

The study on general perception of *Academical clique Ideology*, the reason of vocational education avoiding phenomena, and policies to overcome the problems

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직업교육기피 현상의 원인인 '학벌주의'에 대한 인식과 극복 방안 연구

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국문초록

우리 사회에서 학벌주의는 여러 가지 사회·경제적 문제를 유발시키고 있다. 또한, 학벌주의는 과열 사교육비의 증가, 과도한 대학 입시 경쟁, 대학의 서열 고착화 등의 교육문제를 유발시키면서 공업교육을 비롯한 직업교육을 기피하게 하는 원인을 제공하는 등 교육 전반에 걸쳐 큰 영향을 미치고 있다. 이러한 문제점을 내포하고 있는 학벌주의를 극복하기 위해 노력하는 일은 우리 사회를 능력중심사회로 발전시킬 수 있는 계기를 마련해 줄 수 있고, 학습자들의 소질과 적성에 부합하는 진로를 선택할 수 있는 계기를 제공해 준다는 점에서 그 의의가 매우 크다.

학벌주의의 극복을 위한 대책의 효율적인 추진을 위해서는 무엇보다도 다양한 사회 구성원의 학벌주의에 관한 인식을 정확하게 파악하는 연구가 필요하다. 더욱이 최근에 정부가 학벌주의 개선을 위한 다양한 대책을 구상하고 있는 현 시점에서는 그간에 논의된 이들 개선 대책에 관한 의견도 동시에 조사·분석할 필요가 있다.

이러한 필요성에 기초하여 이 연구에서는 우리 사회의 다양한 구성원을 대상으로 학벌주의에 관한 인식과 개선 요구를 조사 연구함을 주 목적으로 하였다. 이를 위하여 첫째, 사회의 다양한 구성원을 대상으로 학벌주의의 원인과 문제점에 대한 인식을 종합적으로 조사하였다. 둘째, 사회의 다양한 구성원을 대상으로 학벌주의의 개선 요구 사항을 종합적으로 조사하였다. 셋째, 조사 결과가 함의하는 시사점을 도출하였다.

연구 결과 학벌주의의 극복을 위한 실천 대책을 수립하는 과정에서 중시되어야 할 관점은 다음과 같다. 첫째, 학벌주의의 개념 정립이 필요하다. 둘째, 학벌주의는 다른 나라보다 우리나라에서 더욱 심각한 사회 문제로 접근되어야 한다. 셋째, 학벌주의 형성 원인에 대한 정확한 이해와 분석에 기초한 대책 수립이 필요하다. 넷째, 학벌주의의 원인은 교육제도 내에서보다는 사회 전반에서 구명되고, 그 극복 대책이 마련되어야 한다. 다섯째, 대중적(對症的)인 대책보다는 장기적이고 근본적인 대책 마련이 필요하다. 여섯째, 학벌주의 극복 대책의 지향점은 학습자의 올바른 진로정치의 계기 마련과 이를 통한 능력중심 사회의 구현이 되어야 한다.

Key words: 학벌(academical clique), 학벌주의(academical clique Ideology),
능력중심사회(competence-based society), 진로정치(career placement)

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I. Proposition of study

Academical clique is defined as the social status given to graduates of certain universities in Korea. Academical clique Ideology refers to an ideology that justifies discriminations in rewarding individuals based on what universities persons have graduated, rather than giving the persons economic and social benefits commensurate with his/her competences and performances.

Academical clique Ideology in Korean society has caused many problems social and economic. It has had negative impact on the educational system as well, among them the increase of spending in private education, excessive competition to enter a small number of prestigious universities and consolidation of the university ranking. Also, it affects a huge effect to the overall education such as a discrepancy between supply and demand in labor market, a deeping of manpower shortage problem in manufacturing field, a weakening of economical growth potential, a knowledge distortion about work, an obstruction to career placement and etc.(Choi, 2001; Kim, 2001). Trying to overcome the academical clique, which includes those problems, has a great significance in laying the foundation about developing our society as ability-oriented society, in offering the chances of choosing the career according to the learners' quality and aptitude. After all, making efforts to overcome academical clique ideology is expected to help reform the Korean society into a more competence-based society(Lee, 2001; Hong, 2002).

