

A Long Journey toward Student-centered Curriculum in Korea

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Early efforts to modernize school curriculum

❖ In view of the situation of the world, all the rich and independent contemporary nations have their people civilized and enlightened. This civilization of knowledge is accomplished by the beauty of education...Now I, as a king, am commanding the government to establish schools and cultivate talent, to make a contribution to the revival of this nation by the learning of my people. Thus, you, my people, cultivate your virtue, body, and knowledge with loyalty and serving for the nation.

King Gojong, Doctrine for Education, 1895





Frustration of early efforts


❖ Japanese Colonial Rule (1910-1945)

During the colonial period in 1910-1945, school curriculum was determined by the colonial government.

Most Koreans were deprived of learning opportunities and the school curriculum in this period aimed to educate Koreans to be loyal subjects of the Japanese emperor.

❖ Korean War 1950-1953

The public education system was severely damaged by the war. Koreans had to restore their education system out of the debris caused by the war.




Implementation of the National Curriculum

- The six-year compulsory education plan was put into effect in 1954
- The 1st national curriculum was implemented in 1955.
- It was right after the Korean War and the beginning of the Cold War. Koreans had to rebuild their nation while facing the communist regime in North Korea.
- In this context, national unity and integration were more valued than local diversities and autonomy, which resulted in a centralized curriculum system.



Revision of the National Curriculum

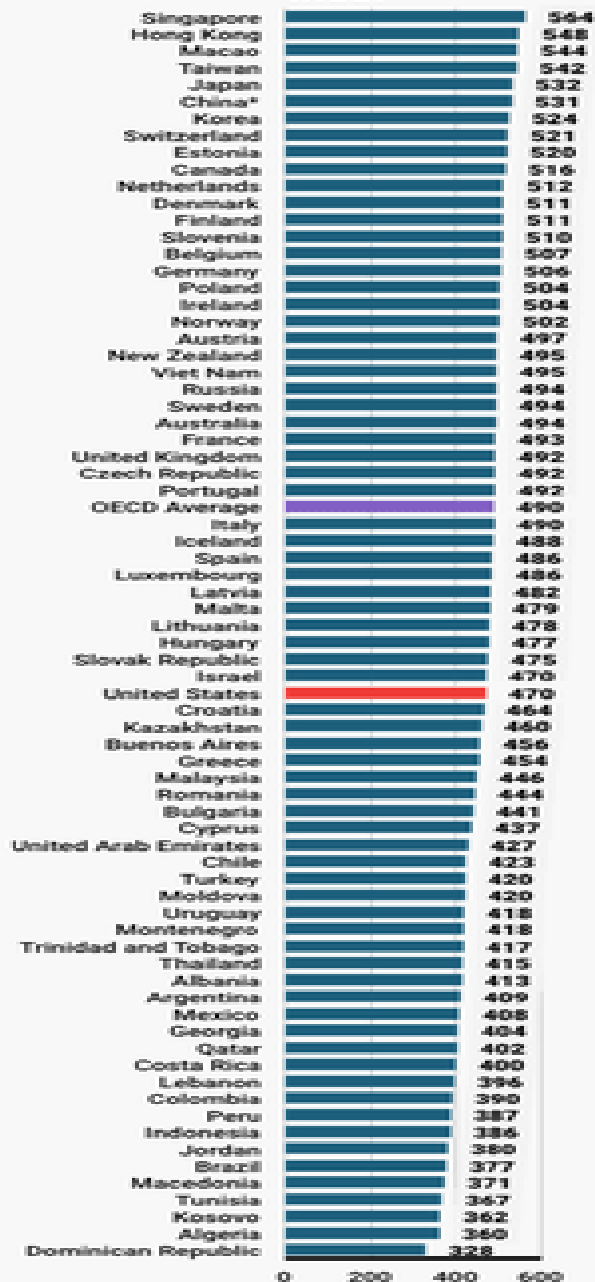
- ❖ Since the 1st national curriculum, the central education authority(MOE) has regularly revised the national curriculum every 5 to 7 years.
- ❖ The revision aimed to reflect changing social conditions and update content knowledge and instructional methods.
- ❖ During the authoritative regime, the MOE had determined the revision process and regulated the school curricula regardless of local diversities and students' interests.



