



Understanding Higher Education Policies in South Korea

Guiding perspectives,
historical contexts,
and recent policy problems

University governance, policy and the state

Shattock (2006: 1) defines university governance as 'the constitutional forms and processes through which **universities govern their affairs**'.

Policy = '**collective puzzling, social construction**' (Colebatch, 2009). 'a course of action by government designed to achieve certain results' (Bridgman & Davis, 2000: 6)

'The state now appears simply as one element - whose functionality is historically specific and contextually variable – in multiple circuits of power, connecting a diversity of authorities and forces, within a whole variety of **complex assemblages**'

(Rose (1999: 5), cited in Bevir(2010: 49))

Problematizing policies

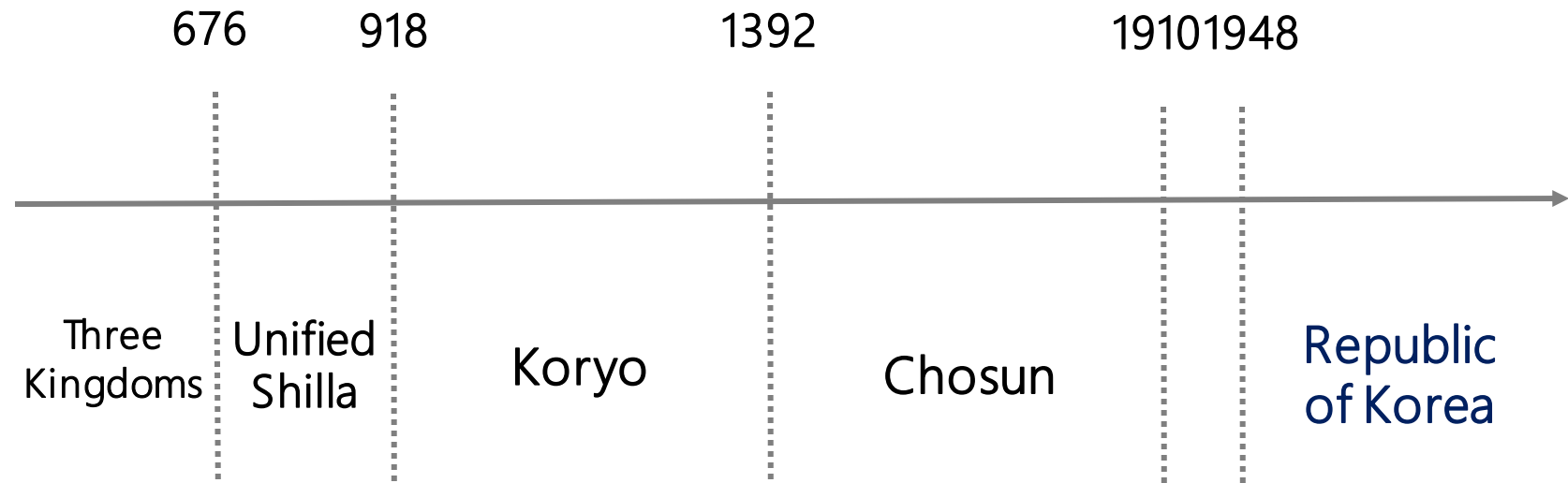
"Policy formation rests on problematisation. So while we can see policy formation as 'problem-solving', it can also be seen as 'problem-finding': interpreting the world in a way that makes **particular forms of organised response appropriate**. (Colebatch, 2009: 30)

"Re-reading **how a contemporary problem is defined**, how mechanisms of power and knowledge production are mobilised in particular forms of **defining problems** and finding their solutions, and locates education in a wider policy frame and in relation to society" (Ozga, 2021: 295)

Historical contexts & traditions

In what ways has South Korean higher education been formulated and institutionalised?

What are the relations between the Korean state and universities?



Confucian traditions

As the state orthodoxy, Confucianism laid down the **basic principle of social regulation** – an ethic of filial piety and loyalty to social hierarchy as the **key moral elements** maintaining **social stability** (Zeng, 1999).

