too much reliance on hakwon Cannot get higher score owing to trivial mistakes and obliviousness	Needs coaching to help student realize their lack of study fundamentals Minimize the time with hakwon and tutoring, and secure self-study time

Tutoring programs provide group studies for three to four students. They are used to train students to advance from lecture-reliant students to solemn self-directed students. Tutoring programs help students experience circular and recursive training, knowledge acceptance and internalization. Here is what students think about the program.

Before I went to a hakwon, I didn't know how to study. So, I just read a textbook and tried to memorize. The first time I joined a consulting program at a hakwon, I felt very awkward. However, the manager repeatedly told me, "You are slow but have conviction, so some time later you will be successful." I often feel anxious when I am slow, as my friends leave the study room earlier or finished studying faster than me. By the way, I have become faithful in my endurance,

which is how my manager continuously advised me to be. The hardest thing to study is vocabulary and memorization. I lack those abilities, so I just rely on simple memorization. However, I try to make up for those deficiencies; I look up words in the dictionary while reading a textbook, and try to explain to myself after learning, and make sentences with a higher level of vocabulary. After some time, I've started to get 100 points in Korean language. Moreover, I not only got 100 points in Korean language but also in English, history, science, and other subjects. (From the interview with Sung-yoon, Je, 3rd year of middle school, December 31, 2015)

### *The English Language Hakwon: Increasing English Competency through Language Training*

Considering now an English hakwon, each student has a different English language competency level. Even for middle school students, there are those that range from not knowing the English alphabet to those who achieve 100 points on a TOEFL exam. As English is a language, how much students are exposed to English will affect students' language ability and sensibility. However, it is not easy for the school to fulfill all the educational demands from each student. For some points, grammar- and reading-centered tests can counterbalance the gaps of English competencies amongst students. So how do English hakwons teach students? There are assorted types of English hakwons: the two most popular are comprehensive language training hakwons and reading-centered hakwons.

At a comprehensive language training hakwon the focus is English as a language. English is a language, so students need to build and use an

English engine in their brain. To achieve this, all areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing are adapted to classes. These hakwons have various training techniques such as TEE (Teach English in English), reciting, extensive reading, shadow speaking, direct reading comprehension, analyzing sentence structure, free writing, listening drilling, and others. The following is a scene from S English hakwon.

On a weekday, at 8 p.m., there are ten third graders in one English hakwon class. They are engrossed in memorizing English sentences. Instructor “(In Korean) When the Patent Act was passed in 1970,” Students “When the Patent Act was passed in 1970,” Instructor “(In Korean) it included a provision requiring that miniature working models must be produced for every new invention,” Students “it included a provision requiring that miniature working models must be produced for every new invention,” Instructor “(In Korean) these patent models—unique artifacts of US patent history—were then displayed publicly in the Patent Office.” Students “these patent models—unique artifacts of US patent history—were then displayed publicly in the Patent office.”

Almost every student speaks directly in English after hearing Korean, some students look down at their paper and speak. After practicing one paragraph of sentences, teacher asks students to recite all the sentences without looking at the textbook. After signaling “Start”, all the students start to recite. Then, each student comes up to the front and recites. After practicing reciting, listening practice and TOEFL question solving follow.

(Part of a participation observation log of *S English hakwon*, December 30, 2015)

Hakwons also provides school exam preparation programs. Starting about one month before school exams, hakwons hold school test preparation classes, which are adequate for each school textbook. As students are gathered from different schools, they are moved into different test preparation classes. In these classes, hakwons offer analyzed previous test material, detailed grammar explanations, and vocabulary checking. However, the major curriculum at hakwons is not school test preparation programs, but rather language training programs. This can be explained for two reasons. Firstly, the content level of a regular language training program is higher than the content level of a school test. Generally, students usually study two to three grades higher compared to school textbooks. Secondly, the language training programs regularly have a synergizing effect with school preparation. It can be said that school test preparation and lan-

guage training programs share an interactive relationship. For example, English sentence structure formed by repeated narration permeates and helps students unconsciously sense the answers to grammar problems on school tests. Moreover, English reading competency from extensive reading enables students to analyze school textbook structure.

At comprehensive language training hakwons, certified English test textbooks are usually used, such as for TOEFL or TESP. In general, TOEFL is a test used by students applying for universities in the USA, and TEPS is for university graduation or employment placement. Therefore, why do hakwons use TOEFL or TEPS materials, which have no direct relationship with middle school? There are four principal reasons for this. Firstly, it enables students to practice all parts of the English language. TOEFL especially deals with all areas: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Therefore, there are extensive English materials dealing with these four sections of TOEFL. And although TEPS is a listening- and reading-centered test, teachers are able to utilize various TEPS materials to practice vocabulary, grammar, writing and speaking. By using these kinds of materials, hakwons train students with all aspects of the English language. Secondly, students can get an objective measurement of their English ability. There are a lack of tools that evaluate each student's real English competency. Even though there is a school test, there are still level gaps at schools, school tests often lack objectivity, and students are faced with discrimination. However, students can measure their English competency by using certified English tests and can check their objective status and ability. Thirdly, it offers adequate classes for all levels of students. As I mentioned before, there are many middle school students who have surpassed even the high school language level requirement. TOEFL and TEPS materials can be appropriate learning tools for these advanced students. Moreover, TOEFL has low-level materials, such as Junior TOEFL, which can be valuable textbook material for intermediate students as well. Fourthly, TOEFL and TEPS can be used at high schools. TOEFL and TEPS materials are used especially at SPSHS in English classes, with prizes bestowed upon the highest-ranking achievers. What is more, high-level grammar problems on school tests can be prepared for with TOEFL and TEPS study. The comprehensive language training hakwons in Korea are Jung-Sang Hakwon, Chung-Dahm Hakwon, Topia, GnB, and others. Here is what students think about comprehensive language training hakwons.

I almost chew whole sentences at my hakwon. After interpretation, I recite all the sentences, so it helps me improve my English competency very quickly. Recited sentences are absorbed and those can be used in my essay writing or speaking. We listen to audio files at two to two and a half times faster than at original speed. I can't catch up with it at first, but after having adapted, I can take a real English listening test very easily. Moreover, sometimes we use only English in classes and that makes me confident with speaking and listening in English. (From the interview with Seung-bi, November 13, 2015)

The reading-centered hakwon is another type of English hakwon. This kind of English hakwon originated from the concept that school exams and SAT tests are almost all reading- and grammar-centered tests. The listening sections of these tests are not considered difficult, so students have a stronger need to focus on the reading comprehension sections. From this background, these hakwons have reading-centered curricula that include additional grammar and vocabulary studies. They use a variety of reading materials; school textbooks, American school textbooks, original books in English, and others. These hakwons also prefer question-based material, because it enables students to check their understanding after reading. These hakwons provide additional grammar and vocabulary supplements to help students improve their reading comprehension. Students can develop their logical and analytic thinking ability after dealing with continuous reading materials.

*The Math Hakwon: Having Students Master Math Principles by Repeated Practice*

Math hakwons are hakwons that many middle school students commonly attend, along with English hakwons. In particular, they are key for students who wish to enter a science high school or a school for the gifted, where far higher math scores are required. Moreover, math is also a subject that most students feel is as difficult as English. Students start to find it difficult to study math as they enter middle school. Let us listen to the thoughts of one student.

In middle school, I noticed my math grade was going down and found it more difficult. In elementary school, I got a score close to perfect, but I only got 70 points on the first exam in the first year of middle school. I was quite shocked. It is because the required amount of studying has increased and the level of questions have become much higher. What is worse is that

the teachers assume that all students have learned math at hakwons, so they skip the explanations. I tried to study by myself but I couldn't, so I decided to go to a math hakwon. (From the interview with Han-wool, Park, 1st year of middle school, December 19, 2015)

What is the main reason that students look for a math hakwon? Here is a student who shared her stories.

The reason why I go to a math hakwon is to improve my math grade. If I study by myself, I don't have anyone to ask for help and I don't feel any motivation. But as I go to a hakwon, whether I want to or not, I'm forced to study; as a result, my grade goes up. If my grade remains the same while I attend this math hakwon, then I can simply change to another hakwon or hire private tutoring. (From the interview with Eun-ji, Kim, 2nd year of middle school, December 19, 2015)

Eventually, students go to a math hakwon for higher scores in math. At elementary school, the purpose of going to a math hakwon is to focus on increasing academic thinking skills, such as mathematical thinking ability, and to gain an advanced level of study for the gifted. However, as they go to middle school, the purpose turns into getting higher grades on school entrance exams and on school records. Consider one of math hakwons.

When winter's cold wind blew, only the scribbling sound and noise of the heater filled the classroom of the math hakwon where seven students were sitting and studying at around 8 p.m. Four of them are in the second year of middle school and the rest of them are in the first year. As the teacher came into the room, they all together lifted their heads toward the door. "Have you reviewed the last lesson? And are you all done with the online assignment? Today, if you fail the quiz, you'll need to stay and study. Don't worry about the cold weather. I'll turn on the heater in the self-studying room. Our last lesson was about the function, which is very important. It's more like a relationship between man and woman. When a man tries to seduce a woman, a man chooses different women or he might feel attracted to the same woman. But, they have some kind of pattern. Now, you are studying the very basic function, linear function, but by studying more about quadratic, cubic and irrational function, you'll learn the providence of the universe, which is peculiar. Take out your notebook." Students turned to a new page in their notebooks and stared at the blackboard all together. As the teacher started to write down questions, the students were automatically

solving the problem. After about two minutes, the teacher said, “Stop.” Then the students immediately put their pencils down.

(Part of a participation observation log of *L Math Hakwon*, December 22, 2015)

Every math hakwon has its own style of teaching. What would be the differences between math classes at schools and at hakwons? They can be categorized according to three factors.

The first factor is the prerequisite learning and the second is repeated studying at hakwons. Students study math lessons at least a term or as much as two or three years ahead. They use their vacation period for the prerequisite learning. As the vacation finishes, they repeat the learning and proceed to the advanced level of problem solving. Generally, math is a subject that requires problem-solving ability, thinking skills, and also memorization. For school exams and college entrance exams that ask students to solve a number of problems in a short time, fast understanding, practical ability and computational skill are especially necessary, all of which are hard to attain at school. The reason being that the textbook does not contain enough questions and only explanations of basic concepts and a basic level of questions. And yet the questions in the school exam have a much more advanced level of questions. This is why students are not likely to attain a higher grade when only practicing the questions from the textbook. They need to improve their practical ability and problem-solving skills by trying a number of questions based on their basic understanding. Students would finish two or three books to practice problem solving. In addition, they need to study online and are given handouts to study. The books from hakwons contain math questions from basic to advanced level that are likely to appear in a mathematical contest. In addition, for the questions that are answered wrong, they will have to repeat two or three times by making a note of the wrong answers or taking a quiz. Accordingly, students can repeat their lessons before starting the semester, while also taking enough time and feeling relaxed.

For example, *Kim sam Hakwon*, with nationwide branches, has used a ‘double-level textbook system’. This system uses different levels of textbooks for each chapter and enables them to prepare and review while proceeding to the next lesson. Let us look at the diagram of the system of K math hakwon (Fig. 5.2).

Another way is continuous testing. Middle school students going to hakwons need to take a test every day, every month and every semester.



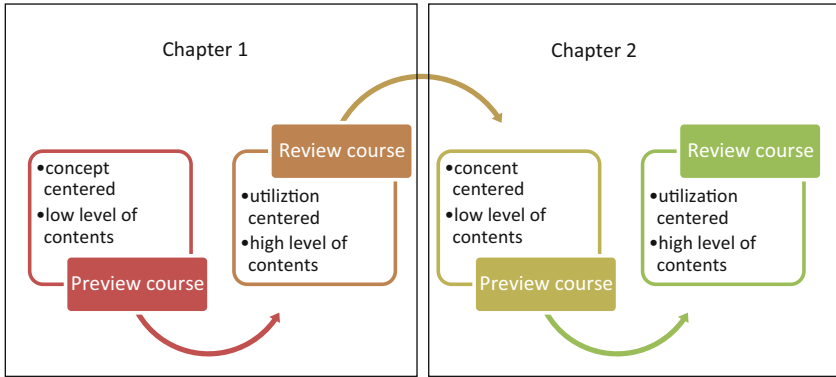


Fig. 5.2 A system of Kim Sam math hakwon

Schools also offer a test, but only twice in a semester or none during a free-learning semester. An exam gives students a lot of pressure but provides an opportunity to develop their mathematical thinking skills. Let us listen to one of the students.

The math hakwon that I go to gives me a lot of tests. I think every hour I have a test. If I get a low score on a test, the teacher will cane me on the soles of my feet and force me to practice until I can pass the test. That is so scary. So, to avoid being caned, I study like crazy. After one semester, my grade, which was 65 points in the first semester, has increased by nearly 20 points in the second semester. (From the interview with Jae-ho, Lee, 1st year of middle school, December 30, 2015)

After students take a test, they will be given feedback about their weaknesses. The hakwons have a question bank system. Franchise hakwons have their own question pool for every chapter. Even independent hakwons have different kinds of textbooks from different publishing companies. Students are provided with various kinds of questions depending on their weaknesses. Also, they are asked to review questions they answered incorrectly and to practice until they master those types of questions.

For example, *Gom Math Hakwon* is a nationwide franchise that has used a wrong-answers system. They train students to master the questions that they have answered wrong. The system consists of four stages to solve a problem. Firstly, students summarize the related theory. The teacher

explains the theory and fundamentals. Secondly, students solve the problems. After the teacher's explanation, each student solves the problem. Then, the teacher can reveal the weakness of each student while helping them to solve problems correctly. Thirdly, students have a review assignment. Students are given handouts that are exactly the same as what they learned that day so that they can review the topic at home. But still, students might have difficulties solving problems. Fourthly, students review the questions that they answered incorrectly. Students check their answers that were given as their assignment, then lastly, review the questions that they had difficulties with or that they answered incorrectly. Those questions are given as another assignment. Here are the thoughts of a student who is learning under this system.

Since I keep repeating the same questions until I can fully understand, they remain long in my head. Before going to this hakwon, I didn't care about the details when solving problems. But now, I repeat until I can find the correct answer and my grade has improved a lot. (From the interview with Min-ji, Choi, 3rd year of middle school, October 8, 2015)

The third factor that differentiates math hakwons from schools is the small number of students in classes at each level. This factor has been referred to previously as a characteristics of a class in a hakwon but it is certain that this factor also plays a great role in improving the math skills of students. There are around 30 students in one class of school. It is not easy for one teacher to learn the characteristics or weaknesses of that many students, while the small number of students in a hakwon class means that each student might have more opportunities to be given individual advice. Also, the class consists of students on the same level; therefore, students can have a proper education. In some hakwons, the class consists of students who are of a different year. The ultimate purpose of this system is not to gather the same year students, but the same level of students so that they can be afforded a proper education.

*Hakwon for Gifted Students: Satisfying Advanced Students by  
Providing Subdivided Differentiated Curricula and In-depth  
Study by Topics*

Another type of hakwon for middle school students is a hakwon for gifted students. The hakwon for gifted students fulfills the needs of advanced

middle school students. For middle school students, various levels of students exist who are equipped with different levels of studying competency. In other words, there is a hierarchy of studying ability for middle school students. However, middle school students' educational needs are difficult to satisfy in school classes. Middle school students have extremely different background knowledge, preferred perception methods and understanding competency. However, all students are obligated to participate in generalized classes. Even though there are several differentiated classes of two to three levels, it is hard to satisfy all students' needs. Then, especially for advanced students, they feel isolated when they have to be involved in common classes, which decreases their motivation for studying and curiosity for new things. In fact, there is a high school which recruits advanced and gifted students. On the other hand, middle school has no additional system for meeting advanced and gifted students' educational needs. As a result, many advanced and gifted students go to hakwons. The hakwons for gifted students usually focus on math and science curricula. Their educational aims are not only to meet the advanced students' intellectual curiosity but also to help students enroll in special purpose high school, especially a science high school or a school for gifted students.

A second-year middle school student, Hajin, is taking an entrance test at a hakwon for gifted students. It has been about 30 minutes since he started the test. The test covers the second and third years of the middle school math curriculum. At a previous hakwon, he studied third-grade math, so this test includes the curriculum of that grade as well. While he is taking the test, the hakwon principal thoroughly looks at Hajin's school report card. On the school report card, there are several things about Hajin including behavioral traits, academic achievements and potentiality. After taking the test, the analyzed results return swiftly. For hakwon test results, achievement rates are provided by lessons, areas and levels. Achievement rates by lesson show strengths and weaknesses in specific chapters, like number and operation, simultaneous equations, inequality and functions. Achievements by area show strengths and weaknesses of each academic ability, such as calculation ability, understanding ability, inferential skills and problem-solving competency. Every aspect of tests is manifested as scores, and 50 points out of 100 is the minimum score that passes the hakwon admittance requirement. Hajin gets 65 points. After that, there is an in-depth consultation with the student's mother, not with the student. The principal shows the test results to the mom and asks her how Hajin studied before. After these admittance procedures, Hajin is assigned to a course.

(Part of a participation observation log of a hakwon for gifted students,  
June 5, 2015)

As previously illustrated, hakwons for the gifted have thorough procedures to pick advanced students. Sometimes, these hakwons reject a student's admittance when the student cannot pass the minimum requirement for entrance. Even though a student might be eager to join these hakwon classes, they are more likely to be left behind if they are not equipped with sufficient intellectual competencies. Therefore, the hakwons for gifted students can adapt specialized curricula and methodologies for advanced students. What then are the main traits of a hakwon for the gifted? There are several factors regarding this. However, let us only inspect the two major aspects.

The first aspect is about subdivided differentiated curricula. There are only two or three differentiated classes at school or at other hakwons. However, at a hakwon for the gifted, there are more subdivided classes, approximately five to six classes. Why does the hakwon stick to that subdivided differentiated curriculum? Let us hear from the *P Hakwon* principal.

Students easily quit hakwons when they are assigned to the wrong classes. If the advanced student joins a lower-leveled class, then they quit the hakwon because they felt that the curriculum was too easy. On the contrast, if a lower-level student is included in an upper-level class, then they cannot grasp what the teacher explains and also eventually leaves the hakwon. Therefore, the subdivided differentiated curriculum is the core of our hakwon system. (From the interview with *P hakwon* principal, June 13, 2015)

The following table is to show how the differentiated classes are composed at *P Hakwon* (Table 5.8).

**Table 5.8** The curriculum of P Hakwon for the gifted

<i>Name of course</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Curriculum</i>
Top class course	Top 0.5%	Ss' grade + 2 year above (in-depth)
Master course	Top 2%~	Ss' grade + 2 year (in-depth)
High-level course	Top 5%~	Ss' grade + 2 year
Advanced course	Top 10%~	Ss' grade + 1 year
Intermediate course	Top 20%~	Ss' grade + 1 year
Basic course	Top 30%	Ss' grade

There are six differentiated curricula. The interesting thing is that there are smaller position gaps between neighboring courses when they reach the Top class course. For example, there are 10% gaps between the Basic course and the Intermediate course, but there are only 1.5% gaps between Top class courses and Master courses. In general, the top 1% and 0.5% of students are the same as the advanced students. However, there are several detailed differences for those advanced students when they are analyzed by strict criteria. The hakwons for the gifted are aware of these differences, so they want to reflect those subdivided traits when composing classes. The following is more specific detail about each course.

#### *Basic and Intermediate Course*

The basic and intermediate course at this hakwon includes students who can manage to study the curriculum in their grade. Even though this course is categorized as the low level at the hakwon, the students are above the top 30% of achievers of their school student body. They are also interested in enrolling in a special purpose high school, but lack some basic knowledge. Therefore, students focus on learning fundamental knowledge and equipping themselves with necessary studying methods. The main methodologies are giving lectures to students. Basic courses and Intermediate courses can both be a foundation stone to be the more advanced students. The lecture style is the main methodology at this hakwon.

#### *Advanced and High-level Course*

This is a course for students who are in the top 10%. Most students in this course are equipped with basic studying habits. Moreover, they can absorb more than one year of advanced curriculum easily. Therefore, teachers rarely directly lecture in classes. On the contrary, every student shares their unique way of solving problems and finds an efficient method by discussing together. Students eager to complete their work autonomously give a presentation and ask each other questions. Even though they are different in age, they feel a sense of kinship when they are involved in classes. The teacher usually acts as a mentor and guides them when they are in need. The main contents in this course are in-depth school curriculum and preparation for academic competition.

#### *Master and Top Class Course*

In this course, there are within the top 2% of students. In other words, they can enroll in any university or major if they keep pace of their studying.

