The Impact of OECD on South Korean Education Policy: Balancing Global Governance and National Demand (1993-2022)

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Abstract

This study focuses on the thirty-year period from 1993 to 2022, and analyses the impact of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on South Korean education policymaking process in the context of global governance. At the same time, the study looks into the context of globalisation and explores the unique value and significance of South Korean education governance in this context. The results of the study show that the external influence of global governance is not a "foreign factor" that contradicts a country's own development needs. On the contrary, as long as the influence of global governance is skillfully integrated with local democratic practices, it can be transformed into a powerful impetus for national education development and effectively serve the core needs of the country in the field of education. In the grand narrative of global education development, a crucial consensus is emerging: the key to the long-term development and ultimate success of global education programmes lies in the establishment of a pluralistic and balanced decision-making mechanism. Such a mechanism needs to take into account the practical demands of frontline education stakeholders, the strategic concerns of the national level, and the advanced concepts and norms advocated by international organisations such as the OECD. South Korean practical exploration in this area provides a vivid and convincing illustration of this theoretical consensus, and vividly explains how to find a balance in education policy decision-making in the complex and volatile international and domestic environments in order to promote the vigorous development of education.

Keywords: OECD; Globalisation; Policy Convergence; South Korea

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1. Introduction

In today's global governance system, international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have long been neglected for their influence on domestic policymaking around the world. However, their power and influence should not be taken lightly, as many academic studies and empirical cases have revealed (Barnett & Finnemore, 1999; Fraser & Smith , 2017). Since the beginning of the 1990s, the wave of globalisation and the marketisation of education have become more and more prominent, and international organisations have been playing a subtle but powerful role in the development of education policy at the national level (McNeely, 1995; Shahjahan, 2012). In the heat of global competition, countries are constantly looking at reports, country rankings and international comparative data published by international organisations in an attempt to improve their competitiveness in education (Wang, 2006; Davis, Kingsbury & Merry, 2012). The knock-on effects of this attention are particularly evident in the field of education policy.

The influence of international organisations spreads like a ripple, profoundly shaping the direction of national education policies (Li, 2020; Chen & Li, 2021; Wang, 2008). From well-written thematic country reports, to rigorous country rankings, to comprehensive and in-depth comparative data, such information acts as a 'compass' and 'wind vane' for policy formulation, and is an important reference point for countries in setting their policy agendas, planning policy reforms, and improving education outcomes. They have become important references for countries to set policy agendas, plan policy reforms, and improve educational outcomes (Morgan & Shahjahan, 2014). Numerous education researchers have explored this phenomenon extensively across national borders and on a global scale (Sellar & Lingard, 2017; Yin, 2024), arguing that the concept of "global" is no longer an abstract term in the field of education today, but has real significance. The use of international organisations as a platform for global governance is far from being an empty gesture, but holds great potential for global educational progress. Unfortunately, however, there is a gap in research that focuses on how countries are responding to the growing influence of international organisations in global governance that needs to be filled.

In the global governance influence map of international organizations, the situation in South Korea is quite representative. Since the Kim Young sam government (1993-1998), successive governments in South Korea have fully or partially adopted initiatives from international organizations through public statements or implicit policy guidance (Macdonald, 2018; Kim & Garland, 2019; Yi, 2018; De Wit & Altbach, 2021). The standards of international organizations are often directly internalized by the South Korean government as

binding norms, deeply guiding the direction of education policies (Yoon et al., 2016). Taking the OECD as an example, since the early 1990s, its policy recommendations have continued to form the core reference framework for South Korean education decision-making, and the South Korean government has remained faithful to them for a long time (Son, 2014).

In this study, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will serve as a key entry point for dissecting forms of global governance as one of the many influential governance entities that influence global education policy (OECD, 2019; Kruse et al., 2022). Although there have been studies on the impact of the OECD/PISA on global governance between 2000 and 2009 by scholars such as South Korean scholars Shin and Joo (2013), the focus of their studies has been mainly limited to specific policy cases introduced by the South Korean government. In contrast, this paper looks at a broader field, analysing in depth the historical and social context of the OECD's contribution to global governance, the South Korean government's policy convergence phenomenon in the process of education policy formulation, and the far-reaching impact of global governance on current education policies in a globalised world.

