

Improper garbage disposal

[Education](#), [University](#)



With more college graduates than jobs, the government wrestles with what to do with them. South Korea is beginning to wrestle with the unappetizing fact that too many of its young are in college. Despite the very real success of its economy, the country can't manufacture enough jobs for its graduates – of which it produces a lot. Singapore, Taiwan and other Asian countries to some extent face the same glut. However, South Korea seems in a class by itself.

Some 86 percent of all high school graduates go on to college, and most expect to graduate with a degree. About 3.3 million students are enrolled in 347 universities – by one calculation one of every 14 South Koreans is a university student. A full 80 percent of parents fully expect their children to graduate with a degree. According to a study by the Samsung Economic Research Institute, the number of students in college is actually lowering gross domestic product by a full percentage point.

The country is regularly faced with the odd phenomenon of newspaper stories about many of its brightest graduates who are forced to enroll in vocational schools in order to get a job after graduation – including a recent story in the Korea Herald about a young woman with a degree in French who enrolled in a course to become a Starbucks barista. Other tales have philosophy graduates learning to become bakers. Fewer than half of those who graduated in 2010 had found full time jobs by the end of 2011.

That has pushed the South Korean government to promote vocational skills as an alternative to college, with President Lee Myung-bak turning up to open the Sudo Electric Technical High School in 20. Sudo is one of 21 so-called Meister Schools modeled on German vocational schools, that are <https://assignbuster.com/improper-garbage-disposal/>

being funded by the government and which guarantee graduates jobs. However, critics say lots more must be done and that in fact the entire education system must be redesigned. The 21 Meister schools are hardly enough, and the practical training aspects of their curricula mean funding must be increased considerably over that of academic high schools.

Certification systems for the students must also be introduced. According to the SERI study published last week, “ it is estimated that 42 percent of the nation’s college graduates are over-educated. ” Had those 42 percent bypassed college and started working immediately after high school, according to the study, South Korea’s gross domestic product would have been as much as a full percentage point higher. In addition, according to the study, maximum opportunity costs -- tuition plus forgone income -- from attending college total an estimated W19 trillion per year (US\$16.8 billion). That is W14.77 trillion for four-year university graduates and W4.24 trillion for two-year graduates. The average university graduate spends W119.6 million (US\$102,000) on his or her education and W53.6 million for two-year college graduates.

A college degree defines success, however, marginalizing high school graduates despite the fact that during the era of Korea's double-digit growth era, skilled technicians and craftsmen with high school degrees were credited with building the nation's infrastructure and lifted manufacturing up to global standards. But today, even those better suited for technical skilled jobs right after high school feel compelled to pursue a university degree,” according to the report. “ Over the past 10 years, corporate executives with only a high school degree have plunged to 2.6 percent from 7.2 percent. ”

It is relatively easy to see why the young opt for college despite the crowded campuses. If half the graduates are on the street, the odds are about the same for those with a high school diploma, and after being hired they are often headed for low-skill jobs.

In 2011, according to SERI, the employment rate of young people with a high school degree only was 59.1 percent and those who were working were employed in low value-added industries and hold sales, services, technical and other such positions. Mechanical jobs and sales account for 38 percent and 32.8 percent of working high school graduates, respectively. Consequently, high school graduates in 2011 had average monthly incomes of W1.46 million (US\$1250) -- 77 percent of that of university graduates and 90 percent of two-year graduates.

Job security among high school graduates also is considerably lower compared to young college graduates, according to SERI. In 2011, 72.4 percent of all employees with a university degree or higher were in permanent jobs while only 47.3 percent of high school graduates had them. The job of righting the situation basically almost means turning South Korean society, if not the education system, upside down, according to the SERI report. One of the big problems, according to a study by Clark W.

Sorenson for the Comparative Education Review, " Vocational schools, whether public or private, are generally considered less desirable than academic high schools by the public. " At one point during the 1960s and 1970s, according to Sorenson, the government hoped to educate up to 70 percent of students in vocational schools to provide technically trained factory workers only to have parents rebel. Thus, changing both parental and

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student attitudes will require comprehensive measures, including developing jobs in the base industries that are the cornerstones of Korean manufacturing competitiveness .

SERI recommends that a specialized organization be established to connect high school graduates to the companies that would seek to hire them. The high school curriculum also needs to be redesigned to equip high school students with what the study calls ready-to-use skill sets, teaching problem-solving skills and a sense of responsibility. The SERI study recommends borrowing an idea from the United Kingdom, which in 2008 introduced a diploma system that requires work experience for students 14-19 years in age to strengthen their career and job education.

Companies must also be brought into the equation to identify jobs graduates can fill and to expand open recruitment of high school graduates. It will also be necessary to address discrimination against applicants who have not yet fulfilled the nation's compulsory military service requirement, the study notes. Businesses tend to avoid these applicants because of concerns over lost productivity. However, recent policy reforms should assuage their worries. For example, high school graduates now may defer their military service for four years.

The point that needs to be made, however, is that Korean society has astonished the world with its ability to pivot and go in entirely new ways. It is not out of the realm of possibility that the country will go ahead and institute the reforms with the alacrity that got it this far, this fast. Set as favorite
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Re Graduate Unemployment written by Rob Schackne, June 11, 2012
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We are seeing a similar situation in urban China today, where the masses of graduates face an increasingly alarming dearth of jobs.

Where vocationalization, rather than education, has also got a bad smell. University graduates are waiting tables... though poorly. But I wonder what government initiative was it that beckoned forth all those young people into a dream of white-collar office work. Was it prosperity, the Tiger miracle? Don't get me wrong, education is a beautiful thing. I'd prefer to ride in a taxi driven by a well-educated French major than a taxed cretin. The conversation will be much better, and all that resentment is a good story that passes the time.