Most students in this course easily go to a special purpose high school or a school for gifted students. They are exceptional in understanding mathematical and scientific concepts and principles. Even though they are middle school students, they can learn university-level content. This can help these students to understand the fundamental principles that underlie the middle school curriculum. These students are mainly interested in math or science academic competitions and contests that can challenge their learning and provide visible outcomes for entering special purpose high schools. In other words, they do not focus much on school curriculum.

The second main trait of the hakwon for the gifted is an in-depth study by topic. At schools, students are adapted to a spiral curriculum. A spiral curriculum can be a more efficient way to reach the top of the “academic mountain” than climbing up vertically. The aim of school is to help most students reach the apex of the mountain, but not quickly reach the top. Therefore, the school curriculum provides a low slope rather than a steep slope. The following table shows how the middle school math curriculum is made up (Table 5.9).

For three years, middle school students can learn all areas of math through a spiral curriculum at school. A first-year middle school student studies every part of math, from the system of numbers to geometry. Then, in the second year of middle school, they start back again with the system of numbers but with a more difficult curriculum. This is the format of a spiral curriculum. This lessens the burden of students’ learning as every area of math is evenly distributed. For example, in the first year of middle

**Table 5.9** The math curriculum of middle school

	<i>1st year</i>	<i>2nd year</i>	<i>3rd year</i>
The system of numbers	Integer	Rational number	Irrational number
The letter and formula	The letter and formula	A monomial expression	Factorization
Equation	A simple equation	Simultaneous equations	A quadratic equation
Function	Function	A linear function	A quadratic function
Statistics and probability	Frequency distribution	The number of cases	Correlation
Geometry	Fundamental figure	Triangle	Pythagoras’s theorem
	Plane geometry	Rectangle	Circle
	Solid figure	Equivalence relation	Trigonometric ratio

school, students should just focus on integers, not rational numbers and irrational numbers.

However, talented students cannot be satisfied with just integers in the letter and formula area. The integer itself would be too easy for them to study and they may have additional questions about the phenomena which cannot be explained by only the integer system itself.

The hakwon for gifted students provides in-depth study by topic. In other words, this hakwon type provides more advanced content in the same area of math. For example, after teaching integers, they teach rational numbers and irrational numbers continuously. In addition, after teaching a simple equation, hakwon instructs simultaneous equations and quadratic equations. This broadens students' understanding of the system of numbers.

At the hakwon, I am fully satisfied with the curriculum system. Compared to school, the hakwon teaches us more adequate and necessary content. At school, concepts are too easy in our textbooks. However, there are many difficult problems and detailed explanations at the hakwon. Moreover, we often have discussions with each other in hakwon classes, so I can develop my math and science background and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, I am motivated to study harder when similar level of students are indulged in studying together. (From the interview with Soobin, 2nd year of middle school, July 2, 2015)

As mentioned before, most advanced middle school students want to enroll in SPHS. Therefore, most middle school hakwons try to provide specialized programs for advanced students. In general, most hakwons run separate differentiated classes for advanced students. Hakwons give more attention and care to these students. Moreover, most hakwons, especially in the Seoul area, provide SPHS preparation programs for advanced students. These include school grade management, extra curriculum activity management and reading activities management. The following is part of an SPHS preparation program at a hakwon (Table 5.10).

These programs play a critical role in preparing for an SPHS document examination and interview test. These are specialized programs and cost a lot of money to participate in. Moreover, only those students who live in the Seoul area can easily join these programs. In contrast, students in other areas and students who cannot join the hakwon classes have to

**Table 5.10** SPHS preparation program

<i>Management items</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Management method</i>
School grade management	1st year ~ 3rd year	Data computerization
Diagnostic test management	Setting future goal and career exploration	
Monthly test Management	2nd year ~ 3rd year	Making a personal portfolio
Extra curriculum	Constant school grade management/	
Activity management	Extra curriculum activity management	
Experience/Volunteer/Reading activities	3rd year Preparation for specific SPHS	Continuous consultation (once a month)

prepare for the SPHS document examination and interview test by themselves. Therefore, hakwons can create a tracking system which discriminates students according to their parents' economic status.

### LIGHTS AND SHADE

This chapter discusses the positive and negative aspects of the hakwons that middle school students go to. Officials who belong to the Ministry of Education and the public education institutes consider hakwons to be a social evil or the object of suppression. Accordingly, they have changed education-related regulations to weed out the private education institution. However, parents and students still look to hakwons, regardless of this situation. Mark Bray (2012) called the private education institution including hakwons "Shadow Education," meaning that they are in the shadow of public education. However, is it a real "shadow" from the perspective of the students? To answer this question, we asked students what hakwon education means to their lives and studying. In every situation, we can observe that light and darkness coexist. However, just as light or darkness can never exist in an everlasting manner, hakwon education can play a role as the light or darkness in a changing society.

To begin, let us take look at the positive aspects of hakwon education from the perspective of students. In other words, these positive aspects of hakwon education can also be interpreted as the negative aspects of school.



Firstly, the hakwon recognizes the individual. Every student is different. In particular, because of differences of studying amounts accumulated from elementary school, middle school students have different personalities and characteristics. School life at middle school is critical, as it influences a great deal of the following high school period.

If students have a studying habit that does not suit them or have an inappropriate studying habit, they can feel depressed with their low scores on exams. In the worst case, they might drop out of school and give up studying. Meanwhile, students who have found their own studying habits and felt a sense of accomplishment can develop a positive self-realization, and consequently have a higher chance of success in studying. Hakwons try to care for and satisfy each student. Otherwise, students would leave the hakwons and the hakwons would have to shut down their businesses. Therefore, the hakwons try to satisfy the needs of individual students in various ways. The first step is to diagnose a student. The hakwons diagnose the students systematically and scientifically to find out weaknesses and preferences: by formative assessment, consultation, school records, and personality and aptitude tests. However, these tests are not implemented once only, but are continuously conducted. The individual consultation helps to analyze the student's assignment performance, weaknesses and improvement of their level, which can be recorded cumulatively in a student chart or Intranet. According to this analysis, students are assigned to different classes, which is the major characteristic of hakwon education. The perfect way to fulfill each student's demand would be one-on-one classes, but it is not realistically possible. The alternative method is a classroom with small numbers of students assigned by level. As the number of differentiated classes increases, it can be effective for students to find a suitable level to study.

Secondly, the hakwon helps to create a steady routine of studying. Middle school students can have a twofold or threefold increased amount of studying and an advanced level of studying compared to those in elementary school. However, some students might feel that the study amount has increased by a factor of five or six. How can students manage that much study? Students who have developed a fundamental studying habit, studying ability, and self-management skills can manage their studying without getting confused by the dramatic changes in their study requirements. However, most students in Korea can have difficulties when faced with sudden changes. As a result, students look to hakwons as a solution. Understanding this situation facing students, hakwons try to provide

an experience that helps students to form a study habit. At elementary school, students can achieve a high grade even if they only study one or two weeks before the exam—in other words, cramming. However, students in middle school cannot compete with other students with the same amount of time spent on studying. That is why hakwons focus on creating systematical study habits for students to achieve higher grades. There are two aspects to be considered to create a study habit.

First of all, the time schedule is fixed at a hakwon. The fixed schedule at a hakwon can be regarded as a minor thing but it has a significant role in creating a study habit. Basically, people seek more comfortable things and are eager to win easily. Therefore, there is a saying, “a resolution is good for only three days”. If students want to metabolize all their studying, they need to have a regular study habits. In other words, cramming cannot be effective but studying steadily is needed. Therefore, going to the hakwon every day guarantees the continuity of study, which is essential in studying. When students follow the hakwon schedule, then they naturally create a study habit and continuity of studying as well.

Managing homework can also create study habits. Generally, attending a class at a hakwon is not enough for studying. It is necessary to practice what they have learned after class. The practice procedures are implemented through giving and checking homework. It is also true that schools give assignments to students. However, the hakwon is more effective in managing an individual student’s homework. One of the reasons can be the textbook. Schools use a textbook published by the Ministry of Education or a private publishing company, but students cannot have enough opportunities to practice learning concepts with school textbooks. Practice can be done by solving a variety of questions. If a school wants to have an extra textbook, which is available at a bookstore, it can face some limitations. Firstly, the study time assigned for each subject at school is not even sufficient enough to finish the regular textbook; therefore, using extra textbooks is much harder. Moreover, using different levels of additional textbooks cannot fulfill all the needs of each student, as they are totally different even if they are in the same level class.

Meanwhile, hakwons are strict when managing assignments. The assignments are thoroughly planned and assigned to students over a long term scheme. Moreover, students who fail to finish their assignments are required to remain at the hakwon until they finish the homework. What is more, some large scale hakwons have an extra classroom for doing

assignments while an administrative teacher is assigned to check their work. Teachers usually check students' assignments during class. Basically, the teacher gives a daily test to check their daily homework. Recently, the online systems that are run by hakwons have made it easier to check assignments. The franchised hakwons have their separate online learning or official website offered by the main branch of the hakwon. Students use these online learning systems to prepare and review their lessons. The websites also offer various services such as online lectures, problem solving, and offering related questions. However, an online service itself cannot guarantee students' full use of their services. Therefore, the teachers offer to check students' progress of homework and lectures with students' administration pages.

Like this, hakwons provide chances for individualized learning and forming steady routines of study. Students can receive individualized learning opportunities from various diagnostic tools and one-on-one differentiated classes. Moreover, students can create consistent study habits by participating in a systematic curriculum continuously and with thorough homework management.

We cannot define which is light or shadow between school education and hakwon education from a student's point of view. In contrast, students utilize schools and hakwons in proactive or passive ways and impose their own unique meaning to these facilities.

In Chap. 4, elementary students were shown to develop artistic abilities and physical development through hakwon classes. Moreover, in the later elementary grades (fourth grade and beyond), Korean students' hakwon education is more focused on academic learning in subjects such as English language, mathematics, and Korean language. Students in the fifth grade and above spend more time studying these various subjects in preparatory hakwons to help improve grades at middle school. What would be the major traits of developmental aspects of hakwons for middle school students? What distinctive role do middle school hakwons play for students? There are two traits of developmental aspects of middle school hakwons, which exist between elementary school and high school. Firstly, students can internalize their study skills and habits. From middle school, a heavy workload is demanded from the students. They have to study two to three times more than they had to in elementary school. Because of this, they become accustomed to grasping how to study efficiently for each subject and form study habits through hakwon education. Hakwon teachers tell students the best ways to get good scores on tests and engage students in

studying in various ways. Secondly, middle school students are adapted to social discrimination by school grades through hakwons. At middle school hakwons, students are judged more by their school exam scores and are treated differently according to their exam scores. Hakwons have a system of differentiating students by scores and providing various levels of differentiated classes. In particular, advanced students are assigned to SPHS preparation classes and are expected to enroll into a prestigious university later. In contrast, students who cannot attain good scores are obligated to strive to achieve better ones.

It is down to the student to attain good grades. Therefore, hakwons can play a role in the justification of social discrimination by school grades.

## High School Years

IN 1978

*My high school days in Soon Chun were different from US high school life in Beverly Hills 90210 or the lives of other average high school students in the USA. Our three years were full of exams, study, and hakwon learning. We all heard that there would be no decent life without a college diploma. Learning was a matter of life or death to all of us, and we had to survive for better scores and application to better universities. Even though we enjoyed something new from courses such as mathematics, English language, and science, we always related learning and joy to our final objective in high school: attaining a good score on the KSAT and a successful college application. Our life was full of sitting on a chair for eight classes every day, taking exams every Monday, studying at school at night, and more studying at a hakwon or during vacations.*

*There were no serious complaints among us because we believed that this kind of life was normal for most high school students on this planet. We were sincere students. We studied at school after 3 o'clock in the afternoon and came back to school again for the night independent study at 7 p.m. We studied in our classrooms until 12 o'clock at night and returned to our homes under the shining stars. Sometimes unimportant classes such as physical education and German language were replaced by English language and mathematics. We studied hard with the hidden determination that we would never study again after we entered a good university. We prayed that we would not become the next person when we heard that a high school gradu-*

*ate killed himself because he did not enter a good university; we thought that one of us might take such a step. I also many times wondered how my parents would react if I failed to enter a university in Seoul, Korea. Would my mom still love me?*

*On February 23, 1981, our emancipation came in the form of the graduation ceremony. As signs of beginning our new life and freedom, we tore up our school uniform that were the legacy of Japanese colonization, and threw them on our school playground. The feeling of freedom from three years behind the unseen prison bars was stronger than the joy of OSU Buckeye's victory over Michigan in the Big Ten rivalry football game in 2014. (Author's personal memory)*

This chapter describes Korean high school students' hakwon experiences. As well we know, high school days are the most important period for Korean students not only for college admission, but also for their future. To compete with other students and to enter highly ranked colleges, what they learn at school is not enough and most high school students rely on extra learning at hakwons. This means that they continue to study after school at hakwons. This is an aspect of the excessive and competitive learning culture. In the light of this, the chapter is devoted to understanding Korean high school students' lives with regards to hakwon education. For this purpose, I first describe the typical three years of high school education, and then the characteristics of hakwon education for high school students.

## LIFE IN HIGH SCHOOL

High school is a period of competition for better jobs and social status in Korea. Korean students' life in high school may be the most typical example of students under an academically oriented and examination-oriented culture for university admission. Even though many national educational reforms have been attempted, the culture of excessive competition to enter better colleges has not disappeared. The competition influences Korean students' academic and personal lives. The following depiction represents a Korean high school student's educational life for their three years of high school, which may help readers in the West to understand why Korean high school students attend hakwon after school and how they use hakwons to achieve their academic goals.

### *Freshman Year*

Before the official enrollment ceremony to enter high schools, students typically have two experiences. The first is to take placement tests in English, mathematics, and Korean language for the purpose of class placement. The second experience is participating in a prior call to receive instructions and information for three years of high school life. Those two experiences may well be different, as the former is an examination and the latter is a preparatory gathering, but the emotions students feel would be similar experiencing the two: that the real competition for entrance to a university has just begun in earnest. Based on the placement test, students are separated into students with an excellent score and those without. The official purpose of the prior call is to guide and inform students of their future school life, but it mainly focuses on how to put competitive effort into being accepted at a good university.

After the enrollment process, students receive a schedule of the subjects they are going to study for the first semester. This schedule is based on the three-year curriculum at the school. The standard national curriculum criteria guide the curriculum provided by the school. Thus, curricula in high schools in Korea share a high level of homogeneity, as the subjects for students to complete are set by the national curriculum. Students take 34 hours of official classes a week. Although this schedule is slightly different from the courses to be completed by grade level or their order, it is generally similar for the three years of high school. Students take regular classes an average of seven hours a day. However, regular classes are not the entirety of their school life. Normal first year high school students must arrive at school at roughly 8 a.m. As soon as they arrive at their classroom, they start the day with morning independent study, officially allocated time slots during which students study what they want. There usually are supervisions. In morning independent study time, students usually solve mathematics questions or memorize English words. At this stage of the first year, students' strategies for university admission are not clearly set yet, but they are aware of the importance of mathematics and English, as they have been so advised since they were young. Therefore, when students have spare time, they put much effort into studying English or mathematics.

Regular classes start at 8:30 a.m. Students take four hours of classes in the morning and three hours after lunch. When regular classes are

over, most students take supplementary classes. Supplementary classes are divided into two categories, preparing the University Scholastic Ability Test (SAT) and supplementing or deepening mathematics, Korean, English, social studies, and science classes. The supplementary classes focus mainly on solving problems, and the SAT form workbook is used as a textbook in supplementary classes. First-year high school students become familiar with solving KSAT styles. After supplementary classes, it is time for dinner. After dinner, students choose whether to stay in school to conduct independent study, as they do in the mornings, or head for *hakwon*. The students remaining in school do independent study under the supervision of the teachers. First-year students study with workbooks or assignments they were given in regular classes. The areas of study are mostly mathematics and English, the same as in the morning. After two to three hours of independent study after dinner, students pack up their bags and go home. A few students continue to study after 10 p.m., which is not mandatory, and go home around 12 a.m. After they arrive home, students go to bed after a few more hours of study, depending on their personal desire and capability. This pattern is typical for first-year high school students. Within this pattern, students' lives become tighter and tougher during testing periods.

Students' tests at school are divided into two main types. The first is the regular examinations that test knowledge learned in class in a particular period. The other is the trial examinations in the same form as the KSAT and organized by certain departments of education for all high school students across the country. Regular examinations are conducted twice each semester, midterm and final examinations for all students in the school. Students' performance is graded by the results of the regular examinations and the performance assessment scores. Students' school grades are accumulated for each year and classified into nine grade levels reflecting each student's position in a student body. The following is the table of the nine grade levels of the high school record (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1** Korean high school grading system: nine grade levels

<i>1st rank</i>	<i>2nd rank</i>	<i>3rd rank</i>	<i>4th rank</i>	<i>5th rank</i>	<i>6th rank</i>	<i>7th rank</i>	<i>8th rank</i>	<i>9th rank</i>
Top 4%	4~11%	11~23%	23~40%	40~60%	60~77%	77~89%	89~96%	96~100%



While the GPA is a measurement of achievement within a school, the scores on the trial examinations are a measure of students' academic achievement in comparison to students in the country. Through these trial examinations, conducted four times a year (March, June, September and December), students check where they stand, and check if they can enter their desired university.

The key feature of first-year high school students' lives compared to those of students in other grades is that they are still in relaxed atmosphere. Very few students have a specific dream or goal, while most students do not know what they really like and what they are good at. They just have vague ideas about which university they hope to enter and what major they want to choose. Most students hope to be successful in their application to well-known, top-level universities in Seoul or national universities in other areas. However, the number of places available in those universities is limited. Thus, they have to go through the university entrance examination experience, but they can be little bit relaxed as they still have two years.

### *Sophomore Year*

When students become second-year students, school life is no longer strange for them. They realize how high school life works and what their study style is through their experience from the first year. The daily routine is not different from the previous year's routine and making friends is also not new for them. However, a change from the first year of school life is that they are in the middle stage of preparing to take the KSAT. The other change is that they have chosen between liberal arts and natural science area; the time for students to choose between liberal arts and natural science is the second semester of the first year. Second-year students do not study broad subjects unrelated to the path they have chosen. Students who have chosen liberal arts focus on Korean and social studies, while students who have chosen natural science focus on mathematics and science. However, most students put studying mathematics and English as their top priorities. Mathematics and English are key elements for successful university entrance, whether they selected liberal arts or natural science. Unless there are big changes in school policy, the hours of attendance are still the same and the supplementary classes and independent study continue.

The distinctive features of second-year high school students are that their future path becomes narrowed as they select either liberal arts or natural science and the relaxed atmosphere they had in their first year is fading away. They now only participate selectively in the non-subject activities in which they broadly participated in the first year, according to the characteristics of the university and the major they set as a goal. By the end of the second year, they know roughly which universities they may be able to enter and which they cannot. When they become third-year students, those boundaries become certain.

### *Senior Year*

Mothers who always nagged to their child to study do not nag their child anymore because students know and believe that getting into a good university is the first step to a successful life. Thus, it is normal for third-year high school students to put their entire energy and effort into their study. Being a third-year high school student starts in March, but in reality it starts when the winter break starts. The second-year winter break starts with supplementary classes. Most classes are problem solving in the form of the SAT. Students do not study as many subjects as they did when they were first- and second-year students. A study strategy is set for each student. Senior students use a strategy of choice and concentration. If students have studied Korean, math, and English intensively, then students begin to study exploring areas, which are two integrated subjects originated from natural science and social studies areas respectively. The natural science-oriented exploring area includes physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, and geology; the social studies-oriented exploring area includes ethics, philosophy, economics, Korean history, world history, geography, and politics.

Students and their parents are well aware that this last year of their educational journey is the toughest. The daily routine of third-year high school students is the same as that for the first and second years, but the self-study classes become an hour longer. Students who had returned home at 9 p.m. generally go home at 10 p.m. and some stay later. Usually, there is no public transportation at that time, so students need their parents' support or need to live within walking distance of school. Regular classes in this year are focused on problem solving: discussion-style classes and activity-focused classes are no longer available. Summaries of concepts and problem solving on the basis of workbooks, textbooks, and activity

books provided by the teacher are offered from time to time. Sometimes there are debates between the teacher and some students in the class when the subject is not one of the required subjects for the SAT. Teachers teach the subjects according to the timetable, but those students disregard the schedule. However, if the schedule includes subjects that are not required for the SAT, there is usually some sort of compromise between students and the teacher. Once some compromise has been made, self-study time is extended even though it is supposed to be a regular class.

The atmosphere of the self-study class that used to be noisy becomes silent, even without the teacher's supervision. Self-study lasts until dinner. Students go to a reading room or hakwon or back home after self-study. Third-year students do not attend school ceremonies or other school events such as picnics or athletics competitions. They are excused from those events because of possible injury that could significantly affect their study. In addition, those events may detriment their study routine.