The central question of this study focuses on the following three aspects: firstly, how has OECD global governance influenced South Korean education policymaking since the Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998)? Secondly, what changes and interactions have occurred between OECD global governance and Korea's domestic governance system since 1993? Third, in the vertical time dimension, has the combined impact of global governance on South Korean education policy been positive or negative?

2. Theoretical background

Although the term 'governance' can be broadly interpreted, we agree with Lu Jiuhuan's (2022) conceptualization, which states that 'governance refers to the domination and guidance of behavior'. Understanding national education management requires consideration of the infiltration of international norms, values, and standards into policy-making through intangible pressure and diffusion mechanisms (Cantwell, Platonova & Froumin, 2023; Capistrano & Carvalho , 2022). The impact of global governance on education policies needs to be revealed through the governance practices of specific countries.

International organizations shape national education policies through a dual path of direct intervention and indirect influence. The direct path is reflected in policy recommendations and special reports released in the form of a "semi mandatory mechanism" (Sorensen, Ydesen & Robertson, 2021), providing systematic reform plans for member countries (Zhang, 2001; Carroll & Kellow, 2021; Canton , 2021); The indirect path is achieved through quantitative tools such as data-driven ranking and rating systems (Gouëdard, 2021; Tichenor et al., 2022).

This "standardization of cross-border relations" feature (Krahmann, 2003) is particularly prominent in national competitiveness indicators that are valued by government decision-makers, parliaments, and the media. Global governance, as a dynamic interactive system (Dingwerth et al., 2006), constitutes the core macro background for the formulation of education policies in the context of globalization.

Among numerous international actors, institutions such as the OECD, World Bank, and UNESCO have a significant impact on South Korean education policy, with the OECD being the most influential (Chun, Munyi & Lee 2010; Ji, Kim & Oh , 2020). Since South Korea took the initiative to align with global standards in the 1990s (Lee, 1999), although the OECD does not have mandatory powers, it has deeply intervened in South Korean education governance through direct policy evaluation and indirect statistical ranking (Kim, 2002; Kim & Choi, 2025; Bamberger & Kim 2023; Kim, 2017). The report data is regarded by the South Korean government as an objective standard for improving education quality and a legitimate basis for reform (Fisher, 2019; Kim, 2023), achieving the internalization process of global norms (Finnemore, 1996). This governance model is reflected not only in the dissemination of global standards and neoliberal ideas, but also in the driving mechanism of educational competition between countries (Zhu et al., 2020; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009).

The specific manifestation of the impact mechanism of the OECD is the implementation of policy evaluation through projects such as "Education Overview" and PISA assessment, and the construction of policy toolkits using reform proposals, quality standards, and ranking data. Its role is not limited to agenda setting, but also serves as a normative benchmark for educational innovation in various countries (Viennet & Pont, 2017; Harmsen & Braband, 2021). This governance practice reveals that international organizations substantially dominate the policy logic and practical direction of member states through evaluation frameworks and data indicators.

Although sovereign states retain autonomy in education policies, the pressure of globalization has prompted countries to actively adopt recommendations from international organizations and prioritize statistical rankings, a phenomenon known as policy convergence. Its essence is the recognition of international norms by policy makers, reflected in the standardization of structure, process, and performance (Drezner, 2001). Convergence stems from cross-border experience exchange, regulatory competition, and autonomous choice (Ziguras et al., 2014), and is also constrained by the global trend of homogenization.

Most member states and countries of international organizations have sovereignty and autonomy. International organizations do not have mandatory regulatory policy tools, but they have "soft power" - the ability to conduct various assessments and rankings worldwide through non coercive means to influence the behavior of other countries. This has led countries to choose to follow their policy recommendations.

Developing countries cannot simply ignore these ratings and rankings, as other developed countries and international organizations have established standards that often carry the cultural and value orientation of soft power. For example, the OECD uses its soft power to shape global education norms and encourage member countries to proactively align with international standards through the release of education policy reports and international rankings. There is power asymmetry within the OECD, with strong countries such as the United States and Europe leading the standard setting, which in turn affects the policy direction of member and non member countries. For example, as a developing country, South Korean education policy was deeply influenced by the OECD and maintained its status as a developing country until 2019.