In Confucian societies, the lack of an independent and culturally indigenous "church" aided the rise of the state, ... left this state too often unchallenged by counter-veiling authoritative sources. Post-Confucian states freely articulated and imposed national ideologies (Hahm, 2004).

Higher education
 ↓
 state institution

	Public institutions		Private institutions	
	Higher	Middle	Middle	Lower
Koguryo	Taehak (372)			Gyeongdang
Unified Shilla	Gukhak (682)			
Ko-ryo	Kukjagam (992)	Hakdang Hyanggyo	Sib-i-do (12 Schools)	Seodang
Cho-sun	Sunggyungwan (1398)	Hyanggyo	Seowon	Seodang

Table 3. The education institutions in ancient and pre-modern dynasties in Korea

* The number in () means the year of establishing HEIs

Source: MOE & HRD (2008) *Education in Korea 2007-2008*. Seoul: MOE & HRD.

The modern universities and developmental state

Modernisation is 'a process of emulation, of the **transplantation** of patterns and products from achievements of others' (Chodak, 1973: 257).

A state is developmental when it 'establishes as its principle of **legitimacy** its ability to promote and sustain (**economic**) **development.**' (Castells, 1992: 56)

Phases	Economic development	Education policy
1945~60s	Post-war reconstruction	Establishment of basic education systems
1960s~70s	Labor-intensive industries, Heavy & chemical industries	Expansion of secondary and vocational education
1980s~90s	Technology, knowledge based industrialisation	Expansion of higher education
Since mid-1990s	Globalisation, information technology and knowledge-based economy	Emphasis on Human Resources Development(HRD) and higher education

Source: KEDI (2008) Understanding Korean Educational Policy (Vol. 1): National Development Strategy and Education Policy

Expansion,
and its cost:
who will pay for
students?

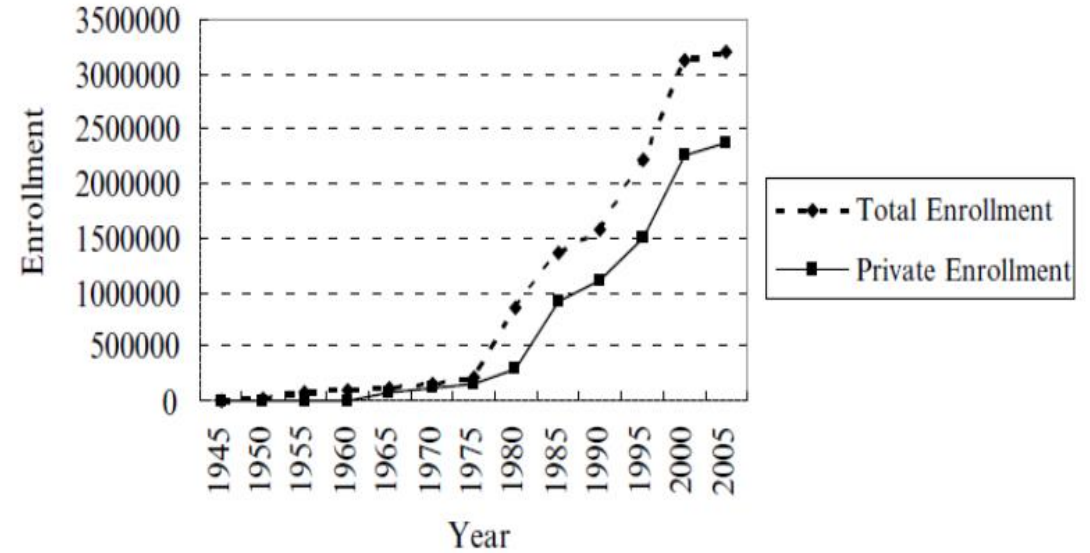


Figure 2. Growth of Korean higher education enrollment. Notes: (a) Total higher education enrollment is the total of student enrollment in 4-year and 2-year HEIs. (b) Private enrollment data are available only from 1965. (c) Sources: Annual education statistics (MOE) [cited in Shin (2011: 323)].