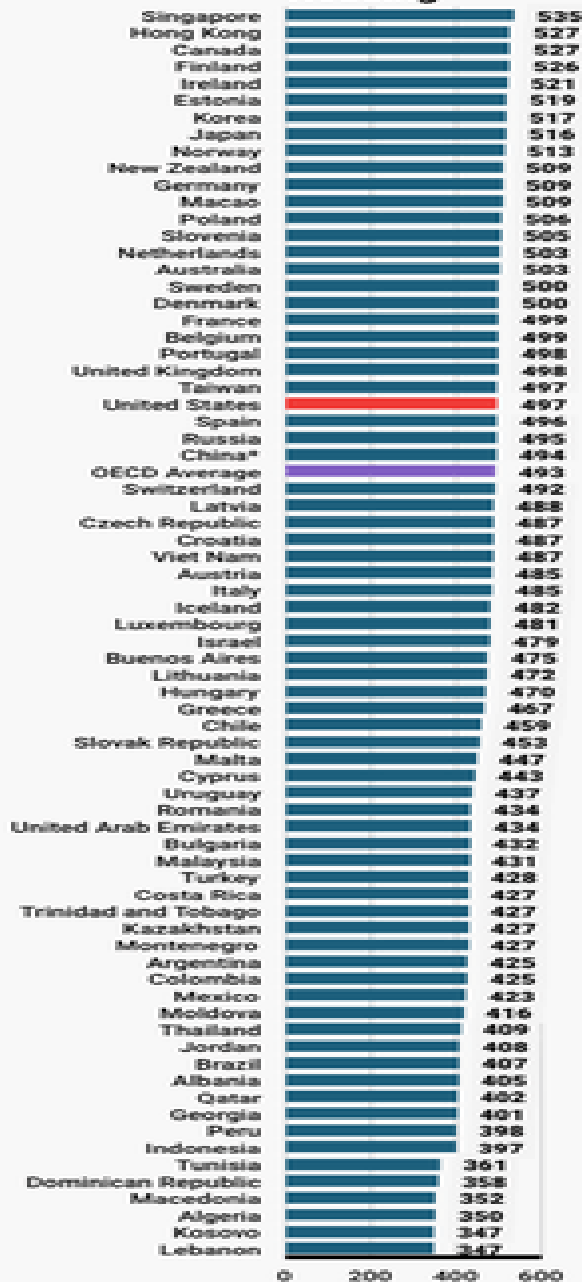
Bright and Downside of the Korean Curriculum

