

**A Study to Improve Korea's  
Comprehensive Evaluation of Student Records for College Entrance**  
- By comparing the college admission systems in Korea and U.S. -

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**I. Introduction**

1. Necessity of study

On August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the Ministry of Education (MOE) revealed its new ministerial directive to reform and innovate Korea's university entrance examination system for year 2022. Final version of the directive was result of intense deliberation processes among relevant parties such as members of the MOE's University Entrance Examination Policy Forum, education specialists, students and parents invited by the Presidential Committee of National Educational Council. The directive recommended all colleges in Korea to make more than a 30% increase in the proportion of their "regular admissions," which focuses on the evaluation of *College Scholastic Ability Test* (CSAT) scores, reflecting the reliability and fairness concerns fueled by the current system, the *Comprehensive Evaluation of Student Records for College Entrance* (henceforth called "the Comprehensive Evaluation System").

However, the regular admission system itself had its own issues, since it has been one of the main evaluation processes for universities to line up and call in from the highest CSAT score earners. This system had the validity and expediency of undisputed results by clearly showing applicants' scores that would decide the admission albeit a mere one or two points would make the difference. Meanwhile, questions were raised about this rather simple type of evaluation as CSAT is designed to focus on few subjects only. Considering a student with a 95 percent score academically more challenged than his or her peer with a 100 percent would be highly debatable, because the student's other abilities and possibilities are not shown on the result of a one-time test which, by the way, is unreliable in measuring

someone's academic potential to the full extent. In this context, it is hard to deem regular admission a more reliable and fair system than the Comprehensive Evaluation System or to consider it suitable for cultivating our youth in this ever-changing world of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution.

The Comprehensive Evaluation System, influenced by U.S. universities' admission systems, is currently the hot potato among other university entrance examination systems in Korea. Through a longer period of trial and errors, U.S. was able to develop such qualitative approach in evaluating students, which is now deemed as a steadfast system. There used to be considerable differences among these colleges' admission programs by state as well as by system – public or private. However, they converged on the goal of selecting talented students by communicating shared concerns with other the ivory towers in the country. This effort led to having standardized selection processes among certain private and state universities.

This paper would view on how and whom U.S. tertiary schools choose from their applicants and find relevant features that could help improve Korea's Comprehensive Evaluation System.

## 2. Research purposes

As the current Comprehensive Evaluation System is being challenged by many regarding lack of fairness and reliability, there are a great deal of researches carrying out to address these issues. By comparing the college admission systems in U.S. and Korea in terms of their notable commonalities and distinctions, this paper aims to identify the glitches and/or complementary aspects in Korea's Comprehensive Evaluation System and suggest some answers to a way forward.

## II. Literature reviews

### 1. Research background

A recent incident reignited the controversy on Comprehensive Evaluation System yet again as a teaching director of Sookmyung Girls' High School leaking test questions to his twin daughters at the same school to enhance their chances in college admission. Voices opposing the Comprehensive Evaluation System lashed out because, under the system, universities evaluate the academic potential of a student by his or her high school records including

grades on the transcript and the non-curriculum activities altogether to decide on their admission. By this point, a lot more public opinions called for raising the number of regular admissions and base the university admission on CSAT scores.

Song Ki-sok, a former lawmaker of the People's Party of Korea commissioned a survey to Hankook Research and asked 1022 people ages between 19 and 69 of their opinions regarding the Comprehensive Evaluation System; 75.1% of them said "the system benefits students who have wealthier family," and 74.8% of the people answered "it is an unfair system because the evaluation depended too much on personal factors like decisions made by parents, homeroom teachers and university admission officers" (Edudonga, July 13, 2017). Lee Jong-bae, the leader of the Civic Group for Fair Society Korea, reinforced such opinion by proposing an alternative option to increase the proportion of regular admission intake to more than 90%, saying the Comprehensive Evaluation is a failed system which must be abolished (Yonhap News, May 22, 2019). Superintendent Cho Hee-yeon of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education said, "Fifteen universities in Seoul have exceedingly high proportion of Comprehensive Evaluation intake and their selection processes lack transparency, raising concerns and mistrust among students and their parents. In order to tackle this issue, a government regulation is required here to limit the Comprehensive Evaluation admission cases to less than one thirds of the total number of accepted students and create a balance among the admission programs in each university" (News1 Korea, February 6, 2018).

