Rethinking South Korea's educational development in terms of students' agency in career choice making

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Abstract

Many scholars and policymakers interested in national development argue that education has been the driving force behind the rapid and unprecedented economic growth of South Korea. In terms of quantitative and qualitative development which is presented in entrance rates and PISA and TIMSS rankings, South Korean education has had many tangible achievements. South Korea's education which has been on the path of growth and development for over 70 years, is now headed toward entering university. The education system and excessive education fever focus on university entrance.

Today, at the end of high school education (nearly 100 per cent of teenagers complete high school courses), 7 out of 10 students choose to go to university as their following career path. This thesis aims to understand that choice and its implications by using the Capability Approach (CA) supplemented with a Self-determination Theory (SDT) to investigate students' motivation and agency.

The rationale for using the CA lies in its ability to offer an alternative analysis in which to scrutinise in a detailed manner what agency means in the choice issue. It focuses on what each individual's valuable doings and beings in making meaningful choices from a range of options in their life. SDT, integrated alongside the CA, offers a measurement of an agency that reveals whether students' exercised agency is indeed autonomous. The CA and SDT that this thesis develops will be contextualised with qualitative data collected from 81 1st year university students in South Korea in 2019. The analyses will demonstrate how students are motivated to choose and how they determine themselves as autonomous agents in choice-making. By understanding students' choices in this way, holistic explanations of students' perceptions of choice can be made, potentially suggesting future practices and policies regarding students' agency issues in South Korea's education development.

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This thesis is dedicated to them.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Example #1

> Over the last 60 years, South Korea has achieved incredible economic growth and is now hailed as a model case of a nation overcoming poverty, becoming the 13th largest economy in the world. This emergence from poverty through rapid economic growth occurred across just a few decades. In 2010, South Korea became the first country in the history of the OECD to join the "Development Assistance Committee (DAC)" after transitioning from a recipient country to a donor country. One of the biggest contributors to this great achievement was South Korea's unique education system and development policy, which enabled schools to raise talents that are in demand.
>
> Quoted from a South Korean government report entitled 'Korean Education Policy Development: education for the future' published in 2014

Example #2

> US President Barack Obama called on the US to take a lesson from South Korea in terms of how they rebuilt the country through educational reform.[1]
>
> Since his visit to Seoul in 2009, Obama has often talked about the education fever that has contributed to South Korea's rapid economic development in recent decades and has deplored the underperformance of American students, especially in math and science. Obama has called for the US to look to South Korea in adopting longer school days and after-school programs for American children to help them survive amidst keen global competition, while he has lamented a US high school dropout rate that has tripled in the past 30 years.[2]
>
> Quoted from a newspaper article

Example #3[3]

> *The more I desired to do well, the more stressed I felt about my studies. My head was always heavy. I got indigestion for no reason, as well as continuous stomach aches. The counsellor told me that psychological discomfort often manifests as physical symptoms.* (High school student #1)
>
> *The hole in my heart was filled with vague anxiety, and I finally climbed up to the railing above the 9th floor of our apartment block. I returned to my daily life and pretended nothing had happened, but when I started high school, the stress of my studies added to my emptiness and sadness.* (High school student #2)

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[1] https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20110315000100315

[2] http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20110126000866

[3] https://m.segye.com/view/20201217520700

> It was found that around 4 out of 10 middle and high school students are experiencing very high levels of stress on a daily basis. Nearly 30 per cent of students have experienced a level of depression that has a significant impact on their day-to-day lives. And these numbers are generally increasing year by year. Feelings of stress and depression were also higher amongst high school students than middle school students, perhaps due to the increased academic burden that comes with university entrance exams. It was also found that education plays a direct causal role in stress levels. Studying (62.3 per cent) gave the highest response rate to the question (multiple responses) asking about areas of unbearable stress, followed by marks (51.9 per cent).
> The number of students who said they had experienced an emotional breakdown in addition to stress was 7.6 per cent. Of the respondents, 61.7 per cent said they had experienced emotional turmoil, and the cause of this emotional turmoil was also related to schooling in many cases. Regarding the cause of the emotional turmoil (multiple responses), the proportion of respondents who chose school or their future career was the highest at 67.7 per cent.
>
> Quoted from the casebook published by 'Wee'[4]

Example #1 is an excerpt from the 2014 government report, 'Korean Education Policy Development: education for the future', presenting a view from inside South Korea that positively evaluates education's contribution to national development and economic growth. Example #2 is part of a newspaper article containing several references to South Korean education by former US President Barack Obama, and it is one of the external perspectives that also look positively upon South Korea's educational achievements. Example #3 is an excerpt from the casebook published by 'Wee' last year, in which students currently within the South Korean educational system voice their opinions regarding academic stress. These are examples from various angles of what South Korean education looks like today.

