

Regional Development and Higher Education

Chan-Suk Park*

지역개발과 고등교육

박 찬 석*

Abstract : So how can we develop balanced growth in our country? The national development policy of our government over the past 30 years has led to the corpulence of Seoul at the expense of the provinces. Now ironically there are policy measures introduced to control the over-expansion of Seoul. Yet the current hardware strategies to control the center requires an additional software strategy to create a nationwide balance for development. The Regional Elite Quota System is one such software strategy which can adjust the unbalanced distribution of gifted student across the national university education system.

One obvious solution that should be utilized is the incredible enthusiasm for high education that exists in this country, perhaps the highest in the world. This has been the backbone of our national development and should be harnessed as a catalyst to produce more balanced national growth.

요약 : 지역개발론은 지리학의 중요한 부문을 점유하고 있다. 한국은 지난 30년 동안 일관된 지역개발방향은 중앙의 성장을 억제하고 지방을 육성하는 정책이었다. 그러나 지방과 중앙간의 격차가 해소되지 않고 더욱 커지고 있고, 국가전체가 인적·물적자원을 효율적으로 이용하지 못하여 고비용 저효율은 국가경쟁력의 문제로 제기되고 있다. 중앙집중의 문제는 서울에 인구의 집중에 있고, 인구집중의 원인은 교육의 서울집중에 있다. 따라서 교육의 지방분산이 인구의 지방분산을 초래할 수가 있다. 교육의 지방분산은 인재지역할당제의 법제화로 가능정책 대안이다. 인재 지역할당제는 국가고시(사법고시, 군법무관시험, 행정고시, 기술고시, 외무고시, 입법고시 등)와 주요자격시험(회계사시험, 변리사시험)을 지방의 인구비례로 지방대학에 할당하는 제도이다. 인재지역할당제는 '98년 1월 임시국회에서 입법화가 논의 될 것이다.

1. The Growth of Capital City

Over the last 30 years, the political and economic development of Korea has been hailed as the 'miracle of the Han river'. During this time period the average annual income for the individual has risen from US \$80 to US \$10,000. Despite the current economic depression, the projected growth rate of the Korean economy for this year will still be higher compared to those of other developed nations. This would seem to indicate an inherent growth potential in our economy. In addition, notwithstanding the difficult challenges, we have achieved political democracy. The new

objective is to strive for globalization and internationalization and to gain membership in the OECD along with other developed nations. Regardless of the various economic and political crises that we are facing it is our determination to succeed in gaining status among the developed nations of the world.

However, Korea does not fit the model of other developed countries due to the disparity between its center and periphery. Despite the national development policy of our government over the past 30 years has emphasized on the equilibrium regional development, the result has shown to lead to the

* President, KyungPook National University and Professor, Department of Geography(경북대 총장, 지리학과 교수)

corpulence of Seoul at the expense of the provinces(Lee, 1995)¹⁾. At present 25% of the population and 80% of politics, financing, high education and culture are centralized in Seoul²⁾. In contrast the provinces are underpopulated and lack investment. For the overall development of the country it is important that all our limited resources both human and material are efficiently and harmoniously utilized. Overcentralization on the metropolis is a waste of resources and prevents any balanced development. Other developed countries do not centralize to the same extreme as Korea. Even in Mexico, which is not considered among the developed nations, only 15.5% of the population is located in the nation's capital.

What are the main contributing factors to this overcentralization? Perhaps the most decisive is the centralization of gifted students and thereby elites. Historically the initial migration to the metropolis stimulated production at the beginning stage of industrialization, centralization of Seoul played the role of growth center which has brought to tricking down effect to the rest of country, however, overcentralization has resulted in serious traffic congestion, environmental pollution, an increase in land prices and a rise in crime. Currently living expenses in Seoul rank third in the world after those of Tokyo and Frankfurt³⁾. This will inevitably lead to a decline in production efficiency and eventually weaken our international competitiveness.