As the demonstrated above, the Comprehensive Evaluation System is under a lot of pressure from left and right; Therefore, the background of this study lies in such strong opposition against the Comprehensive Evaluation. In this paper, the goal is to figure out certain measures to regain the system's credibility from the public, because such qualitative evaluation has its own merits positive enough to preserve and develop further in Korea's education system.

## 2. Review of previous studies

The literature and studies reviewed in this paper are as follows. Firstly, Han Jong-ha's study of 1986 describes on rather general aspects of U.S. university admission system, laying the groundwork information how the system works. Then, the study done by Jean Gon Cheong (2005) provides detailed information on the evaluation procedures of three universities in the

state of California, namely Berkeley, Stanford and Washington, by interviewing the people who work in admissions offices of the aforementioned schools. Next is the study of Yang Sungkwan and Chung Il-hwan (2007), which illustrates characteristics and lessons we can take away from U.S. university entrance systems by researching a vast amount of relevant data related to historical background and development of the system. In the study of Kang Tae-joong, Lee Sung-ho and Kim Dong-min (2009), the authors visited esteemed universities in U.S., both private and state, and found some common features in their admission officer systems by interviewing each school's admission-related personnel. In regard to Korea's university admission systems, the data derived from interviewing admission officers in Kyunghee University, Yonsei University, Ehwa Womans University, Chung-Ang University and Hankook University of Foreign Studies (2018) portray Korea's Comprehensive Evaluation System in detail. Another book (Sung Ki-sun et al., 2007) was used as additional reference to acquire more specific information about U.S. college admission systems aside from practical information aimed at people interested in college admissions in general.

The content of each study reviewed is as follows. The first study (Han, 1986) mainly wrote about U.S. states and not the federal government obtaining autonomy over their own educational system given by the Constitution of the United States, and the study had limits to not furthering the extent of the study beyond the mere outline of jurisdiction in U.S. In the next study (Cheong, 2005), he focused on particularly California's college admission systems and derived facts from interviewing staff members in admissions offices in Berkeley, Stanford and University of Washington. The book ends with a short remark on what lessons Korean educational specialists and public servants can draw to supplement Korea's educational system. Another study (Kang et al., 2009) also presented take-away lessons as its conclusion and shows a number of similarity with the one before (Cheong, 2005) as to conducting research at revered universities, some state and few private ones, and interviewing workers in admissions offices. Both studies also had somewhat feeble implications compared to the well-structured content in the main body of the research. Cheong (2005) analyzed Korea's college admissions system by looking at then-reformed version of 2008; Hence, it required the author to anticipate what would happen three years later in the college admissions in Korea, weakening in practicality of the further implications part. With the study of Kang et al. (2009), the information given in the writing clearly showed extensive research, but the conclusion drawn from the study had nothing to do with the actual research done; The study took Yang and Chung (2007)'s comment on U.S. admission officer system

that the country's key in university admissions lies in discretion and opacity which had little relation to his own researched materials.

Consequently, this study aims at more practical implications on the Comprehensive Evaluation System by conducting a comparison analysis of particular factors in university admission systems in U.S. and Korea.

### **III. Research methods**

#### **1. Research methods**

For the purpose of this paper, literature analysis would be the main research method. First of all, gathering and analyzing the information on U.S. university admission system would be conducted through exploring relevant studies and literatures on the subject. To study the basics of U.S. university admission system, this study would refer to Han (1986)'s study and probe into who the decision-maker is and how the universities operate under the system. For a more detailed materials to review on the U.S. college admission system, this study would look into researches of Cheong (2005) and Kang et al. (2009) and find what common grounds different U.S. universities have – either sorted by state or all under the same state government's jurisdiction – in order to organize the characteristics of U.S. college admission system. In terms of the research on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), this study would take Sung et al. (2007)'s literature and compare the exam management style and grade application of the SAT with Korea's CSAT. In regard to the information on Comprehensive Evaluation System, this study would review the literature created by combined effort of 5 different universities (namely Kyunghee, Yonsei, Ehwa, Chung-Ang and HUFS) to better compare Korea's system with that of the U.S.