Mass HE,
Regional
distribution,
& functional
diversification

Category	Overall	University	Specialised college	Others
HEIs	426	202	134	90
Students	3,201,561	1,938,254	576,041	687,266
Full-time Academics	90,464	68,805	12,028	9,631

Category	Founder		Location	
	National	Private	Metropolitan	Region
university	44 (22%)	158 (78%)	73 (36%)	129 (64%)
Specialised college	9 (7%)	125 (93%)	43 (32%)	91 (68%)

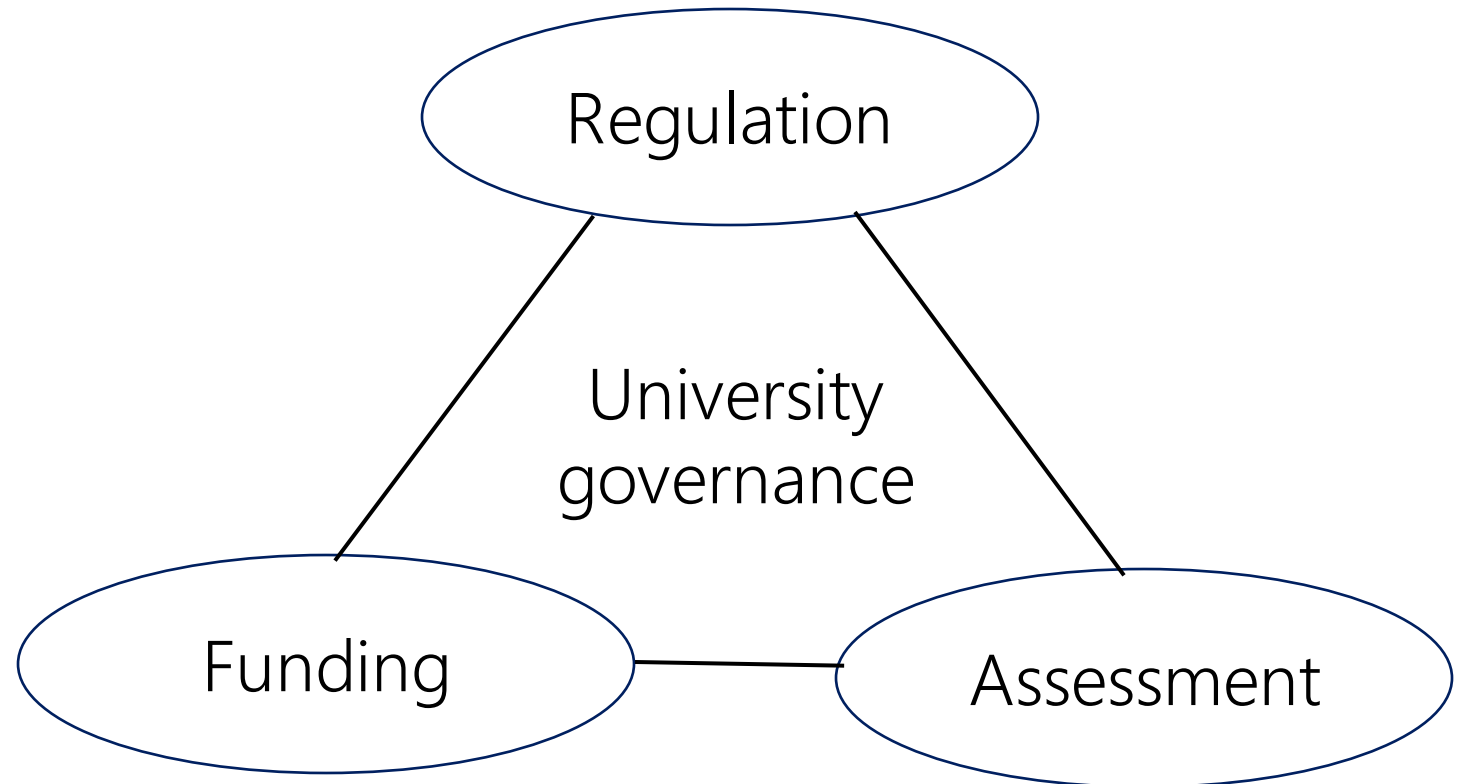
Source: Ministry of Education, Year 2021

Defining problems in higher education

What are the problems that SK's higher education policies are dealing with?