Foremost in the attempt to overcome academical clique ideology should be the research to identify how various members of the society perceive this phenomenon. It is also

necessary to gather and analyze opinions on the policies that the government is considering to overcome academical clique ideology.

This research primarily aims to meet these needs by identifying how academical clique ideology is seen by diverse groups in our society, and what demands exist for reducing the impacts of academical clique ideology.

II. Methodology

The research focused on universities, which are the educational institutions most seriously affected by academical clique ideology. Researchers conducted the 'Survey on Perception of Academical Clique Ideology and Demands for Improvement' from 9 October to 14 November. The sample included those groups that are under substantial influence of academical clique ideology, such as workers in private companies who have a bachelors degree(450 respondents), workers in public organizations who have a bachelors degree(450 respondents), HRM officers in private companies(100 respondents), high school students(400 respondents), undergraduates(400 respondents), parents(250 respondents) and teachers(250 respondents), in total 2,300 people.

After purposeful sampling 7 groups which were selected as the object of research, allotted them according to the proportion within groups. The detailed sampling selection method is following.

The 450 workers in private companies who have a bachelors degree were selected from the people who work in medium or big companies with a bachelors degree and the sampling standard is the number of workers according to the company size. To sampling the HRM officers in private companies, 100 companies

were selected in proportion to the number of workers according to the company size and selected one HRM officer from each company, thus the total sample number became 100.

The 450 workers in public organizations who have a bachelors degree were selected in the same proportion to organizations. This group is consisted with 225 university graduated 1~9 level general public officers who belong to the Administration and 225 university graduated workers who work at government affiliated organizations.

The sample of 400 high school students and 250 parents were selected in proportion to regions(Seoul, Kyung-Gi, Young-Nam, Ho-Nam, Chung-Chung, Kang-Won) and curriculum(academic high school 70%, vocational high school 30%). Also undergraduates were selected according to the major in same proportion first, then 400 undergraduates samples were selected in same proportion to regions(Seoul, Kyung-Gi, Young-Nam, Ho-Nam, Chung-Chung, Kang-Won). The teachers of elementary, middle, high school and universities were sampled according to school level and regions(Seoul, Kyung-Gi, Young-Nam, Ho-Nam, Chung-Chung, Kang-Won) in same proportion.

Questions in the survey addressed causes of academical clique ideology, the problems that are rooted in academical clique ideology and their possible solutions. Respondents were asked to consider multiple aspects of each issue: namely, the individual aspect, social aspect, the aspect of organizational HRM, and the educational aspect.

Surveys were either sent by mail or conducted through personal interview. Response rate was 95%, and results were analyzed with focus on frequency and percentage.

III. Survey Outcomes

A. Causes and problems of academical clique ideology

According to the survey, academical clique is considered to be a critical factor in acquiring a certain level of economic and social status in society. 61.0% of the sample group chose academical clique as the most decisive success factor given individuals have equal level of competence, while 15.9% and 9.2% chose the individuals credential and regional background, respectively.

<Table 1> The most decisive success factor given individuals have equal level of competence (unit: %)

Response	Academical clique	Credentia l backgr ound	Region al backgr ound	Blood relatio n	Etc.	Total
Frequency	61.0	15.9	9.2	9.1	4.8	100.0

The biggest obstacle that graduates of second or third tier universities faced in society was the difficulty in finding employment(59.9%). Other hardships noted were the difficulty in getting a promotion at work(21.0%) and disrespectful treatment in the workplace(9.6%).