#### **2. Conceptual or analytical framework**

Foremost, this study would lay out the reason of selecting the college admission system of the two countries, U.S. and Korea, and make a comparison analysis by distinguishing the commonalities and differences of the two systems. In terms of common factors, this study would look into basic evaluation processes of student record and other documents, the number of evaluators assigned per student, and finally, the procedure to ensure cultural variety by choosing students from different backgrounds. For difference analysis, this paper

includes the study on influence of government directives at the national level, how each system reflects the education gap among different high schools, how universities obtain secondary school information, the management and result analysis of nation-wide exams (SAT and CSAT), and the two countries' high school curriculum as well as the ways to complete secondary education. This paper, thereafter, would conclude by making suggestions to improve Korea's university admission system.

## **1. Reason behind the sampling of the two systems**

Korea's current university admission system has been greatly influenced by U.S. systems. Introduction of CSAT alone was reflecting SAT to determine college applicants' general academic abilities in logical thinking and judgement; Plus, the way Korea adopted admissions officer system took after that of the U.S., trying to consider factors such as volunteering, specialty, aptitude, leadership and so on besides SAT scores (Cheong, 2005). This study chose U.S. college admission system because it had a great impact on Korea's evaluation processes for university entrance. At first, the intention of this paper was to focus on just one U.S. state and review into the university admission programs of those universities alone; However, as the level of communication surged among all the universities in the country, their admission programs started to emulate that of one another, having more and more common factors to make a sound comparison analysis along the way (Kang et al., 2009)

U.S. universities showed a few common grounds in selecting their freshmen, namely, the academic achievement, athletic and artistic abilities, social participation and volunteering, the leadership in class, school, association and community (Cheong, 2005; Kang et al., 2009). The Comprehensive Evaluation System that reviews all above factors takes after that of the U.S. in many aspects, however, there are some critical differences. In consideration of such comparative elements in the two countries' systems, this paper would further suggest how to promote reliability in Korea's Comprehensive Evaluation System which is currently under scrutiny and opposition pressure.

## **2. Common factors between the two systems**

### **1) Evaluation factors in student records**

The Comprehensive Evaluation System shares much commonalities with U.S. universities' student document evaluation system, especially because they are both methods of qualitative

approach, not quantitative. However, it would not be easy for to predict whether one is admitted to the school or not under such qualitative evaluation system, and questions would be raised about the acceptance results. The Comprehensive Evaluation System takes into consideration not only the student’s grades on the transcript but also the person’s major suitability and potential for growth judged by each university based on student records, individual essay, recommendation and so on. The same goes for the United States college admission systems, selecting students by reviewing their application documents, high school records, personal and assignment essays, etc.

Table 1. Comprehensive evaluation factors standardized by Konkuk University, Kyunghee University, Seoul Women’s University, Yonsei University, Chung-Ang University and Hankook University of Foreign Studies

Evaluation Factors	Evaluated Segments in Detail	
Academic ability – ability to follow academic curriculum and carry out academic responsibilities	Academic achievement	* A student’s learning ability indicators assessed by grade ratings or the raw score (average/standard deviation) * Completed subjects and personal efforts evaluated to determine a student’s past achievement or the level of improvement
	Learning attitude and determination	* Willing to fulfill academic responsibilities and learn further * Setting one’s academic goals and appropriate learning strategy, as well as planning and carrying out the plan
	Research activity	* Level of curiosity to conduct in-depth, extensive research
Major suitability – the level of interest, understanding,	Completion and achievement of the subjects related to the major	* Level of achievement after completing subject (high school curriculum) relevant to the field and/or the major

investment and preparation towards the field	Interest and understanding of the major	* Extent of knowledge and curiosity fueled by the interest on the subject relevant to the major (or field)
	Field-related activities or experiences	* Effort and progress made regarding the major (or field) of interest
Character building – rationality and behavior appropriate for a member of the community	Teamwork	* Ability to work with and trust others to accomplish the common goal
	Sharing and considerateness	* Interpersonal skills based on respect and understanding * Altruistic demeanor and sharing ability
	Communication	* Attentive listening skills and empathetic understanding * Communications skills to effectively convey one’s thoughts and information
	Ethics	* Operating within the bounds of basic social ethics and principles as well as refraining from unjust or inappropriate action
Potential for growth – to advance and develop one’s ability to a qualitatively higher standard	Conscientiousness	* Fulfilling one’s duties with a sense of responsibility and diligence
	Initiative	* Goal-oriented attitude with choosing appropriate strategy, planning and execution
	Versatile experiences	* Life lessons derived from personal experience or various activities in school
	Leadership	* Ability to reach consensus and create harmony with others in order to achieve a common goal
	Creative problem-solving	* Creative and logical problem-solving skills