How are they related to contextual elements?

How do the problems affect the governing work of universities?



Regulations : key elements governing university affairs?

- Legal limitations in **tuition fees**

Source: The Higher Education Act, MOE

- **4 conditions** regulating **private HEIs**: Examples

The size of university building	↑ 12m ² / student
The size of university site	↑ 24m ² / student
Full-time academic / student ratio	↑ 1 / 25
Basic property for profit	↑ Total revenue per year

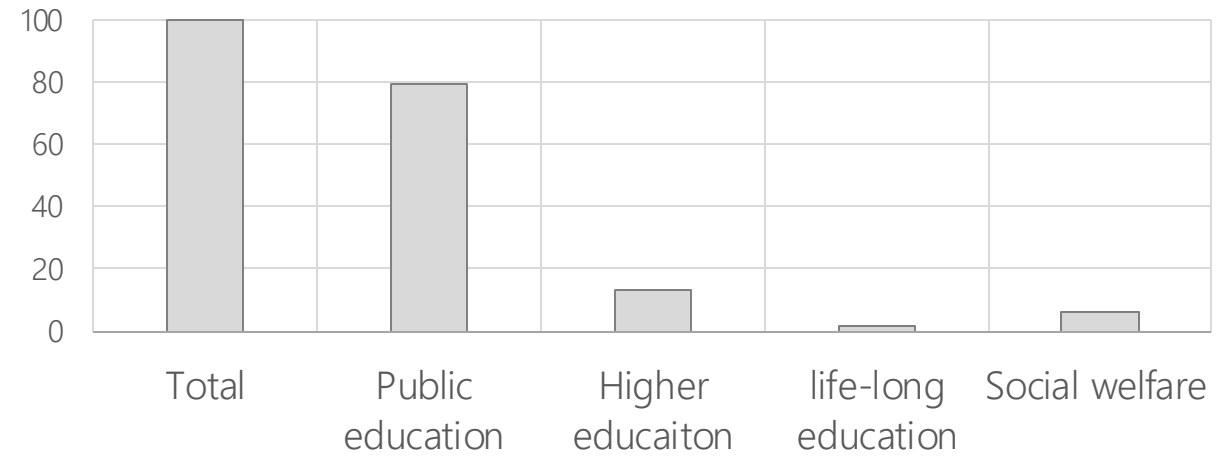
Source: The Enforcement Decree on University Foundation and Operation, MOE

"I think there exist a kind of **social consensus** on this. It requires a minimum degree of **social responsibility**, in return for the autonomy of university. They are socially **acceptable conditions** for ensuring the quality of higher education." (An interview with a government official)

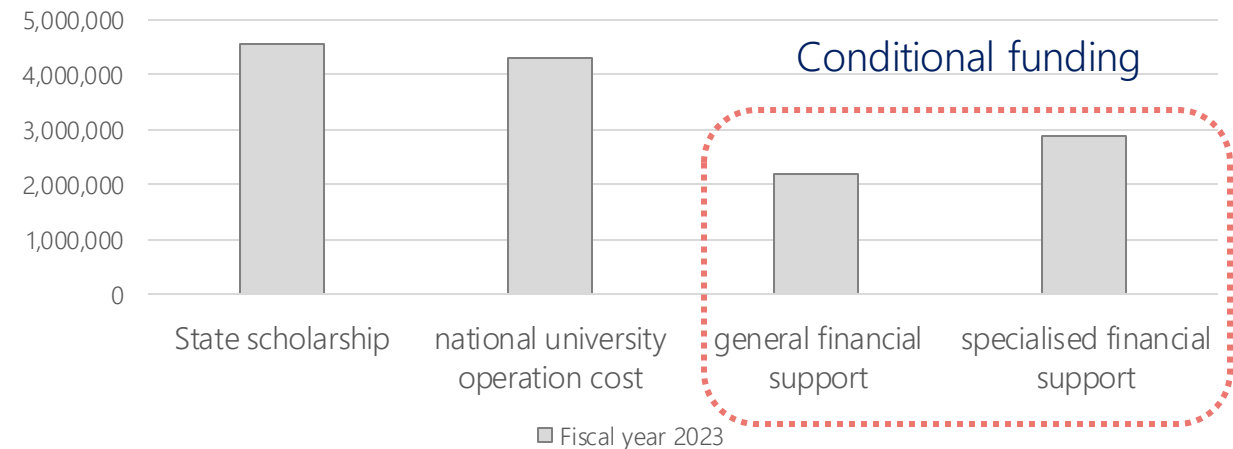
Source: National Policy Agenda Briefing Team (2007) '40 years' history of Education in SK'