The competition that exists between domestic universities has recently become more fierce than ever due to the new competition with the world market. In turn this has accelerated the centralization of talent in the universities located in Seoul. As a result these universities are able to accumulate wealth and prestige whereas the local universities are weakened. This outflow of gifted student furthers the outflow of population, the outflow of population then furthers the outflow of capital⁴⁾. As a result local industries suffer, many going bankrupt, land prices fall, regional districts lag behind and the pride of the people is

affected. Local communities have become dependent and subordinate to Seoul thereby losing their ability and capacity for sustainable development.

Ironically, even local people prefer Seoul universities so they perpetuate the situation by sending their best students to the capital. As a show of support for these students and to reflect pride in their hometown, local elites who are enjoying social status of regional government and wealth people argue sometimes even to finance to the construction of dormitories for provincial students at Seoul. Unfortunately, this type of activity only serves to exacerbate the regional problem. If provincial towns actually benefited from the concentration on Seoul then such behavior would be commendable. However, the opposite is true and only Seoul benefits whereas the regions disintegrate. Consequently Seoul becomes a poison to the overall development of the country. The disparity between the provinces and the center results in an overpopulated metropolis, underpopulated regions, high living costs, lower productivity, inefficient use of resources and a weakened international competitiveness.

So how can we develop balanced growth in our country? The national development policy of our government over the past 30 years has led to the corpulence of Seoul at the expense of the provinces. Now ironically there are policy measures introduced to control the over-expansion of Seoul. Yet the current hardware strategies to control the center requires an additional software strategy to create a nationwide balance for development. The Regional Elite Quota System is one such software strategy which can adjust the unbalanced distribution of gifted student across the national university education system.

One obvious solution that should be utilized is the incredible enthusiasm for high education that exists in this country, perhaps the highest in the world. This has been the backbone of our national development and should be harnessed as a catalyst to produce more balanced national growth.

2. The Provincial Worship of Seoul

1) Why are dormitories for provincial students built in Seoul?

What is the reason behind the building of dormitories for provincial students in Seoul? The explanation is important yet the answer would seem to be simple. The prestige accompanying the successful entry of local students to a good university in Seoul builds an excellent reputation for a local high school. The dormitories built in Seoul are to provide gifted local students of Seoul universities a convenience in support of elite course achievement.

In the background are the parents' desires for their children, albeit self centered and private. Parents believe that in order to find a good jobs and have bright prospects for the future their children must go to a university in Seoul whatever the cost. As long as this educational elitist monopoly persists the migration of gifted student to Seoul will never break.

However, we can hardly expect our local communities to flourish if we keep encouraging all our gifted students, potential elite, to go to Seoul. There are some who believe that successful graduates can return to their help home town and thereby help in regional development, however, that is not the norm. Most leading citizens in Seoul are not natives of Seoul yet they still strive to support the capital rather than their own home town⁵⁾.

It is often remarked that high government officials are in a position to help support their hometowns, yet, if this were really true surely Taegu should have benefited exceedingly over the last thirty years as it has produced three former presidents. Indeed is it not more appropriate that high ranking officials should be impartial and distribute national resources without reference to personal considerations. This is assuredly an essential prerequisite for governments of developed nations.

It is the individual right of all high school students to continue their education at university and their

freedom of choice of which university should not be restricted. As such regional students continue to apply for admission to universities in Seoul and even provincial university graduates persist in seeking jobs in the capital. Hence, the polarization deepens. This idolatry of Seoul does not merely question the maintenance or dissolution of regional universities but rather challenges the destiny of the nation. To achieve the status of a developed nation this predicament must be revised.

2) Is the level of university education lower in the provinces?

Is the level of education in provincial universities inferior to that of Seoul universities? The quality of a university should be evaluated based on the caliber of its teaching and research activities, however, that is not the current situation. Instead quality is determined by the grades of entering students achieved in the government sponsored scholastic aptitude test for university admission. In truth the real essence of a university has been distorted.