2015 PISA AVERAGE SCORES

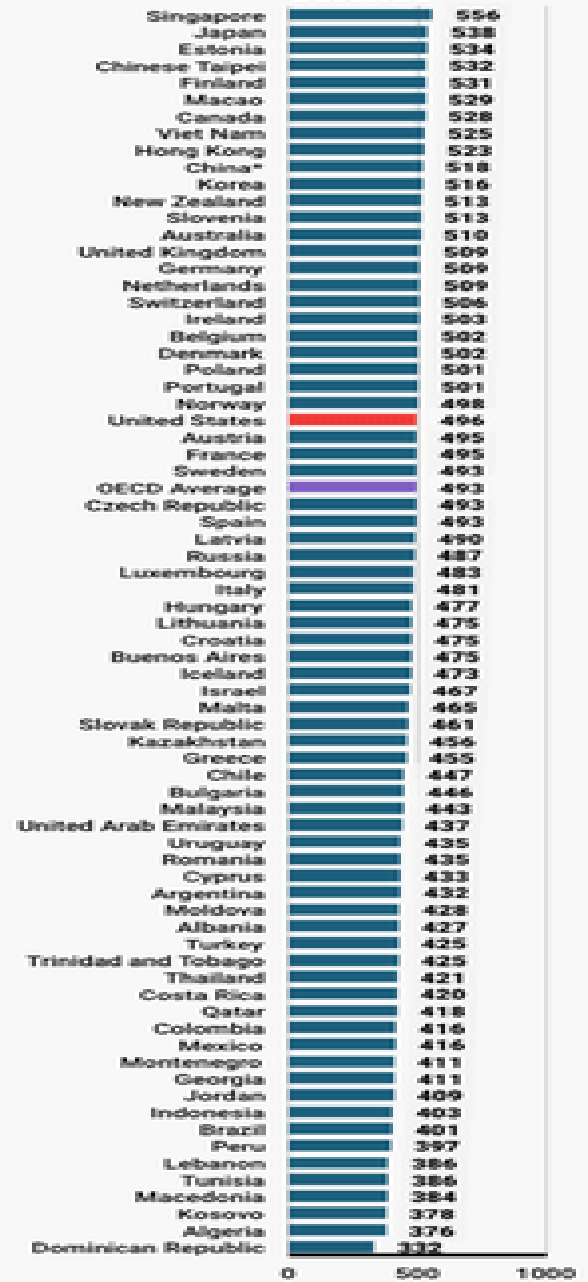
Math



Reading



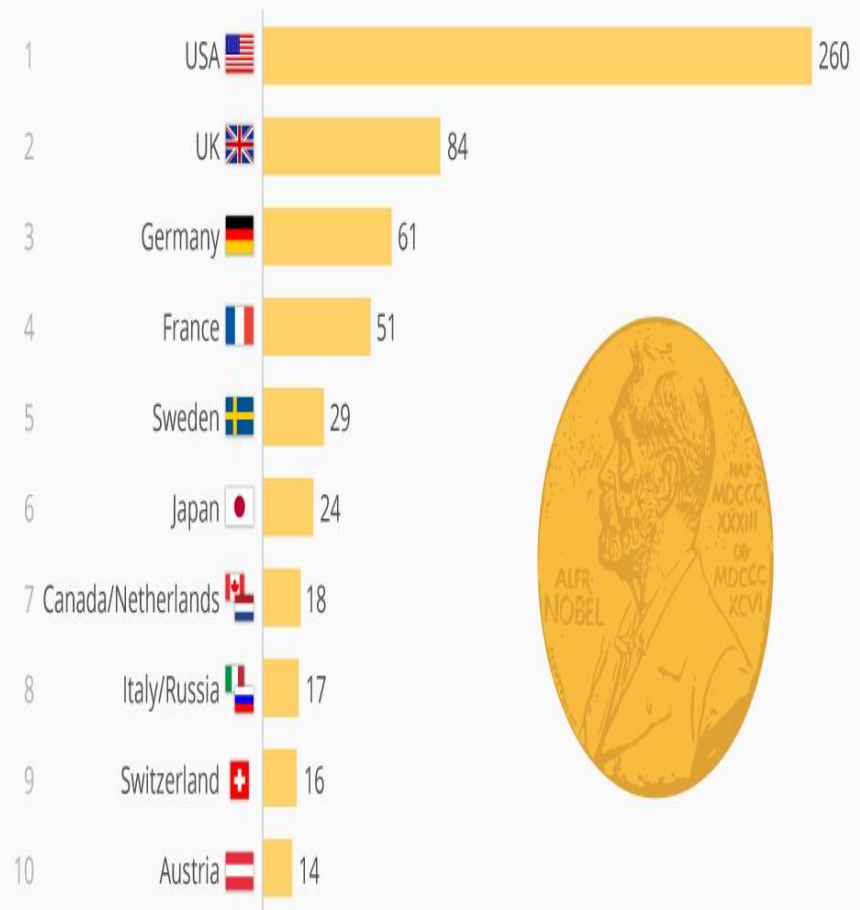
Science



Country	Amount of best ranked universities in the top 200
US	77
United Kingdom	31
Netherlands	12
Germany	10
France	8
Switzerland	7
Australia	7
Canada	7
Sweden	5
Belgium	5
Japan	5
Republic of Korea	4
Denmark	3
Hong Kong	3
China	2
Republic of Ireland	2
Singapore	2
Israel	2
Austria	1
Finland	1
New Zealand	1
Norway	1
South Africa	1
Spain	1
Taiwan	1
Turkey	1

