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Education and Middle Class Anxieties

Maintaining Class Position

- The Old Middle Class before industrialization (independent farmers, shopkeepers, small business owners) based their position on owning middling means of production
 - For them, passing on means of production to heirs (land, businesses) is the key to maintaining class position
- The New Middle Class (salaried managers, professionals and technicians) grew up with industrialization and is based on educational qualification
 - Passing on NMC status thus involves fostering children's educational success

Old and New Middle Classes Coexist in Developed Economies

- In developed economies the New Middle Class becomes large and dominant
- The Old Middle Class becomes reduced in size, but does not disappear
- Old and New Middle Classes thus coexist in development societies—but their manner of class reproduction is different
 - Passing on property for OMC versus fostering education in the NMC

Historical Influences

- In the bureaucratic monarchy of Chosŏn, the ruling class (yangban) were educated elites who disdained manual labor
 - Mencius—“those who work with their minds are the rulers; those who work with their hands are the ruled”
 - merchants and artisans had low status in premodern Korea , so the Old Middle Class had low status
- Koreans view the New Middle Class as a “modern” class that is civilized and enlightened
 - Educated managers, professionals and technicians do not work with their hand, whereas farmers and small businessmen do work with their hands
 - Thus, New Middle Classes professions have higher status than Old Middle Class occupations, regardless of income

Status Consciousness

- Because of Korea's historical distinction between those who work with their minds and those who work with their hands, there still is a status distinction between white collar and blue collar works that transcends income [and is more pronounced than in Japan]
- Thus, to be recognized as “middle class” you need to be a white-collar manager, professional, or technician
 - Managers without education tend to be regarded as vulgar businessmen

The Middle Propertied Class

- In theory Korea's Middle Propertied Class (중산층) is a class of educated professionals, and thus a New Middle Class
 - It is also partly, however, a class of *rentiers* (pronounced rahn-tyays) who live off investments in property
 - You need to have education, a proper white collar profession, *and* live in a high-rise apartment in the right part of town (whose cost is beyond what most professionals even earn)
- Fierce competition in the educational system is the first step in the status reproduction struggle
- Intermarriage and exchange of resources with equal status families is the second step

Gender and Status Reproduction

- In the Korean middle classes, the stay-at-home mother is an ideal that can be attained
 - Ancrocentric nationalism—the man is the protector and breadwinner, the woman is the “inside person” who manages consumption standards (that maintain status)
 - The “women inside” is also the person who is primarily responsible for *family status reproduction*
 - She bears and raises children, of course, but family status reproduction involves making sure her sons (but daughters, too) are successful in the education system
 - Thus, the kyoyuk mama—education mother—is a typical image

Wealth and Family Status Reproduction

- Wealth by itself cannot reproduce New Middle Class status (unless it is at upper class levels)
- NMC men need to have appropriate jobs—as managers, professionals, and technicians, but there are not enough of these jobs to go around for all the college educated
 - Status is not simply an individual attribute, but accrues to the entire extended family
 - A NMC family cannot afford for even one child to fall out of the NMC without affecting the status of the entire family, so all children must succeed in obtaining NMC education

Wealth and Educational Success— Theme of this Lecture

- One question that can be asked about a country's educational system is, “to what degree can wealth foster educational success, and access to the best jobs
 - England—20% of the population go to Public Schools (which in the UK means private prep schools), and these are the elite
 - Famous schools like Eton or Harrow provide most Prime Ministers, for example
 - State secondary schools used to be divided into grammar schools for the top 5%, and secondary modern for the rest (with many working-class youth leaving school at 16). Now most state secondary schools are comprehensive schools, but a few grammar schools still exist