The areas of study in the independent study are different in the third year. Up to the second year, mathematics, English, and Korean were major subjects, but in the third year, the time spent on those subjects decreases, while time spent on exploring area subjects of their choice increases. The number of students who go to hakwon after dinner is reduced because they do not want to waste time moving between places: time is the most precious thing for third-year high school students. Most students stay at school and study by themselves. Media players, mainly smart phones, take their place on the side of desk, and an increasing number of students watch online lectures wearing earphones.

This pattern lasts through summer break until September, when they make their application for non-scheduled admission. As conditions for non-scheduled admission vary, they try to figure out which university to apply by exchanging and sharing information with family, friends, and the supervising teacher. They compare their academic records from two and half years of high school to information about their chosen major. Some students are busy making personal statements for applications, while teachers are busy writing letters of recommendation for those students. The others do not apply for non-scheduled admission, and focus on the SAT to apply for regular recruitment. During this period, the classroom atmosphere becomes disordered because students discuss their applications with friends during independent study periods. This atmosphere settles when the period of application for non-scheduled admission is over. After two months, students take the SAT, which is the final gateway of regular education.

The day before the SAT, students receive a preliminary notice with test verification slips and instructions. The venue of the test is on the test verification slips. The venue is usually the high school that is geographically closest to the student's house. On the day of the SAT, the scheduled reporting time for workers nationwide is put back to enable examinees to go to the location of the SAT as quickly and conveniently as possible. The social atmosphere on this particular day supports the examinees, and students give their best effort to achieve good results. When the 350 minutes of the test are over, seniors feel that their high school life is over, if not officially.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF LIFE AT HAKWONS

In the previous section, I introduced Korean high school students' lives at school as the background to understand better the characteristics of hakwon education for high school students in Korea. In this section, by telling the story of the life of Korean high school students at hakwons, I discuss the characteristics of hakwon education for high school students. High school students in Korea study at hakwons every night, every weekend, and every vacation. According to Statistics Korea (2013), as of 2013, more than 50% of high school students had attended hakwons for the previous five consecutive years. They believe that hakwons teach school subjects better than schools in terms of academic achievement. High school students in Korea evaluated hakwon education higher than school education in four areas in a survey conducted by Choi (2009). The survey was implemented through a questionnaire, with 12,180 high school students participating nationwide. As shown in Table 6.2, hakwon institutes are more positively assessed than schools.

While Table 6.2 may demonstrate Korean students' favorable attitude toward hakwon education, it does not show Korean students' everyday engagement in hakwon education, and the distinctiveness of hakwon education. Suspending judgement on hakwon education, I would first like to understand what hakwon education is for high school students and their understanding and perceptions about it. To begin with, I would like to provide a typical schedule for Korean high school students at a hakwon.

Most students go to hakwons after school is over, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. or later. Some Korean high school students study at a hakwon from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. before school starts. Even though a new law in 2015 prohibits study at hakwon after 10 p.m. to protect students' health and to

**Table 6.2** Korean high school students' attitudes toward schoolteachers and hakwon teachers (Likert Scale: Maximum of 5.00 points)

<i>Category</i>	<i>Sub categories</i>	<i>School teacher</i>	<i>Hakwon instructor</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Instruction	Curriculum expertise	4.37	3.96	-0.59
	Sincerity	4.44	4.96	-0.52
	Flexibility	4.02	4.99	-0.97
	Preparing lesson	4.25	4.94	-0.69
	Passion	4.32	5.01	-0.69
Relationship with students	Respect opinion	3.68	4.79	-1.11
	Empathy	3.60	4.65	-1.05
	Communication	3.61	4.82	-1.21
	Fairness	3.26	4.52	-1.26
Effectiveness	Good character	3.31	3.72	-0.41
	Intelligence	3.14	3.73	-0.59
	Self-directed learning	3.40	3.78	-0.38
	Preparing admission	3.70	4.92	-1.22
Satisfaction	Satisfaction	3.62	4.72	-1.10

encourage their getting enough sleep, many hakwons still teach students after 10 p.m. Weekends are a good time to learn at hakwons, because students do not go to school, particularly since it was announced that hakwons and their owners who violate the law can be sued. Students go to hakwons on two or three days during the week and on the weekends. Since there is not much time to go to hakwons on weekdays, intensive hakwon education happens on weekends. Students spend 10–12 hours a day at hakwons on weekends. Table 6.3 shows an example of a high school student's weekly schedule.

**Table 6.3** The weekly time schedule of a high school student

	<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
08:00–12:00	<i>English hakwon</i>			School classes			School additional classes
13:00–17:00	<i>English hakwon</i>						Self-study
18:00–20:00	Internet hakwon	Night self-study	<i>English hakwon</i>	Night self-study	<i>Essay hakwon</i>	Night self-study	<i>Math</i>
21:00–23:00	Rest	<i>Math hakwon</i>	<i>Internet hakwon</i>	<i>Math hakwon</i>	<i>Internet hakwon</i>	<i>Math hakwon</i>	Rest

Intensive hakwon education also happens during vacations, which are usually a month long. Hakwons run various kinds of courses during vacations, from advanced learning programs to supplementary courses. Students consider hakwons as a school during vacations. Those who do not go to hakwons during school semesters tend to go to hakwons during vacations to keep on their toes. It is very common to see brochures advertising hakwon education at the gate of every house when vacations begin. Since hakwon education is a common practice among high school students and even for their parents, hakwon buses go to students' houses to transport them. Also, parents who are concerned about their children's safety at night wait for them at the door or at the hakwon, where parents' cars line up near midnight on the road in front of hakwon buildings. Some students who have studied very late in hakwons fall asleep during lessons at school; for them, school is the place to sleep, and a hakwon is the place to learn. Hakwon is the commonly accepted place for high school students to study.

In this section, I discuss six characteristics of life of high school students at hakwon that may help readers in the West to understand hakwon education for high school students in Korea. Those are: (1) an efficient preparation for exams, with emphasis on math and English; (2) building tenacity; (3) guidance for college admission; (4) overcoming temporal challenges; (5) inducing students to study; and (6) individualized learning.

### *An Efficient Preparation for Exams, with Emphasis on Math and English*

School record shows how I look, and it is my name. (From the interview with a student from G high school)

The first characteristic of life of hakwon education is an efficient preparation for exams. If one asks high school students what is most important for them, the answer surely will be a good score on the KSAT. If one asks them to name just one thing that has essentially changed in comparison with middle school students, it will be preparing to take the KSAT. KSAT is of the greatest importance for high school students. Moreover, if you ask high school students for a second answer, it will be their school record. The school record is the average of all their scores on internal regular examinations. The reason for the importance of the school record for high school students, even when they are still first-year students, is that this

school record can be used for applying to universities. In other words, the school record is one of the key elements that decide a failure or a succession of an admittance to university. Most major universities in Seoul reflect school records on university admission. Thus, most major universities require a high GPA score. Although, this is not as important as the score on the KSAT, but students who neglect to maintain a high school record would face a huge problem later in the process of university application. The school record is more than just the scores on internal regular examinations; it is an indication of how this student earnestly performed in school, and students with a low GPA score have a lower probability of passing the university entrance process. This is why students should maintain a good school record. Having a good GPA is more crucial, although not exclusively so, for those who want non-scheduled admission, which fills half of the places in university admittance. Since non-scheduled admission starts at the end of the first semester of the third year, the GPA of the first and second years play an important role in university admission. For this reason, from the first year, students consider their school grade as a critical factor. However, it is not easy for students to have a good school record. There are a few reasons.

First, the school curriculum is particularly broad. Students have to study almost every subject such as Korean language, mathematics, English, social studies, and science—five important subjects that all students have to study. Not only is there a huge amount to study, but also the level of difficulty is also a challenge. This is perhaps why many high school students experience frustration during the first year of high school. The second reason why high school students have difficulty maintaining a high GPA is that high schools employ a relative evaluation system, while absolute evaluation is used in elementary and middle school. All students are placed in a specific grade level based on the nine-grade system I provided earlier in this chapter.

Therefore, achieving a high level of discrimination ability of tests is crucial for schools so that they can allocate students from levels one to nine. If tests for school record are made too easy, a couple of difficulties may arise. On the one hand, it would make it difficult for schools to assort students' grades into the nine levels, since many students would have a chance of getting higher grades. On the other hand, top-grade students aiming for prestigious universities would be disadvantaged, as their school records become lower due to easy school tests. For example, if a student attained third or fourth grade out of nine even after scoring 90 points on

the test, school would face enormous complaints from students and their parents. Thus, as long as the school record is calculated by test results in a relative evaluation, school tests have to be difficult, and that is why schools make tests as tricky and meticulous as possible. The difficulties students have maintaining a good GPA provide a convincing reason for them to go to hakwons. Many high school students experience frustration with school tests and school support for the tests. Even though the content to learn has expanded rapidly and become more difficult, students do not think that schools do a good job of teaching them how to prepare for tests.

In the pursuit of getting a decent score in school exams, students go to hakwons. Hakwons identify questions for the tests of specific schools through analysis of previous tests provided by the school and help students prepare for the tests. Hakwons employ several strategies to prepare their students for the tests. First, hakwon lessons focus on the tendencies of school exams. Since schoolteachers make the exam questions, it is important for hakwons to know the styles and preferences of the schoolteachers. Therefore, hakwons receive previous test papers and teaching content from schools first and analyze them. These analyzed materials from hakwons help students to figure out which parts need to be focused on. Hakwons help their students to understand and study in efficient and effective ways based on data they have gathered and analyzed.

Second, during the test season, hakwon lessons are not especially focused on practicing problem-solving, rather than understanding concepts. Usually, hakwons cover a curriculum faster than schools do. Therefore, students can have additional time for preparing for school exams at hakwon. Based on the analysis of school exams, hakwon instructors provide many related materials and questions. During this season, students are focused on solving problems, checking the answers, re-solving the problems which students got wrong, and moving on to more difficult questions. A math instructor at a hakwon told me how he prepares his students for school exams.

In the case of K school, the questions are usually from the math workbook. When the test season comes, I have my students solve the problems in the workbook until they have almost memorized the questions. The strategy helped a lot of students to raise their grades, which made our hakwon really popular in this area. Intermediate students can get higher than 90 points.  
(Math instructor at K hakwon)



From those experiences, students develop their problem-solving skills and can get used to the school tests. Once students get used to a difficult level of questions, they feel much more at ease when they encounter easier questions.

The strategy of hakwons of focusing on problem solving has been criticized for only being concerned about grades, not raising students' abilities in certain subject areas. However, hakwons believe that students' grades represent their ability in the subject. Thus, at hakwons, the efforts to increase students' grades are not different from the efforts to raise students' abilities in the subject.

We used to believe that students' grades in a subject do not necessarily represent the student's ability in the subject. Now we believe it does. We believe that a student's grade in math is his or her ability in the subject. During the exam seasons, our teaching methods become more focused on raising grades. (From the interview with S hakwon instructor)

Studying mathematics and English is the major reason that students go to hakwons. Students consider English and mathematics the most important subjects, but they think these subjects are very difficult. It is well-known that the level of the mathematics curriculum in high school is especially high in comparison with those of other countries. The reason why high school students are placed in the top ranks in international science and mathematics tests is that the actual level of mathematics in the high school curriculum is higher than it is abroad, almost at a university standard. Students take five hours of mathematics each week, and have to complete answers in supplementary exercise books, workbooks, and two to three textbooks chosen by the school. The content in these books is not easy, and students who are not good at just one specific area would face significant difficulties because tests consist of questions from various areas evenly. In the case of English, the problem is more severe. Reaching a certain level of English requires daily study memorizing words, reading, listening, and learning complicated grammar.

The first place students go for help in studying mathematics and English may be the school class. They try to receive as much help from school as possible. They ask the teacher questions once class is over, and read the textbook before class to prepare for class. However, they soon realize that the time allocated for mathematics and English is not enough for what they want to achieve.

I'm studying mathematics in school, about an hour a day. Sometimes there is a supplementary class for two hours, but it is not available for the entire week. I'm much concerned about my math. Since mathematics is too difficult, but important, studying math every day would not be enough for me. I do not like math classes, but at the same time, I want more help with math because it is too difficult for me. (From the interview with Seung Wook, May 17, 2015.)

So, why do schools not allocate more time to such important subjects as English and mathematics? The reason is that the national curriculum dictates the number of classes for each subject to be taught at school. The allotted time for each subject is proportionately distributed. However, a fundamental problem arises from the fact that mathematics and English are the most critical subjects for getting good grades in the school record and KSAT. In order to achieve a decent school record and KSAT score, students need to focus on mathematics and English.

### *Building Tenacity*

The second characteristic of hakwon education for high school students is building tenacity. Students as pre-candidates for university entrance examination have to consider study as their life. When they were elementary or middle school students, they did not have to be very disciplined after finishing tests until the next test. So they could spend their time on hobbies such as playing musical instruments or playing sports. However, for high school students, those activities are just a luxury. They have to prepare for the university entrance examination all the time except for the test period. Even during holidays, they have to study.

One typical part of the study culture that first-year students experience for the first time is night independent study. Studying alone in the classroom for a long time is an unfamiliar experience for them. Students who are not familiar with night independent study may waste time by sleeping or doing worthless activities for academic achievement without a specific and appropriate study plan—study plans will be discussed in the section on individualized learning. Time at home is sweet, but students suffer from various temptations at home. In the bus on the way home, they imagine themselves studying hard, but when they arrive home, there are too many distractions such as TVs, computers, and smart phones. They are easily tempted unless they have a strong will to study. There are alternative ways

to continue studying, such as staying at school until late or going to the library or going to a reading room, but unless students have a fundamental study plan and strong commitment, it is hard for them to succeed.

This problem is difficult to solve even with the help of parents or teachers. Making a study plan is possible when the long-term goal is set and the short-term target score for achieving the long-term goal is also set. A study plan requires proper study methods as well. If students just try to study without proper plans, they will soon lose their way. It is hard for students to solve all of these problems at school. Teachers help them as much as they can, but as teachers' working hours end at 5 p.m., even the supervising teacher cannot instruct the students in what to study. This situation is another reason that students go to hakwons after school.

Hakwons make students build positive and productive study habits. It is actually a difficult task to instill that kind of attitude in students. However, there are a few distinctive strategies that hakwons use to build students' study tenacity. One way to build tenacity in students is to encourage and instill consistent effort. Hakwons do so through giving homework and checking it on a daily basis. It is believed that putting forth consistent effort is second-to-none in achieving good grades. Checking homework in an open space at hakwon provides in-depth information and allows all teachers and hakwon staff to identify students' academic achievement. Since checking homework takes time with the particular emphasis hakwons put on, hakwons allocate homework checkout time separately from regular classes in an effort to avoid class interruptions.

Second, hakwons emphasize learning from errors that students make. It is not unusual to find students who do not know what they do not know, why they do not understand something, and which areas they need to study. There are two distinctive ways in which hakwons address this concern: writing wrong-answer notes and statistical analysis. Hakwons make students write their own wrong-answer notes, through which students become aware of what they do not know, what they need to learn, and what they need to focus on. Writing the notes invites students' metacognitive reflection on their learning. Hakwons also use IT technologies to analyze students' test results, which provides students and instructors with information for reflection and improvement in their teaching and learning.

Third, hakwons encourage students to reflect on their study habits. Having good study habits means giving up bad ones. Making students' study habits productive is also associated with changing their lives in

positive ways. Thus, hakwons help students understand and reflect on their study habits. For this, students keep a reflective study diary. It is a kind of diary in which students check and reflect on what they learn on a daily basis. Students write their goals, dreams, and study plans in the diary. They check how they are doing based on their detailed plan. Besides checking what they study, they also reflect on how they spend time and how it can be used more effectively. This diary is called a secret story that the hakwon designed for strengthening students' self-directed learning. In this diary, students write their goals and passions and evaluate their own learning. The hakwon has students write in their diary every day and incorporates the diary into its reward system. Thus, it is an important part of the learning culture of the hakwon. The diary consists of two parts: "My brain and dream," and everyday study goals. The first part, "My brain and dream," includes what one does well and what one likes to do, one's strengths, reasons for studying and going to a hakwon, and one's imaginary future in 20 years. There are four points that students need to consider in making their goals: measurable goals, feasible goals, the process needed and the amount of time needed to achieve the goals. Under the four points, students make their own plans: a short-term plan and medium- and long-term plans. This diary provides students with opportunities to think about and reflect on their future and dreams. The second part of the diary is for students to check on their everyday study goals. Students look back on their everyday study and evaluate it. This section includes weekly goals, everyday study activities, homework, checking self-directed learning, checking emotional states, reflecting on the day, and teacher's comments on the diary.

### *Guidance for College Admission*

#### *General Guidance*

The third characteristic of hakwon education for Korean high school students is to provide guidance for college admission, which begins when students enter high school or even when they are in middle school. "Educational guidance for university" means helping students get into a higher level of school with similar scores. In other words, it is to guide them make the best use of their scores in entering a preferable university. Hakwons offer the adequate guidance to find a possible university to apply to successfully with a thorough analysis of a student's scores. Although there is also educational guidance at school, there are too many students

with different goals in class, so it is hard for schoolteachers to provide guidance to all of them. In contrast, private hakwons have separate analytic tools to guide students to find possible universities that student want to enter. The following story tells how hakwons effectively guide high school students to enter the university they want to enter, exercising management and consulting systems that help students to apply for desirable universities.

Changsu was placed into the moderate proficiency group. Until sophomore of high school, he did not attend the hakwon classes. He could not feel the necessity of going to hakwon. Moreover, his parents could not afford his hakwon tuitions. However, he felt the importance of study and looked for the proper hakwon when he was at the end of sophomore. He enrolled in comprehensive hakwon, but he could not get the hakwon fee from his parents. Because he could not tell the fact of enrolling in hakwon to his parents, he found a part time job to pay for hakwon fee. One day, he failed to receive part time job payment, and he had to postpone paying hakwon fee. The hakwon teacher found out Changsu's financial struggle and his hakwon fee could be deducted. As a result, he could study hard and his score increased. After KSAT, he wanted to enroll in national university, which is relatively cheap and provides decent welfare benefits. However, the school was against him because, his score was lower than the average standard of national university admittance. However, the hakwon analyzed the specific components of standard, and predicted the possible number of students who would apply for the major that year. He applied for the university following the advice from the hakwon. Moreover, there were many cases that the successful applicants did not accept admissions from the department for which Changsu applied. After all, Changsu was able to enter the national university as the hakwon predicted. (From the interview with S hakwon teacher, February 28, 2015)

In hakwons, the staff carefully analyze the current entrance requirements and help students apply to better universities based on a wide array of data, as well as the students' grades. In hakwons, in order to practice these strategies in a proper way, the instructors collect information via various educational websites, seminars, and the educational office. It is not easy for students or parents to collect this information by themselves.

The current university entrance process is extremely complicated because there are various systems regarding the university entrance process. These complicated processes for university entrance become another

pressure for students because, as we have seen in Changsu's case, students need to be strategic in finding and applying for universities. Even though the Ministry of Education has tried to simplify the application process to prevent it from becoming complicated, this phenomenon is actually difficult to control because universities want to choose the best students. There are limited opportunities to be accepted into a similar level of university if students fail to pass the admittance procedures. For this reason, students today put extra effort into learning about and preparing for a wide array of university entrance processes because universities have largely changed the ways they select students. In the past, after KAST, students just applied to a university according to their scores. However, nowadays universities try to look at various abilities of students to select suitable ones. Thus, application procedures are minutely different between universities. Now, if students want to attend a certain university, they need to obtain the necessary grades and qualifications one or two years before. Therefore, guidance from hakwons plays a critical role for high school students to navigate the application process, in order to enter the desired university.

### *Essay Writing*

Another major issue regarding entering university concerns the essay test, the oral statement, and the interview. Actually, the essay test is the most influential one amongst them for entering a university. In 2017, about 15,000 students will be selected through essay test. Compared to a total student number of 355,000, 15,000 is not negligible. Entering university through the essay test needs a strategic approach and guidance. This is because students should select the best way of applying for university between regular admission and non-scheduled admission. The essay test plays a critical role in non-scheduled admission, so students who lack confidence in regular admission (mostly determined by KSAT score) can think of non-scheduled admission with essay test as their method of applying for university. Currently, a wide range of students, mostly seniors, attends private hakwons to prepare for the essay test. With the new policy for university entrance, hakwons that prepare for the essay test have become common and many high school seniors attend at least once or for a longer time. The time for attending these hakwons varies. Students who are preparing for non-scheduled admission visit hakwons in the first semester. However, most students who need to prepare for their essay test attend writing hakwons during summer vacations or the second semester of their senior year. Especially since the evaluation system was entirely amended in

2015, more and more students attend writing hakwons to prepare for the university entrance process.