3. Research methodology

This paper exam Indicators of Educational Systems the impact of the OECD in global governance and the South Korean government's response to it through document analysis, from the Kim Young-sam administration (1993-1998) to the Moon Jae-in administration (2017-2022), and also discusses the apparent residual impacts that have become apparent in recent years. Document analysis is a useful research method in policy analysis because researchers can collect and analyse reliable data on historical events and statements of policy actors through official documents that provide objective evidence to address research questions (McCulloch, 2004). In order to apply document analysis in educational policy research, it is important to collect and select reliable and valid documentary data and information that matches the research questions. Therefore, this study adopted the triangulation of mutual evidence through document collection and analysis methods, utilising multiple sources. This meant that it was particularly necessary to review official documents in South Korean and OECD documents to identify the specific impacts of particular education policy cases.

In order to collect and analyse the literature data through the triangulation method, we first looked extensively at official documents and research materials from each South Korean governmental period using search terms such as OECD, education policy, and the Ministry of Education (MOE) in order to investigate in depth the specific education policies related to the OECD.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) in South Korea was renamed the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOERD) in 2001, then the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2008, and then the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2013. In this paper, we use the uniform term "MOE". We focus on South Korean government documents, research reports, and research journals available through the MOE website and the KEDI homepage because the acceptance of standards and norms proposed by the OECD is based on the autonomy of the South Korean government. This study pays particular attention to reports prepared by KEDI for official South Korean government positions, as the South

Korean Ministry of Education relies on KEDI to produce the OECD's South Korea Background Report [62]. As a next step, after identifying a specific education policy case, we searched and collected news articles about the education policy case, using key words phrases such as OECD, the name of the specific education policy, and the Ministry of Education to review comments from government officials that could confirm the impact of global governance and provide additional objective data to demonstrate the impactful relationship between the OECD and South Korean education policy , while exploring domestic educational governance in relation to specific educational cases.

In order to identify the specific process and content of the South Korean government's response to the OECD's recommendations and international comparative data on South Korean education policy and policy convergence, online search Indicators of Educational Systems including Google and Naver South Korea were used to search for news articles. In addition, OECD documents were collected from the OECD library in the case of policies where the OECD's influence on South Korean education governance was confirmed.

Finally, academic research papers published in South Korean were collected using search terms such as OECD, education policy, and Ministry of Education or South Korea. Although there are fewer South Korean academic papers related to OECD global governance, these academic papers can provide critical perspectives on the nature of global governance and the South Korean government's response to it, as well as reveal critical perspectives that have not been disclosed in government documents, research reports, and news articles. To locate academic papers, we used the Research Information Sharing Service (RISS), which is operated with the support of the South Korean government.

In summary, this study collects and analyses cases of education policies where the impact of the OECD has been clearly confirmed through the triangulation method. This study did not focus exclusively on specific education policies due to the fact that the South Korean government's interest and focus on OECD comparative data and policy recommendations varies with each change of government. Therefore, we analysed official documents including academic articles, KEDI studies, KICE studies, journal materials from research institutes, news articles, OECD reports, and official documents released by the Ministry of Education in order to analyse cases of South Korean education policies influenced by global governance.

4. Findings

4.1 Kim Young-sam's Government (1993-1998): Globalisation begins to link up with OECD

The Kim Young-sam administration promoted democratisation and liberalisation through institutional reforms to enhance national competitiveness (Hahm & Kim, 1999). President Kim Young-sam also established globalisation as

a key fundamental policy for government administration. In order to promote this fundamental policy in the field of public education, the Kim Young-sam administration released the 5.31 Education Reform Plan in 1995. The plan was evaluated as a radical education policy because it not only promoted the marketisation of education, but also the democratisation, privatisation, liberalisation and decentralisation of education (Park, 2011). In this context, some South Korean education scholars consider the reform programme as the beginning of neoliberal education policies and trends in South Korea (Lee & Kim, 2016; Park, 2002; Fleckenstein & Lee, 2019).