South Koreans have followed the tradition of Confucianism and have had a respect for learning since early times (Lee, 2006). During the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1897), only those who passed the public exam could become top government officials (So and Kang, 2014). In addition, after the Korean War in the 1950s, the newly established government in South Korea emphasised a system in which people's positions and responsibilities in society depended on their intelligence and abilities, not on their parents or wealth. Within this environment, education became the key to social mobility (Lee, 2011). And importantly, South Korea has experienced rapid and unprecedented economic growth (Kim, 2014; Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017), shifting from being one of the poorest countries in the world after the Korean War to the eighth-largest economy in the world in 2018[5]. Scholars and policymakers at home and abroad argue that education has been the driving force behind South Korea's development.

The term 'education fever' has been commonly referred to as a phenomenon that characterises South Korean education. Education fever has been defined as an excessive interest in education or strong social demand for education (Kim, 2002; Lee, 2014). Education fever is a familiar concept not only in South Korea but also in other Asian countries (e.g., China, and Japan). Education fever is directly translated from a Chinese word, and the reason why the researchers

[4] Wee' is a service operated by the South Korean government to support student adaptation at school.

[5] https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/202005271772070341

chose ‘fever’ in English is associated with the somewhat negative nuance of education fever in South Korean society. Therefore, the meaning of education fever reflects an unusual level of interest in education (Kim, Lee, and Lee, 2005: 8). The OECD report highlights South Korea’s strong fever for education and how the country has achieved its dramatic economic development in the twentieth century through human capital formation (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017). Seth (2005) also proposes education fever in South Korea as the driving force that has transformed South Korea into an exceptional educational nation. The education fever actively contributed to the expansion of educational opportunities and high-quality education. The enrolment rate for each school reached or exceeded 90 per cent for primary schools in 1959, middle schools in 1990, and high schools in 2000. Also, the results from both the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 and TIMSS 2011 reported that South Korea was one of the top countries in terms of academic achievement in reading literacy, mathematics, and science (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017).

South Korea has produced one of the most highly educated labour forces in the world. The proportion of those aged between 25 and 34 years old graduating higher education in 2019 was 70 per cent, compared to the OECD average of 45 per cent, making it the highest among all OECD countries (KEDI, 2019; MOE, 2020). The advancement rate to higher education steadily increased and peaked at 83.8 per cent in 2008. It subsequently fell slightly every year but has risen again since 2018, and 72.5 per cent of high school graduates continued higher education in 2020. Higher education in South Korea has reached the stage of universalisation from the stage of popularisation for over a decade (Kim, 2009). South Korean education and fever for education have walked the path of development in terms of historical, traditional, cultural, and social perspectives, and today, the goal is to reach universities, especially prestigious higher ranking ones.

Advancement rates approached almost 100 per cent for high school by 2000, making South Korea one of the few countries in which graduation from high school is almost universal. Therefore, theoretically, students' first career ‘choice’ comes after they graduate high school. At the end of their high school education, students have a ‘choice’; as expected, 7 out of 10 students ‘choose’ university over other options. Every moment of a person’s life is made up of choices, with career choice being one of the most important of these.

In this research, the capability approach is applied alongside self-determination theory to this research in order to understand students’ choices. The capability approach focuses on what each individual can do and be, their ‘valuable doings and beings’, in making meaningful choices from a range of options in their life (Walker, 2005). In the capability approach, agency refers to an actor’s capacity to make purposeful choices; thus, people who enjoy high levels of agency should be able to make choices that matter to them for a valuable life (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007). A lack of agency or constrained agency results in disadvantages when making choices. Thus, agency helps a person shape their own life rather than allowing it to be shaped by others (Unterhalter and Walker, 2007). Looking at an individual’s choices and the values that lead to said choices is important in understanding how they exercise their agency in choice-making. However, the choice made could be affected by collective judgements or decisions. The choices and values made and held do not indicate whether the choice-making is autonomously engaged and unrestricted. Factors that affect the free exercise of agency in choice-making should also be examined to reveal people’s autonomy through their perception of agency valuation. Therefore, self-determination theory is integrated alongside the capability approach, as the theory offers a measurement of an agency that reveals whether a person’s exercised agency is indeed autonomous. Self-

determination theory is a multidimensional and validated measure of people's agency and their perception of making certain choices via types of motivation and regulation.