USA leads the way in the Nobel Prize

The Top 10 Nobel Prize Winners by Country of Birth

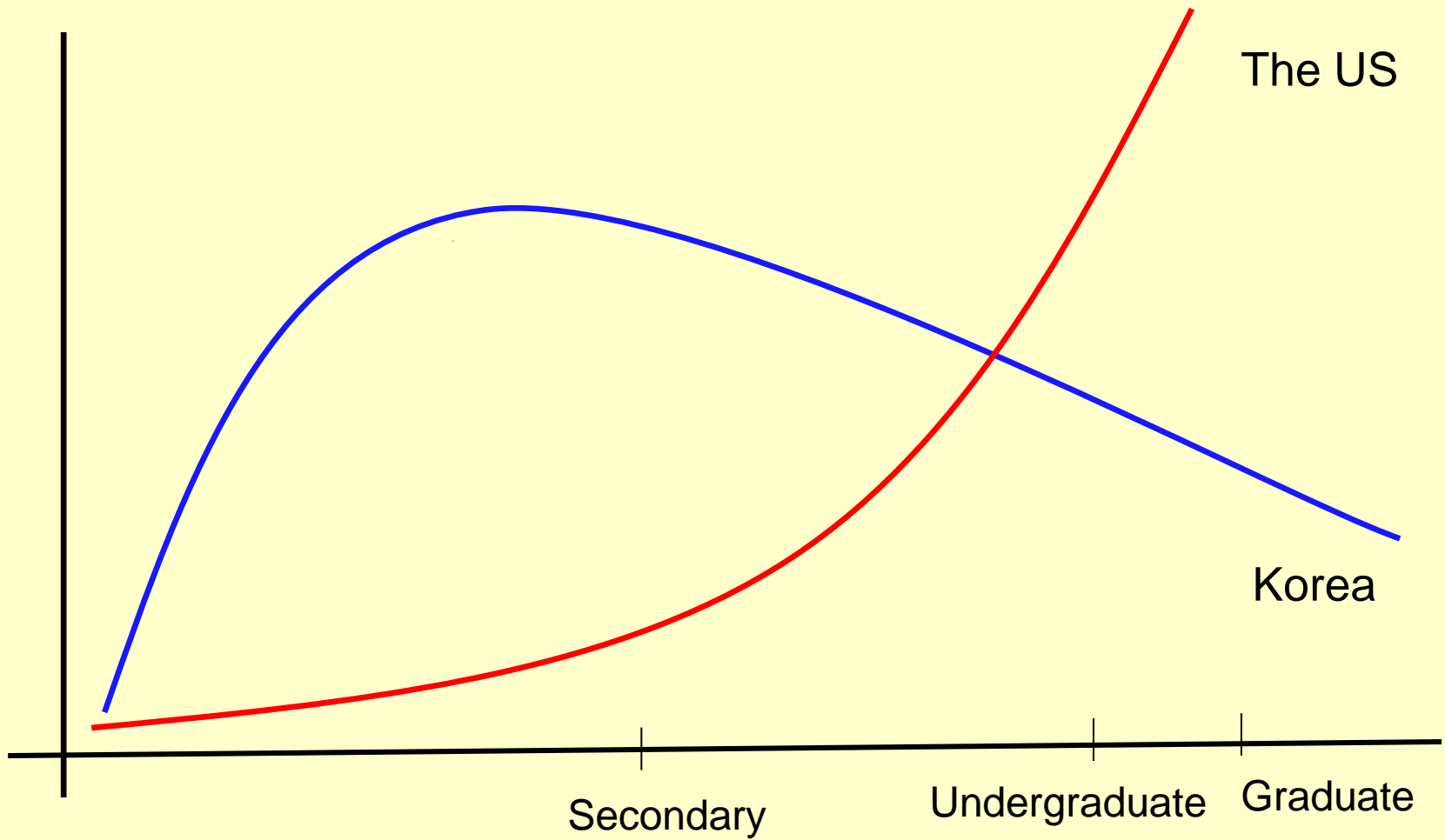


@StatistaCharts Source: Nobel Foundation

statista

<https://www.easyuni.com/advice/the-countries-with-the-best-universities-in-the-top-200-369/>