<Table 2> The biggest obstacle that graduates of second or third tier universities faced in society (unit: %)

Response	The difficu lty in findin g emplo yment	The difficu lty in getting a promoti on at work	Disrespe ctful treatm ent in the work- place	Low inco me	The difficu lty in finding fianc(e)	Etc.	Tota l
Frequency	59.9	21.0	9.6	5.6	2.3	1.6	100.0

<Table 3> employment practice in companies significantly intensifies the impact of academical clique ideology

(unit: %)

Item content	Frequency
The existing HRM policy in companies which consider academical clique as an important qualification	41.2
The educational policy of government	21.4
Media coverage of the university entrance exam also consistently reinforces the ranking of universities in the minds of the public	17.1
The public organizations' policy of taking a serious view of academical clique	10.0
The entrance examination institutes which want to take an advantage of entrance examination industry	5.1
Etc.	5.1
Total	100.0

It was found that employment practice in companies significantly intensifies the impact of academical clique ideology. Slightly less than half of the respondents(41.2%) answered that what most aggravates academical clique ideology is the existing HRM policy in companies which consider academical clique as an important qualification. Media coverage of the university entrance exam also consistently reinforces the ranking of universities in the minds of the public, thus fostering academical clique ideology.

The survey discovered that respondents believe academical clique ideology hinders social integration. 70.6% of the respondents responded that academical clique ideology made graduates of lower tier schools feel deprived. 64.0% believed it excessively intensifies competition to get into prestigious universities and leaves the unsuccessful students branded as failures in society. More than half(57.4%) of respondents have experienced an inferiority complex on account of their academical clique. The outcomes imply that academical clique ideology is negatively correlated with social

<Table 4> The academical clique ideology problem in the aspect of personal/social

(unit: %)

Item content	Response			
	dis-agree	undecided	agree	total
Academical clique ideology made graduates of lower tier schools feel deprived	11.8	17.7	70.6	100.0
Academical clique ideology excessively intensifies competition to get into prestigious universities and leaves the unsuccessful students branded as failures in society	13.7	22.4	64.0	100.0
Academical clique ideology as a greater problem than credentialism and thus deserving greater attention	17.7	23.6	58.8	100.0
Many respondents have experienced an inferiority complex on account of their academical clique	13.1	29.6	57.4	100.0
Academical clique is the outcome of a fair competition between individuals	40.8	28.0	31.2	100.0

integration.

According to the survey, the majority of respondents saw academical clique ideology as a greater problem than credentialism and thus deserving greater attention. 58.8% of the sample group held this view. Opinions were almost equally divided on whether or not academical clique is the outcome of a fair competition between individuals. 31.2% replied that academical clique is the result of fair competition while 40.8% held the opposite view. The result implies that a reform of the current system of university entrance examination is necessary.

Academical clique is one of the critical factors in the employment of individuals. 64.8% agreed with the statement that academical clique is considered by private companies as a deciding factor in recruitment. Only 16.8% disagreed with this statement. Within the sample group, 67.3% of undergraduates, 64% of workers in private companies with a bachelors degree, and 64% of HRM officers in companies acknowledged the statement as being true. Respondents in general were critical of the HRM policies in companies that give weight to academical clique. Only 18.5% supported such policy as being reasonable while 61.3% opposed it. Half of the B.A. degree holders who work in companies(51.1%) and 45.0% of the HRM officers felt emphasizing academical clique is an unsound policy. Supporters of this policy were 29.1% of workers who hold a B.A. degree and 34% of HRM officers in the sample. The results show that enterprises should reconsider their current recruitment practice and make the necessary modifications.

The survey found that there is little correlation between the workers academical clique and productivity. Only 29.8% accepted the statement that in the private companies,

the productivity is higher for graduates of top universities than for those of less reputable universities. 35.2% refuted this statement. A similar question was asked in the context of public organizations. 25.5% of the sample agreed that workers in public organizations who have earned their degrees in first-tier universities are more productive than those who have graduated from lower tier universities. 37.8% felt this assertion ungrounded.