It is officially accepted that the educational facilities, curriculum and research activities at Pohang Engineering College are unsurpassed, nevertheless, the best qualified candidates prefer to enter universities in Seoul. It would also appear that most regional universities are underestimated in their academic and research capabilities. It is conjectured, since most members of the evaluation committees are based in Seoul, that there is a bias against provincial universities.

Provincial universities number many excellent professors on their faculty, and the results of their research work compare favorably with any of those produced by professors based at universities in Seoul. Furthermore sometimes the results are even superior because there are fewer additional duties and more opportunity to focus away from the capital.

The quality of education in provincial universities is equivalent to that in Seoul. For example the results of the national examinations for medical practitioners

and pharmacists showed no difference between candidates from provincial universities and universities in Seoul. As previously mentioned if the grades of entering students are equivalent, the ensuing education should be of the same caliber. In contrast the results of the judicial examination showed a huge disparity between Seoul candidates and provincial candidates. This merely reflects the differences in the grades of the entering students rather than the quality of the university education.

3) Are provincial residents third class?

The most serious problem caused by the migration of elite is the loss of self respect in the provinces. After the best students are recruited by Seoul universities the provincial universities are left with the less talented and poor students. As a result the local residents lose pride in their university and lose an aspect of self respect. They perceive the solution to their loss is to become self confident like Seoulites. Therefore, a successful provincial university graduate will not be satisfied with employment in a medium or small sized local company but instead will seek to be employed along with the so-called elite in Seoul. Thus the gap between the two perpetuates and the provincial concept of third class students, third class professors, third class officials, third class enterprises, third class politicians, even third class journalists persists.

The population in Seoul continues to increase due to education. Accompanying the migration of talent to the capital are local funds and people. Even large provincial cities are decreasing in size. After the rich and successful residents leave the provinces for Seoul the remaining community is left helpless and any power for future development is lost.

3. Why do we need the Regional Elite Quota System?

In an advanced country, the provinces and the

nation's capital are all in competition with each other. A well balanced country will appoint talent to keep the regional balance. The kinds of Regional Elite Quota Systems have been implemented in the U.S.A., the U.K. and Germany.

Currently, the elite public positions, for example judicial officers, high-ranking administrative officials, high-ranking foreign officials, high-ranking technical positions, certified public accountants and patent attorneys, are all selected by national professional qualifying examinations.

In the present circumstances there is no way to prevent the privileged few concentrating in Seoul, and thus there is no way to nourish the development of the regional universities. The REQS is crucial if we are going to see any progress on a local level. This system would apportion successful candidates regionally according to the size of the local population.

There is some doubt as to the effectiveness of such a system and there was criticism that S University was reorienting its educational priorities to become a preparatory institute for the national examination such is the power and influence of the elite course national examinations.

It is clear that the quota system can achieve the desired results particularly in the provinces. With greater opportunities in the national examinations gifted students will be encouraged to apply to the provincial universities. This in turn will result in a more even distribution of the capable high school graduates across all universities and a reduction in the enormous amounts of money spent by parents sending their children to universities in Seoul.

University expenses of a student at Seoul costs 15,600,000won in a year, so that regional layman cannot afford to send his kids to Seoul universities. Every year 2000 gifted student or wealthy family students are amounted to enroll in universities in Seoul, in turn it implies that outflow fund amounts to as great as 2000wok won per year to Seoul from Taegu. Kyungpook province send 2500 students⁶⁾.

We can also find several examples of quota systems

that relate to race or gender. One such example is the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 in the U.S.A. which attempted to provide equal employment opportunity for historically discriminated groups such as racial minorities and women. In addition the U.S.A. is encouraging government agencies and government affiliated educational institutions with 15 or more employees to implement the Affirmative Action Program. Private enterprises are also responsible for proving nondiscrimination.