One of the keywords in this paper is the capability approach. However, there is a lack of research and understanding of the capability approach in South Korea. Most of the papers on the capability approach are studies on ethics and political philosophy, and there are not many studies that relate Sen's discussion to education (Chung, 2015; Yoo and Lee, 2016). In the field of education, there are only recent research papers by Chung (2015), Yoo and Lee (2016), and Mok and Jeong (2016). In addition, in these papers, the 'capability approach' is translated into different Korean words. If you look up 'capability' in the English-Korean dictionary, it is translated as '*yeokryang*' or '*neungryok*'. And when these two Korean words are translated into English, they are translated as ability, capacity, competence, or capability. In fact, these four English words are often used interchangeably in South Korea. Of these words, the word capability is the least used. Therefore, this thesis, along with existing papers, find significance in introducing and guiding capability approach in research related to education and educational development in South Korea.

This research started with personal questions. As a South Korean, I was educated in South Korea for 16 years, from primary school to university, and I took going to university for granted and chose to go to university as a career path after graduating from high school. In the choice and its process, I did not receive the question 'why' either by myself or by anyone. As time passed, I studied international development and education for my masters in the UK with my interest and will and worked in related fields, allowing me to more objectively look back on education in South Korea and my past time as the most ordinary student in it. Why do students take going to university as a natural choice without any questions or doubts? What motivated students to go to university? Is the motive autonomous? And where are the students who should be the agents in their choice and choice process? And here, the 'student' is also a projection of the 'me' of the past.

Therefore, this is a study about 'choice' and 'agency'. The relative importance of individual freedom of action (Agency) and the constraints imposed by one's position in society (Structure) have been debated. There are few areas of study within the social sciences where questions relating to individual choice are not raised. (White, 2007: xiii). This study examines the current status of educational development in South Korea, looking at students' career choices, especially the choice to go to university, and students' autonomy and agency in the choice process. In South Korea, there have been numerous studies into factors and variables that influence career choice. However, it wasn't easy to find studies that focus on the students' voices alongside the life histories that influenced their choices, even if students should be the agents in the whole process of choosing their career path.

It is important to make clear the aims of the study. The research questions addressed in this research can be summarised as follows:

1. How does the collectivistic perspective on education influence students' perceptions regarding career choice following high school graduation?
2. What leads students to choose to go to university? What about the degree of autonomy of those motives?
3. How do students determine their own agency when it comes to choosing a career, and what happens in this process?

A qualitative design is applied in this study as the goal has not been to establish objective truth, but rather to investigate the truth as students perceive it, as they reflect on their career choices. Therefore, the life history research method is chosen as a primary data collection strategy because it captures individuals' perceptions of their lives. Face-to-face interviews were carried out with 81 1st-year university students in South Korea from April to October 2019. The interviews aimed to conceptualise the choice-making process at this important transition in students' lives.

Provided in the next chapter is a detailed picture of South Korea's educational landscape since independence in 1945, with a particular focus on education fever and higher education. Chapter 3 discusses the national and international literature pertaining to career decision-making and higher educational choice, how career choice is conceptualised and understood in these contexts, the dominant discourses that have developed in recent years, and their characteristics and meaning with regard to this study. Chapter 4 introduces the analytical framing of this study, focusing primarily on concepts introduced by the capability approach (CA) and self-determination theory (SDT), and discusses why and how a combination of these two frameworks can provide a space in which to understand and reflect on students' career choice and their agency and autonomy in choice-making. Chapter 5 discusses the overall research design and outlines the specific data collection and analysis methods used in the research. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 present and discuss the data in depth. Chapter 6 looks closely at sampled South Korean students' perception of going to university as a matter of choice, paying particular attention to how socially formed collective perspectives could organise students' thoughts, perceptions, motivations, and choices. Chapter 7 explores what motives underlie the students' decisions to go to university and the autonomy of these decisions by applying the self-determination theory framework with intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and regulations. Chapter 8 explores how students shape their own personal values and objectives and how they judge themselves as active agents in making a choice to go to university. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by drawing together the findings and linkages across the chapters, reviewing what has emerged from the three research questions, and addressing the potential educational implications and the contribution of this study might be.

Chapter 2. The educational landscape of South Korea

Before delving into an examination of the literature surrounding career decision-making and higher educational choice, it is important first to understand the educational landscape of South Korea. South Koreans have long recognised the importance and value of education. There is little doubt that this recognition has made a great contribution to the economic growth and social development of South Korean society. Yet, at the same time, there are also problems of excessive education fever and an education system oriented around university entrance. Therefore, in this chapter, I explore educational development in South Korea from various angles and the characteristics that stimulated the research questions of this study.

