Education for a Better World

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentleman. I am Tae-Wan Kim, the president of the Korean Educational Development Institute, KEDI. It is my great pleasure to speak at this Meeting before such a distinguished audience.

Today, I would like to mainly talk about three things: First, the current Korean education issues. Second, the policy direction of the Korean Government in response to educational demand in the country and lastly, major research projects that KEDI is undertaking as an educational think-tank.

Before I present these issues, perhaps, I must briefly introduce the current Korea’s circumstances. Currently, the school age population in Korea is decreasing, which in the long term will lead to a decrease in the economically active population. A structural change in the world economy refers to a change in the roles of working people everywhere. While simple repetitive, cognitive and physical work is decreasing, the need for analytic and creative tasks is increasing. Korea is not an exception. Students from multi-cultural families and North Korean immigrants are increasing. The economic polarization has been widening and the youth unemployment rate has been continuously increasing. Korea is solving these new challenges through research and carefully developed policies.

With that said, I now would like to talk about current major issues that Korean education is facing. Just within the past few years, school violence has become one of the biggest problems in Korea. There have been cases of serious school violence and some ending in suicide. A recent survey on school violence showed that there are students who have committed violent acts but do not feel guilty; students who have suffered from violence but do not know how to ask for help;
and many students who have remained silent for fear of becoming the next victim. This result reflects the importance of character education even further.

Another issue is that a sense of social competency and emotional competency of students has not developed enough. According to the 2009 PISA, Korean students’ interest, confidence and enjoyment in subjects were relatively low while their intellectual performance was high. To improve the issues, education policymakers are putting more emphasis on cultivating talents with skills for the next generation.

Speaking of which, I would like to talk more about the policy direction of the Korean Government in response to educational demand in the country. Future education requires the designing of educational policies aimed at fostering creative talents with not only future capabilities and knowledge but also social and emotional development. The Korean government stresses creativity and character education which aims to cultivate every one of our students to be global talents. In addition, to bring up students who possess creativity and character, we are establishing a system that enables businesses, local communities, family, and other entities outside the school system to work together. Specifically, we are looking for a way that businesses can donate their resources to education. In a knowledge or information-based society, we need more than a system to nurture our talents. All aforementioned elements and their interactions are necessary to bring up talented students.

Ladies and gentlemen, lastly I would like to introduce major research projects that KEDI is undertaking as an educational think-tank to respond to the changes of Korean society and government’s future direction. KEDI is currently conducting various research based on scientific analysis, thereby advancing schools, settling creativity and character education. To develop a future-oriented
educational agenda and paradigm, we put our focus on five educational categories: future education, educational indices, higher education, educational welfare and international cooperation in education.

First, in the area of future education, KEDI is conducting research on the “Development Direction and Strategy for Future Education in Korea (2013-2017).” It is to establish an educational vision and present a road map for the policy plan. We believe that current subject-centered curriculum should be complemented with competency-based education. As for teaching and learning, project-based learning which emphasizes understanding and experience should be widely employed. For student assessment, descriptive assessment is more needed than assessment by multiple-choice tests. KEDI’s research also covers the strategy to strengthen STEAM education in the primary and secondary schools.

Second, KEDI has been conducting research on development of indices to measure students’ creativity to foster talents with creativity and character. KEDI is also building educational indicators on social and emotional as well as academic learning for promoting holistic education strategies.

Third, KEDI is vigorously expanding research on higher education. KEDI makes an effort to enhance the competitiveness of higher education and the capability of universities in managing foreign students in Korea. Starting from 2010, KEDI has been participating in the OECD AHELO project which analyzes and evaluates the learning process of college students. Indeed, one of the hot topics being discussed in Korea is the issue of increased college tuition which has become a huge burden to many students and their families. KEDI is currently conducting an in-depth research on the effective management of higher education finance in hope of reducing the financial burden on families of college students.
Fourth, research on proactive educational welfare for social cohesion is also KEDI’s field of responsibility. KEDI is continuing research and projects to support underprivileged classes and suggest solutions for the students who are maladjusted to school. This year, KEDI will suggest a policy direction for students from multi-cultural families by analyzing the actual state of their secondary school. Also, KEDI will support educational programs for North Korean immigrants. In addition, KEDI has been supporting underprivileged classes in education by operating the WEE (We, Education, Emotion) project.

Finally, KEDI is also trying to expand its partnership with international and regional organizations as well as outstanding educational research institutes in foreign countries through combined research and joint seminars to take an active role in the international education agenda. This year, KEDI participates in OECD’s TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) and ESP (Education and Social Progress) projects; hosts the APEC Education Ministerial Meeting from the 21st through 23rd of May; hosts a joint seminar with UNESCO Bangkok in July; and arranges the Meeting among the Heads of Korean, Chinese and Japanese National Educational Research Institutes in August. Further, KEDI will enhance the level of research on educational ODA for the educational development in developing countries as Korea has successfully transformed itself from recipient to donor country.

I believe education has a great impact not only on the personal development but also on the development of one’s nation and even the development of this globalized world. Therefore, for economic development and international security, education to bring up global citizens with creativity and character is of utmost importance.

Thank you very much for listening.