

# Agricultural Education In Korea

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At the dawn of the first century, Korea had contacts with the Japanese islands, and the highly developed culture of China was embraced. After unification of the country into a single state by Silla in A.D. 668, however, the Korean people were more or less confined to the Korean peninsula. This later led to isolationism in the mentality of the Korean people and their society. The Koryo dynasty in A.D. 936 repulsed alien invaders from the north, and the people succeeded in developing a Buddhist world of their own. This cultural heritage led to the Yi dynasty in 1392 and national integrity derived from Confucianism. The Japanese annexed Korea in 1910 as a result of the relentless pressure and exploitation of Japanese capitalism. Korea as a Japanese colony then went through a period of stagnation during the first half of the 20th century (Kim, 1970).

After independence from Japan in 1945, effective land reforms supported by the government improved rural equity in Korea. In the 1950s, the Korean government placed emphasis on the industrial sector leaving the rural areas underdeveloped. During the Korean War of 1950 the agricultural sector was neglected for a while and there was no economic balance between the industrial sector and the agricultural sector.

In the early 1970s the Sae-maul Movement started. The objectives of this program were to modernize the land, build residential facilities, form a network of streets and roads and improve agricultural techniques in rural areas under the slogans of self-help and cooperation. The Sae-maul Movement tried to help people recognize the importance of developing the agriculture sector.

The structure of the Korean farm is generally characterized as a duality. Korean farm households have migrated from rural areas to urban areas where the possibility of greater income exists, but there are still traditional hierarchical family relationships. Modern education has influenced the development of the rural area, but much of the traditional Confucian teachings such as perfect virtue, respect for parent and teacher, and the arranged marriage are still evident. More demand for female labor has not yet solved the sex discrimination problems associated with economic and social areas.

Rice, which provides more than half of the Korean farm household income, is a major agricultural product. Although the area of irrigated paddies has stayed constant, new varieties of rice have been developed, not only to raise farm household income but also for self-sufficiency. Agricultural research has played an important role in increasing per hectare yields of rice. Government pricing and policies have contributed to substantial increase of rice production and farm income.

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## Secondary Agricultural Education

Secondary vocational and technical education has been emphasized as a major issue of educational policies since the establishment of the Korean government in 1945. In the early period of the Korean Republic in 1952, high school and junior high school systems were separated from each other and the number of vocational high schools and students increased by 57% and 80% respectively. In the 1960s, practical vocational education development was stressed because of its contribution to economic growth. Focus was on the expansion of training facilities, preferential treatment for teachers, cooperation between industry and school, and expansion of employment opportunities for agriculture, engineering, business, and marine industries.

In the early 1970s, the number of vocational high school students exceeded the number of academic high school students due to government support of vocational education; however, the number of academic high school students increased by 238% for the ten years after 1974 compared to an increase of only 196% for vocational high school students. The gap between vocational high school and academic high school enrollment has continued to increase. There are two major reasons for this: First, the government abolished entrance examinations for academic high school students; and second, an academic career has become critical to getting a higher salaried job. In 1986 there were 1,621 high schools in Korea. Of these, 990 schools were academic high schools and 631 were vocational high schools. Sixty-one of these were agricultural high schools. The ratio of female to male students in academic schools was 78% and in agricultural high schools, only 10.5%.

The general educational goal of the agricultural high schools is to produce knowledgeable and technically trained farmers able to contribute to the development of their country. The first objective is to teach students to recognize the importance of agriculture, understand the relationship between the agricultural sector and the growth of the country, and to construct a healthy rural community. The second aim is to recognize the dignity and accomplishment of labor through agriculture and to develop diligence, a sound body and a sound democratic mind. The third objective is to help students select agricultural jobs on the basis of their individual aptitudes and situations, develop the skills to engage in agricultural production and play a vital role in developing the rural community.