Essay tests included in non-scheduled admission are administered during the semesters. Thus, writing hakwons can be essential for students who are preparing for non-scheduled admission. Students who aim for non-scheduled admission with high school records constantly attend the writing hakwons until the entrance examination is over. There are many methods for improving essay tests: for general essay tests, students write their thoughts about issues that are commonly mentioned in current news or in the department in the university they want to enter. Stating a viewpoint on the problem of cruel treatment in the army in 1,000 or 1,500 characters is an example of a current issue. If an essay is specific in a field such as economics, the test may ask for an essay on an economic policy or how to regulate prices. In addition, there are intensified essay tests, which are mainly related to mathematics and science. Extremely difficult questions are presented, and then students must solve them within the limited time. Students are evaluated by writing a detailed process for solving the problem, not just for solving it. The detailed process of solving the problem confirms the students' ability in mathematics and science. In private writing hakwons, students and teachers study together for new essay tests and solutions to problems.

In the essay test class, students first learn some basic theories, such as how to write in an acceptable style and how to express the main topic clearly. After this, most classes continue with students writing their own essays. Teachers offer expected questions or sample questions from previous tests. Then students practice writing an essay within the time limit, and after that, they receive one-on-one correction. Corrections and revisions are extremely important because students need to revise their thoughts and explain them convincingly in a logical way. Thus, teachers who study the requirements of each university in detail correct students' ideas and help them more cogently state their opinions or points.

In private writing hakwons, the classes are totally different from those in school. In classes at school, students simply learn the content of the textbook. However, the issues discussed at private hakwons range from societal phenomena and common sense to one's own values and thoughts. The writing hakwon is not just for teaching writing techniques: it requires all kinds of knowledge. The Korean language, literature, philosophy, sociology, science, and history play a key role in essay tests. Of course, since students do not have enough time to practice all of these topics, they

study those that are related to the university entrance examination and the department in the university they want to enter.

Each university has different essay tests according to the university's purpose and the selection standard. The essay test classes begin at different times depending on the schedules of the entrance examinations. Since the most important factors in the essay test are confidence and thinking skills, students want to improve their confidence and thinking skills. It is not easy for students to express their thoughts properly since they will be nervous during the test. In order to overcome this nervousness, private hakwons combine discussion with writing training. Private writing hakwons have their own teaching system, which is correction. In private writing hakwons, teachers revise writing right in front of students and provide improvement points based on the student's character. The advantages of this correction are obvious: for students who rarely write an essay, the opportunity to be evaluated is important.

### *Overcoming Temporal and Special Challenges*

Overcoming temporal and special challenges is another characteristic of hakwon education for high school students in Korea. In particular, Internet-based hakwons are noticeable when it comes to issues of time and geographical barriers for high school students. Specifically, seniors, who lack time preparing for KAST and school exams together, can utilize Internet-based hakwons for overcoming the shortage of time and utilizing supplementary time. With the advantages of Internet-based hakwons, students do not need to visit hakwon in person and that they can listen to famous teachers' excellent lectures everywhere. For those reasons, Internet-based hakwons have gained popularity with students. Internet-based hakwons can offer high-quality lectures at reasonable prices, below 100 dollars per subject. Currently, the leading Internet-based hakwon in Korea is D hakwon. Since students can access the Internet everywhere throughout the nation, at least 100,000 students take the lectures. The lectures provided by Internet-based hakwons are well organized and their lectures have a powerful impact on hundreds of thousands of students.

There are a few key strengths of Internet-based hakwons. They can be an alternative method for high school seniors who have limited time. Students who feel that private tutoring is a financial burden or who worry



about going to hakwons late at night choose Internet hakwons. In the Internet hakwon, students can select as many classes as they want and can choose classes suitable for their level. Before selecting Internet hakwon classes, students collect enormous amounts of information to check meticulously who is the best teacher in a certain subject or which website offers the best services. Most Internet hakwons offer free sample lectures for one or two hours, and after watching them, students can determine whether they will select the lectures or not. The registration information, replies, and opinions from previous students are important information, and reviews of the courses are also significant for students in deciding which courses to take. Below are a few reviews of a Korean course from D hakwon.

- I was so impressed by the teacher when I took this course off-line before. Thus, I took this one again online.
- I have been having difficulties in understanding the whole picture of literature. I believe that this course really helped me with developing my ability to understand literature.
- This course helps me grasp the meanings of literature line by line, paragraph by paragraph, and the whole picture of it. It also helps me develop logical thinking.

(Retrieved from Korean course from D Internet hakwon,  
September 10, 2015.)

Having up-to-date information about KSAT is another benefit of taking courses at Internet hakwons. Internet hakwons continuously upload analysis about KSAT and other related materials to their websites. The information is only accessible to students who attend the lectures.

The most popular subjects in Internet hakwons are also mathematics and English. In the case of mathematics, KAST requires not only simple calculation skills and concepts but also mathematical and logical thinking ability. To fulfill the requirements, a mathematical problem-solving ability based on robust basic concepts is needed. Students can prepare this through the math Internet hakwon, which provides basic concepts and problem solving together. Students can continuously rewind the part that they do not understand and work until they grasp the basic principle. If they fail to understand the meaning or principle, they can ask questions and get help through the website. English lectures are made up of various

parts, such as syntax, vocabulary, grammar, and actual problem practice. Students can select their weak part and register with the online class.

### *Inducing Students to Study*

Inducing students to study is another characteristic of hakwon education for high school students in Korea. It means that hakwons continually motivate students to study by systematically providing opportunities, which may help students to become self-directed learners. The best study habits are built when students study of their own accord, and this kind of study happens when they are self motivated. Thus, hakwons are devoted to making students motivated in studying. Hakwons use multiple strategies for this purpose; counseling to find feasible goals and plans, building caring relationships with students, and reward systems.

First, in-depth counseling helps students build up attitudes toward being a self-directed learner. Some students lose confidence, disparage themselves, think that they are not smart enough, or give up studying when they find that it is really hard to raise their school grades. Moreover, some students conclude that since they cannot do well in just one subject, they will not be able to do well in other subject areas too. For these students, hakwons start by counseling them about what they really want to do in the future and trying to find what they may be able to do well. Hakwon instructors and staff try their best to build students' confidence. For this, hakwon instructors put effort into helping students find their vision and become interested in studying.

Second, providing a comfortable atmosphere and a close attachment to students induces students to study themselves. In particular, high school students are always under stress because of academic pressure, relationships between friends or parents, and so on. Students cannot focus on studying if they are under too much stress of this kind. Hakwons are very important places for high school students to be motivated to study hard. Actually, many high school students have a much closer relationship with hakwon teachers than with schoolteachers. They are eager to disclose their worries and weak points to hakwon teachers. The following story is about how much students and hakwon teachers are engaged in close relationships.

I was once pregnant. I was very good at studying and my family was very rich. Therefore, close people think that I will go abroad and study in there until that bad memory will diminish. However, my father did not do that.

After getting abortion, I went to my hakwon teacher's house. The hakwon teacher laid me on a warm room and supply with delicious meal. Moreover, the teacher protected me from exposing to bad rumor. With the strong relationship between the hakwon teacher and our family, I can continue my daily life; daytime in school and nighttime in hakwon dormitory. I almost rely my whole existence on the hakwon teacher. Sometimes, the teacher told me that I was a murderer and should strive for better life on behalf of the dead baby. (From the interview with Mina, April 2, 2015)

Third, various kinds of reward systems also induce students to study themselves. Hakwons have rewarded students with scholarships, not only for the highest achievements, but also for their highest achievement, the greatest improvement between terms or tests, and the most consistent effort. Students who do well in writing in their reflective study diary or who attend classes without absence, which are closely related to building good study habits, can also receive scholarships.

### *Individualized Learning*

The last characteristic of hakwon education for high school students in Korea is individualized learning. Every student has different background knowledge, preferred learning style and personal goals. Then, how can hakwons satisfy students with such differences? Hakwons maximize individualized learning. They provide lessons that meet individual students' needs and abilities in certain subject areas. Knowing how public schools deal with this concern helps us understand the individualized learning at hakwons. Schools teach students by levels instead of through individualized learning. They divide students into different levels of classes in various ways; the most common way is to divide students into advanced, intermediate, and basic levels. Some schools provide classes for the highest achievers and the lowest achievers. There are problems in a teaching-by-level approach at schools. First, since there are about 25 students in a classroom, there is still a noticeable achievement and ability gap between students. The number of the students in a class is too many for individualized learning because it is too difficult for a teacher to know the issues and concerns of individual students, and thus it is difficult to meet their needs. Second, there is no differentiated curriculum for students in different levels in school. As a result, teaching-by-level is only supported by teachers' personal methodologies without the help of level-appropriate materials

There are two major strategies employed in hakwons for individualized learning: differentiated classes, and individualized teaching. The former is an organizational aspect; and the latter is the personalized approach by hakwon instructors. First, in differentiated classes, students are divided into levels, similar to schools to some extent, but it is different because there are more levels at hakwons compared to schools. The division is based on placement tests and individual counseling. Hakwons try to put the closest students in terms of their achievement in the same classes. Hakwons also use differentiated curricula and materials, which allows for really differentiated education. The following is an example of individualized learning.

In the case of K Math hakwon, classes are first divided into three: the highest level, the high level, the middle and the lower level. The highest level is for students who may enter the most prestigious universities. Students at this level learn complicated concepts and train to solve the highest level of problems. Students in the high level are those who show a relatively high level of achievement. The focus is to move up to the next level. Middle and lower level courses focus on building up students' basic knowledge and skills.

Each of the three categories can also be divided into two subsidiary levels: advanced and basic. The advanced level is for those who have the ability to move up to the next level, and the basic level is for those who need to build up basic knowledge and skills. Thus, the differentiated curriculum at K hakwon includes six levels. Table 6.4 shows the structure.

Class division goes even further. Within the six levels are multiple classes that can also be differentiated by levels. For example, if there are 60 students in the basic category of the high level, the students are divided into four to six classes depending on their levels. In this way, the classes in K hakwon form a big step structure. As a result, the similarity of students' abilities in a classroom is maximized.

**Table 6.4** Differentiated curriculum at K Math hakwon

The highest level		High level		Middle and lower level	
Advanced	Basic	Advanced	Basic	Advanced	Basic
← higher level		lower level		→	

Organizing classes with an even level is one of the most important things that hakwons consider. To organize them in this way, hakwons conduct level tests. In the K mathematics hakwon, two types of regular tests are conducted every two months. The first is a level test, and the second is a level test of prior learning. Hakwons separate students by analyzing the results of these tests. However, the criteria for separating students are not simply their scores; other important criteria are as follows. The first criterion for separation is ability. Mathematical skills need to be considered because they vary greatly. Some students' mathematical skills are very advanced compared to others at the same age. Some students lack basic knowledge and skills. Therefore, many hakwons teach them in accordance with their ability. The second criterion for separation is school ranking. Even though students are in the same level, it does not mean their rank in school is the same. Their school ranking depends on the factors such as self-confidence, personality, or ability to solve problems carefully. In the hakwon, these factors are considered in separating students. Once separation is finished, hakwon runs the classes by applying a curriculum suitable to each class. Each class has a different goal and uses different textbooks. Most hakwons use self-made materials which clearly reflect the class separation system. Dividing the students into more and more levels does not guarantee individualized learning. It is a kind of prerequisite, but not a guarantee. K Math hakwon uses differentiated teaching and learning materials for each class and level. K hakwon has at least five different textbooks for the same content, for example, for functions. Thus, individualized learning is approached at K hakwon by dividing students into many levels and using the most appropriate curricula and materials.

The second strategy for individualized learning is individualized teaching, which is actualized by instructors. There are at least two premises: the class size and the lasting relationships between instructors and students. The limited number of students in a class and continuous instructor-student relationships are prerequisites for the instructor to know students well enough to treat students individually. These two are hardly found at schools: class sizes are usually 30 students in a classroom, and students meet different teachers almost every year. Thus, with a few exceptions, structurally, the teacher-student relationships do not last more than one year. The number of students in a class at K hakwon is between 10 and 15. K hakwon has a "responsible homeroom teacher" system: when a student comes to the hakwon and is placed in a class, the instructor who is in charge of the student teaches the student until the end of high school.

This hakwon policy guarantees a lasting relationship between students and instructors. There are two cases when students meet different instructors: moving to higher or lower levels and quitting the hakwon.

In order to provide appropriate teaching, it is very important that teachers be aware of each student's level of education, learning propensity, preferred learning style, potential, intelligence, and even their friendships. The following interview excerpt shows how an instructor at T hakwon individualizes his teaching.

Minsu had struggled with his study before he came to this hakwon. This was because previous hakwon was very oppressive to Minsu. It might be an effective way for students who need extensive studying. Minsu, however, felt it is very frustrating. I see him as an autonomous student after thorough counseling. Thus, we assign a generous and receptive teacher to him, and encourage him do his study by himself a lot. Since then, his school record has improved. He also feels comfortable with us. (From the interview with a teacher from T comprehensive hakwon)

Various diagnostic tools are used to identify a student's learning tendencies, potential, and their academic level. For the academic level, diagnostic tools such as the results of hakwon entrance examinations and regular tests, study records, and the school record are used, while tools used for learning style and tendencies are learning style determination checklists, aptitude tests, personality tests, and learning skills tests. By recording in detail in a study diary what they like, what they are good at, their strengths, the reason for study, the reason for going to the hakwon, and their dreams for their future in 20 years, students may find out why they should study. This helps students set realistic goals, which is important in motivating them to study actively to achieve their goals. The study diary also enables students to check their learning objectives and future path on a daily basis, through reviewing their day life and evaluating their study habits. Students also set weekly objectives, record study contents, record homework, check self-directed learning, and self-reflection. Teachers check this study diary once a week and give advice for how to achieve their goals.

The learning clinic is another important aspect of hakwons' approach in terms of individualized learning. K hakwon runs clinical sessions interconnected with regular lessons. In the clinic, students study at designated seats by themselves. However, there is a big difference between independent study and the clinic. In the clinic, students are given tasks they have to fin-

ish during the session. The study tasks are carefully selected by instructors for each individual. Thus, the tasks vary from one to another. The tasks are given by homeroom instructors, but other instructors are in charge of the clinical sessions. The clinical instructors make sure that students understand what they are supposed to do, finish the given tasks, and help students when they need help. Thus, communication between homeroom instructors and clinical instructors is critical. The learning clinic is mandatory for every student at K hakwon, and rather strict rules are applied to the sessions. Hakwon education for high school students in Korea puts a lot of emphasis on individualized learning, which makes them really different from schools.

### SUMMARY

Up to this point, I have described the lives of high school students at hakwons. This seems to be strongly related to the college entrance application process. In short, I described six characteristics of life of high school students at hakwon. The first one was an efficient preparation for exams, with emphasis on math and English. For high school students, KSAT and school exam score would be the most critical factor for getting into a university. Students can get well-organized and analyzed materials and have various opportunities for problem-solving experiences. Moreover, students can have broader experience to increase their math and English competency in hakwons. The second one was building tenacity. Students can build their study tenacity by completing hakwon homework, writing wrong-answer notes, and completing a study diary. The third one was guidance for college admission. Students may be able to get better chances of getting into a preferable university with the help of hakwons. Students can also have chances of preparing essay tests with the guidance of the hakwon's strategic approach. The fourth one was overcoming temporal and special challenges. In particular, Internet-based hakwons help students to attend any classes they want anytime and anywhere at a reasonable price. The fifth one was inducing students to study. Students can be self-directed learners through hakwons' in-depth counseling, the caring relationship between student and instructor, and various kinds of reward system. The sixth one is individualized learning. Differentiated classes and individualized teaching methods are adapted to students.

This chapter shows Korean students' strong engagement in private learning at hakwons. While it may be criticized by outsiders, many stu-

dents I met in Korea apply their hakwon learning for their future planning and even their school performance. Even though they were tired of studying late at hakwons, the students I met did not much complain about the situation; rather, they interpreted it as contributing to their future and success in society. The findings I have discussed in this chapter provide us with implications in light of finding problems with the quality of public education, such as those concerning individualized instruction, counseling and guidance for university admission, and other educational services to meet every student's needs and desires.

Furthermore, the discussion shows that students' attraction to hakwons is associated with the fact that changes in public education have not been consistent with changes in university admission systems. Educational problems such as excessive costs for private education and the enormous pressure on students for academic achievement do not seem to be solved without changing the university entrance system. The discussion I provide in this chapter may invite readers in Korea, as well as in the West, to rethink about hakwon education: to see it not as fundamentally detrimental to society, but as an opportunity to make the public education system better.

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## Good and Bad Effects of Hakwon Education

This chapter discusses the effects of hakwon education on students, parents, and Korean society. Since most Korean students experience hakwon education, we need to know how it influences educational life, students' learning, and society. In relation to this topic, Bray (2003) first noted its roles and impact in three dimensions: mainstream schools, students, and society. Based on data from many nations, he showed that it has positive and negative impacts on these three dimensions (pp. 29–38). According to his analysis, the positive effects are as follows: complementary teaching of subjects not learned at school and individualized instruction for fast learners. On the other hand, the negative effects are as follows: imbalance in the curriculum between school and hakwons; student's physical fatigue; reproduction of social inequality; boredom at school; and teachers' ignoring fast learners.

It was natural to observe those phenomena in my fieldwork, and I felt it was necessary to summarize them as one important component in discussing hakwon education. For this purpose, I categorized the effects into positive and negative categories and will let the audience recognize its wide roles and effects as a future resource to discuss the desirableness or problems of hakwon education.

## POSITIVE EFFECTS OF HAKWON EDUCATION

Hakwon education has been criticized as a shadow education that threatens public education. A thorough study of hakwon education reveals that its impact on students has been shown widely in a positive light. In fact, a worse problem than hakwon education is that students focus only on obtaining good scores on the tests in an environment of academic snobbery and admission-prep culture. In this context, hakwon education basically has played a supplementary role to public education. However, as hakwon education has developed, it functions as a place to help students obtain higher test scores to provide a higher probability of getting into top universities.

That is, there is a tendency for those attending hakwons to acquire better test scores than others, giving them a better position in the competition to enter certain schools. As hakwon education meets the demands and needs of students and parents, it has expanded quickly. Through a number of trials and errors in the learning process, hakwon educators have invented the most appropriate learning methods; moreover, hakwons offer a better quality of education than public schools in a professional way through enhancement of the textbooks, small class sizes, tailored guidance, differentiation of classes by level, and constant tests. In addition, hakwons play various socio-cultural roles. As most students participate in hakwon education, hakwons become a living space for students. Accordingly, they function as a place to make friends and have fun. Because of the sharp increase in the number of working parents, hakwons play a role in taking care of children for parents having trouble in childrearing. For these complex reasons, hakwons have become the most influential educational institutions in the community.

### *Improvement in Academic Performance*

The most basic and fundamental reason most Korean students participate in hakwon education is to increase academic test scores and admission test scores. A better academic performance is a consequence of supplementing public schooling with hakwon education. While hakwon education was designed to supplement public schooling, hakwon education has been implemented with the purpose of achieving better scores on the test than others. Consequently, it is seen that top students are taking hakwon education fiercely to obtain a higher score in competition with other top stu-

dents rather than not receiving hakwon education, even though they are good performers in school (Korean Educational Development Institute 2010).

However, improvement in test scores is not fully explained solely by participation in hakwon education. Better test scores depend largely on students' study habits, study motivation, hakwon characteristics, and teacher quality. It is frequently seen that students quit hakwons as they would rather obtain worse test scores or they have difficulty in adapting to hakwon life. Nonetheless, students and parents have faith in the ability of hakwon education to improve the academic performance on school and admission tests. According to the outcomes of surveys on the academic achievement effect of hakwon education, students and parents, the demanders of hakwon education, have consistently shown positive responses (Choi et al. 2003; Kim 2001; Kim and Kim 2002; Lee et al. 2002; Yoon 1997).

The reasoning of students and parents behind the improvement in the test scores through hakwon education can be explained as follows. First, many students have, in fact, increased their test scores through hakwon education. Lee et al. (2002) reveal that elementary school students have positive thoughts about the effect of hakwon education. They also point out that of students responding to the survey question, "Status of academic performance after participating in hakwon education," 71.6% experienced higher test scores; 24% remained the same; and only 4.4% received a lower test score. Among the survey respondents, approximately 90% of both students and parents answer "Yes" to two questions: "Did you achieve the expected effect of hakwon education considering the expense?" and "Has it influenced your college admission?" Students especially, the real participants in hakwon education, express more positive opinions about hakwon education.