The Affirmative Action Program includes a quota system. For example, a U.S. district court determined that 60% of the new appointments to the police force should be from minority groups until the overall percentage of minority officers employed, in proportion to their representation in the local community, reached 30% of the total force. (Office for Justice vs. Civil Service Commission)

A judicial precedent from the U.S. Supreme Court which is often cited confirmed that the quota system itself was constitutional. (Regents of the University of California vs. Bake, 1978)

Representative Bureaucracy is also pervasive in the U.S.A. This argues that the composition of public servants should reflect that of the local community so that a local government can be sensitive to the needs of its people⁷⁾.

Even though Harvard is considered to be the best university in the U.S.A. as a direct result of the above mentioned quota systems, the best students do not all attend there.

Chosun dynasty, even feudalistic society, also implemented the smiliar system to recruit government elites, whom were allocated to the regional level in proportion to the size of population of the region⁸⁾.

1) The strongest enthusiasm for education in the world

Last year there was a special initiative applied to students from farming and fishing communities. It was a quota system that gave preferential university entry to students from Eub and Myon, districts in Kun

county, (up to 2% of the total student population). Because high school graduates from Eub and Myon had a higher chance of entering university there was a sudden movement of population to fishing and farming communities. The government declared the program a success and increased the quota entry ratio from 2% to 3% of the total student population. However, this shift of population to fishing and farming communities may only be a temporary phenomenon and it is hard to tell whether the parents will stay in these communities after their children have entered university.

Seoul National University also planned to select a quota of students from farming and fishing communities, however, provincial universities often complained, 'Otherwise they will enter our university...'

The 8th school district in Kangnam, Seoul, collapsed as a result of the policy which associated success in the university entrance examination with the candidate's high school record.

As emphasized previously, the population can be decentralized according to education variables, notwithstanding, so far no serious countermeasure has emerged to help develop the provinces and the provincial universities while limiting the overcrowding in Seoul.

2) The Regional Elite Quota System in action

Medical and teacher's colleges alike currently use the REQS. Thus provincial students need not graduate from Seoul colleges in order to qualify as doctors, dentists, pharmacists and teachers. As a result many talented students now enter regional universities to pursue these careers.

On examination of the National Examination for medical Practitioners there is no difference in the quality of education between Seoul and the provinces and the ration of successful candidates is the same in the provinces as in Seoul. This phenomenon could equally apply to the training of lawyers.

3) The Quota System in National Examinations

In 1996, a total of 1,225 people were selected by the government through the National Examinations. Using the quota system, 11.7% (or 144) of those selected should come from universities located in the areas of Taegu and Kyungbuk (TK) which represent 11.7% of the total population. In this way provincial universities, representing 75% of the total population, would, therefore, produce 75% of all successful candidates. This would give a tremendous boost to the growth and prestige of these regional universities. It must be noted that successful candidates in the provincial universities, as in Seoul, are given official orders by the national government.

If the quota system is implemented surely the most talented students will not by necessity move to Seoul but rather stay in the provinces. It is estimated that 450 Taegu high school graduates entered S university this year, many of whom will be preparing for the National Examinations.

4) The hidden potential of failed National Examination candidates.

By virtue of the REQS, 144 applicants would be eligible to pass the National Examinations in TK region, an affirmative step and a substantial increase from the current average of 30. Nevertheless thousands of candidates in TK will fail in the national Examinations due to the high rate of competition. Yet these are often high caliber people and by remaining in the provinces they can play the key role to future local development in parallel with center, Seoul.

To boost up regional economics in long run, there are two major factors; human resource and finances, yet it is people that are more important. The key to the local development theory is; where there is a nucleus of talented people they will attract funding and enterprise.