Although the 5.31 Education Reform Programme was characterised by government-centred policymaking, unlike previous education policies, the South Korean government established an agenda for the 5.31 Education Reform that was developed in close consultation with the OECD (Gim, 2019). Kim, the then Deputy Minister of Education, briefly explained that the 5.31 education reform was "a direct result of information exchange with the OECD". Why, then, did the South Korean government discuss South Korean education reform with the OECD when it considered that the structure of the OECD's operations had been essentially a closed one since the 1980s? The most important reason is that South Korea, as a non-OECD member country, has difficulties in obtaining up-to-date information on educational issues and policy directions discussed at the global level (Jung, 2020). This historical fact is significant because the South Korean government has been actively adopting the OECD's concepts from an early stage in order to achieve globalisation and enter the ranks of developed countries by formulating the 5.31 Education Reform Plan, which is in line with international standards. It is noteworthy that during the Kim Young-sam administration, the South Korean government underwent a detailed education policy review by the OECD's Education Committee at the South Korean Education Policy Conference held in Seoul in December 1996, prior to joining the OECD. At this meeting, the OECD proposed tasks for South Korean education reform, including reforming the teacher education system to produce high-quality teachers, introducing an incentive system for teachers, guaranteeing freedom of political association for teachers, and strengthening foreign language education at universities.

Although these OECD policy recommendations were not completed under the Kim Young-sam administration, and the 1996 OECD policy recommendations were adopted by subsequent administrations, it is clear that the OECD trend towards global governance and neo-liberal education policies began and became the basis of South Korean education governance during the Kim Young-sam administration (Kim, 2005).

4.2 The Kim Dae-jung Administration (1998-2003): Generation and Diffusion of the Impact of OECD and PISA on Educational Governance in South Korea

During the Kim Dae-jung administration, the OECD began to strengthen its role and influence in the governance of education in South Korea, echoing the previous administration's trend towards globalisation (Doucette, 2009). Following the South Korean government's activities with the OECD, its most cited OECD data related to education policy is PISA (Park, & Lee, 2005 ; Hyun, 2020).PISA measures actual knowledge and skills in the global knowledge society (OECD, 2000), and results have been released every three years since 2000 (OECD, 2009). However, due to the lack of awareness of the existence of PISA and its content, the PISA 2000 results have not attracted enough attention from the South Korean government, media, and education scholars.

Despite the lack of interest in OECD PISA during the Kim Dae-jung administration, the importance of PISA2000 in South Korean educational governance was that it began to be used as a key piece of evidence for the implementation of educational excellence to enhance national competitiveness. In other words, the South Korean government began to realise that international comparative data should be used as a logical basis for the introduction and implementation of government policies, taking advantage of the public trust of the OECD. Regardless of regime change, the global governance of the OECD continues to influence the formation of South Korean education policy, an OECD phenomenon that is referred to as "a new form of governance for South Korean education policy." This statement implies that the influence of OECD comparative data on domestic education governance stems from the South Korean government's unlimited trust in the OECD [76].

On the other hand, the Kim Dae-jung government did not explicitly focus on the impact of the OECD, including the OECD PISA2000, on South Korean education policy because of the lack of human and organisational infrastructure to facilitate collaboration and research within the South Korean government (Park, & Lee, 2005). However, the Kim Dae-jung administration did begin to discuss participation in OECD projects to take advantage of OECD policy recommendations and international data.

KEDI, which has served as the focal point for the South Korean OECD Indicators of Educational Systems project since 1995, released a report in 2001 on the performance of South Korean participation in the Indicators of Educational Systems project and the current status of the Indicators of Educational Systems project. It is worth noting the South Korean University Reorganisation Policy ose for which the report was released. To this end, KEDI suggests that comparative data from the International Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) are needed to prepare for the era of globalisation and to obtain information for educational policy making through objective international comparative data. Considering that the Indicators of Educational Systems project aims to provide comparative data on the performance of the

education systems of OECD member countries and their partner countries (OECD, 2012), this statement by KEDI can be interpreted as a willingness of the South Korean government to make active use of the OECD international data in future policy formulation.

President Kim Dae-jung declared in his New Year's address in 2000 that he would develop South Korean educational environment to the level of the OECD, but although it is not possible through documentation to get a clear picture of the specific influence of the OECD on the specific educational policy formulation of the Kim Dae-jung administration, it is certain that the South Korean government based its macro direction and criteria for educational reform in the 21st century on the international data of the OECD (Canton, 2021). Thus, it can be argued that as the South Korean government's education reform principles became more closely aligned with the goals of the international data provided by the OECD, the tendency of the South Korean government to rely more on the OECD in subsequent administrations increased.