<Curve in the Power of Education>



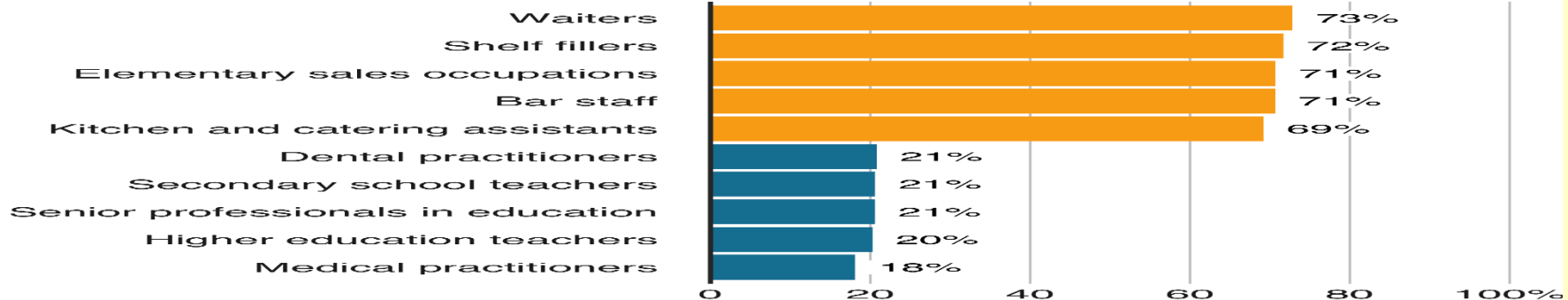
Social Changes: the 4th Industrial Revolution

- ❖ Students may have to learn to maintain social and emotional integrity even though finding stable jobs becomes more difficult.
- ❖ They also have to develop higher- order thinking skills beyond rote learning.