Second, parents believe that they can increase students' academic performance if they find appropriate or outstanding hakwons for their children. There are a number of types of hakwons with various levels in Korea. An area crowded with numerous hakwons reminds one of a department store with thousands of products. One area in Gangnam, Seoul has hundreds of hakwons teaching the same subject; dozens of hakwons teaching the same subject are even located in the same building. While they offer lessons for the same subjects, they have their own characteristics, such as learning methods, study know-how, and target students. Like the many stores in a department store, hakwons offer their own unique commodity.

Accordingly, parents, together with students, take on the task of finding the more outstanding hakwons or the ones to provide a more suitable education for their children, even if students' academic performance declines. Sometimes parents and students move into another place to find an appropriate hakwon. Depending on the area, there are differences in the level of development and the quality of hakwon education. Since hakwon education makes a profit from parents, there is a tendency for the most hakwons to develop in the areas where the wealthy live. It is believed that hakwons in Gangnam, Seoul, and SooSung, Daegu are highly developed. And parents with a fortune move into those areas to enroll their children in the hakwons. Parents sort out hakwons based on other parents' reviews or real testimonials that students received a high score on the test after taking lessons in a specific hakwon. After assessing whether the hakwon fits the student well or gives satisfaction, parents and students decide which one to attend.

All in all, hakwon education seems to have positive effects on academic performance because of the active selection of hakwons, various types of hakwons, more focused educational opportunities than public education, the real experiences of increasing test scores, and trust in hakwon education.

### *Classes Tailored to Each Level*

Another positive effect of hakwon education is to offer classes tailored to students' learning level. In order to reflect learners' academic level, hakwon education offers one-on-one guidance. Since it is hard for public schools to provide this sort of educational service, this characteristic of hakwon education is one of the principal factors in attracting students and parents. To reinforce the tailored guidance, hakwons use diverse methods such as the class size, teaching methods, and state-of-the-art technology. The following are the main strategies for tailored guidance in hakwons.

First, hakwon education implements a differentiated class system by level to offer classes based on students' academic status. Most hakwons first assess students' academic level and assign them into the level of each class that will enhance their learning ability. While maintaining the class system based on grade, it offers various levels of classes. By maintaining the class system based on grade, hakwons can prepare students for the school tests. But a significant number of hakwons adopt the class system

only by academic level regardless of grade. For better efficiency in the tailored guidance through the differentiated classes, a primary task is to assess students' academic level thoroughly and assign them to various levels of classes when they show different academic abilities. The excellence of a hakwon is assessed by its ability to realize the learners' academic level and organize classes tailored to each one's level. For this purpose, the hakwon considers comprehensively the school academic report, scores on regular placement tests, and hakwon teachers' reports about study attitude and the learning process.

Second, hakwons have small class sizes. The maximum number that can be accommodated in the classroom is 17 and on average, the number of students in a class is 8–15, compared to around 35 in public school classrooms in 2006. Recently, class sizes have become smaller as hakwons have strengthened the tailored class system. Especially for math hakwons, assigning two to five students in a class has gained popularity for implementing guidance tailored to students' various levels. However, as class sizes get smaller, the hakwon's fees rise sharply. Accordingly, the very large hakwons implement other methods to reinforce the tailored guidance and keep the class size small while not increasing the fee.

Third, hakwons use different teaching methods that enable them to offer guidance tailored to each students' level while maintaining a small class size. Hakwons increase the learning efficiency by adopting more effective and self-directed learning methods instead of the past teaching method, which was lecture based. The hakwon teacher explains the basic principles and then lets students independently solve problems appropriate to their level. The teacher implements the tailored guidance by providing help when students ask questions.

Fourth, hakwons adopt state-of-the-art learning technologies which enable the individually tailored guidance while maintaining the same class size. They have systems that give the students significant problems matched to their level, automatically identifying the problems that students get wrong frequently or cannot solve. Also the smart phone is actively used as a learning tool. Most Korean students have a smart phone and hakwons provide video scripts. When a hakwon is equipped with this system, students solve more problems on their own and ask fewer questions in class, so the hakwon can enhance individually tailored guidance while increasing the class size.

Fifth, hakwons produce their own individually tailored textbooks. While public schools tend to use only one textbook in an academic year,

hakwons develop textbooks matched to the various class levels. For example, English textbooks are categorized into 10 stages by level; for math, the various levels are basic, advanced, prerequisite, or math competition study.

Hakwons try to reinforce their individually tailored guidance in various ways within parents' budgets and their management circumstances.

### *Development of Systematic Textbooks*

Hakwons increase students' learning ability by using a variety of learning materials. Hakwon educators make their own textbooks, rather than using public school textbooks, or use various learning materials in addition to the textbooks to increase students' interest and improve their academic performance. Consequently, hakwon education enhances students' general academic performance, not just increasing their test scores based on a study of the textbook. Some hakwons still focus only on memorization of subjects, the cramming method, to increase test scores within a short period. However, as the hakwon education field gets more competitive and the tests for admission require students to demonstrate thinking ability and problem solving ability, hakwon education in Korea is changing to embrace teaching methods to improve general academic ability in the subject. In this context, hakwons put a significant effort into developing their own outstanding textbooks, considering the different characteristics of the subjects. Teachers in most hakwons invest more than three hours on average in organizing the textbook and have regular seminars once or twice each week to analyze past exams of Korean universities and prestigious Japanese universities. That is, hakwon teachers work hard to organize high quality textbooks.

In the case of math, hakwons develop systematic textbooks that include various types of problems. While some provide learning materials and a teaching system from a franchise hakwon under a franchise agreement, many teachers research and develop their own textbooks because math learning increases greatly when the teacher considers very carefully the personal traits of learners. Also, standardized textbooks are not suitable for individual learners since the academic performance of learners varies greatly. Therefore, it is effective when the teacher develops the textbooks on his own. As teachers insert more levels between the basic problem and applied problems, students with a lack of mathematical ability develop more interest in math and obtain higher scores on the test. Likewise, the

contents of the math textbooks are categorized into various stages, and each stage is composed of studying core concepts, practice problems, and problems by level. Moreover, students understand the core concepts more fully through a series of classified problems based on the number of problems in the database and, for the top students in math, a new type of problem, the mixed style problem connecting chapters in the textbook, is included.

*Specialized and Systemized Education for Elementary/Middle/  
High School by Grade*

Hakwon education in Korea has a conspicuous trait of offering specialized and systemized education for each grade. While individual hakwons compete with each other freely, together they represent a coherent and systematic activity structure. Under the structural flow, each hakwon develops its own learning strategies.

The structural flow in the hakwon education field is quite closely related to the traits of the admission system. One of the survival strategies of hakwon education is to develop learning methods adapted to the changes in the admission system and education policies more quickly than public education does. For example, the Korean SAT has recently included questions outside of the textbook to assess thinking ability and problem-solving ability, not like the period when most questions came directly from the textbook, so hakwon education has been reorganized in a way to enhance learners' thinking ability.

Currently, hakwon education in Korea strives to achieve two goals: outstanding scores on the school tests and on the Korean SAT. First, hakwon education has built up an educational system for improvement of academic performance in school. The school academic report is one of the standards for qualification in applying for a university. Students can apply for a specific university when the grades on their school academic record meet the requirement of the university. However, once students are on or above the baseline required, the school academic record has only a marginal effect on acceptance; rather, among students with the same qualifications, the score on the Korean SAT is crucial for acceptance. Second, hakwon education has a system to increase students' ability to acquire a high score on the Korean SAT. Since school tests are composed of problems from school textbooks, students can obtain a high score on those tests by memorizing or solving problems, even though they do not under-

stand the content and lack thinking ability and problem-solving ability. However, the Korean SAT uses problems that are not from the textbook, problems which require thinking and problem-solving ability, so students can achieve a good score only when they are adept at thinking critically and applying the principles to various situations.

Accordingly, hakwon education has two curricula: one for the school academic record and another for the Korean SAT. Preparation for the school test lasts for a short time during the midterm or final exam week. Consequently, while public education follows the coursework based on the textbook and prepares students for the school exams, hakwon education has a tendency to emphasize study based on thinking and problem-solving ability for the Korean SAT.

As hakwon education in Korea uses a variety of learning materials, develops textbooks, and builds up learning strategies and assessment systems to increase learning ability, it has established an educational system differentiated from the public educational system beyond the simple task of increasing school test scores. Hakwon education has become a more systematic and professional teaching/learning system for application of practical ability. Therefore, hakwon education represents an independent, professional educational system apart from a supplementary role for public education as a shadow education.

In this context, the goal of hakwon education is to study subjects systematically, focusing on understanding, and to enable learners to build up skills by improving thinking ability, not to increase their test scores and prepare them for college admission. Once students reach this educational goal, they have a higher probability of being admitted into prestigious universities. Hakwons came to realize that students could have competitiveness through simple memorization of the textbook. For improvement of learning skills, they reorganized and systemized the learning goals for each grade.

Many students in the lower elementary school grades participate in arts/music/physical education hakwons to experience a variety of things and raise sensible knowledge. During this period, students have diverse experiences through piano, taekwondo, camp, and other hakwons. Then as they move to higher grades, they start to prepare to study core subjects. Middle school students follow systematic studies, where students overcome the current study level and achieve goals in a challenging way, to increase their thinking ability. In math, for example, elementary school students experience various solving techniques and expand their thinking ability through



cooperative study. Also, hakwons helps students think about mathematics in a challenging way, supporting students in joining the Olympiad math competition. Through all these activities, hakwons bring out the students maximum mathematical potential. During high school, college admission is the most significant task. Students focus mostly on the Korean SAT, trying for a better position in competition with retakers through repetition of skills they learned during middle school. Then they send applications to diverse universities, including universities with a low probability of acceptance based on their current status, through the individually tailored consulting service for the college they want to attend.

Hakwon education in Korea runs a systematic and consistent educational curriculum by grade for the ultimate purpose: college admission. That is, it sets up specified learning goals for each grade in elementary school to be a basis for future study in middle and high school.

### *Special Educational Institutions for Talented and Top Students*

Hakwon education functions as a special institution to maximize the potential of talented and top students, another educational function not implemented by public education. Public education can discern students who lag behind the regular coursework through the midterm and final exam; however, it doesn't have a standard for identifying gifted students. Students with a high level of study cannot benefit from public education. In school, they lose interest in academic studies and are not challenged. In this context, it is a remarkable point that hakwons distinguish talented and gifted people with a high academic level and provide special education for them. Just as hakwons select appropriate textbooks for each level of student, they uncover the potential of gifted children by providing the necessary education for children with the highest academic level.

Hakwons offer education for gifted children in three ways. First, they provide advanced study targeting top students and gifted persons. That is, hakwon education organizes the classes through strict assessment of study levels and then offers a class for each level. There is a difference in study level even among gifted children. Thus, they take lessons based on their individual level.

Second, hakwons provide advanced study by theme or systematic study for talented and gifted children. For instance, students talented in math study advanced work in various areas to prepare for math competitions; for English, they study for official English tests like TOEFL and TEPS

(Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University). Hakwons provide additional advanced classes to meet students' interests and needs. Through these hakwon classes, they enjoy a sense of freedom, of being away from public education, which is boring.

Third, hakwons offer special education for students whose goal is to be admitted into special purpose high schools (SPHSs). An SPHS is the most realistic institution to which a gifted student can go. As the number of SPHSs has increased sharply since 2002, around 10% of high schools are SPHSs. SPHSs were initially established with the purpose of educating talented students in various subjects like science, math, and foreign languages. However, as they are considered a stepping stone to prestigious universities, there has been a fad for SPHSs in hakwon education.

### *College Admission Information and Consultation*

Hakwons also give students mental stability. It is true that hakwons have been regarded as increasing students' study burden and giving them significant levels of stress by intensive memorization and forced study. However, current high school students tell a different story. Hakwons rather think of communication with students as a priority and a pivotal task in management. The counseling done in hakwons is systematic. Since all counseling data is backed up in a database, hakwon teachers can access the data of all students. Counseling in hakwons is usually about study but it also includes school and hakwon life or friendships. Through one-on-one counseling, students receive appropriate help in solving daily problems and hardships arising from study. Providing an environment where students can study hard and enjoy hakwon life can be a reason for students to register in hakwons for the long term. Because counseling is one of the key factors for registration, many hakwons have increased the frequency of counseling.

Counseling is a new type of educational activity not just confined to teachers' having conversations with students individually. It is not simply the teacher's assessing and correcting students' study habits. The more important task is to help students look at themselves seriously. Thus, the teacher keeps asking questions to help students change by themselves, a process which is very similar to Socratic questioning. To offer the proper counseling to students, teachers should take care of students consistently and understand their study habits and their minds, as seen in the following comments by a student.

*I also have counseling with school teachers. But it's just different from the one in hakwon. When my test score fell, the school teacher just said, "You should study hard" and scolded me like "You don't want to go to the college?" Actually, I had nothing to say at that time. You know that if you go to the teachers' room, then it seems that I should be quiet. But the hakwon teacher tends to ask tenaciously. When I was studying a few days ago, the hakwon teacher asked whether I have any problems at home because I used to study at least till 11 p.m. (these days he came home earlier than 11 p.m.), or whether friends bug me sometimes. When I listened to the teacher, I could feel that the teacher had kept an eye on me. (From the interview with Seung-Wook, April 4, 2015)*

This comparison of school counseling and hakwon counseling describes effective counseling for study succinctly. While the school teacher individually counseled with the low-achieving student, the teacher was saying the obvious things, such as, "You should study hard," which does not help the student change his bad learning habits by himself. In a hakwon, students can quit the hakwon or change to another one if they do not experience a positive effect of hakwon education. However, the hakwon teacher tries to figure out thoroughly the reason for low achievement, based on observations of the actual activities of the student. It is significant that teachers keep an eye on students for a long time and know their good and bad habits. Since teachers interact with students in the classroom and they spend lots of time together in daily life, teachers know students the best. Accordingly, teachers are strong counselors to students. Because students do not know their own traits well in an objective way and what the problem is, they sometimes are surprised when teachers tell them their traits. It is not easy to persuade students to have good study habits even through counseling, but students naturally prefer the way of counseling in the hakwon. Hakwons also have the advantages of counseling in terms of setting up the study schedule since hakwons teachers can know the real reason for students' low achievement.

Another important theme of counseling in hakwons is school life. The reason for low achievement may be in the students themselves, but the home and school environment students have a higher probability of causing low achievement. Students have a hard time and then are unable to concentrate on study because of problems in friendships or school life. Students are especially reluctant to tell very personal stories in school. Sometimes, students feel their personal stories will be distributed over school as soon as the student talks to the teacher. Also, a student who has

no close relationship with the teacher is reluctant to tell the story honestly. However, during counseling in hakwons, students are asked many questions about hakwon life. Counseling of hakwons is implemented regardless of the level of academic performance. Even students who perform very well in class might have problems in their lives.

Just as in schools, there are problems with friendships in hakwons. Hakwon teachers detect such problems in advance and then mediate between friends, listening to each one's opinion, before the problem gets worse. Hakwons strive to keep an eye on students' life in the hakwon and give them advice because a problem between friends might lead to a student's dropping out. Although counseling does not guarantee a peaceful resolution of all problems, it can at least prevent a crack between friends from widening. Counseling and guidance about daily life is carried out frequently along with study guidance. Students tell hakwon teachers everything, even about events at home. High school students open their minds when they have counseling time in hakwons. It is surely worthwhile that students utilize hakwons as much for help in solving problems in daily life as in solving problems in studying. Students trust hakwon teachers and follow their advice.

## NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF HAKWON EDUCATION

Hakwons also have some negative effects on students, families, public education, and Korean society. This section examines the negative effects of hakwon education in these areas.

### *Economic Burden*

One of the negative effects of hakwon education is related to the economic burden on parents. Basically, hakwons provide educational opportunities in exchange for payment from educational consumers. Thus Hakwons have positive incentives to make their educational opportunities enjoyable for students. However, hakwon education fees can be burdensome for parents. This situation makes an inevitable dilemma.

In other words, the more a family indulges in hakwon education, the higher the cost. In fact, hakwon education fees are at a critical level. In the Korean economy, the portion of the private education market is increasing. Many Korean parents give the largest portion of their income to pay for their children's private education. They believe that their children can

achieve a higher performance when they invest more money in their private education. Hakwon education is regarded as a way of advancing, not just supplementing, school education. So, Korean parents tend to spend more money on their children's hakwon education and reduce their living expenses or even borrow money from a bank, which affects their entire economic situation.

In the Korean language, there are many neologisms reflecting this syndrome, such as Spine Tower and Sparrow Daddy. Spine Tower means that university entrance fee is very high, so children can enter the university only by taking the spines of their parents. Sparrow Daddy means that only mothers are able to afford to move to the Seoul-Gangnam area with their children, the area which has dense hakwon districts for the children's education.

These terms have mostly negative meanings. That is, hakwon education fees produce negative effects. Korean parents spend an average of 240,000 won for one child each month. The older the child, the higher their hakwon expenditures. From the early age of kindergarten, parents spend money for an English kindergarten or another specialized hakwon. For first through third graders, an average of 100,000–150,000 won is spent each month for arts, music, or P.E. hakwons. From the fourth grade on, students tend to take more math and English hakwon classes, which cost an average of 150,000–200,000 won for each subject. To attend a comprehensive hakwon, students have to pay more than 200,000 won per month. As students enter middle and high school, parents spend even more money on hakwon education. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, 14.4% of families spend more than 500,000 won per month for hakwon education.

The hakwon fee burden has created a new social status, the “edupoor”—the families that are in debt because of educational expenses. More than 800,000 families, 13% of all Korean families or about 3,050,000 people, are edupoor, spending too much money on private education, especially at hakwons (Hyundai Economic Researcher 2012). The edupoor spend 860,000 won, 28.5% of their gross income, on education. They live a below-average life for their children's education.

One reason for Korean parents' excessive spending on hakwon education is low incomes for the elderly. Korean parents believe that their future depends on their children's present education. They cannot imagine having wealth in their senior years. As life spans increase, senior citizens are in more danger. The current government's indifference to finding solutions

for this critical situation adds to this problem. Sadly, Korean parents face their later years without specific economic preparation. The edupoor are connected to the “silverpoor.”

### *Fierce Competition and Excessive Anxiety*

Hakwon education can promote excessive competition and workload. Also, it can boost rivalry between peers, increase anxiety and tension about academic performance, and decrease the time for a hobby or free time. According to Kim and Kim’s (2002) analysis of actual admission prep hakwons, of the respondents to the question, “Does peer competition gets higher through hakwon education?”, 31.7% of students, 33.9% of parents, and 51.8% of teachers replied with “Yes.” To the question about changes in anxiety and tension about academic performance in school due to hakwon education, only 16.2% of students answered “lower than previous,” and 39.4% of students said “higher than previous.” The questionnaire results imply that many students at hakwons have more anxiety and tension about the school academic record. Excessive competition between peers, anxiety about rivalry, and suppression of freedom have the possibility of hurting students going through a sensitive and mentally unstable period, which can lead to suicide or aberrant behavior (Choi 2003). Hakwons encourage excessive competition and anxiety in several ways.

Hakwons tactically encourage rivalry and anxiety. Many students and parents come to hakwons to improve their academic performance. Obviously, hakwons recognize that the only way to meet their demand is for students to increase their test scores. Thus, they strive to enhance students’ academic performance using all methods. Another important thing is that hakwons need to generate high academic achievement for a short time only, not for long. For this purpose, hakwons use various psychological shock therapies on students and use strategies that cause rivalry and anxiety among students. Numerous hakwons put the list of students getting a better test score or receiving an acceptance letter from prestigious universities on the wall or bulletin board. All students in hakwons hope to see their glorious name on the list. There is no way to accomplish this goal except to survive in the fierce competition. Students are assigned to various levels of classes based on the outcome of monthly or quarterly tests. While the students moving to a higher level feel a sense of achievement, those who fail to proceed to the next level feel a sense of defeat. Also, hakwons guarantee rewards for high achievement, like scholarships. Hakwons

can motivate the will to study through competition, but obviously, excessive competition also produces stress and a sense of alienation.