4.3 The Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008): from OECD and PISA to the strengthening of the power of global governance in higher education

Although the 2000 PISA had little impact on the Kim Dae-jung administration's educational governance, the South Korean government has been paying close attention to PISA since 2003 (임영신, 2018). German scholars Martens et al. (2013) note that "today, rankings and scores are used to assess states, their performance in certain policy areas, or government agencies". The behaviour/policies of the South Korean government are no exception. As shown in Table 1, reading proficiency improved, while maths and science scores declined in 2003. Nonetheless, South Korean students overall led the participating countries.

Table 1. South Korean international ranking in PISA results.

	reading literacy	mathematical literacy	scientific literacy
2000	6	2	1
2003	2	2	3
2006	1	1~2	5~9
2009	1~2	1~2	2~4
2012	1~2	1	2~4

2015	3~8	1~4	5~8
2018	2~7	1~4	3~5
2022	1~7	1~2	2~5

Source: National Statistical Office of South Korea (2024)

The South Korean government analysed the results as follows:

> Domestic students achieve excellent results in three subjects, reading and maths, exceeding the average of all OECD countries ..... [However] the proportion of domestic students who reach the OECD [average] is not high ..... The best tier of students, i.e. the group of students who meet international standards, is very scarce.(Ro, 2001)

The South Korean government understood the results from two perspectives: the current high school standardisation policy was not problematic and the South Korean government only needed to supplement the policy. Therefore, the Ministry of Education (2004) formulated the Comprehensive Plan for Educational Excellence (CPEE) in 2004, which aimed to balance the high school standardisation policy that had been in place since 1974. The policy aims to alleviate regional disparities in the level of high school education, address the issue of memory-based education, and reduce the learning burden of junior high school students. This case of policy formulation shows that although comparable data do not directly regulate the education systems and policies of other countries, the South Korean government still sees OECD data as a standard for reforming national education and legitimising the reform agenda (MOE, 2007; OECD, 2010b). It is important to note that PISA2003 and PISA 2006 have influenced South Korean education policymaking and domestic education governance, in contrast to the 'passive response' of the Kim Dae-jung administration. The main background is the growing awareness of policymakers of the importance of OECD international assessments.

The OECD has also been directly involved in education governance in South Korea; in 2004, the OECD published a report on South Korean national teacher policy, Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers (Coolahan, 2004). It emphasised that the South Korean government should implement a new teacher assessment system that focuses on "developing effective teachers rather than attracting and retaining effective teachers". Whenever teachers' associations objected to the introduction of the teacher assessment policy, the South Korean government cited the OECD country report to emphasise the legitimacy of the policy (Republic of Korea Government, 2005). Eventually, the South Korean government created and implemented a new teacher assessment policy in 2010, which aimed to enhance the professionalism of teachers.

Since 2007, under the Roh Moo-hyun administration, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has vigorously pursued a higher education reform programme that includes merging national universities and enhancing educational research capacity through improved internal university governance and management. However, the higher education reform programme (i.e. merging national universities) further exacerbated the conflict between the MOE and national university staff organisations, as the MOE finally began to seriously discuss plans to merge national universities (Kim, 2006). The direct and indirect influence of the OECD during the Roh Moo-hyun administration was more pronounced in the field of primary, secondary and higher education than in the previous administration. The expansion of the OECD's influence in South Korean educational governance is based on the system of cooperation promoted by the previous government and strengthened with the trust of OECD policy makers. Another reason is that the OECD facilitates consultation and information exchange among member countries centred on the Conference of Ministers of Education). However, the increased and expanded influence of the OECD on South Korean education policy ultimately led to conflicts within South Korean education governance and in the process of education policymaking.

4.4 Lee Myung-bak administration (2008-2013): global governance-induced competitiveness and efficiency agenda in education

The OECD has published the Education at a Glance (EAG) annually since 1992. As an indirect policy tool of the OECD, the EAG has influenced the education policy formulation of the Lee Myung-bak administration. In particular, the EAG has served as a comparative indicator for the Lee Myung-bak administration to objectively assess higher education. Specifically, the MOE noted that the tertiary completion rate for 25-34 year olds in the EAG was 58 % in 2010, which was higher than the OECD average of 35 % (OECD, 2010a), and determined that this result was due to the steady increase in the number of tertiary graduates since 1998 (MOE, 2010a). However, the Lee Myung-bak administration emphasised educational competition and efficiency based on market principles, arguing that despite the fruits of the remarkable quantitative expansion of higher education, the competitiveness, quality and efficiency of South Korean higher education still failed to reach international standards. It is clear that South Korean higher education institutions have insufficient compensation systems to attract outstanding professors and enhance their competence. Therefore, the Ministry of Education emphasised the need to foster universities of international standards by creating a more competitive environment (MOE, 2010c).