Jobs at risk from automation

Highest and lowest probability

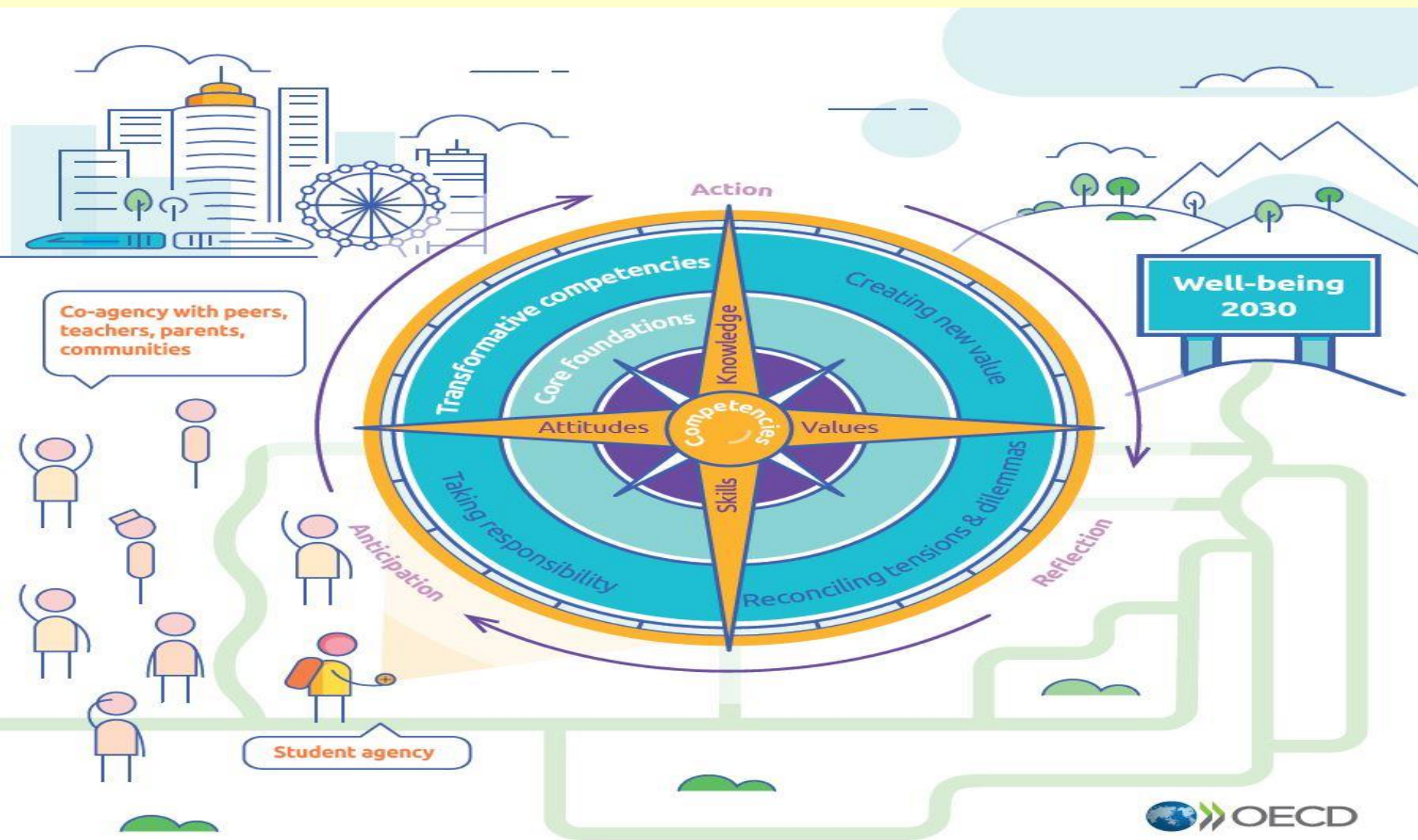


Source: Office for National Statistics

BBC

Global Effort to Redirect the School Curriculum

OECD Education 2030 project launched in 2015.



Future Curriculum Proposed by 'Education 2030 Project'

Categories	Characteristics
Student agency	The curriculum should be designed around students to motivate them and recognize their prior knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.
Rigour	Topics should be challenging and enable deep thinking and reflection.
Focus	A relatively small number of topics should be introduced in each grade to ensure the depth and quality of students' learning.
Coherence	Topics should be sequenced to reflect the logic of the academic disciplines, enabling progression from basic to more advanced concepts through stages and age levels.
Alignment	The curriculum should be well-aligned with teaching and assessment practice. New assessment methods should be developed that value student outcomes and actions that cannot be measured.
Transferability	Higher priority should be given to knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that can be learned in one context and transferred to others.
Choice	Students should be offered a diverse range of topic and project options, and the opportunities to suggest their own topics and projects, with the support to make well-informed choices.

Cited from Lee and So, 2019, p. 152

Recent Efforts to Revise the Korea School Curriculum

- ❖ Free semester in all middle schools since 2016
- ❖ In the 2015 National Curriculum, high schools students can choose elective courses in most subject areas from the second year after they learned common courses in the first year.



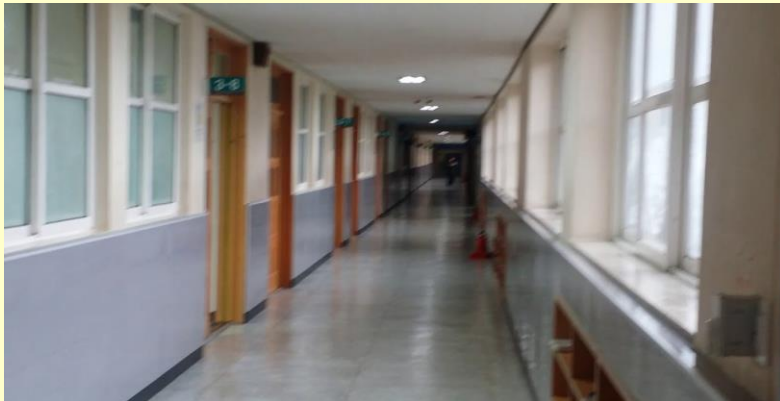
Credit-based Curriculum System in High School

- ❖ Along with the 2015 National Curriculum, preliminary attempts to implement credit-based curriculum system in high schools began in 2018.
- ❖ The underlying idea is to change high school curriculum to be more flexible and student-centered by adopting a university-style course taking system.



Further Tasks for Student-centered Curriculum

- ❖ Changes are required in student assessment: from norm-referenced to criteria-referenced assessment
- ❖ Teachers' professional authority should be recognized for criteria-referenced assessment to be accepted.
- ❖ Renovation in learning environment: schools have to provide spaces and resources for diverse learning activities





The most significant task

- ❖ Can we devise a valid, fair and stable college-admission system and obtain social consent on it? Otherwise we may continue to repeat the past failure.



Thank you very much

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