Hakwons naturally foster academic supremacism in students. They exist for improvement in academic performance and study, and all their goals are tied to improvement in students' test scores, contrary to public education, which seeks a well-rounded education. If there is only one way to the goal, competition is indispensable. However, high academic performance does not guarantee success in society. Hakwon teachers know that. However, they are not permitted to tell students. Hakwon teachers are uncomfortable saying that someone can have a happy life, even if they are not successful in academic studies, and that a happy life comes from listening to one's inner voice and then following it. Students could interpret such statements as meaning they do not have to study hard and attend a hakwon to improve their academic performance. Instead, teachers have no choice but to say that life will be full of happiness if the student enters a top university after getting a high score on the test. This way of thinking lines up students with diverse characteristics only by their academic performance. In that psychological environment, students have too much stress and tension about the academic report. Such psychological and physical circumstances lead to excessive competition and force students into the world of academic supremacism. However, public schools also encourage excessive rivalry and anxiety about study. All in all, it is problematic that students have a sense of rivalry and tension about their academic performance more severely outside hakwons. It implies that they have no time to relax during the day. They are put into an environment that gives them anxiety and excessive competition about academic performance through hakwon education.

### *Demanding Workload*

Hakwon education puts a heavy burden of study on students. This is one reason for criticism of hakwon education. Sometimes Korean students are depicted as children in the nineteenth century who suffered from long hours of heavy labor. The status of Korean students in 2009 was comparable to the labor conditions in the UK in 1833. A law was enacted in the UK in 1833 that children under 13 were allowed to work only up to eight hours, and between 13 and 18 years of age, only up to 12 hours. High school students in Korea go to school at dawn, finish at night, hang around the night hakwon, and finally return home after 12 a.m.,

which reminds us of poor children in the UK being forced to work for 18 hours. Hakwon appeals to allow night classes resembles UK factories trying to abolish the law that limited the workday to 12 hours. Because even sacred labor is a bad thing if excessive, it is quite obvious that excessive study is harmful to students. The Association of School Parents for Realization of Well-Rounded Education Committee on the Rights of the Child (2009) pointed out that the rights of children and young people in Korea were being violated by excessive prerequisite study and admission prep study in a meeting where the officials assessed the status of following the Convention on the Rights of the Child, indicating that hakwon education lasting until the late night had harmful effects on students' health (Report of Ministry of Health and Welfare 2003). When 70% of high school students are receiving hakwon education and most hakwon classes are at night, young people experience academic stress from the demanding study workload instead of resting, which might cause various negative consequences (Choi 2004).

One of the problems with excessive study workloads is that hakwon education just repeats public schooling. The curriculum of most hakwons is composed of prerequisite study for school and review of what is done in school. Obviously, hakwons use different textbooks and workbooks, but hakwons basically repeat the content of the school textbooks; accordingly, students just do problem solving and memorization rather than experiencing a variety of educational activities. That is, repetition of the content from public school in the hakwon wastes time and physical resources and further burdens the students.

Moreover, a demanding study workload leads to less hobby and free time. Students should experience various things in real life according to development status by age. Learning is not a simple thing to be done only with books and in classes. Bray (2012) argues that while hakwon education has a positive side, boosting pride and contributing to academic achievement, it comes at the sacrifice of experiences in the arts, music, and sports. The time allocated to reading, experimenting, travel, nature experience activities, exploration, cohesion with the local community, and educational relations is greatly reduced when students in the upper elementary grades start taking classes in admission prep hakwons (Choi 2003). According to Kim and Kim's (2002) analysis of admission prep hakwons, which asked students, "How has your hobby and free time changed through hakwon education?", only 7.1% of students replied that it had gotten better, and 53.2% of students replied that it had gotten



worse. However, only 39.2% of parents replied that it had gotten worse, a much lower ratio than students with the same answer.

All in all, because Korean students are forced to study in hakwons along with public schooling, they live with an excessive burden of study without any time for hobbies or leisure.

### INDUCING EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY THROUGH REPRODUCTION OF WEALTH

Hakwon education can cause educational and social inequality through the reproduction of wealth. It has created the opportunity to take systematic and specialized education according to one's financial background. Of the freshmen of Seoul National University, one of the top universities in Korea, in 2015, 63.3% came from Seoul, the capital of Korea, or Kyounggi, a metropolitan area near Seoul. And among the students from Seoul, 21 times as many students are from Gangnam as from GangBook. Moreover, 48.98% of all freshmen at Seoul National University are from independent high schools (IHSs) or special purpose high schools (SPHSs). It seems that one needs to go to an IHS or SPHS to be admitted into the top colleges. The structure of the admission system makes it much more favorable to a student who can begin preparing for admission early, that is, one who has prepared for admission in an appropriate and systematic way through hakwon education beginning in elementary school. In this situation, people who do not have an educational opportunity through hakwons are likely to cause social disruption in a feeling of relative loss. The hakwon system ruins the positive function of education, which is the natural circulation of the social strata. Hakwon education, basically, is an area of personal activity. However, because it is big enough to have an impact on the "reasonable utility" of others and overall society, not just individuals, hakwon education should be a theme of public discussion (Lee 2003). Through various studies, Bray (2012) consistently finds that hakwon education can either maintain or worsen social inequality in Korea.

Generally an education system is defined as a system that produces outstanding persons based on their learning ability by providing equality of education regardless of financial background. It is a harsh criticism that students from poor families and with high academic achievement can no longer go to the top universities. It is rare that a poor student improves his or her social and financial status through study. Becher (1993) explains

this phenomenon with his theory of investment in education. That is, the reason the social and financial status of parents is passed down to children is that there is a difference in the amount of financial resources to invest in children's education. Educational expenditure is inseparable from the economic and social fortunes of parents. In a similar context, as the educational level is standardized at the upper level through expansion of the investment in education, a specific social stratum invests more in children's education, because it sees the expansion as a threat to its dominant position in society (Thurow 1972).

This phenomenon appears because hakwon education runs on the personal expenditure of parents so that expenditure on private education depends on the household income. The difference in economic status implies a difference in opportunities to receive hakwon education; therefore, it is likely that expenditure on private education causes a difference in the competitiveness of admission to college. As a result, there is a tendency for good hakwons to be located in areas where wealthy people live; accordingly, most students from these areas show a much higher acceptance rate in the prestigious universities than students in other areas (World without worry about private education, 2012).

This type of social problem is serious because it worsens the polarization of society. It is not only a problem at a society level but also in the school scene. Poor students do not receive any private education or have fewer chances to receive hakwon education, and students without hakwon education feel a great distance between themselves and students receiving hakwon education. While 32.1% of students from households with less than 1,000,000 won of monthly income participate in private education and spend 66,000 won monthly on average on private education, 83.5% of students from households with more than 5,000,000 won of monthly income participate in private education and spend 1,060,000 won monthly on average. The average monthly private education fee is 720,000 won, which is 19.4% of household monthly income. These are just averages. For many students, the cost is more than average. For example, taking lessons in an English kindergarten costs more than 1,000,000 won each month. For high school logical writing hakwon lessons, students have to pay 300,000 won each month.

That is, differences in financial resources have an impact on the opportunity to participate in good hakwons. Students not receiving hakwon education because of constraints on finances become the ones showing low achievement or underachievement, including multicul-

tural children. The gap between those receiving hakwon education and those unable to receive it widens to the level of society, so that we can see signs of the gap in daily life. Communities are separated spatially and have different lifestyles depending on the level of financial resources. Alienation between the social strata caused by inequality of education can cause social disruption and can result in a fixed social stratum that is inherited.

### *Enhancement of Passive Study Attitude*

Hakwon education strengthens students' passive study habits. Here, passive study habits does not refer to study by coercion. But obviously, students and parents depend heavily on hakwon education and have more faith in hakwons than in schools. The phrase that refers to the opposite of dependent study is self-directed learning. According to the theory of self-directed learning, learning is the most efficient when students study on their own. A few high school students validate this theory well. They have their own study method, know what to study, and make a schedule by themselves without the help of private education. They are the most ideal students. However, most students get used to going to hakwons and studying in the realm of hakwons. As an extension, they regard participation in hakwon education when they go to high school as natural. The thought "study = hakwon" is engraved in their minds. Some students even think that they only go to school to get a diploma, since public education up to high school is mandatory in Korea, and that the real study is done at hakwons. Hakwons, of course, use efficient learning methods to help students and are more independent than schools. However, hakwons make students think that they are unable to study without the help of the hakwon. Students depend heavily on hakwon education rather than studying independently for several reasons.

First, they have no idea how to study independently. Since students have no experience in studying independently, they do not even think about studying on their own. Hakwons collect and analyze printouts, textbooks, past exams, and characteristics of the school teachers before the midterm and final exams. They put information neatly on one sheet of paper and suggest various ways for students to study and memorize it well. Once students are immersed in the convenience of studying offered by hakwons, they cannot figure out how to study independently. Students and hakwons are not the only ones to blame. All participants around the

students—parents, school, and society—are responsible for this phenomenon. Students come to the state where they have difficulty in preparing for school exams and the Korean SAT without hakwon education. Now they go by the saying: “No hakwon, no study.”

Second, the frequent changes in educational policies in Korea are partly responsible for the phenomenon. Frequent changes in the admission policies make students more worried and then become more dependent on hakwons. For students who do not have enough time to study, there is not much time and limited information to figure out what has changed. Accordingly, students are more comfortable in preparing their admission applications based on the hakwons’ analysis of the admission policy. Schools also try to give individual consulting services, recognizing the changes in the admission to high schools and universities; however, school teachers are basically unable to respond to all the changes in a sensitive way because of their personal work and taking care of students outside the class. However, hakwons hire experts to analyze the admission policies and offer information thoroughly tailored to individuals.

Third, students feel tense and worried when they study alone. Students studying alone have more anxiety than students going to hakwons. The former are not sure whether they are studying the right things for the school exams or the Korean SAT. To relieve this anxiety, students must study hard for all the parts and also collect the information from various sources, which is virtually impossible for students studying all day at school. Through analysis of the patterns in past exams, hakwons provide the information, dividing it into the more significant and the less significant parts. In a series of steps, students come to believe in hakwons more and more. Studying only the information highlighted by the hakwon teachers makes students feel more relieved.

In conclusion, students cannot easily free themselves from dependence on hakwons because they have no idea of how to study independently and because of frequent changes in the admission policy and anxiety about studying alone. Such passive study habits can be an obstacle in making an independent career in college and society.

### *Loss of Motivation of School Teachers*

One of the negative effects of hakwon education is that it causes lethargy in schoolteachers. According to the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2013, based on the study of around 105,000 middle

schoolteachers of OECD member countries, 20% of Korean participants said that they regretted being a teacher, which ranked first among participating countries. Also, 36% said they would choose another job if given a chance, the third highest rank. Many teachers have a passion to be a great teacher but a significant number show “group helplessness,” having fallen into cynicism and frustration. The factors that cause helplessness are related to the existence of hakwon education.

First, prerequisite learning in hakwon education threatens the role of the schoolteacher as the absolute messenger of knowledge. Before hakwon education was developed to the current level, the absolute knowledge transmitter was the schoolteacher. What schoolteachers said was regarded as the bible and it was barely possible to doubt it. Teachers had a feeling of achievement and satisfaction when they let students figure out what they did not know. However, students now lean on hakwon education more and more. Classes in school do not have any meaning to students who already learned more than the school curriculum through hakwon education. Schoolteachers work hard to prepare and teach the classes, but students are not surprised or appreciative. For them, the class in school is just a repetition of what they learned in a hakwon. The schoolteacher is not the absolute knowledge transmitter anymore; instead, students doubt or criticize schoolteachers when the teaching in school is different from that in the hakwon. In this circumstance, schoolteachers doubt their role as teachers and feel helpless.

Second, the life of students is centered on hakwons. It is frequently seen that although schoolteachers help low achieving students individually after school, give counseling, or spend some time with students, sometimes they receive a call from parents saying their children should go to the hakwon. They have limited relationships with students, only during school time. Although students do not do the school homework, they do the hakwon homework. While physical punishment is strictly prohibited in school, it is allowed in hakwons to a specific level. Even students recognize that the hakwon is a place for study and school is for rest. According to the report of Gyeonggi-do Institute for Education in 2013, 24% of high school students said that they sleep in the school class every day. Students study in hakwons until very late at night and they catch up on sleep in school. The fact that the center of students' life is the hakwon, not school, makes schoolteachers feel helpless rather than responsible for the job, as their position is regarded as a supplementary one.

Of course, this problem can be an example of “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” It can be debated as to whether students go to hakwons due to lethargic teachers or whether schoolteachers become sluggish since students participate in hakwons. However, one apparent thing is that the status of school as an official educational institution is threatened by hakwons, the private institution. It is true that too much dependence on hakwons makes schoolteachers lethargic and doubt their role as teachers.

### *Constraint on Creative and High-Dimensional Thinking Ability*

Hakwons have a negative effect by restricting creative and high-dimensional thinking. Of course, many hakwons provide education to foster creative and high-dimensional thinking. For instance, the elementary school math hakwon for thinking ability offers education to enhance high-dimensional mathematical thinking through the curriculum by topic and grade level. However, once students enter middle or high school, where everything is focused on college admission, hakwons have no choice but to emphasize a good outcome in terms of academic performance in the near future. Learning centers on memorization and solving numerous problems. Such skills and methods are very helpful for increasing test scores in a short period; however, as students get accustomed to them, they gradually lose the ability to think critically and creatively. Especially in the renowned hakwons, teachers provide easy and efficient problem-solving techniques after thoroughly analyzing previous school exams and the Korean SAT, and students have nothing to do except eat at the well-prepared table. If a student follows the way of the hakwon, he or she is efficient in terms of time. But obviously, since students does not go through the step of analyzing and thinking on their own, they are limited in thinking, analyzing, and creative ability. If there were no such help, they would be very unstable mentally and have difficulty in unfolding their own thinking when they faced a new problem. Therefore, even when they are grown up enough to go to college, they may be a dependent people who have lost their own voice and are always in need of someone’s help.

School exams have recently included many descriptive questions. The purpose of including descriptive problems is to assess the thinking process and high-dimensional thinking ability to get away from learning based on memorization. Moreover, the Korean SAT is intended to assess reading habits and logical thinking through the writing test. When there are some changes in assessment/admission policies, hakwons find out and adapt

more quickly than any other educational institutions. Hakwons entice students by developing new strategies and methods for high academic achievement. Students learn the secrets and the way of thinking to get a high score on the new test and descriptive problems and then practice repeatedly. All in all, students just absorb the thinking frame offered by the hakwon teachers and apply it to the problem rather than trying to solve the problem in a creative and critical way.

In 2012, Cha, Seok-Ho, a Chuncheon high school student, was admitted to the Yonsei University as a systems biology major with the low grade. Although he was bad at math, he collected insects after becoming fascinated with the study of insects, and examined them all night long from a young age, which made a huge impression on the professors in the admission committee. They gave him an acceptance letter, appraising him as a “must-be-chosen”. In an interview with a student who wrote in a personal essay that he spent his whole school life observing insects, he confessed that he had only had a few chances to smell the ground in a rural area. This is an extreme example of the negative effect of hakwon education. Hakwons sometimes ignore the development and thinking process of students to make the best outcome for admission. Hakwons would be ideal places for students to learn good learning methods and habits if they are used and depended on only in a selective and necessary way. However, if students are heavily dependent on hakwon education, it functions as a double-bladed sword to restrict creative and high-dimensional thinking.

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## Hakwon Education as a Worldwide Curriculum Question

In previous chapters, we researched the various types of hakwons and the life of students in elementary hakwons to high school hakwons. Moreover, we reviewed the positive and negative aspects in hakwon education. In this chapter, I would like to present the possible theme dealing with hakwon education as a promising upcoming realm of curriculum studies worldwide based on experiences in Korea. There are several possible research topics for curriculum studies in hakwon education that could be studied more in depth. I propose six research topics on hakwon/shadow education for curriculum studies: (1) hakwon/shadow education and ecology of education; (2) hakwon/shadow education on child development; (3) individualization; (4) students' lived experience at hakwons; (5) hakwon educators; and (6) curriculum and teaching strategies of hakwons.

### HAKWON/SHADOW EDUCATION AND ECOLOGY OF EDUCATION

From the perspective of ecology of educational environment, Bronfenbrenner (1976) argues that educational “research cannot be restricted to the laboratory; for the most part they must be carried out in real-life educational settings” (p. 5). By “laboratory,” Bronfenbrenner (1976) refers to “contrived experiment” (p. 5), which is somehow controlled or conditioned. He suggests “*nature or natural* experiment” [emphasis original] (p. 5). In an

effort to analyze educational research, Bronfenbrenner conceptualized five environmental systems that affect education: “microsystem” is the immediate environment individuals live in, such as family, peer group, school, and/or workplace; “mesosystem” is an extended system of microsystems, i.e., groups of microsystems; “exosystem” is an extension of mesosystem that constitutes concrete social structures, such as major institutions of the society, the world of work, agencies of government, communication and transportation facilities, and informal and formal social networks; “macro-system” refers to social and cultural values, such as economic, social, educational, legal, and political structures; “chronosystem” encompasses change or consistency over time. We suggest that shadow education has become an important microsystem of education.

Using Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) Ecological Systems Theory of Child Development as their central conceptual framework, Bray and Kobakhidze (2015) studied the dynamics between family, school, tutoring center, and policies in Hong Kong. They argue that “the rise of tutoring in Hong Kong has significantly changed the ecosystems in which they operate” (p. 477). This issue rejects the commonly understood concept of “shadow education,” which is mimicking public education, in that it interacts with other microsystems, family, and school (Bray and Kobakhidze 2015), oftentimes leaving backwash on regular schooling (Barrow and Lochan 2010; Bray and Kwo 2014; Kobakhidze 2014; Kwok 2010; Lao 2014).

The influence of hakwon education reaches not only individuals but also all levels of the systems that Bronfenbrenner conceptualized. As Bronfenbrenner (1976) described, “the environment is conceived topologically as a nested arrangement of structures, each contained within the next” (p. 5). Microsystems of hakwon, family, and school actively interact with one another. In Korea, some hakwons grow rapidly as family circumstances change from nuclear families to dual-income families. The main functionalities of the hakwons are helping students with homework and caregiving until their parents come back from work (Kim 2012; Bray and Kobakhidze 2015). The shortage of familial interaction may be a drive to seeking shadow education, and vice versa. On the other hand, hakwon education in Korea is “a barrier for participation in the labor force by women with school-aged children”. Since the mother’s role is crucial in children’s performance, mothers give up their professions and put a lot of time into managing their children’s learning. Relatively recently, a slang term, “mother pig,” appeared in Korea. Mother pig refers to a leading mother who has information about good hakwons, strategies to enter certain schools, and skilled tutors. “Tiger

mother” in China also carries the demanding expectations of parents for their children (Bray and Lykins 2012)

Mesosystem among family, school, and hakwon interact with exosystem, educational policies, and governmental regulations. Shadow education has been regulated by governments of Korea, Japan (Aspinall and Roesgaard 2008), Thailand (Lao 2014), Australia (in Bray and Kwo’s regulating private tutoring) and Hong Kong, Macao, and mainland China (Kwok 2010). Of course, “the policy feature,” Lao (2014) states, is distinctive depending on its socio-economic and political context” (p. 477). Korea is distinctive in that its government brought the hakwon system into public education. In 2004, the Ministry of Education of Korea developed after-school programs as an effort to recuperate the reputation of public schooling and reduce the cost of private tutoring. These programs have gradually expanded as time went by. As of 2010, 99.9% of public schools ran after-school programs, and 63.3% of students participated in these programs (Kim 2012, p. 87).

In terms of macrosystems, cultural factors are evident perhaps in strengthening shadow education. In East Asian countries, Confucianism is “unmistakable” as a strong drive for shadow education. The argument is based on her study of Korean cases, but it is not exclusively so, as we see a similar argument in East and Southeast Asian literature (Dang 2008; Huang 2004; Kuan 2011; Kwok 2010; Zhang 2014). This factor is also observed in Korean and Chinese communities in other countries, such as in the USA (Zhou and Kim 2006) and in Australia (Sriprakash et al. 2015). In Ukraine (Hrynevych et al. 2006), Armenia, and Kazakhstan (Kalikova and Rakhimzhanova 2009), cultures for shadow education have been shaped by post-Soviet legacies. While private tutoring existed in the former Soviet Union, Bray and Lykins (2012) argue, “new socio-cultural realities of new democracies and market economies increased reliance on private tutoring” (p. 26). Like other skills, personal knowledge could be purchased. In Sri Lanka, private tutoring has long existed. With diversities and complexities, hakwon/shadow education actively interacts with other levels of systems in the ecology of education.

### *Hakwon/Shadow Education on Child Development*

How hakwon education influences students’ development can be an interest of curriculum studies given its pervasiveness and its significant role in students’ lives (Kim 2012, 2015), at least in some Asian countries such

as Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan. It is not difficult to notice that hakwon education dynamically interacts with the public sector, as I discuss in the subsequent section, but what remains unknown is how increasing the time children spend at hakwon educational institutions affects their development. This area may be conceived as a “blind spot, what we do not know well enough to even ask about or care about” (Gough 2003, p. 63). Research on hakwon education may shed light on our understanding about students’ development through hakwon education in conjunction with public education. Since this issue has not attracted scholarly attention, there is little literature on the subject. The foremost rationalization for me to make the claim that hakwon education shall be studied from the perspective of students’ development is that hakwon education has become an important part of students’ lives.