In the 21st century the key factor will be knowledge and the knowledge industry will grow on the foundation of gifted students. When gifted people are equally distributed across the nation then businesses, industry, enterprises will naturally ensue resulting in

Table 1. Allocation of National Examination according to REQS

(1996)

District	Ratio of Local Population to Total Population	Number of Successful Applicants allotted by REQS							TOTAL
		Judiciary exam.	Judge Advocate exam.	Administrative exam.	Technical exam.	Foreign Affairs exam.	CPA exam.	Patent Attorney exam.	
Seoul	25.0	125	10	48	12	10	88	15	308
Kyungee	17.9	89	7	34	8	7	62	11	218
Pusan / Kyungnam	17.2	86	7	33	8	7	60	10	211
Taegu / Kyungbuk	11.7	59	5	22	5	5	41	7	144
Kwangju / Chenam	8.4	42	3	16	4	3	29	5	102
Taejen / Chungnam	7.0	35	3	13	3	3	26	4	87
Kangwon	3.6	18	1	7	2	1	13	2	44
Chungbuk	3.2	16	1	6	1	1	11	2	38
Chenbuk	4.8	24	2	9	2	2	17	3	59
Cheju	1.2	6	0	2	1	0	4	1	14
TOTAL	100.0	500	39	190	46	39	351	60	1,225

a balanced regional and national development.

5) The delay of implementation for 4 years

If the REQS is implemented immediately, students currently enrolled in provincial universities will become eligible for key national positions. Due to the current lack of talented students in the regional universities this could pose a problem for maintaining the current high standard of successful candidates in the National Examinations. Therefore, there needs to be an advance public notification that the REQS will be introduced in 4 years time. As a consequence more gifted students will start to enter the regional

universities and gradually the quality balance will be restored between the universities in Seoul and the provinces. The deterioration of provincial universities will be halted and the real academic competition will begin.

4. Too serious an illness for the provinces and provincial universities

The relationship between Seoul and the provinces is commensurate in a limited national human resource. If Seoul occupies a larger slice of the pie then