In addition, in order to improve the quality and competitiveness of higher education in South Korea, the South Korean government promoted the reorganisation of private, public and national

universities to include national universities and introduced the PPS.Although South Korean University Reorganisation Policy was introduced after the Kim Young-sam administration, the consolidation and abolition of universities really began under the Roh Moo-hyun administration (MOE, 2010b).

While university professors oppose South Korean University Reorganisation Policy based on market economics, ironically, they dispute it with other OECD data. For example, KFNUPA criticised the Lee Myung-bak administration's South Korean University Reorganisation policies, including the PPS, pointing out that the South Korean government puts pressure on professors and universities that fail to reach the level of developed countries - where investment is only at the lowest level (0.6% of GDP), and far from the average of OECD countries (0.6 % of GDP). The Ministry of Education rated the results of PISA2009 as the highest level of achievement in reading, maths and science after PISA2003 and PISA2006.The results of PISA2009 are important for the development and implementation of education policy in South Korea, as it supports the rationale for, and the need for, the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA). In other words, under the Lee Myung-bak administration, the Ministry of Education (MOE), despite its conservative philosophy, promoted accountability policies to ensure the quality of education and used the results of PISA2009 to counter the opposition of progressive political parties and teachers' organisations to the NAEA.

4.5 Park Geun-hye administration (2013-2017): curriculum reform through global governance

The Park Geun-hye administration emphasised that education policy should contribute to the development of students' competences to prepare them for the future society (KEDI, 2019). Naturally, the greatest influence of the OECD on South Korean education policy during the Park Geun-hye administration came from the key competencies of the OECD's Competency Definition and Selection Programme. These are the competencies that the OECD suggests are needed to cope with the complexity and diversity of modern society (OECD, 2005). These competencies were adopted by South Korea under the Park Geun-hye administration, and the results of PISA 2012 have become an important international standard of comparison for the Park administration in assessing student academic performance and in seeking to improve education policy. Specifically, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has emphasised the need to support policies to maintain current achievement levels as South Korean achievement levels in mathematics, reading and science are well above international averages, as well as the need for policies to improve basic academic competencies, particularly in response to the increasing proportion of low achievement levels (KICE, 2013).

The Ministry of Education (2017) considers competencies, such as collaborative problem solving and creativity results, to be more important than international rankings in PISA

2015 reading, maths and science. The South Korean government focuses on competence rather than international rankings in the PISA results not only because it is in line with the national agenda of the Park Geun-hye administration, but also because the government believes that the key to solving education problems lies in competence (Choi et al., 2017). For example, the Minister of Education, Lee Joon-seok, mentions the importance of Competency-Based Education (CBE) and educational reforms in creating South Korean future as follows:

According to the 2012 PISA test, South Korean adolescents have the highest intellectual ability among OECD countries. On the other hand, social interaction skills, or "the ability to live with others," are the lowest among the 36 countries surveyed. This is a serious negative impact of education that aims only at academic achievement. The future is a society based on creative integration, where the amount of knowledge and information will grow exponentially. Therefore, simple knowledge or memorisation education cannot produce people who meet the needs of the times.

A specific case in point is that the CBE concept is based on the competencies that are the focus of the OECD DeSeCo project, as reflected in the 2015 national-level curriculum reform. The Ministry of Education has also linked CBE to several university-funded programmes, such as the Research and Education Programme of the Faculty of Humanities and the Higher Education Development Programme. As a result, CBE has become a standard that South Korean national and private universities must adhere to in order to receive government financial support.