\* Source: (Kyunghee University et al., 2018)

Table 2. Evaluation criteria used by “A” University in the U.S.: academic

Evaluation	Evaluation Criteria
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Points	
7	The highest or a top-tier grades in school; All-A student; Best education program (school); Excellent essay and a very strong recommendation letter; A very strong intellectual curiosity; Combined SAT score higher than 1550
6	Grades within the top 5%; Mostly A's; Excellent education program (school); A lot of AP courses and honor classes completed; Great essay and a strong recommendation letter; Strong intellectual curiosity; Combined SAT score higher than 1430
5	Grades within the top 10%; Largely A's; Excellent education program (school); A lot of AP courses and honor classes completed; Great essay and a good recommendation letter; Plenty of intellectual curiosity; Combined SAT score higher than 1350
4	Grades within the top 15%; Evenly A's and B's; Great education program (school); Some AP courses and honor classes completed; Above-average essay and a school recommendation letter; Combined SAT score higher than 1300
3	Grades within the top 20%; All-B student; Advanced education program (school); Average-rated essay and a school recommendation letter; Acknowledgeable academic achievement; Combined SAT score higher than 1300
2	Grades around the top 25%; Mostly B's; Average education program (school); Adequate essay; A courtesy recommendation from school; Some concerns for successful academic achievements; Combined SAT score higher than 1150
1	B's and lower grades; Weak education program (school); Weak essay and; School recommendation letter somewhat reluctant; Many concerns for following the curriculum if accepted; Combined SAT score about 1100

\* The highest combined SAT score was 1600 at the time of the interview, which is currently 2400

\* Source: (Kang et al., 2009)

Table 3. Evaluation criteria used by “A” University in the U.S.: non-academic

Evaluation Points	Evaluation Criteria
5	Active and strong participation in school and community activities; Extraordinary leadership; The highest recommendation from school; Top athletic or artistic ability; Vigor and character; Highly possible in contributing to the campus life
4	At least one or more extra-curriculum activities of great service; Active participation; A very strong recommendation letter; Acknowledgeable athletic or artistic ability; Potential to contribute to the campus life
3	Average-rated participation in school and community activities; Adequate leadership; Some experiences in the field of athletics and art; A positive recommendation letter from school; No distinguishable weakness or strong suit in contributing to the campus life
2	No distinguishable participation in school or community activities; A lower than average recommendation from school; weak participation
1	A typical or negative letter from school; Concerns for immaturity in campus life; Insincere attitude in the process of applying to the university

\* Source: (Kang et al., 2009)

## 2) Number of evaluators assigned per student

Normally, two admission officers are assigned to primarily review the documents submitted by one applicant to accept or decline the application; In which case, one junior and one senior staff member are generally paired up, or one local officer pairs up with the one from outside of the region. The admission officers evaluate each applicant by their academic abilities, athletic and/or artistic abilities, leadership, volunteer works and other factors on paper. If the two officers' evaluation results show a huge difference in the points given, a third-party officer would arbitrarily decide on whether the student should be accepted or not (Cheong, 2005; Kang et al., 2009).

Korea's Comprehensive Evaluation System also takes the same form of two admission officers working together and a third-party officer making the final call when the first two officers cannot agree upon making the primary decision.

## 3) In efforts to promote student diversity (from a variety of cultural, social

**background)**

*“In the United States of America, universities endeavor to accept a group of applicants with different backgrounds; For example, there are students with socio-economically higher backgrounds, who worked hard their way up from a less fortunate families, who have different ethnic backgrounds and are from different states. These universities also accept a large number of international students from all over the world including Europe, Africa, Asia, Southern America and so on. As students live and study together with others from different backgrounds, they get to know and understand people who are diverse in their own lifestyles, values, views and attitudes. Such experience is crucial to the students in terms of living in a diversity society like U.S. as well as becoming the world leading figures in the future. If these universities would only accept middle to high class applicants with U.S. citizenship, the students would never have the opportunity to learn from other people nor understand others’ value, point of view or lifestyle, causing them to believe their ways as the right ones and advocate themselves without proper thinking (Cheong, 2005).”*

The reference above clearly shows U.S. universities’ effort to provide opportunity for students from all walks of life, especially the ones from social minority groups.