Given that the focus of this section is developmental perspective, it would be reasonable to provide a sketch of elementary school, middle school, and high school students’ engagement with hakwons respectively. According to the survey conducted by Statistics Korea, the participation ratios of elementary, middle, and high school students were 81.8%, 69.5%, and 49.2% respectively in 2013 in Korea (Statistics Korea 2014). In terms of the time students spend at hakwons, elementary students who attend hakwons spend approximately 13 hours and 30 minutes a week, almost three hours a day. In the earlier grades, Korean parents want their children to develop artistic abilities and talents and physical skills through hakwon classes. In the later elementary grades (fourth grade and beyond), Korean students’ hakwon education is more focused on academic learning, such as English language, mathematics, and Korean language. An interesting point from a developmental perspective is that this cultural feature of extra learning after school causes a new culture of play and social gathering among Korean students who go to hakwons to meet their friends or to make friends: a child who does not attend hakwons may not be able to find friends in the playgrounds in apartment areas because most of his or her friends have gone to hakwon institutes (Kim 2008).

As students enter middle school, their involvement with hakwons becomes greater as the burden of academic achievement grows. Yejin, a middle school student, gets up before 7 a.m., then studies at school from 8.10 a.m. to 4 p.m., then studies at hakwon from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., does homework or self-study from 10 p.m. till midnight, and goes to bed around 12.30 a.m. Yejin’s routine is not unusual among middle school students who attend hakwons in Korea. What distinctive role do middle

school hakwons play for students? Through this study, I learned that middle school students are exposed to social discrimination by school grades through hakwons. At middle school hakwons, students are judged more by their school exam scores and are treated differently according to their exam scores. Hakwons have a system of differentiating students by scores and providing various levels of differentiated classes.

While most students go to hakwons after school, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. or later, some Korean high school students study at hakwon from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. before school starts. Even though a new law in 2015 prohibits study at hakwons after 10 p.m. for students' health, hakwon lessons are secretly provided late at night. Since there is not much time to go to hakwons on weekdays, intensive hakwon programs are run during weekends and vacations. High school students spend 10–12 hours a day at hakwons on weekends. Students consider hakwons as a school during vacations. Those who do not go to hakwons during school semesters tend to go to hakwons during vacations to keep on their toes.

While hakwons are deeply imbedded in students' lives given the time they spend at their hakwons, and the significance of the role of hakwons for students' learning from elementary school to high school, little research has been done on how hakwons influence students' development. There are concerns about the excessive hakwon education that may strengthen intellect-oriented and competition-based education in Korea, as well as Hong Kong (Bray 2013), Japan (Watanabe 2013), and China (Kwok 2010). Some worry that excessive hakwon education may negatively impact children's socio-emotional development. However, no study from a developmental perspective has been conducted on hakwon education. Thus, I await the findings from these potential future studies.

## INDIVIDUALIZATION

The individualized teaching and learning that hakwons provide can be of interest to curriculum studies, since highly individualized learning, teaching, curricula, and programs perhaps best characterize hakwon education in Korea (Kim and Kim 2012, 2015), and juku in Japan (Mawer 2015). In Korean public schools, and perhaps in some other countries around the world, there is *the* curriculum, a national curriculum that should be delivered to all students in the country. Within the highly dictated curriculum in Korea, students are taught at school regardless of their interests, prior

knowledge in a subject, intellectual abilities, or styles of learning. This characteristic of individualization of hakwons challenges the notion of homogenization and standardization of education under the name of equality.

It was not long ago that hakwons started to focus on providing individualized instruction and programs in Korea—before that, one of the traits of hakwons was to provide classes for a large number of students: the more students in a class, the more productive or cost effective the class. Nowadays, many students in Korea attend hakwons equipped with individualized classes (Statistics Korea 2016). Providing individualized classes is a receptive response to students' needs and parents' requests (Cho 2015). Individualization at hakwons starts with understanding a student (Kim 2008). When a student comes to a hakwon, the hakwon diagnoses the student's abilities and level in subject areas using the student's school grades, K-WISC-IV (Korean - Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children), paper tests, and sometimes essays. For individualization at hakwons, hakwon instructors are interested in discovering students' learning propensity, preferred learning style, academic potential, intelligence, and even family and friend relationships, in addition to their level of education. Hakwons also interview each student to learn why he or she chose the hakwon and his or her goal (Cho 2015).

At hakwons in Korea, it is possible for a student to find an instructor whose teaching and personality is a good match for him or her. The following interview excerpt shows how an instructor at T hakwon individualizes his teaching:

Minsu had struggled with his study before he came to this hakwon. This was because the previous hakwon was very oppressive to Minsu. The oppressive approach might be an effective way for students who need extensive studying. Minsu, however, felt it was very frustrating. I saw him as an autonomous student after thorough counseling. Thus, we assigned a generous and receptive teacher to him and encouraged him to study by himself a lot. Since then, his school record has improved. He also feels comfortable with us. (From the interview with a teacher from T hakwon, December 12, 2015)

From a caring perspective, students can benefit from working with an instructor with whom they feel comfortable (Cho 2015; Mawer 2015). A learning clinic is another important aspect of hakwons' approach in terms of individualized learning. K hakwon runs clinical sessions interconnected

with regular lessons. In the clinic, students are given tasks that they have to finish during the session. The individual tasks are carefully selected by instructors. The clinical instructors make sure that students understand what they are supposed to do and finish the given tasks; they help students when the students need help. Thus, communication between homeroom instructors and clinical instructors is critical. The learning clinic is mandatory for every student at K hakwon (Kim and Kim 2015). At K hakwon, when a student or an instructor thinks that the student needs extra help, immediate help is provided. When a student is found to be more advanced in certain areas, he or she is encouraged to move to the next level.

Besides individualized instructions and teaching, students are encouraged to write their own Study Diary and Wrong Answer Portfolio (Cho 2015). The former is a kind of reflective diary in which students write their goals, study plans, daily learning, and what they did well vs what needs to be improved. The latter is a kind of portfolio in which students record what they got wrong, organized by students in a way that allows them to return to the information during later studies.

Individualization of teaching and learning is an active response to students' and parents' needs. It is an effort to provide a student with perhaps the best educational experience that might fit a student. However, this aspect can be criticized for its concentration only on individuals, not on learning groups or "forms of community" (Bergman 2004, p. 158), "based on the primacy of the other" (Noddings 2002, p. 67). There are students who learn better when they work together. There might be students who want to work on their own areas of learning, which might not be included in the school curriculum.

### STUDENTS' LIVED EXPERIENCE AT HAKWONS

Students' experience at hakwons and how it is conceived, constructed, and/or reconstructed by them is unknown. Bringing *currere* (Pinar 1994, 2011, 2015a) into studying students' experience at hakwons is a potential way to study this unknown area. *Currere* is a conception of curriculum, a verb that focuses on "the individual [emphasis in the original]" (Pinar 2011, p. 1). The conception of curriculum underscores the immediacy and uniqueness of lived experience of individuals whose distinctiveness is recognized, cultivated, and perhaps reconstructed. From the *currere* perspective, one becomes an individual who is "committed

to actualizing whatever independence we experience and can muster in order to pursue course of action (including thinking) that we choose as significant” (Pinar 2011, p. 2). *Currere* emphasizes one’s agency in recognizing what is important and what can be done in a concrete situation. *Currere* acknowledges the significance of the everyday experience of individuals and their ability “to learn from that experience; to reconstruct experience through thought and dialogue to enable understanding” (Pinar 2011, p. 2). When individuals with their distinctiveness meet in certain places on certain days, it becomes a complicated conversation, “not only classroom discourse, but also within solitude” (Pinar 2011, p. 2). This conception of curriculum is no “Ponzi scheme wherein present investments pay off later, but, rather, lived experience embodied in children whose futures are inevitably unknowable” (Pinar 2011, p. 140). *Currere* rejects the objective-outcomes coupling as the faulty connection is in the service of control and ordering, as Doll (2012) critiques.

From a *currere* perspective, given the amount of time students spend at hakwons and the intensity of their studies, it is important to understand students’ lived experience at hakwons. What is unknown is what happens within students who attend hakwons. Possible research questions include: “What consequences do hakwons have on students? Do hakwons incorporate students’ inner lives? If so, how, and in what way?” For the former, we can raise even more questions: “Does attending hakwons help students with their individuation, the psychological process of integrating the conscious with the unconscious for better self-understanding? Or does hakwon strengthen outer-directedness culture through consecutive testing?” Here are two radically different attitudes toward the same hakwon:

Studying with similarly leveled students made me feel competitive. This would be a kind of competition in good faith. Studying alone never made me think that way before. Studying together with other students at a hakwon helped me find passion for academic achievement and work harder. (Joon-sung, Kim, July 21, 2015)

Continuous assessment makes me feel burdened and that was the reason why I quit studying at a hakwon. I was the only person who could not pass the level test, so I came apart at the seams and I quit the hakwon. (Eun-young, Lee, July 21, 2015)



As we see, Joon-sung and Eun-young had far different attitudes about their hakwon experience. For Joon-sung, the hakwon was a place where he felt motivated and competitive, whereas the hakwon for Eun-young was a place where she felt burdened and frustrated. As seen from the two interview excerpts, there should be a fair amount of diversity in students' hakwon experiences that needs to be studied. *Currere* provides us with a perspective to study students' experiences at hakwons.

There is also the question of whether hakwons incorporate students' inner lives, and if so, how and in what ways? This is also an almost entirely unknown area that awaits to be studied. The predominant view that curriculum is exclusively concerned with the observable, testable, and quantifiable and is always externally given is challenged by *currere*. When curriculum is entirely given by external entities, then the resulting submerging idea of the self is that "we are not integrated and further that many of us have forgotten that we are not integrated" (Pinar 1975, p. 388). Education that is evaluated through standardized tests, eventually by numbers (Taubman 2009), puts individuals' inner lives at risk (Jung 2015). Is the hakwon the one to blame, given that it has been commonly criticized for only preparing students for tests and strengthening the competition culture? This is not an easy question to answer. Test preparation at hakwons is a priority which is not different from schooling. Hakwons in Korea promote self-directed and self-motivated learning through individual counseling and by building caring relationships with students (Cho 2015; Kim and Kim 2015). Are the inner lives of students revealed through the counseling process and then incorporated into their learning at hakwons? We do not know yet.

Students' experiences and the meaning of these experiences to individuals can be studied by the method of *currere*. This gives us a way to approach our inner world, which is present but more often than not hidden from us. It is a method according to which "students of curriculum [can] sketch the relations among school knowledge, life history, and intellectual development in ways that might function self-transformatively" (Pinar 1994, 2011; Pinar et al. 1995, p. 515). Since this method can reveal information that may put people in an extremely vulnerable position, and this is a method that has to be conducted by individuals, I would not suggest using this method with high school or lower grade students, but rather with university students and older adults. Using the method of *currere*, one may be able to better understand the significance of the hakwon in his or her personal, as well as intellectual, life.

## HAKWON EDUCATORS

The lives of hakwon educators are unknown to curriculum studies. Historically, schoolteachers' lives and the nature of their profession has been an interest of curriculum studies that intersects the areas of "understanding curriculum as autobiographical/biographical text" (Pinar et al. 1995, p. 515), and "understanding curriculum as institutional text" (p. 661). Understanding curriculum as autobiographical/biographical text has begun with the publication of "*Currere: Toward Reconceptualization*" (Pinar 1974), and "Toward a Poor Curriculum" (Pinar and Grumet 1976). Thereafter, many autobiographical and biographical texts have appeared: studies on teachers' lives (Goodson 1992; Miller 1990; Neumann 1998; Schubert and Ayers 1992), including first-year teachers' lives (Britzmann 1989; Bullough 1989; Bullough and Knowles 1990; Kim et al. 2003), black teachers' lives (James 2002), and female teachers' lives (Dean and Kolitch 1997; Grumet 1988). The significance of studying teachers' lives relies on the fact that they are practitioners in concrete situations where actual teaching and learning happens. William Ayers notes that:

The secret of teaching is to be found in the local detail and the everyday life of teachers; teachers can be the richest and most useful source of knowledge about teaching; those who hope to understand teaching must turn at some point to teachers themselves. (Schubert and Ayers 1992, p. v)

Knowledge about teachers' lives and the profession is available, although it remains to be understood. The questions asked in Schubert and Ayers' project include: "Why are teachers so often invisible and silent even in their own world? What gives meaning and direction to the lives of teachers?" (Schubert and Ayers 1992, p. ix). Then, we may raise questions such as: "Why are hakwon instructors so often invisible and silent even in their world? What gives meaning and vitality to the lives of hakwon instructors? How do their professional lives develop? What kinds of struggles, dilemmas, or pleasures do they experience? Where do their identities develop, and how do they identify themselves? How do they teach?"

In Korea, as of 2014, there are 69,678 hakwons; 7,193,705 students are taught by 277,028 hakwon instructors. Statistically speaking, the number of hakwon instructors is too big to be ignored in understanding Korean education. How and why hakwon instructors go into the profes-

sion needs to be considered. In Korea, hakwon instructors are oftentimes conceived as teachers who failed to enter the public school system—to become a schoolteacher, one has to pass a highly competitive exam, which guarantees him or her a job for life. However, this conception is only partially correct. First of all, not all of the hakwon instructors are trained to be teachers; their majors vary, oftentimes outside education, in fields such as Korean, English, math, management, or business. The reason they become hakwon teachers is not necessarily due to their failure to become public teachers, but sometimes a result of their decisions and other circumstances. Of course, there are some who trained to become public school teachers in colleges of education. A number of these college of education students were not able to pass the exam to become public school teachers. However, these individuals are not hired by hakwons only because of the education they have received; to teach at hakwons, instructors are also evaluated on their education, instructional skills, personalities, character, and educational philosophies. Thus, it is a limited perspective when they are conceived as teachers who failed to enter the public education system.

The biggest difference between hakwon instructors and school teachers in Korea is the security of their jobs: when one becomes a schoolteacher, he or she can remain in the job for the rest of their lives; however, if hakwon instructors fail to prove their ability to teach, they fall behind and consequently they might lose their jobs.

For survival, hakwon instructors continuously need to develop their abilities to teach, which is not limited to the delivery of knowledge or skills, but also includes their ability to build responsive, receptive, and perhaps mutual relationships with students. Students' evaluation of a certain instructor's course is an important factor for instructors to reflect on their teaching. Beside students' evaluation, hakwons, especially relatively big hakwons, have a structural strategy for the development of instructors' ability through instructor meetings, seminars for studying curriculum and materials, professional development for instructional methods, and so on. Some hakwons run programs for the development of instructors, which is similar to the Center for Teaching and Learning provided by colleges or universities.

The drive for this effort by instructors is to be chosen by students year after year. Students' willingness to study with an instructor again, not always on the same course, is an important indicator for the instructor and hakwons to grasp the effectiveness of the instructor. Of course,

this is directly related to their income. Different from public schools in Korea, students and instructors both have a say in whom they want to work with. When a student stays in an instructor's courses for multiple semesters or years, it means that there is a mutual respect built between the two. This fact may lessen the need of management, control, or a hierarchical relationship between them. When an instructor finds a conflict between him or her and a student, he or she can suggest the student change instructors or hakwons. The mutual choice may explain the fact that many students in Korea express more respect for hakwon instructors than schoolteachers.

Two studies on hakwon educators' lives have recently appeared: one in Korea and another in Hong Kong. In his study, *Case Study about Hakwon Teachers' Educational Culture*, Lee (2010) conducted in-depth interviews with hakwon educators for high school students and high school graduates in preparation for KSAT. Lee found that the hakwon educators expressed negative attitudes toward educational policies that were in favor of public education, leaving the private sector unaddressed. Other characteristics that Lee reported include the performance-based pay system that can be a drive for quality instruction, hakwon educators' effort to build horizontal relationships with students rather than vertical relationships, and frequent communication with parents. In particular, the performance-based pay system is associated with the insecurity of jobs and leads to a high turnover rate of hakwon teachers. In *Constructing Professional Identities in Shadow Education: Perspectives of Private Supplementary Educators in Hong Kong*, Trent (2015) interviewed six private tutors in Hong Kong. Trent provides findings that "expose and problematize discourse which establish a rigid division between educators providing private tutoring and those in mainstream school" (p. 1). Participants of the study felt that the discourse constrained them in constructing their preferred professional identities. Trend gives educational authorities a message "to respond to private tutoring in ways that overcome the antagonisms" (p. 1). While data about the pervasiveness, diversity, and intensity of hakwon education is available, what is unknown is the nature of hakwon educators' lives, their teaching, and the nature or complexities of the profession. This can be an area of curriculum studies, given the impact that it leaves on students' lives.

Because of the size of the group of instructors and their influence on students, hakwon instructors' lives can be an important area of study for curriculum studies. They are not simply intruders or "invasive species" (Bray and Kobakhidze 2015, p. 476), or supplemental instructors,

as commonly understood in Korea. Rather, they are educational agents different from teachers in public schools in Korea. I postulate studying hakwon instructors' lives as a subject of curriculum studies.

### CURRICULUM AND TEACHING STRATEGIES OF HAKWON

Curriculum and teaching strategies of hakwons is also an area of curriculum studies. In this section, I discuss three representative characteristics of hakwon curriculum in terms of its structure and implementation, as well as a few teaching strategies employed at hakwons in Korea. The hakwon curriculum has various modes with consideration of needs of the students and parents. A hakwon curriculum is always evolving, in response to the changing school entrance examination trends in combination with the owner's educational philosophy and teachers' teaching know-how (Park et al. 2015). Thus, it is hard to generalize the curricula of hakwons. However, in some aspect, there are common characteristics in the curricula developed and employed by hakwons, which are perhaps not easily found in the public school system in Korea.

First, every hakwon develops and implements the delicately divided curriculum in terms of areas and levels of subject areas. This characteristic can often be found at English and math hakwons. International Math Hakwon (pseudonym) can be an example of this. For beginner level students, it instructs students to practice school-text-level problems on their grade fully. For intermediate students, International Math Hakwon adapts accelerated learning of content one semester ahead of the students' level, along with more in-depth content. For advanced students, the hakwon teaches students using content that is more than one year above their school level. International Math Hakwon utilizes phased material composition and provides a proper curriculum for students in various levels. For example, it uses level 3 materials for beginning level students to preview and review. For intermediate level students, it uses level 3 materials for preparation and level 2 materials to review. For advanced level students, the hakwon uses level 2 materials to preview and level 1 materials to review.

Secondly, hakwons can implement an in-depth and accelerated curriculum, which is not limited to the school curriculum, in combination with various teaching strategies. Top English Hakwon (pseudonym) has its own curriculum and materials, which are different from those used in schools. For elementary students, the hakwon provides students with an ESL environment to be exposed to native English. The hakwon teaches

English in English in all classes and utilizes various games, group activities, and chants to allow students to be naturally involved in English using concrete situations. In addition, the hakwon uses authentic English materials such as American textbooks and storytelling books. Moreover, teachers use those materials to practice listening, reading, writing, and speaking areas all together. In particular, the storytelling books, which have a complete narrative structure, pique students' interests in studying English. What makes this kind of instruction possible is perhaps the adequate division of the levels. From middle school, by using various materials such as TOEFL, TEPS materials, storytelling books, articles from the New York Times, and YouTube videos, the hakwon helps students develop reading, speaking, listening, writing, and grammar skills separately. Moreover, Top English Hakwon adapts extensive reading, shadow speaking, listening practice, free writing, and debate strategies in classes in combination with TOEFL and TEPS materials (Kim and Kim 2015). In fact, TOEFL and TEPS are irrelevant to school exams directly because those materials are far beyond the school textbook level. However, integrated English training by using TOEFL or TEPS can help to solve tricky grammar problems in school exams and increase the sense of language (Kim and Kim 2015).

Lastly, hakwons reorganize the school curriculum. For example, Harvard Math Hakwon (pseudonym) provides systematic chapter composition to teach math in-depth. The school textbook is comprised of parallel parts, such as numbers, figures, possibilities, and statistics function altogether in one textbook. However, the hakwon provides a systematic approach, which studies one specific part deeply. For instance, when studying figure systematically, the hakwon provides chapter composition as follows: "basic figure → the traits of triangles and rectangles → the relationship amongst figures → the traits of a right-angled triangle → the special theorem for triangles → rectangle analysis → circles." In this way, the hakwon develops a unique curriculum in terms of areas and level and implements an in-depth and accelerated curriculum, which surpasses the school curriculum, in combination with its own teaching strategies.