In both private enterprises and public organizations, academical clique may affect the assessment of individuals performance. 59.5% and 51.1%, respectively felt that performance evaluation in private companies and public organizations is affected by prejudice on account of academical clique. Those who felt such prejudice did not influence worker evaluation accounted for only 14.5%(in private companies) and 18.6%(in public organizations), respectively. The survey also showed that academical clique ideology could take effect through an alumni network of a first-tier university. 66.3% agreed to the claim that such an alumni network can facilitate the promotion of its members in private companies, while 55.5% agreed that the claim also holds true in public organizations. Considerably less number of people disagreed with the claim, only 13.5% and 17.4% respectively responded that the claim does not hold true in private companies and public organizations. Asked to consider the validity of academical clique as an indicator of vocational competency, a clear majority asserted academical clique would not be an accurate indicator(66.9% in the case of private companies and 67.8% in the public organizations). A very small number of people held that academical clique could serve as a meaningful indicator of vocational

<Table 5> The academical clique ideology problem in the aspect of HRM in private organizations

(unit: %)

Item content	Response			
	dis-agree	unde-cided	agree	total
The validity of academical clique as an indicator of vocational competency, a clear majority asserted academical clique would not be an accurate indicator	9.3	23.7	66.9	100.0
Academical clique ideology could take effect through an alumni network of a first-tier university	13.5	20.2	66.3	100.0
Academical clique is considered as a deciding factor in recruitment	16.8	18.4	64.8	100.0
Some people, who took a job depending on academical clique, are in difficulties because their majors are in discord with their businesses	7.2	28.1	64.6	100.0
Performance evaluation in private companies is affected by prejudice on account of academical clique	14.5	25.9	59.5	100.0
The productivity is higher for graduates of top universities than for those of less reputable universities	35.2	35.0	29.8	100.0
The HR policy of taking a serious view of academical clique is reasonable in recruitment	61.3	20.2	18.5	100.0

Note: Highschool students and parents of students are not included in the target group of this examination

<Table 6> The academical clique ideology problem in the aspect of HRM in public organizations

(unit: %)

Item content	Response			
	dis-agree	unde-cided	agree	total
The validity of academical clique as an indicator of vocational competency, a clear majority asserted academical clique would not be an accurate indicator	9.0	23.2	67.8	100.0
Academical clique ideology could take effect through an alumni network of a first-tier university	17.4	27.0	55.5	100.0
Performance evaluation in public organizations is affected by prejudice on account of academical clique	18.6	30.4	51.1	100.0
The productivity is higher for graduates of top universities than for those of less reputable universities	37.8	36.7	25.5	100.0

Note: Highschool students and parents of students are not included in the target group of this examination

competency(9.3% in the private companies and 9.0% in the public organizations). These results together show that despite the fact that academical clique is not a sound indicator of vocational competency, it nevertheless has both

direct and indirect influence on HRM in private and public organizations. This raises the necessity of developing new indices to measure vocational competency of individuals.

<Table 7> The problem of academical clique ideology on the educational system

(unit: %)

Item content	response			
	dis-agree	unde-cided	agree	total
Academical clique ideology has definitively ranked universities and has thus brought about excessive competition to enter top universities	7.8	10.8	81.4	100.0
University ranking based on academical clique ideology has negatively affected schools outside of Seoul	7.1	12.8	80.1	100.0
The reason of the poor public education and the expansion of private education	10.6	14.9	74.6	100.0
Academical clique is more helpful in improving the status · economic advantage than in learning development.	14.0	16.7	69.3	100.0

Note: Highschool students and parents of students are not included in the target group of this examination

Not surprisingly, academical clique ideology was found to exercise considerable influence on the educational system. As much as 81.4% felt that academical clique ideology has definitively ranked universities and has thus brought about excessive competition to enter top universities. A meager 7.8% disagreed. 80.1% agreed that university ranking based on academical clique ideology has negatively affected schools outside of Seoul, while 7.1% disagreed. The results show it is necessary to develop ways to reduce side effects of university ranking, to strengthen support for graduates looking for

employment, to foster variegation and specialization of curriculum, and to increase opportunities for participation in lifelong vocational education so that individuals may develop competencies that can compensate for their academical clique.