According to recommendation made in the 2015-2016 University Admission Policies (MOE) and the 2015 Guideline for University Admission Systems (Korean Council for University Education), colleges have great social responsibility to employ level-playing field admission systems to accept people from challenged backgrounds such as the students from agricultural and fishing villages or low income families as well as the ones who entered the workforce with a high school degree. There are also other admission programs pertaining to the applicants’ special circumstances such as for students from agricultural and fishing villages, descendants of patriots and veterans, students of the Specialized Technical High Schools (also known as Characterization high school), employed workers and so on. These programs recognize rather difficult circumstances of applicants minor social groups and provide enough opportunities so that students from all walks of life would be able to apply and enter the college.

### **3. Differences between the two countries’ university admission systems**

#### **1) Influence of government directives at the national level**

Korean government has more power to influence its education system. A well-known government policy intervening in education would be the Three-No’s (i.e. (1) No revival in

individual university admission exams, (2) No evaluation based on the school rank, (3) No legacy admission), and other guidelines and directives for university entrance are delivered from the central government. Such control by the government naturally led to the lack of autonomy for universities, which continues to this very day. A certain structural default system was created since the MOE has provided financial contributions to universities that follow government guidelines. Most Korean universities, however, urge the government to hand the power over to the tertiary institutions and ensure the university autonomy on admission systems.

On the other hand, the federal government of U.S. is composed of its state governments which hold full administrative and financial autonomy on the constituents' education from the preschool to state and public universities in the jurisdiction (Han, 1986). The federal government establishes national-level educational policy, drafts the bill and conduct research and development to promote education; However, it does not have the power to intervene on decisions made by any tertiary education institutions in the country (Han, 1986). As U.S. government does not have power over any universities (except the state government has jurisdiction over its state university), Korean government has far greater influence on the country's education compared to the U.S. government.

## **2) How each system reflects the education gap among different high schools**

*“Universities in U.S. do not apply absolute evaluation criteria when assessing students' high school grade. Many of the U.S. state governments carry out examination every year to assess the level of academic achievement in all schools that falls under the state's jurisdiction. The University of California has a 9-point grading system to categorize the group of high schools based on this state-level examination. The universities would provide additional points to the students after measuring the number of accepted alumni, the school's average SAT score, and how well the graduates of the same high school did in tertiary education institutions (Cheong, 2005).”*

However, Korea does not allow grading high schools or evaluating college applications based on the school rank. In the aforementioned literature of 5 different universities (2018), it says,

*“High school grading system refers to the system which recognizes every high school is different in its teaching level. On this note, this system benefits schools with weaker academic ability; However, it does not mean that any student's grade would differ along with his or her*

*high school's grade. This is the myth of those who profoundly misconstrued the system, and applicants need not worry that they would be disqualified against the minority students. The main purpose of the Comprehension Evaluation System is to consider the exceptional students from difficult learning environment who have come through and reached their full potential (Kyunghee University et al., 2018)."*

As the above interview illustrates, grading high schools differently is strictly prohibited in Korea; However, this regulation could also be a reverse discrimination against the accomplished students who have been, ironically, disadvantaged by their strong education. On this note, Korea's college admission evaluation could take after what U.S. does with its standardized achievement test system and simply obtain the information on the student academic level each year. Then, evaluators could use this information as a basis to more clearly assess each applicant's grades in high school. This is not to classify Korean high schools by grading them but only to prevent the relative disadvantages some high achieving students are prone to receive; And it could also be an alternative to the current system where high school profiles would not allow clear assessment on the applicant's actual grade.

### **3) How universities obtain secondary school information**

United States have specialists assigned per region. These specialists have a detailed knowledge of current status of each high school in the region. In addition, each high school sends the universities its school profile that shows what AP courses and advanced classes they have, to which universities its graduates got accepted, what score this year's senior students received in SAT (average), how many teaching staff there are, what their teacher to student ratio is like and so on (Cheong, 2005; Kang et al., 2009).