I proposed six research topics on hakwon/shadow education for curriculum studies. These include hakwon/shadow education and ecology of education; hakwon/shadow education on child development; individualization; students' lived experience at hakwon; hakwon educators; and curriculum and teaching strategies of hakwon.

Writing this chapter allowed me to remain vigilant on the globalization of hakwon/shadow education. I concentrated on Pinar's understanding of the spread of hakwon/shadow education, rather than internationalizing it. The internationalization of hakwon/shadow education would require incorporating the localities and particularities in each country, as hakwon/shadow education carries distinctive relationships to culture (hakbeolism and seodang in Korea), intellectual histories (Confucianism in Asian countries), and political and economic circumstances in post-Soviet countries. It is hardly possible to generalize what hakwon education is and how it functions in different countries. For a deeper understanding, studying the research topics I suggested in the previous chapter may be helpful.

"Place" (Kincheloe 1991) becomes a key consideration to studying hakwon/shadow education. In Korean and Chinese communities in Los Angeles, for example, hakwon education contains multiple meanings and influences in each place. Hakwon education, non-profit, and for-profit educational institutions interact with the ethnicity of the people (Zhou and Kim 2006): hakwon education helps them keep their ethnicity alive; the ethnic and cultural environment certainly help the emergence and growth of hakwon education (Zhou and Kim 2006). Since Korean and Chinese language education is not offered by public schools, the Korean and Chinese immigrants in that area created hakwons for education of their children. Thus, hakwon education for them has been associated with the matter of the survival of their languages and cultures.

What is lacking within the scholarship of hakwon/shadow education is its conceptualization and theorization, a major mean in the field of curriculum studies (Pinar et al. 1995). While concepts such as shadow education, private tutoring, hakwon education, juku, buxiban, and so on have been introduced, their theorization and reconceptualization remains placid. For example, the term "shadow" may be reconceptualized or rescued from its strong association with its mimicry character. From a Jungian perspective, shadow does not always express a dark or negative side of individual, but it is also the seat of creativity. Shadow, from this psychological perspective, may be "the dark side of his being" (Jung 1983, p. 262), but for some, it may "represent the true spirit of life" (p. 262). Can there be shadow education as currently conceptualized that incorporates the shadow of individuals? This remains as my suggestion and hope.

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## CONCLUSION: QUESTIONS WITHOUT ORGANS

Through the previous chapters, I have portrayed the Korean scene of hakwon education and its various roles and impact on Korean students' educational lives. The following topics were analyzed through qualitative research methods: (1) the historical development of hakwon education in the Korean context; (2) seven kinds of hakwon education; (3) the general features of students' learning based on their school grades; and (4) strengths and weaknesses of hakwon learning. Through the analysis, I have found that Korean students' education is greatly assisted by hakwon education and therefore their learning for their future goals is also influenced by their participation in these institutes. This study has shown that Korea has its own particular learning culture created and shaped by hakwon education. On the basis of these findings, the idea of hakwon education as an urgent topic of worldwide curriculum studies was suggested.

The research was done from 2008 until 2014, and qualitative data was collected through participant observation, intensive interviewing, and document analysis. Research participants were people working for schools and hakwons, such as classroom teachers, owners of hakwon institutes, and instructors in those institutes. Also, students in elementary, middle, and high schools were intensively interviewed in order to know what their genuine experiences were and how positive the students were about their experiences. In addition to the interviews, more than 15 hakwons were observed for analysis of their instruction and student

management. During participant observation, various documents such as curriculum guides, textbooks, and students' materials were collected for further analysis. These materials were beneficial in finding out why Korean students and parents gladly evaluated hakwon education as better than school education.

Since the research site was schools and hakwons in Korea, there were no particular problems or difficulties related to gaining entry, language, or cultural differences. Fortunately, I was able to collect extensive data since I am a native Korean, know the educational systems very well, and had visited them many times for prior research. Since my research objective was to understand the positive roles of hakwon education, the research participants were friendly and helpful. This kind of fieldwork was the first in Korea, and they hoped their education would be described more positively than before. My research attitude, based on an emic perspective and thick description, became beneficial in making this fieldwork successful. Thus, I was the first scholar to collect and analyze those materials developed by hakwon educators in Korea for educational research.

Also, I was psychologically motivated by the fact that this research was the first international qualitative case study on hakwon education, and thus might be used as a guiding example for succeeding research. Neighboring countries (China, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan) have similar phenomena, so the scholarly and public interest in it is expanding even in the West (the EU and Canada). I felt that I would be able to contribute to the growing discussion on this topic and provide scholars in the area with some initial ideas and possible questions for their future studies. The book can be read as a text of insight and reflection about how hakwon education operates with/against public schooling and students' education in either a good or a bad way. Also, reading this Korean tale may stimulate the publication of more local studies on this topic from other nations.

However, there is some degree of an ethical dilemma in representing Korean scenes of educational phenomena in the English language for international audiences. Since the topic is not a tale of educational success in Korea, which is the most common in the literature or mass media in the West, I hesitated to present images of Korean education which were not familiar to readers and were opposite to their previous perceptions. I was worried that this new tale might change their prior understanding of Korea that had only good images about education and that they might see Korea in a new negative light. The audience may be surprised that students in Korea spend extra hours every day in hakwon education, and

may think that it is not educationally and developmentally appropriate. I stood between scholarly responsibility and ethical consideration and am curious about whether this text may influence the shape of Western readers' images of Korean education and its international success.

Readers may have the following new images of Korea derived from reading my book: (1) that public education is in danger and its traditional castle of power is threatened by hakwon education; (2) that hakwon education is prevailing over the students' personal and educational life, and it has become the second life of their education; (3) that education is taught and sold for commercial purposes, that it is advertised as a commodity like cars and clothes and if you have more money, you can buy better products; and (4) that students are obsessed with competition and survival through hakwon education. I asked myself what kinds of words, metaphors, or symbols might arise in readers' minds as the major impression from this text: "Strange? Primitive? Unproductive? Too competitive? Underdeveloped?"

In addition to this ethical consideration, I have to admit that the nature of this study was exploratory and descriptive. My research purpose was to emphasize the existence and importance of hakwon education for Korean students and to show how it related to their public schooling. Rather than producing and answering any kind of specific research questions, I decided to let readers observe the educational culture of a nation in the Far East in which students are deeply engaged in extra education outside schools; knowledge of the phenomenon is necessary for understanding Korean education and education in Far Eastern nations. From that perspective, this study's findings are incomplete, developmental, and insightful rather than determining, final, and confirmative. Further questions, analysis, and fieldwork are strongly requested in the future.

The limitation of the research to an exploratory case study asks us to approach this topic within broader contexts and more advanced questions. This study shows only the particular culture of hakwon education in Korea and not the present state in nations beyond Korea. Also, it only discusses the general features of Korean students' learning culture in relation to hakwon education. Other topics, such as the effectiveness or problems of hakwon education, remain without clear answers. Also, we need to extend the findings of this research to other nations and to identify the similarities and differences between Korea and other nations. More importantly, we do not know what kinds of questions, topics, and theories are available to conceptualize this troubling phenomenon.

It is a new kind of aporia to all of us who have been through all our life accustomed to ecology and the philosophies of public schooling but never experienced this new form of education, which is basically different from our public schooling. It is an aporia because students inside schools are seduced to leave school for a better education, and school is not believed to be the best system for their personal objectives. Hakwon education is not controlled by schoolteachers and administrators, since it occurs outside schools and sometimes is not controlled by governmental laws and policies. Under the ideas of free democracy and capitalism, hakwon education is completely supported and protected by customers and citizens.

Because of these new features of hakwon education, I determined to use the term “Questions without organs” as the title of this chapter to indicate the need for multiple ideas and suggestions. The term, borrowed from Deleuze’s “Body without organs” (1969), implies that better answers and ideas are made without predetermined beliefs, prejudices, and theories or hypotheses. Rather, the topic should be discussed with more open, nomadic, and transgressive attitudes. Since the nature of the phenomenon is not familiar to us, and not something traditional and predictable, our positions for questioning this phenomenon should be different from our previous perceptions of an educational topic. We may juxtapose hakwon education with public schooling equally. Or we may find research questions first from public schooling as the origin of the birth of hakwon education. We may discard our modern approach to this phenomenon and should not lay public schooling as the center and hakwon education as the other. I do believe that these untraditional ways of thinking about these troubling questions will be more relevant and effective in creating productive ideas and solutions in searching for the hidden faces of hakwon education.

Waiting for an era of more global discussion and brainstorming through multinational and multicultural perspectives to come in the near future, I close my book with the following suggestions. I think that these suggestions are useful in producing “questions without organs” as a new and urgent request for curriculum studies related to hakwon education. I hope that they are used in developing a basic perspective or knowledge for scholars in the area to begin to study the phenomenon. Since this study is one of the earliest in this area, the suggestions might be considered educational advice for work either in qualitative or theoretical studies. Even though the suggestions are not directly related to research findings, they are important in making fieldwork on hakwon education more successful

and for interpreting its potential roles and contributions. They will help prepare researchers of the future well by giving them a better understanding of “What to see and how to see.”

First, hakwon education is recommended as a new area in curriculum studies. Most definitions of curriculum or curriculum studies have been confined to the school curriculum and students’ experiences inside schools. Curriculum means structured programs or activities planned under schools’ direction. Such a definition does not ask us to study the hakwon education phenomenon because it is not considered an area of curriculum. This traditional concept of “curriculum” prohibited us from entering the field of hakwon education, and from posing questions on its curricular activities and phenomena. If anyone visits classrooms in hakwons, he or she will be surprised that the word “curriculum” is used repeatedly. They say “We teach our students with our own high-quality curriculum,” or “Our curriculum is special because...” Their monthly and yearly life is structured and planned around the curriculum, either that of the hakwons or the schools.

Studying the curriculum at hakwons is more urgent if we consider that there are two kinds of schools in Korean society (schools and hakwons), and development is occurring in both places. If we ignore one part, our full understanding of Korean students’ development is not possible because half of their curriculum is not included in our analysis and interpretations. It is possible to measure and judge Korean students’ academic abilities and their features and problems only after we acquire the information on what Korean students learn at hakwons, how they learn, and with what materials. Studying and analyzing the curriculum at hakwons must be the first step in creating a new picture of students’ learning in the societies or nations where hakwon education is strongly practiced. This request is more relevant considering that hakwon education is expanding all over the world (Aurini et al. 2013; Bray 2011; Buchmann et al. 2010; Davies et al. 2014). The present approach to the features of Asian education, or Far Eastern education, is limited to the analysis of the school system and curriculum in relation to the results of students’ remarkable accomplishments on the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and other international tests (Bensen 2012; Stewart 2012).

Second, students’ educational life inside hakwon education should be more deeply described and interpreted. As has been described in this book, Korean students spend a considerable amount of time studying at hakwon institutes. It is another important space for their development from ele-

mentary school through high school. However, student life and learning inside hakwons is not a major object of curriculum studies or other educational science research. We simply know that our students learn subjects such as the English language, mathematics, and writing techniques at a superficial level. We simply pay their tuition every month. Or we teachers tend to think that students waste important time there without genuine learning. We presume that students are taught to learn how to answer test questions well. Or we may predict that the teaching strategies at hakwons are better than those at schools because students tell us so. Or we may conclude that hakwon education is beneficial for students' academic performance at school (Byun and Park 2012). However, we do not know how the subject is taught and with what kind of teaching methods. More importantly, we do not have any knowledge of whether such extra learning and the culture of learning are helpful in cultivating students' academic and personal growth in a good direction based on prior criteria for "a good learner."

Thus, I hope that more case studies and qualitative research on students' life and development at hakwons will be produced better to know and judge the benefit of hakwon education as an important space of human development. For this purpose, I suggest the concept of "*currere*" theorized by Pinar (1994). According to him, *currere* is a biographical description and analysis of a student's educational experiences in schools. It is a broader concept than the traditional definition of curriculum, which is simply defined as "curriculum material or products." Adopting such a new definition allows us to see and analyze the overall trajectory and features of students' experiences at hakwons and to identify hakwons various effects and contributions to the student's educational experience. Students' life stories will enable us to better understand the hidden influences of hakwons on their academic and non-academic development. On the basis of more research, we will be able to draw probable conclusions or theories to better explain the pedagogical and theoretical implications of their experiences, such as how the hakwon education place is "A place called school" (Goodlad 2004), how the hidden curriculum is like "Life in classrooms" (Jackson 1968), and how it is structured in a capitalist country "Schooling in Capitalist America" (Bowles & Gintis 2012).

Third, I pose the question of whether hakwon education is a negative practice. Furthermore, I ask that the present discussion with only negative images be stopped until we have more objective and neutral analysis. The following negative and undesirable terms are mainly applied to hakwon



education: testing, competition, survival, race, and death (Beach 2011; Lo et al. 2015; Seth 2002). For example, Seth used the expression “education fever” in describing the Korean scene of educational competition based on shadow education. Also, Watanabe (2013), the author of the book, *Juku* (the common name for Japanese shadow education), used the terms “hell” and “war” to describe the Japanese culture of testing and examinations. Also, the famous international writer on educational topics around the world, Ripley in *Time* magazine (2011) only described scenes of hakwon education related to the illegal educational enterprise banned by the Korean government. Korean high school students’ hakwon life was broadcasted in the US program *Believe it or not* as a topic similar to the description of primitive people in Africa or the South Pacific Islands.

The scarce research and research findings on this topic may lead to hurried judgments or definitions and to establish wrong hypotheses or problem statements. Worse, such judgments may negatively influence our research processes and findings. Thus, the research attitude of non-judgment and an emic perspective, which are emphasized in qualitative research paradigms, is urgently needed. Also, we need to find those who have played key roles in creating such negative images and to discuss the relevance of such images. I presume that there are some reasons why hakwon education has been perceived as negative: (1) simply because it is something Oriental and unfamiliar to scholars of the West; (2) simply because it is the other and is marginalized from our perception of schools as central and legitimate; and (3) simply because it is opposite to the basic philosophy of education in the West, which emphasizes progressive education and a child-centered curriculum. Thus, I elaborate the following questions as a way to examine our prejudices or negative evaluation of hakwon education, and hope that scholars in this area are encouraged to apply them to all phases of their research related to hakwon education: (1) “Why do I think the study of hakwons is trivial, unimportant, and unscholarly?”; (2) “Are there any reasons for me to believe it is bad and undesirable?”; (3) “By what criteria and standards do I judge that hakwon education is irrelevant, illegitimate, and useless?”; (4) “What knowledge and information has been accessible/inaccessible?”; and (5) “Has the image of the East influenced the shape of these negative images of hakwon education?”

These questions are based strongly on the idea of postcolonial and postmodern analysis of our local practices and phenomena. They suggest that rather than relying on *a priori* and old scientific knowledge based on Western educational theories, we may need to see hakwon education

as an Asian or a local cultural tradition, which cannot be fully covered or interpreted by Western knowledge systems or frames of reference. From this perspective, Juan-Shing Chen's suggestion of four strategies is useful in discovering or de-imperializing Western definitions and judgments on what an education is or what public schooling is/should be (2010, pp. 217–223). Postcolonial interpretations of hakwon education in Korea and Far Eastern nations, about what it possibly means and implies for our children's education, may allow us to create new insights into or concepts of our old/normal definition of "education" and "schooling" by disrupting the beliefs and traditions of the West as the center of our scientific activities.

Fourth, we curriculum scholars in the East and Africa should talk more about our own historical and local phenomena as our major research topics. Studying hakwon education lets us recognize that studying the educational phenomena of our nations can be as important as studying those of the West. This new belief is drawn from my long fieldwork in Korea that led me to discover how little I knew about Korean schooling and educational phenomena and to stand far away from my ethnic identity and traditions. I must have ignored them intentionally simply because they were not mentioned by scholars in the West, or were not acknowledged as of equal importance with those of the West in contemporary curriculum discourse. I was deeply immersed in the power of Western knowledge: I believed that it was omnipotent and should be generalized to our Korean practices. However, these beliefs turned out to be wrong.

My pedagogical learning from this hakwon education study enabled me to approach the real and hidden aspects of Korean educational problems and to feel the necessity of posing questions which were different from those of the West. I had to admit that even though knowledge of Western discourse is in some degree helpful and insightful in discussing our local agenda, its value is not absolute and it cannot be completely applied to our location. We are living in a social space where the culture, traditions, and values are different from those of the West. This implies that in addition to the acknowledgement of positive participation in the idea of worldwide curriculum studies (Pinar 2014), curriculum scholars in marginalized locations should begin to take their original and cultural practices more seriously. This postcolonial attitude toward local phenomena also contributes to the advancement of our prior discussion and knowledge driven and theorized only by Western perspectives and traditions. For example, findings from local research may be able to complement the flaws or problems

of Western research and canons, or to reject their potential value as a global theory or thesis.

In the twenty-first century, more people are visiting Korea for its historical beauty and cultural heritage. Also, people around the world are surprised at its economic development, which has been called the “Miracle of Hangang River.” Now, Korea is a member of the OECD. Thanks to its geographical and cultural advantages, Korea has been chosen many times by global companies and leaders of innovative organizations as a nation in which to experiment, to first observe customers’ responses and their product’s degree of success. For example, Hollywood blockbuster movies open first in Korea. New electronic devices and products from world-class business companies are first introduced to their users in order to see how they are accepted. From that perspective, hakwon education in Korea is also considered a first experiment to help to better understand the phenomenon for worldwide curriculum studies. In the present situation, where everything is blurred and unclear, the Korean story of hakwon education is a good guide to light our next steps in a better direction and destination. It is particularly so when “shadow education” is not in the shadows anymore.

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## EPILOGUE: SIMULACRA AND A DANGEROUS FUTURE

In Spielberg's movie *AI (Artificial Intelligence)*, the robot boy, David, was finally discarded in the trash pile by his adoptive family because of the tricks of Martin, the real son in the family. But he escaped from the trash pile and searched for the blue angel in the tale of Pinocchio to make him a human. After waiting for her and praying for his wish for 2,000 years under the deep sea, the blue angel appeared to him, and his dream came true. The original son had already been dead for 2,000 years, but the Cyborg son, David, was reborn and met his adopted mother as a real human.

This story reminds me of the present image of hakwon education in Korea. Hakwon education was born after the original schools and mimicked their ideas and practices. It was a copy. However, after 100 years, it resides inside our mind and life as a more genuine place of education than the present school. It is more welcome and is acknowledged as a "better place than school." Its popularity has not decreased and its industry continually increases. It is ironic to see Korean children enjoy their "Korean Teacher's Day" (May 15) with hakwon instructors rather than teachers in the schools. The catchphrases of our government and school administrators such as "Come back to schools" or "We teach better than hakwons" are vacant and useless when students rely on hakwons more than on schools for their future plans.

Observing this Korean phenomenon led me to compare it with David the cyborg. Hakwons may finally take the school's position and roles and become another school that looks more like a school. By mimicking the

previous images of schools and creating better images, hakwons are seen as better, more original, and more real than schools. They are not supplementary places anymore, and hakwon education is not in the shadow anymore. Hakwons occupy the previous territory of schools and are taking away all the power and prestige of schools. Schools seem to remain only with the old name and a glorious past.

But I ask myself, “Do I think too far, or too pessimistically, or unrealistically?” However, unwanted questions do not stop in my head and I cannot erase the following incident. A few years ago, an insurance company salesman told me that AIG (American International Group) in the USA would never disappear and that I would die before the company disappeared. “Please trust AIG” and “Buy the insurance.” However, it is bankrupt and has gone. What should we do if a similar case happens to our public schooling? What should we do if something better replaces schools? Or if public schooling is still alive, is it working well or efficiently? A more perplexing thought bothers me: “What should we do if hakwon education is more attractive than school? What should we do if it better satisfies our expectations than schools? What should we do if it continually surprises us by bringing new ideas and programs for children’s education?”

My questions turn to students’ education and their change: “Is hakwon education a fortune or a disaster for them?”; “What are our responses and strategies if students want to spend more time for extra learning outside schools, and enjoy their learning without feeling arrested?”; and “What can we say to parents who will not refuse this undesirable atmosphere and instead push their students to gladly take this culture of learning?”

My final questions go to a change of our attitude to educational enterprises: “What if education is considered a commodity?”; “What should we do if the educational service which belongs to the public sector on most societies is produced and consumed as merchandise?”; “What if it is sold and bought like electronic items or cars?”; “What should I do if hakwon education industries produce better products than schools, and we, all of us, gladly pay for this new product?”; and, more seriously, “How can we find ways to take care of students who cannot afford the product, whereas students of rich and upper-class families are happy to acquire the new product?”

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