B. Demand for overcoming academical clique ideology

Respondents have their own opinions on the policies the government has so far considered

<Table 8> The overcoming counterplan of academical clique ideology in social level

(unit: %)

Item content	Response			
	dis-agree	unde-cided	agree	total
Limiting media coverage of university entrance exams and programs that highlight academical clique of individuals earned greatest support	6.5	23.4	70.1	100.0
Adopting a regional quota system in student recruitment	17.4	22.1	60.5	100.0
Legislating a discrimination prevention act and then founding a committee on discrimination prevention	14.6	27.9	57.5	100.0
Setting a legal limit on the ratio of graduates from certain universities that may be recruited by a public organization.	21.4	28.8	49.8	100.0

Note: Highschool students and parents of students are not included in the target group of this examination

<Table 9> The overcoming counterplan of academical clique ideology in private organizations' HRM level

(unit: %)

Item content	Response			
	dis-agree	unde-cided	agree	total
Implementing a national policy to give incentives to individuals with good skills and qualifications	1.8	9.6	88.6	100.0
Introducing a brand new HRM system	2.6	12.2	85.3	100.0
Providing government support to vocational competence development system within the enterprise	2.7	13.8	83.5	100.0
Identifying and promoting enterprises that set an example in overcoming academical clique ideology	3.9	15.7	80.3	100.0
Abolishing the system of giving advantage points to graduates of prestigious universities during resume screening	4.8	15.0	80.3	100.0
Deleting from application forms the blank in which applicants are asked to specify the university they graduated from	11.2	24.2	64.5	100.0
Leaving the decision to the employers on whether or not to consider academical clique in recruitment	27.9	32.4	39.6	100.0

Note: Highschool students and parents of students are not included in the target group of this examination

adopting to overcome academical clique ideology.

The survey presented policies that may be implemented to overcome academical clique ideology and asked respondents to indicate whether or not they support them. Limiting media coverage of university entrance exams and programs that highlight academical clique of individuals earned greatest support(70.1%). 60.5% called for adopting a regional quota system in student recruitment. 57.5% supported legislating a discrimination prevention act and then founding a committee on discrimination prevention. 49.8% backed setting a legal limit on the ratio of graduates from certain universities that may be recruited by a public organization.

Measures that the government can implement to help reduce academical clique ideology in private companies by fostering reform of their HRM practice were generally

received favorably: These include implementing a national policy to give incentives to individuals with good skills and qualifications(88.6%), providing government support to vocational competence development system within the enterprise(83.5%), identifying and promoting enterprises that set an example in overcoming academical clique ideology(80.3%). Among suggested efforts that enterprises should make to reduce academical clique ideology, three were most preferred by respondents. On top of the list was introducing a brand new HRM system(85.3%), followed by abolishing the system of giving advantage points to graduates of prestigious universities during resume screening(80.3%) and deleting from application forms the blank in which applicants are asked to specify the university they graduated from(64.5%). In contrast, relatively fewer people were for leaving the decision to the employers on whether or not to

<Table 10> The overcoming counterplan of academical clique ideology in public organizations' HRM level

(unit: %)

Item content	dis-agree	unde-cided	agree	total
Introducing a pre-inspection system when the high level officeholder is prompt	3.5	16.8	79.7	100.0
Reorganizing the HRM system with a focus on competency and performance	4.7	16.5	78.8	100.0
Reducing recruitment by public servants examination(5th level) and instead employing experienced candidates from the private sector.	14.3	25.9	59.8	100.0

Note: Highschool students and parents of students are not included in the target group of this examination

consider academical clique in recruitment. 39.6% supported this suggestion while 27.9% opposed it.

Concerning HRM in public organizations, 78.8% of the sample voted in favor of

reorganizing the HRM system with a focus on competency and performance. 59.8% supported reducing recruitment by public servants examination(5th level) and instead employing experienced candidates from the private sector.