Wealth and Education in the US

- Most people go to public schools that are state supported
 - All public schools are not equal, however, because public schools are financed by local property taxes, so that schools in affluent towns tend to be better funded than those in poor areas
 - Large cities also frequently have public magnet schools, or specialized schools with selective admissions
 - Children from educated families often dominate in these schools, reproducing existing educational hierarchies
- Between 5% and 20% of US K-12 students go to private schools (depending on the area)
 - About half of the private schools are religious schools—Catholic parochial, Lutheran (Wisconsin), Evangelical, Jewish, etc.
 - The other half are expensive prep schools whose tuition keeps out the middle middle class and below
- At the college level there is a prestige hierarchy of expensive private schools and a couple of state schools (that tend to be expensive) that provide an elite education and the contacts to get the best jobs
- Overall, the US has one of the most unequal school systems in the world (some of the best and some of the worst schools)

During the 1970s and 1980s South Korea had an egalitarian school systems

- The Park regime despised traditional intellectual elites (yangban) and wanted to prevent them from dominating the new, modern economy through their hold on elite educational institutions
- 1988-91 IAEP (International Assessment of Educational Progress) found South Korea No. 1 in Science and No. 3 in Math
 - Korea high average with little variation around the mean (i.e. low standard deviation)
 - US moderate average with great variation about the mean (i.e. the best students are great, but the average isn't high, and some students are really poor)

Sources of South Korea Educational Equality

- National curriculum set by the Department of Education had to be used in all schools
- Few private schools existed at the elementary level
- At the secondary level private schools were allowed, but the government set the tuition low so that state schools that got equivalent tuition and state funds were better funded
 - Private secondary schools at this time were second-best overflow institutions for students who couldn't get into the best state schools
- High School equalization program
 - Middle School entrance exam abolished
 - Teachers rotated, students assigned to high schools by lottery, school facilities equalized
 - Admissions to vocational schools decided before admissions to academic schools to encourage vocational education

At the College Level

- College Entrance Qualifying Test (until 1980s) limited the number of students able to apply to college
- A person could not get an exist visa to study abroad until graduate school
- After passing the qualifying exam, one could take exams for individual departments at individual universities
 - Thus, the strategy had to do with both the prestige of the university and the competitiveness of the individual department

■ Dissatisfactions in the 1970s and 1980s

- Within the examination system, parents were using tutors and cram schools to improve their students' performance
 - By this means wealth could be transformed into academic success
- School records noted the occupation of both parents, labeling children of successful parents for success
 - Envelopes given to teachers in appreciation on Teacher's Day could translate into influence
- Students objected to harsh, corporeal punishment, rote learning, ideological indoctrination, and mobilization of students for political purposes
- Students and parents wanted a more flexible, less authoritarian system with more teacher autonomy, and more attention to individual students' strengths

Reforms in the 1990s focused on deregulation and choice

- Emphasis came to be on students and parents as educational “consumers” whose choices in the educational marketplace would shape outcomes
- High school equalization had already been dropped
- Government controls on private school tuition and selection of students were dropped
 - Fancy private prep schools then began to appear in South Korea, and chaeböl-foundation supported schools have also appeared
 - Now private schools able to select their study body attract the highest ability students
- Enhanced choice for parents and students also enables those with wealth to provide a superior education for their students

Early Education Abroad (Chogi yuhak)

- The educational reforms of the 1990s put more emphasis on English language as appropriate for a trading nation
 - English pushed down to 3rd grade in the 1990s, and to kindergarten in the 2010s
- Parents seeking an advantage for their children began to send them abroad at an early age so that they would acquire fluent English (it and math were the most important college entrance exam topics)
- “Wild Geese Fathers” (kirōgi abōji) would support wife and children in US, Canada, New Zealand, etc. and fly back and forth on holidays like wild geese
 - Some did Singapore for Chinese and English, or cheaper Beijing for Chinese

Tutoring and Cram Schools

- Tutoring and cram schools (hagwon) are still important
- Mothers take charge of these aspects
 - Often mothers make a side income (flower arranging, life-insurance, kye, accounting done at home) to pay for these extras
- Mothers exchange information among themselves
 - Which are the best schools, tutors, best plan for getting children into the right university
 - Kangnam is generally considered the center of the best public schools, and the best cram schools