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Preface

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I am very pleased to have the opportunity to introduce the education in Korea to the Hungarian Educational Research Journal which is the official journal of the Hungarian Education Research Association. I would like to thank the Hungarian Educational Research Association for this opportunity. Four papers are presented at this time, but obviously all four papers would not be able to provide all the information on education in Korea. I hope our 4 papers can help Hungarian education scholars and those who are engaged in education to understand the education in Korea. Traditionally the zeal for children's education in Korea has been very high. As shown in the results of PISA, Korea shows high levels of academic achievement compared to that of other countries. Nevertheless, some issues still remain to be solved and are being discussed. Therefore, our papers do not only introduce educational situations in Korea, but also some issues related to the topic.

Education of a country can be fully understood under its historical and cultural background, because it has an unique history. Korea located in the East Asia and Hungary located in the Central Europe have different history and tradition of education. As they have different points of view accumulated by different experiences, it is not easy to identify and understand the education system and issues of other countries. We would like to help you to understand the education of Korea by mainly handling relatively recent educational efforts and attempts of Korea which all the countries are currently paying attention to.

The purpose of the first paper, „Secondary school teachers' training course in Korea”, is to help understand the general education system of Korea. It talks about school education systems, current situations of schools, students and teachers, changing process of teachers' training courses, current situations of secondary school teachers' courses and some issues to be discussed in Korea. Teachers' training courses vary depending on the schools such as kindergarten, elementary schools and secondary

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schools. Teachers' training courses are being performed in University. Due to limited space, we cannot talk about all teachers' training courses here. Thus, we would like to talk about the overview of teachers' training courses in Korea and we are focused on secondary school teachers' training courses.

The title of the second paper is „After-school programs in elementary schools in Korea”. We introduce backgrounds of introduction of after-school programs, goals of after-school programs, contents of after-school programs, contributions and discussions of after-school programs. In Korea, society has been changed due to currency crisis in 1997 and financial crisis in 2008 as follows: increases in economic difficulties, nuclear family and single-parent family, and expansion of women's participation in the society. Such social changes have increased interests in public childcare environment in which elementary school students are stably protected and take some activities after school hours in schools instead of home. As a result, each school is operating 'after-school programs' to contribute to reduce private school tuition and improving the schooling features and 'develop creative and talented students to prepare for future society' by providing various and creative educational opportunities.

After-school programs originate from 'educational activities after school' which is one of educational programs proposed by the Board of Education in 1995 to develop personality and creativity of students. As the after-school programs have reflected various educational policies of the government, it has been renamed 'specialty & aptitude educational activities' and 'after-school programs' in 1999 and 2004, respectively. After-school programs in elementary schools are classified into class and specialty & aptitude programs performed on weekdays, childcare programs and Saturday programs on the basis of the features of the programs. This paper gives more detailed features and examples of each program.

The purpose of the third paper, „alternative schools in Korea”, is to introduce the experiments of school education in a new type to complement the problems and limitations of public education. It's not that they never had the condition in South Korea but, the voluntary educational reforms have been actively developed as people criticize the college entrance exam-oriented education in early 1990s. These efforts have been gradually settled down in the type of schools outside of the educational system in Korea. In addition, the government has announced the plans for establishment and support for alternative schools and legalized the alternative schools to accommodate educational changes and demands since 1997. As of 2014, many authorized alternative education organizations such as a total of 24 alternative schools (6 public/ 18 private schools), a total of 12 specialized junior high schools (3 public/ 9 private schools), a total of 24 specialized high schools (3 public/ 21 private schools) and a total of 199 entrusted alternative schools (middle & long-term) are being operated in Korea.

These alternative educational organizations are accredited and given a certain amount of autonomy by the national educational system. Curricula are formed by combining

common basic curricula at the national level with alternative curricular in accordance with the school autonomy. These curricula and general school management policies increase the trust for school education and satisfaction with school living, because students and parents are given positive responses. Moreover, it contributes to minimize the number of students who drop out of schools due to maladjustment under the public education system.

The purpose of the fourth paper, „educational support for children from multicultural families in Korea” is to cover the government’s educational policies and discussions for students from multicultural families in Korea. You can find efforts to resolve new educational challenges caused by changes in population in the society in Korea. The proportion of those who have diverse cultural backgrounds has recently been increased with increasing international exchanges and international marriage. They have experienced many difficulties due to cultural differences, social prejudices and difficulties in communication, when they try to adapt themselves in the society in Korea. In particular, students from multicultural families have been reported to experience difficulties such as poor school achievement, bullying and emotional shocks caused by lack of language skills, discrimination and prejudices and economic difficulties. Government has promoted the educational support policy targeting students from multicultural families and performed various support projects to prevent these problems and help their smooth social adjustment since 2006. As of 2014, students from multicultural families account for more than 1% of the entire students. It seems to gradually increase in the future. On the basis of the awareness of these issues, the paper covers the current situations of children from multicultural families, contents of multicultural educational policies being promoted since 2006, educational support policies to improve Korean language skills and basic school achievements of children from multicultural families, and current discussions.

I hope these papers will help Hungarian readers to expand the understanding of education in Korea from the perspectives of the comparative education. I wish educational discussions be actively exchanged between two countries in the future. Once again, I would like to thank the Hungarian Education Research Association for giving us the opportunity to introduce the education in Korea.