<Table 11> The overcoming counterplan of academical clique ideology in educational level

(unit: %)

Item content	dis-agree	unde-cided	agree	total
Universities should reinforce the employment support center in their institution	2.5	13.5	84.0	100.0
Internship and other programs that help undergraduates gain a firsthand experience of the workplace should be fostered	3.8	12.7	83.5	100.0
Fostering development of unique programs in the universities as a viable option	3.4	13.3	83.4	100.0
A government policy to aid the development of higher institutions outside of the capital city	5.3	13.9	80.8	100.0
Restructuring universities and strengthening quality control in these institutions as an imperative	4.6	14.7	80.7	100.0
Recommended carrying out a policy of minimizing private education and improving public education	5.8	14.3	79.8	100.0
It would be constructive to document the results of competency development programs so that they may be used in job search	7.1	23.3	69.7	100.0
A competency recognition system in which the individuals achievement in competency development will be recognized in the form of credits/credentials.	9.9	20.8	69.3	100.0
A transformation plan of the national academic aptitude test into the state-run qualifying tests for the entrance to colleges	9.7	25.4	64.9	100.0

Note: Highschool students are not included in the target group of this examination

A number of suggestions were presented to the sample group to consider with the educational aspect in mind. The two most preferred suggestions were aimed at giving better assistance to university graduates in finding employment. 84.0% felt that universities should reinforce the employment support center in their institution. 83.5% asserted that internship and other programs that help undergraduates gain a firsthand experience of the workplace should be fostered. The sample group also favored a set of measures that promote a reform of the overall educational system and institution. 83.4% chose fostering development of unique programs in the universities as a viable option. 80.8% called for a government policy to aid the development of higher institutions outside of the capital city. 80.7% saw restructuring universities and strengthening quality control in these institutions as an imperative. 79.8% recommended carrying out a policy of minimizing private education and improving public education. 64.9% agreed to modifying the current Scholastic Aptitude Test. Finally, the sample group gave positive responses to measures that may help expand the opportunity of lifelong vocational education. 69.7% felt it would be constructive to document the results of competency development programs so that they may be used in job search. 69.3% supported a competency recognition system in which the individuals achievement in competency development will be recognized in the form of credits/credentials.

IV. Recommendations

Recommendations for concrete action were made based on the survey outcomes and

conclusions.

Academical clique ideology is a social ill that must be reduced through efforts implemented throughout the Korean society. Programs should be developed and launched so that the public can participate in overcoming academical clique ideology. The mass media should voluntarily modify their conventional manner of depicting academical clique. The government should legislate affirmative action to prevent discrimination based on academical clique. The government should also come up with ways to inhibit negative effects of networking among people of same academical clique.

In the industries, HRM practices need to be modified to reduce side effects of academical clique ideology. To support this, a brand new set of National Skill Standards should be developed and along with it the plan to foster its use in HRM in enterprises. The government could also help by introducing a system to authorize basic vocational competence development programs and supporting efforts in the industries to reform their HRM system. Developing concrete plan of implementation for projects such as 'the Assistance for Good Recruitment Practice Enterprises' is also necessary.

To successfully modify HRM in public organizations with eliminating academical clique ideology in mind, innovative ideas should be turned into sound plans. Such initiatives include, reorganizing HRM system with a competence-performance focus and launching a system to encourage industries to recruit human resources from a regional balance perspective. Eliminating academical clique ideology should also involve efforts that focus on the educational sector. A viable alternative is increasing the opportunity for lifelong

vocational education so that people can gain the vocational competency enterprises want instead of academical clique. Institutions of higher education need to specialize their programs and curricula so that their students may develop a wide range of skills and competencies. The government, meanwhile, should come up with ways in which to assist these efforts. In addition, the government needs to draft detailed plans to support the efforts to reform the ranking of universities based on academical clique, to monitor observance of quota system in appointment of professors, to reform the current university entrance exam system and enhance the quality of public education, and to strengthen awareness education to enlighten the public to the problems of academical clique ideology.

Finally, future research should deal with important questions such as whether or not academical clique is a critical element to consider in assessing an individuals performance and competency. The effect of interaction between academical clique ideology and territorialism and between academical clique ideology and credentialism are also important subjects that deserve academic attention.

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