

A Discussion of C.S. Park's Paper on Regional Development and Higher Education

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When I received this paper and read it through, I was anxious how this paper is related to the topic of today's symposium, which is focusing on the role of area studies in geographic researches. When I read it twice, however, I could find many brilliant ideas which can be used as a tool of regional development policies. I think these ideas are coming from President Park's strenuous efforts and anguish to develop his school and also his local community. I want to discuss his points, regardless of today's topic, as a regional planner who has participated in establishing several national and regional policies.

The Regional Elite Quota System (REQS) or Local Talent Quota System (LTQS), whatever they call, is a very interesting and somewhat very revolutionary idea. His point is that by allocating regional quota of national examination selections, the System can attract gifted students to local universities, and these elites can be forces of regional development. He emphasizes virtuous circle that the System can bring out, in contrast to the vicious circle under the current examination system.

I generally find his points very logical and worth considering as a tool of regional development policies. As he pointed out, the regional inequality problem is still an everlasting problem. Given this situation, I agree that the education system or human resource

management can be an effective instrument to solve this problem. Investment and money flow inevitably follow the behavior of manpower.

His ideas could be applied in the regional development practices. But I think we need to be some more cautious and take some possible problems into consideration.

First of all, I think the education problem can be one of the results as well as regional inequalities. Dr. Park argues that the centralization of gifted elites is one of the decisive factors of overconcentration of the center. This might be true in some respects, but we need to also see the differences of living conditions between the center and periphery. People leave in search of better living environments and education is one of the results. Therefore, the REQS only cannot lead the local residents to stay in their hometown.

Secondly, the System he suggests assumes that every region has the same potential in human resources or should have the same structure of human resources. Kangwon Province or the Cheju Island should have proportionally the same quota of judiciary exam, government official exam, etc. The specialty or unique potential of each region might not be fully utilized. Agglomeration effects could be ignored. There might be big differences between selected personnel of each region and this could lead

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to differentiation problem.

Thirdly, we need to be more cautious of the possible results when the System is adopted. I think several points in the virtuous circle he suggests cannot be working. Even the enrollment in the local colleges to occupy a better position in the exams might not guarantee money flows into the region and remaining of the personnel who has passed the exam. False migration and backstream of money flow are also possible, such that people enroll in the local colleges

and take exams there with their living basis still in the central area, say, the Seoul metropolitan area.

Anyway, I think President Park's idea is very interesting and can be seriously considered in the regional policies. I am very respectful of his passion to develop his school and local community. Again, I really enjoyed reading his paper and discussing his points.

Thank you.