However, Korean universities use the high school profile in student evaluation. In the aforementioned literature of 5 different universities (2018), it says,

*"High school profile is used by universities that have Comprehensive Evaluation System as a reference material for a better understanding of the applicant's high school learning environment. Each high school writes their own profile, and Korean Council for University Education (KCUE) collects these profiles for the universities that have Comprehensive Evaluation System. With this information, universities can identify the current condition and notable factors about the high school, which are not stated in the student record. The high*

*school profile includes information on the basic circumstances, learning environment, member specifics, curriculum management, clubs and association (how they are created and run), school awards, the 3-year curriculum plan and so on. In order to prevent devaluation on students' achievements and abilities, universities evaluates the student by taking high school profile into consideration (Kyunghee University et al., 2018)."*

U.S. and Korea share another common factor in having high school profiles, however, U.S. has regional specialists to assess high school environment as to Korea's high school profiles are merely forms filled out by each school. Having the regional school specialists who have extensive and detailed knowledge would raise the level of expertise and accuracy in evaluating student records because the information gathered by these specialists would be far better in reflecting the ongoing affairs at school.

#### **4) The management and result analysis of university entrance examination**

United States have two different types of nation-wide examination called the SAT and ACT (American College Testing Program). SAT can be taken 7 times a year, and ACT can be taken 6 times per each year; Such multiple test-taking opportunities let people, mostly college applicants, to take as many tests as they want and choose from the best result they've received before getting assessed by the admission officers (Sung et al., 2007). However, Korea's CSAT advents only once a year, and the students who are high-school-graduates-to-be or above the education qualification pour everything they have into this one exam (Daum Encyclopedia, on "CSAT").

The main difference is of the two counties' systems is that the esteemed universities U.S. do not consider only the SAT scores but also see how far a student improved against all odds in his or her learning environment and living condition (Cheong, 2005). These universities also takes standard error system to make a meaningful distinction among applicants with measured dispersions in SAT scores (Yang and Chung, 2007). Korea's university admissions offices do not always consider how the difference in a student's CSAT score mirrors the academic level against his or her peers (Cheong, 2005); Not considering a meaningful measurement of the test results, Korean admission offices take the apparent CSAT score at face value and undisputed. If, however, this system is used as a criterion to assess an applicant's academic standpoint, another point of view would be necessary to not read too much into the dispersion or meaningful measurements – only take into consideration how big

the point gaps are among the test-takers. The absolute evaluation criteria for CSAT score is set by the government for this reason. Meaningful margin of scores can be construed differently depending on the number of people applying for the same university; Therefore, universities must be able to decide on their own rather than getting regulated means (absolute evaluation) from the government, and the government should be limiting its level of intervention to merely suggesting a guideline from which universities can derive a gauge for standard deviation using previous entrance results.

### **5) High school curriculums and ways to complete secondary education**

In U.S. high schools, most subjects other than P.E., arts and music in the curriculum (i.e. English, math, second language, science, history, etc) have divided classes according to a student's academic level. When a student receives the transcript, it shows all AP (Advanced Placement) courses the student took and grades per term (Cheong, 2005). As university admission offices review the student's grades on the transcript, it would be hard for the student to receive a great mark if he or she did not challenged themselves with as many AP courses and advanced classes (i.e. honor class) as possible. Even if the student got B's in AP or honor class courses, the student would be viewed as a person who is up for a challenge with great intellectual curiosity, resulting in the student receiving higher evaluation points than the ones who didn't go for advanced classes but have higher grades (Cheong, 2005). Korean students, on the other hand, completes the curriculum set by the nationwide institution and do not have the option to choose advanced courses. Because of this fixed curriculum, all Korean high school graduates who apply for the universities compete with the grades they've earned in the similar courses. In the aforementioned literature of 5 different universities (2018), it says,

“Under the Comprehensive Evaluation System, a student's grade on the transcript goes through qualitative evaluation after considering all aspects including the raw score, course average, standard deviation, level of achievement, number of students, class rank, number of subjects completed and so on. What reflects from these factors is how much a student focused on the course and the learning environment, and we evaluate those to academic aptitude such as their attitude toward learning and the will power to fulfill the responsibilities. Meanwhile, it is true that marks and grades a student received play a key role in the evaluation along with award winnings, specific abilities or specialties and a vigorous reading history. Therefore, if a

student works hard and shows the potential and development in the given learning environment, then, difficult or not, he or she would be deemed a high achieving student. (Kyunghee University et al., 2018)”

MOE has announced the course credit system would be introduced to Korean high schools beginning 2022, giving Korean high schools a similar atmosphere to those of U.S. counterparts. When the new system is applied, more factors like the subject chosen would be taken into consideration for evaluating a student’s ability to challenge oneself, academic competence, major suitability and so on. To successfully implement such system, diversifying the curriculum would be needed so the students would be able to opt from any classes of their choice in their school with different levels.