Despite government support for the agricultural sector, in the present situation Korean farms are faced with a serious lack of labor. Industrialization and the tendency of the population to move to the cities has resulted from rapid economic growth. This has promoted a rural exodus of youth labor. This mobility from farm to city has helped to modernize rural communities and solve the problem of over abundance of labor that often is the result of scientific and

mechanical farming. Agricultural education in high schools has tended to concentrate on preparing students to go on to university or get a job, resulting in a shortage of educated workers, which the agricultural sector needs. To solve this problem the Ministry of Education in 1980 changed its focus to agricultural education for self-managed farming. This policy encouraged students to recognize the stability of rural communities and to learn scientific techniques of farming.

### Adult Education

The agricultural high school has played an important role in educating adults at the rural gun (county) level. High school teachers also hold joint appointments at the gun rural development office, and training classes in the high schools use the same materials and machinery as those used by extension workers. These extension workers train farmers in the schools during vacation periods. Students from the agricultural high schools usually join the extension service and deliver valuable information to farmers under the supervision of their teachers.

Agricultural colleges also have participated in programs to educate farmers. The Kon-Kuk University (KKU) holds a "school of the farmer" every summer vacation providing farmers with lodging and boarding at school facilities. Adults who have expertise in agriculture are invited to attend.

### Educational Youth Organization

The Sae-maul Youth Organization, formerly called the 4-H Club, has expanded its age range from 13 to 24 to the present maximum age level of 29 years. It contributes to agricultural education for adults. This organization, in contrast to formal schools, emphasizes not only education but also production. Information programs broadcast daily by radio for 45 minutes from the Sae-maul Youth Organization provide practical and technical information such as recommended crop variety; uses of fertilizer; pesticides or herbicides; and weather conditions.

### Agricultural Education Colleges

There are 34 universities in Korea and half of them have colleges of agriculture of different sizes. Only two universities have Departments of Agricultural Education--the Kon-Kuk University and the Seoul National University.

The Kon-Kuk University (KKU), a private university, has placed emphasis especially on development of Korean agriculture. The KKU has not only a College of Agriculture but also a College of Animal Husbandry. The Department of Agricultural Education in KKU offers only a B.S. degree. The curriculum for freshmen concentrates on liberal arts, economics, physical education and computer programming. Sophomores take agricultural education, introduction to education, educational psychology and history of education. Juniors and seniors take courses at higher levels concerned with practical and analytical skills.

The Department of Agricultural Education at the Seoul National University (SNU) is available to agricultural education majors and agricultural extension education majors. Agricultural education consists of various programs associ-

ated with agronomy, forestry, animal science, horticultural science, agricultural civil engineering, agricultural machinery and process engineering, and food science and technology. The agricultural extension education major has two programs--animal science and horticultural science. Courses of the agricultural education major and the agricultural extension education major are similar to those of the agricultural non-education major except for some courses related to education, the teaching profession, and guidance. SNU offers both undergraduate and graduate study, implying that SNU puts more emphasis on academic research to prepare students for higher level official positions. The KKU, with its stress on liberal arts, is more concerned with practical enlightenment and service to farmers. Both universities emphasize computer programming.

Even though other universities with a College of Agriculture do not have a Department of Agricultural Education, their students can be teachers in agricultural high schools by taking some courses of study for the teaching profession in their Departments of education.

Agricultural education is available only at KKU and SNU, with SNU the only graduate program. Two main factors may have prevented establishment of more departments of agricultural education. 1. Korean tradition often has welcomed bureaucratism rather than technical education; 2. Farming is less profitable than other businesses from an economic point of view, making industrial business much more attractive to youth.

### Conclusion

Agriculture is an economically declining but indispensable business to Korea at the present. The agricultural sector is important in supporting progress in the nation's total economic situation, since growth in the rural area can contribute to industrial output and more employment. If real incomes in the rural sector increase, there will be greater demand for industrial goods (consumer goods, farm machinery and farm supplies) which can lead to further expansion of the industrial sector.

Agricultural education programs for the high school level and adult education programs in Korea have been well organized as practical education, showing close relationships between the school and the rural community. More emphasis on higher agricultural education is required at both undergraduate and graduate levels. The Department of Agricultural Education in the Kon-Kuk University at the undergraduate level could be considered a model for future programs because that program has a connection with enlightenment of people in the rural area.

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