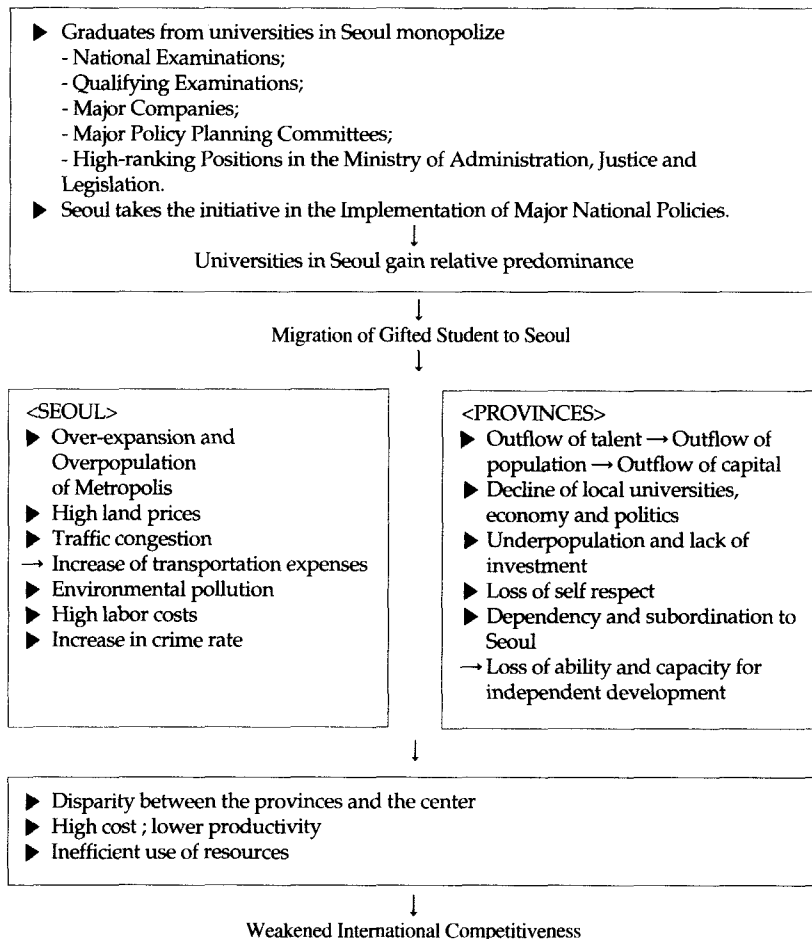


Figure 1. Result of elite centralization

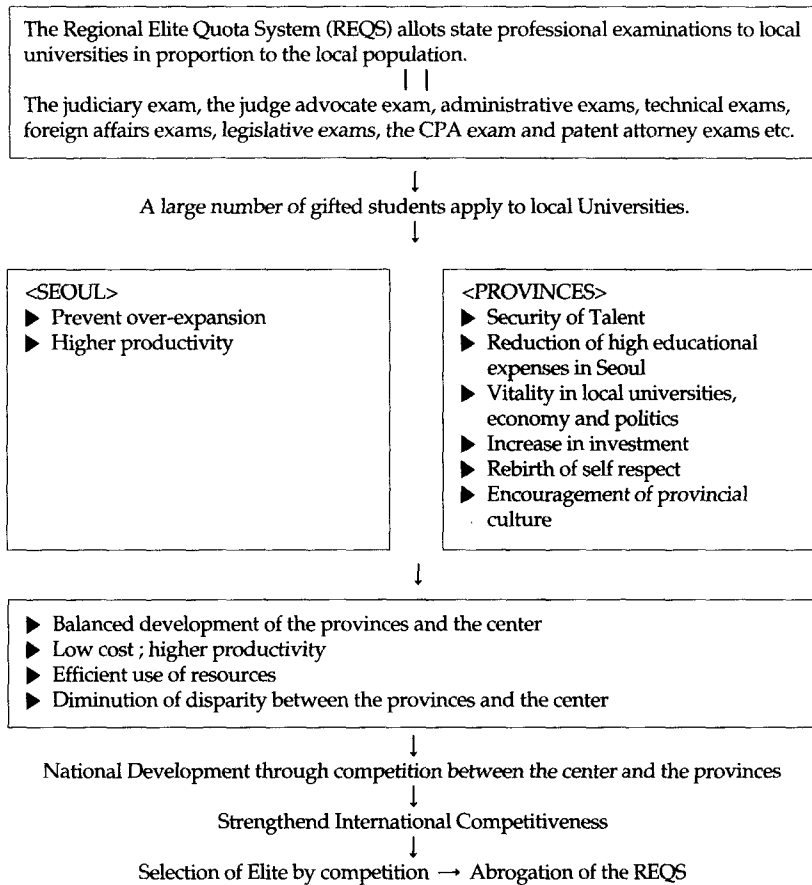


Figure 2. Provincial elite and circle of development.

provinces get a smaller one and vice versa. The development of provincial universities must take account of this inherent dynamic.

The universities in Seoul currently have a monopoly on the talented students. If this monopoly is beneficial for the overall development of Seoul and thereby whole nation then it should be sustained even to the detriment of the provincial universities. However, if on the other hand this monopoly on the gifted impedes national development it must be modified.

In the 21st century the most important factors for national development will be knowledge and information. In 1995 the Samsung Electronic

Company exported semiconductors worth US \$10 billion. These semiconductors had been developed by a research team of only 5 persons. In an information-oriented society a scholar has a far greater potential to increase production than a million workers. A university is the delivery room for technology and invention and thus pays a crucial role in leading the future for society.

The population of Seoul is constantly increasing as a result of the determined efforts of all gifted students to find their place in the nation's capital. Yet it is clear that Seoul is now too large and faces insurmountable traffic problems, soaring real estate prices which rank second in the world and a cost of living that is only

surpassed by Japan and Frankfurt.