4.6 The Moon Jae-in administration (2017-2022): limited international engagement and structural contradictions under the logic of equity

Against the backdrop of the accelerated restructuring of the global education governance paradigm and the East Asian social stratification crisis, the Moon Jae-in administration (2017-2022) has launched a "silent revolution" in the South Korean education system (Song et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2018), with the "democratisation of education" as the core proposition, using the reconstruction of local equity as the fulcrum and indirectly prying globalisation to participate in the "silent revolution". It is a "silent revolution" that indirectly leverages global participation by restructuring the South Korean education system with local equity as the fulcrum. The policy design has broken away from the "efficiency-first" globalisation path of the Park Geun-hye and Lee Myung-bak eras, and instead, by abolishing the privileges of elite education, reshaping the power structure of basic education, and redistributing financial resources for education and other systemic reforms, it has accidentally constructed an underpinning for the participation of South South Korean education in global competition, while dissolving the barriers to education at the domestic level. The support of this "fairness for competition" approach has been

a major factor in the development of South Korean education. Although this "fairness for competition" reform model is not directly under the banner of "global governance," it has formed a hidden interaction with globalisation in the examination system, basic education, higher education, and social education through the reconstruction of the paradigm of fairness in education, revealing the relationship between globalisation and the needs of localisation. It exposes the deep tension between globalisation and localisation needs, and also provides a unique model for East Asian countries to explore the local path of education reform (Kim, 2020). In the field of higher education, the Moon Jae-in government has pushed for both "decentralisation" and "democratisation" in an attempt to break the absolute monopoly of educational resources by universities in the Seoul metropolitan area.

The Moon Jae-in administration's education reform is essentially a practice of "defensive globalisation" under the double pressure of globalisation countercurrents and intensifying domestic social conflicts (Jon & Yoo, 2021). It has indirectly enhanced the global competitiveness of South Korean education by restructuring the education equity system, but this "inward-looking reform" cannot completely avoid the impact of globalisation. The future transformation of the global governance of South Korean education requires not only consolidating the achievements of domestic equity reform, but also seeking a dynamic balance between globalisation and localisation. Only in this way will South Korean education be able to make a substantial leap from "passive adapter" to "rule reconstructor" in the global education governance system, and its reform path of "fairness for competition" will also provide a good example for East Asian countries to follow. Its reform path of "promoting competition through equity" will also provide a key inspiration for East Asian countries to break the "globalisation trap".

5. Discussion and implications

Since South Korea joined the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996, the coupling of its education policy with the global governance framework has deepened. The Kim Young-sam administration took the lead in introducing OECD neoliberal concepts into education, promoting customer-centred education, educational excellence and school autonomy through de-regulation, decentralisation and market-oriented reforms. Subsequent governments have continued to use OECD policy recommendations as a blueprint for reform, incorporating PISA scores and comparative data into the criteria for teacher evaluation and higher education reform, forming a "data-driven" policymaking model. This convergence is not only reflected in the choice of policy tools, but also in the reconstruction of educational values - take the OECD's "DeSeCo Competency Framework" as an example to promote curriculum reform, South Korean internalisation of the global

standards as a national education strategy has weakened teachers' autonomy, revealing the relationship between global governance and local culture. In the case of South Korea, the internalisation of global standards into a national education strategy, while undermining teacher autonomy, exposes the tension between global governance and local culture. Neoliberal values have shaped the logic of South Korean education governance in the form of "implicit pressure" through OECD's ratings and policy recommendations, making market-orientated and outcome-oriented reforms an irreversible trend (Lee et al., 2019).

The empowerment of OECD global governance on South Korean education governance is characterised by 'two sides of the coin'. On the one hand, by providing internationally comparable data and policy templates, OECD provides legitimacy for the South Korean government to break through the constraints of interest groups and push forward reforms. For example, the 5.31 education reform and the CPEE programme both leveraged the authority of the OECD to bring radical policies to fruition, and the national university merger programme relied on global standards to promote the integration of scientific research resources and the enhancement of outputs [103]. Global governance reinforces the characteristics of South Korean "directive democracy" and the lack of stakeholder participation in the decision-making process, leading to the externalisation of the power of the board of trustees of the national university and the retreat of internal democracy, highlighting the deep-rooted contradiction between global governance and the demands of local democracy (Shin, 2020).