Funding and university self-regulation

MOE Budget in 2023 (%)



MOE HE budget in 2023 (₩ M) 1GBP = 1,608KRW



Source: Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea

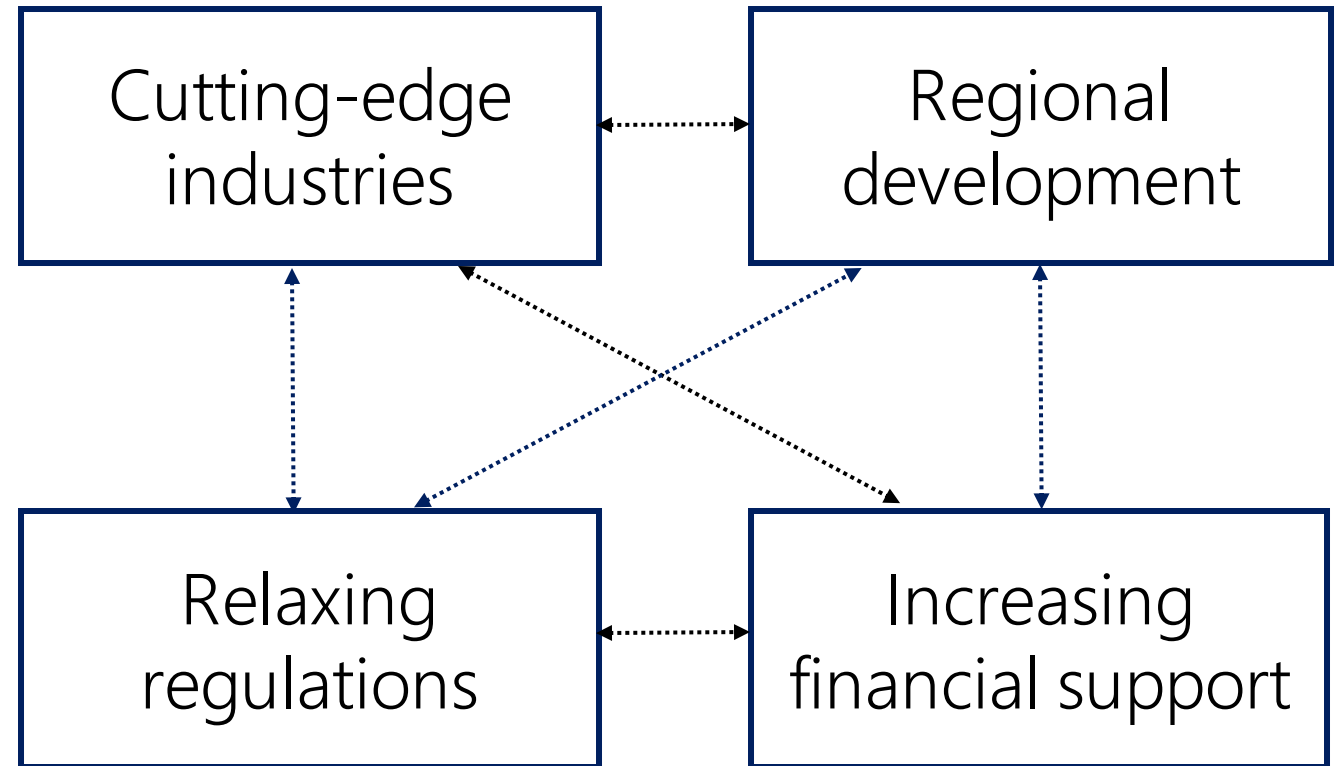
Conditional funding and assessment

- **Type1: General financial support**
 - qualified by 'University Basic Competency Assessment'
 - guaranteeing more freedom of HEIs in using funds
 - but, uniform criteria / assessment burden on HEIs
- **Type2: Financial projects with special purposes**
 - competition-based funding to HEIs
 - conditional financial aids
- **The conditions attached to funding**
 - tuition fees increase rate, students' employment rate
 - full-time academic staff retention rate
 - university-industry cooperation, resources sharing,
 - investment to high-tech industry related studies, etc.

Key words in HE policies

What are the main purposes of HE policies?

What are the policies proposed to attain the goals?



High-tech industries & regional innovation

- "Education and HRM Plans for High-tech Industries"
 - Joint Ministerial Report
 - Strategic Committee in the Gov't (chair : the President)
 - Analysing demands of human resources in 5 Key areas
 - * Aerospace, Mobility, Bio-health, Component, Digital, Eco/energy
 - The processes of managing the national agenda
 - * Targets - Plans – Role set-up – Resources – Monitoring
- Universities for regional innovation

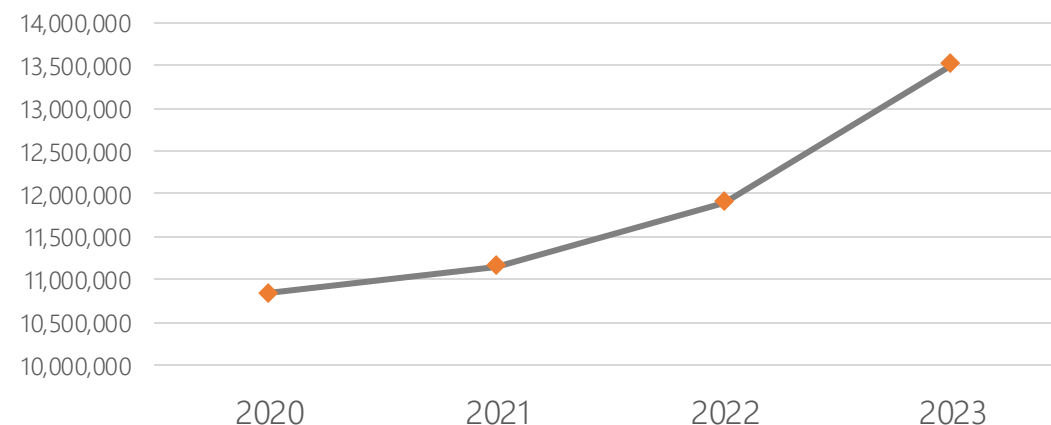
Goals	Educating local talent + Regional development ecosystem
strategies	Financial support for regional development strategies
	Empowerment to local governments
	Reduction of government regulations

Source: "Education & HRM Plans for High-tech Industries" (February 2023)

De-regulation, empowerment, and financial support

- Regulations reconsidered in 2022 and 2023
 - MOE announced plans for relaxing 4 conditions
 - replace 'University Basic Competency Assessment' with more flexible policy tools
- "Special Account Act for Financial Support of HE and Life-long Education", enacted in 2023
- Higher education **budget** increased sharply

Change in HE Budget, MOE (₩ M)



Discussions

- The spirit of institutions
 - Two kinds of connections: past & present / visible & invisible
 - state-centrality in university governance
- The one who tie the knot must untie it
 - who is a right player that can make difference?
 - strong support without control
- State-managerialist traditions ongoing
 - surviving in the global economy, rehabilitation of regions
 - sensitivity to social and economic needs
 - comprehensive mobilisation of policy instruments
- The meanings of 'public good' of HE
 - HEIs exist not just only for elite groups any more in SK
 - wider & deeper connections to community, society, economy
 - HE as new language or platforms enabling new innovations
 - HEIs should be free, but government still has something to do

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