During the past thirty years, the balance of the regional development has evidently been a cornerstone of Korean national development policy. However, any new initiative has only served to support the development of the nation's capital, perhaps merely a reflection of Seoul's consolidation of the privileged few.

Seoul must lose weight in order to increase efficiency and promote a balanced national economy. If we use our enthusiasm for education as a catalyst towards this goal supported by the REQS perhaps we can achieve momentous results for Seoul, the provinces and the whole nation.

It should be noted, however, that the support of the REQS will only be needed for a limited period of time. Whereas the policy of protective trading should only be adopted when the balance of trade is in the red, similarly the affliction of the provincial universities is so serious that free market competition alone cannot cure the situation.

Notes

- 1) Lee, Keun-Young, 1995. "Perspectives of National Land Development Policy Orientation, 21 Century," Symposium on the 50th anniversary of liberation of Korea of the Korean geographical society, Proceedings, the Korean Geography present, past and future, October 13-14 Seoul National University, pp. 11-14, 1995.
- 2) New York's landscape exemplified the ultimate material expression of a capitalist city. Its commercial and residential districts were experiencing unlimited expansion, both horizontal and vertical, and its merchantile and financial elite class continued a never-ending search for conspicuous consumption, using their residences and commercial buildings as the outward forms of such display. New York was, in any ways, what Christine Boyer calls the 'quintessential bourgeois society, and its economy can be characterized as one of competitive capitalism, in the sense that unbirdled

economic growth was the major goal of the economic and political systems', Boyer, M. Christine. 1985 Manhattan manners, architecture and style 1850-1900. New York: Rizooli Publications. p. 1

- 3) Seoul Metropolis Research Institute, 1996.
- 4) ... if the probability of success in securing a modern sector job is higher for those with more education their expected income differential will be higher and the more likely they will be to migrate the cities.
Michael P. Todaro, Economic Development in the Third World, second edition, p. 242, Longman Inc., New York, 1981.
- 5) In the 1970s K high school, a prestigious school in Taegu, had 164 of their graduates enter Seoul National University, the best university in Seoul. According to the alumni records only 4 of these students returned to Taegu after finishing their university studies the rest remained in Seoul.
- 6) Every year approximately 2,000 highschool students in Taegu come up to Seoul to continue their study in the universities. Their parents in Taegu pay the school and living expenses, which goes on for six years at most. It does impose a heavy burden on local economy consequently.
 - School expense per person a year ; 12,000,000 won
 - Living expense per person a year ; 9,600,000 won (12 months × 800,000 won)
 - School and living expense per year ; 15,600,000 won
 - * Outflow money to seoul for school and living expense per year ; 187,200,000,000 won
((6years × 16,600,000 won) × 2,000 person = 187,200,000,000 won)

If local government executed a thousand billion budget, ten percentage of total budget would be supported by the central government. Therefore the education expense for studying in Seoul have as much economical effect as a thousand billion funds.

- 7) Kim Youn-sang, Park Chan Suk, *The Regional Elite Quota System: Suggestion for the Solution of Province Discrimination*, University Education, Associate of University Education, pp56-63, 1997(1-2)
- 8) According to the *KyungKuk Daejeon*, the Chosun government took two examinations for recruiting elites. The first test(Chosi) was carried out in each

provinces and the second test(Haesil) was performed by the first successful candidates in Seoul. The quorum of first test was allocated to the

regional level in proportion to the size of population of the region.

Hansung	Kyungee	Kyungsang	Chungchong	Chenra	Kangwan	Hwanghae	Peungan	Hamkyung	Total	Haesi	
Sangwan	200	60	100	90	90	45	35	45	35	700	100
Jinsa	200	90	100	90	90	45	35	45	35	700	100
Munga	90	20	30	25	25	15	10	15	10	240	33
Muga	70	-	30	25	25	10	10	10	10	190	28