South Korean educational governance continues to seek a dynamic balance between global governance and localised demands. By deepening cooperation with OECD, the government has transformed global standards into tools for enhancing educational competitiveness, such as promoting curriculum reform through the DeSeCo framework, and strengthening the country's voice in the global education system (Choi, 2020). At the same time, it has gradually established a mechanism for transforming global-local policies, such as under the Roh Moo-hyun administration, whereby the Ministry of Education and research institutes led the OECD in the implementation of the OECD's Global-Local policy. At the same time, a 'global-local' policy transformation mechanism has been gradually established, for example, under the Roh Moo-hyun administration, where the Ministry of Education and research institutes led the localisation analysis of OECD policy recommendations to reduce the risk of cultural conflict. However, there are still structural challenges to this transformation: the pressure of external ratings and rankings has forced South Korea to focus too much on the output of education, neglecting the fairness of the education process; and the contradiction between the one-size-fits-all nature of OECD policy recommendations and the cultural specificities of East Asia has led to

difficulties in the implementation of reforms such as teacher evaluation and curriculum design. In the future, South Korea needs to deepen its reforms in the following dimensions: first, to build a policy evaluation system based on cultural appropriateness to ensure the compatibility between global standards and local practices; second, to strengthen the mechanism of stakeholder participation to turn the pressure of global governance into the impetus of democratic consultation; and third, to explore the relationship between the "global competency framework" and the "local philosophy of education". Third, explore the path of integration between the "global competence framework" and the "local education philosophy", so as to maintain the competitiveness of education while safeguarding the cultural heritage and the kernel of democracy in education.

6. Conclusion

This study suggests that local governments' educational governance practices show a more constructive potential for transformation if they position the OECD policy guidel Indicators of Educational Systems as "reference recommendations" rather than "mandatory directives". In South Korea, the education system has indeed been optimised in some areas through the selective incorporation of OECD recommendations and the integration of local education models, but such improvements have always been limited by the adaptation of established educational traditions. However, the OECD's neo-liberal tendency in global education governance is a cause for alarm - by embedding the logic of competition and marketisation into the core of South Korean education policy, the OECD has pushed governments to gradually shift the paradigm of education governance to one of 'efficiency' and 'accountability for performance'. The OECD, through the OECD, has been able to promote a shift in the paradigm of education governance towards "efficiency" and "performance-based accountability". In essence, the OECD, through the double penetration of neo-liberalism and neo-managerialism, has constructed a set of discourses centred on "de-regulation" and "decentralisation", transforming global governance norms into an implicit instrument of discipline for member states (Alawattage & Elshihry, 2017).

In the early days, the conflict between the educational philosophy promoted by the OECD and South Korean local values was widely disputed. For example, before the Lee Myung-bak administration, OECD-promoted "competency-based" curriculum reforms challenged South Korean traditional teacher dignity and collectivist educational ethic, provoking a strong backlash among teachers, academics, and policymakers. But today, with the globalisation of neoliberal ideology, resistance to market-oriented reforms has weakened significantly, and an independent model of educational governance has been reduced to theoretical imagination in South Korea. This phenomenon is not unique to South

Korea - similar trends are occurring in East Asia and even in developing countries around the world, where global education governance is reshaping the logic of national education policies in a way that transcends geographical boundaries. The Bologna Process in Europe, for example, has completely reshaped the landscape of European higher education in a short period of time through the unification of degree frameworks, mutual recognition of credits, and other mechanisms, forcing member states to make compromises between cultural traditions and practical interests, and its compulsion and the depth of change have highlighted the disciplining efficacy of global governance.

The influence of global education governance has been unleashed for decades, and its penetration is likely to increase with the expansion of the power of international organisations. While this trend is difficult to reverse, it is important to emphasise that the positive value of global governance can only be truly unlocked if policy formulation and evaluation mechanisms are built on the cornerstone of consultative democracy. Specifically, the policy tools of international organisations (such as OECD) should be put to the test of local democratic practices, and through the full participation of stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, communities), global standards should be transformed into action plans that match national development needs. For example, South Korea has established a tripartite dialogue platform of "government-experts-civil society" in education reform, which not only absorbs the technical support of OECD in monitoring education quality, but also retains the ethical commitment of the Confucian cultural circle to education equity, providing a practical sample of "decolonization" for global education governance. It provides a practical sample of "decolonisation" for global education governance. This experience shows that when the normative force of global governance is in dynamic balance with the experience of local democracy, education policy can not only resist the risk of cultural alienation, but also enhance the country's adaptability in the global competition for education, and ultimately achieve a double breakthrough in governance effectiveness and cultural autonomy.

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