



ABC CLARION

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Finland and South Korea's Contrasting Education Systems

by Harvey Wang

In recent years, both Finland and South Korea have been commonly regarded as the countries with the best education systems in the world. Despite the fact that these democracies have placed in the top of the charts for educational tests year after year, there are many stark differences between the two countries' schools and cultures.

Finland has an unexpectedly easygoing education system for a country with such high scores on international tests. The student education time per week is the lowest among the developed countries in the world, and the students also receive the least homework, with an average of less than an hour each day. In Finland, the actual learning is considered to happen outside of classes and in extracurricular activities. For instance, the short school days allow Finnish students to participate in the rich variety of clubs the schools offer. In school, one third of the high school

classes are actually electives, which all sums up to a very low stress atmosphere at school. The schools also receive funding for extracurricular activities, but unlike in the United States, the towns sponsor sports instead of the schools.

South Korea, on the other hand, has a completely different style of learning. South Korean students spend up to 12 hours a day studying, with a mindset that they just have to get through a couple years of tough times, and the rest of their lives will be much more enjoyable. The students are studying as often as possible year-round, usually through tutors and extra classes outside of school. However, this method of education has developed beyond simply parenting and has become part of the South Korean culture. The classes in South Korea are relatively large, which would seem undesirable in America, but this leads the students to be pressured into

studying more. This national mentality of diligence and hard work has led South Korea to a remarkable feat: 100 percent of the population is literate, something that could not have been accomplished without the intense passion for education within South Korea.

The one aspect of these two countries that they have in common is the respect that is directed toward the teachers. In Finland, one in ten applicants is admitted into teaching programs, and only one in twenty applicants is accepted into the teaching programs in South Korea. Both of these countries give teachers a high social status and they are paid extremely well. The teachers in these two countries are known for being very dedicated to their work. Finnish teachers teach for just 600 hours a year compared to the average 1100 hours of American teachers, but they spend the rest of their time in professional devel-

opment and meeting with students. Likewise, South Korean teachers always try to do more than what is expected, and only 1 percent leave the teaching field every year.

Of course, the United States has a lot to learn from both of these countries. For such an influential country, it is disappointing, even embarrassing, to be ranked 17th in education in the developed world. Many analysts say that Americans simply do not have the motivation to be more educated than other countries. Specifically, 50 years ago, students would not have depended on problem-solving skills and critical thinking to get a job and make a living. Now, parents are still encouraging kids to have similar experiences to what they had, and the American culture is simply not stressing education enough.

Online Classes

by Brandon Ho

The Internet seems to be a revolution for modern education, and it appears to have opened up a multitude of opportunities for people to learn more. In recent years, online classes have become a new tool for educators to use in order to expand education.

Online classes make education more accessible; through online education, people who live in secluded areas can get an education, even though they may live miles away from the nearest school. Furthermore, students that don't have time in their schedule for school are sometimes offered the opportunity to take that class online, as EBHS students have experienced with the online financial literacy pilot course. Tommy Cho, a sophomore who has taken this course, feels that the course was a success: "Because this course depended on the internet, the assignments were made more tech friendly. Also, the files and assignments were easier to access and I was able to do my work even if I had missed school that day." Taking online classes allows students to pace themselves, taking their time on concepts they have difficulty with, and speeding through lessons that they find easy. In real life, this is impossible, since teachers usually have to teach an entire class of students and cannot focus on a single student. However, a student can control his education with online classes so it fits his own needs.

Online classes can also be taken as a supplement to education, as many organizations on the Internet are there just to help students study.

Nevertheless, many believe that precautions must be taken with the increasing popularity of online education, and that in the future, education cannot be taken completely from the internet. A real life classroom setting can benefit and help students in many different ways, which you may not realize until these benefits are taken away from you. Jessica Ling, a sophomore who has taken East Brunswick's financial literacy pilot course, recounts the annoyances she experienced throughout the course: "You don't get reminders in person to keep up with certain projects or daily class time to work on it, so I had to constantly remind myself and that was a bit tedious." A teacher can identify a student's weak points and guide them on where to focus, but when studying online, a student has to figure out his own education path. Some students claim that the quality of education from online lectures simply does not match the quality of education with a real teacher. Furthermore, classes in real life teach skills beyond the knowledge of the subject. In class, hands on activities can further deepen students' knowledge, while improving skills like cooperation. A chemistry lab could never be done online, but in real life, it is an

incredibly important part of chemistry, as chemistry students and teachers will tell you.

Online education will remain a controversial tool to help students excel in their academic career. Some may use it, and some may not, but in the end it is your choice to determine what helps you the most.



The Adulthood Ad-lib

by Michael Cao

To appropriate myself for adulthood, I have begun fretting over what I say. I spent the latter half of my teenage years stockpiling a repository of cruel and incendiary remarks, only to realize that I'll never be able to use them unironically. It's mentally and morally draining, and that's just one part of adulthood. I still have a license to register, a wine cooler to stock, and tax forms to file, but this forthcoming verbal cleansing has top priority.

The problem is that, growing up as an only child, I lived a nonchalant and unrestrained lifestyle. There was no brother to stuff me into mud when I threw a hissy fit, there was no sister to wail at my misgivings, and there was no grandmother around to (literally) whip me into shape. The concept of "censorship" is dubiously foreign, and I fear that I will never get used to it.

Will I spend the rest of my life living as

a pariah, or will I take a vow of silence and never speak again? The simultaneous pettiness and social ramifications that my quandary has on myself and the others around me poses as a dual threat, but perhaps a solution is multifaceted as well.

My future success lies in both my ability to self actualize myself and my maturity. Whether we like it or not, the transition into adulthood requires a growing up, and a growing up of words. The real world is a paradigm of delicate checks and balances, and it's my responsibility to uphold civic duty. Even though the modern construct of democracy actually provides me the freedom to be a metaphorical bull in a china shop, the profoundness of my situation lies not in the question of a right to freedom, but a recognition of restraint.

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