### **3. A proposal for Korea’s University Admission Examination System**

In comparison of the university admission programs of U.S. and Korea, it has been revealed that Korea’s Comprehensive Evaluation System took after a lot of aspects from U.S. admission officer system. Even though the Comprehensive Evaluation System began to settle down in Korea’s college admissions, opposing voices are raised against the unfairness issue of the system. In order to appease the strong concerns, the system and the immediate parties (i.e. students and their parents) to establish trust in terms of qualitative evaluation. To do so, admission officers’ level of expertise must be raised to build up their credibility, and we also need to set a clear guideline for relative evaluation factors. In addition, if Korean universities are ready to promote regular admissions and the significance of CSAT score, then the nationwide examination must be held more often within a year, creating more opportunities for students to make an eligibility cut of their true academic competence.

First of all, admission officers must obtain accurate yet in-depth knowledge of the current education system as well as high schools’ information. Generally, Korean universities take about 10 to 20 minutes per applicant to read the high school profile and other documents to conduct a primary evaluation, which is not enough for an accurate evaluation. In order for the admission officers to make a quick yet appropriate evaluation, they should be very well informed about the high schools and the district they are located in so that they can understand the ongoing affairs at the schools and applicants document accordingly. They should also have a great deal of information about the changes in the current curriculum and educational systems. For the purpose of building trust between the system and the people, we



need the means of regular test designed to identify and manage university admission officers and their level of competence in check. Plus, in terms of a relatively less experienced officer, he or she should receive a practical training using actual student data and must consult with more seasoned officers who could deliberate and inspect their latest work.

We also need a clear guideline for relativity in evaluation. High school profiles are not enough to fully grasp each school's actual level of academic competency. To identify which level a subject would fall into, a relativity comparison is necessary – which means every college applicant must take the same test to set the criterion. For instance, all high schools in the country could take the same test to have a better understanding of students' academic competence, which then would provide the admission officers to gain information on all the senior high school students of that year. This is how we prevent another scandal like the Soomyung Girls' High School incident as well as eliminate the possibility of reverse discrimination for the high achieving students.

Finally, we need to increase the number of CSAT taken per year and lower the age bar to meet test taking eligibility. If students could take CSAT more than once a year or prepare themselves for the actual exam to assess their own standpoint, there will be less pressure for them. Any change in college admission system or regulation must be announced 3 years in advance of the policy coming into effect. If there would be an early admission requirement that set the bottom-line CSAT score for the potential applicants, it would be logical to let them prepare themselves by looking into the disciplines and features of the university.

It is a shame that all the controversial debates on the Comprehensive Evaluation System show pattern of converging on reducing the number of items filled by students' applications. This measure would lessen the burden on students and teachers but eliminating any information would undercut the fairness issue for the students even further because of lack of information for admission officers to evaluate on. Rather than lowering the bar for the equity and fairness, raising the discernment on evaluation system would work better.

There was a restriction to this study as most of the literatures and written resources used were outdated, because the current data on U.S. college admission system was hard to come by. When given opportunity, conducting interviews with U.S. college administrators and admission office workers would greatly help with the justification of this study, provided the latest data was acquired from those interviews. In addition, it would be highly relevant to study more on the artificial intelligence (A.I.) system later on, because Topic Modeling (Seoul Daily, December 23, 2018) for the analysis filtering of self-introductory essays is the

blue chip of the field.

Simply evaluating our next generation by marks and scores does not seem appropriate for this world of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution, and comprehensive evaluation process is proper for our complex world. Before we jump to conclusion to abolish the Comprehensive Evaluation System, it would be better to make amendments and try out supplementary measures to make it work.

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