The chapter begins with an overview of contemporary South Korea's education sector and its historical background and development strategies. This discussion will ask questions regarding the philosophies and ideologies that have influenced educational aims in South Korea. Moreover, I examine what sorts of policies and strategies have emerged as a result. I explore the economic growth and educational development, factors that have been the focus of the domestic and foreign scholars who discuss education in South Korea. Finally, I look into education fever and the high rate of university entrance, both a cause and a result of this education fever in South Korea. And then, the high participation of higher education in South Korea will be discussed in international contexts.

2.1. Overview of South Korea's education sector

2.1.1. School system

The education system in South Korea includes early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, and higher education. School education in South Korea spans twelve years. Primary schools provide six years of education to children aged 7 to 12, and middle schools offer three years of education to those aged 13 to 15. The first nine years of education in primary and middle schools are compulsory, followed by three years of high school education and two to four years of higher education. Education is free at the primary and middle school levels, and high schools also have provided free education since 2021, except for some private schools[6]. According to their missions and purposes, various types of schools exist in high school and higher education (Lee, 2001; IQAS, 2007; Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017; KEDI, 2019; MOE, 2020).

Most primary and middle schools are public, and the same level of education based on the national curriculum is provided free of charge. Students usually attend a neighbourhood school. Students graduating from middle school or those passing a qualification exam providing equivalent credits are eligible to participate in three-year high schools. While high school education is not currently compulsory, it is nearly universal, with an enrolment rate of 91.4 per cent in 2020 (Lee, 2001; MOE, 2020). At the end of middle school education, students usually choose the type of high school. There are four types of high schools, differing according to their specialised curriculum: 1) general academic high schools where students receive general education and preparation for the university entrance exam; 2) special-purpose high schools such as foreign language high

[6] https://www.korea.kr/news/cardnewsView.do?newsId=148882955&call_from=rsslink

schools, and science and arts academies for gifted students; 3) specialised high schools that provide vocational education and training; and 4) autonomous public/private high schools which have more autonomy in school administration and curricula (KEDI, 2019: 4).

General academic high schools form the largest group and provide a general education across diverse areas. Students are commonly selected based on their neighbourhood and academic record (KEDI, 2019; MOE, 2020). General academic high school students are placed in either the *Munka* (Humanities) track or the *Yika* (Natural Sciences) track. This tracking occurs at the end of 1st-year. Students generally choose either the *Munka* or the *Yika* track. The tracking determines the subjects that students learn at schools and for the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) later. For example, *Yika* students study advanced mathematics and science and are prepared to study engineering, medical sciences, natural sciences, or technology programmes at university. In contrast, *Munka* students learn advanced language arts and social studies courses that prepare them to study liberal arts and social science majors at university (Paik and Shin, 2013: 289). Switching from one track to another is difficult because the track-based curriculum is implemented at the classroom level, not individually (Paik and Shin, 2013).

Special-purpose high schools aim to provide professional education and/or training in specialised areas. Special-purpose high schools can be divided into multiple specialty tracks: science high schools, foreign language high schools, international high schools, arts high schools, sports high schools, etc. Students are selected for special-purpose high schools based on transcripts, teacher recommendations, interviews, performance examination results, evaluations that assess students' self-directed academic skills, and so forth (MOE, 2020; MOE, 2021).

Specialised high schools aim to provide education in specialised areas through field-based workshops and experiments and experienced-centred education based on students' skills, talents, and aptitudes. Based on the characteristics and aims of the high school, diverse vocational education, including agriculture/life industry, industry, commercial information, fishery/marine, housework/business, etc., is provided instead of general courses such as Korean Language, Maths, English, and Social Studies. Students are selected based on their academic records, interviews, performance, and so on (MOE, 2020; MOE, 2021).

Autonomous high schools are high schools that have more autonomy in implementing their curriculum than other high schools. They employ diverse and specialised educational programmes with more independence and accountability in terms of school management. There are autonomous public high schools and autonomous private high schools. Students applying to autonomous public high schools are selected based on academic records and selective examination scores for the region, whereas students applying to autonomous private high schools are selected based on transcripts, teacher recommendations, interviews, evaluations that assess students' self-directed academic skills, and so forth (MOE, 2020; MOE, 2021).

However, in 2019, the South Korean government passed a partial amendment to the Enforcement Decree of the Primary and Secondary Education Act, which would abolish autonomous private high schools and special-purpose high schools in 2025 and convert them to general high schools at the State Council meeting[7]. The Ministry of Education says that there is a clear ranking among high school types in university admissions, and to resolve this, these high schools will be converted into general high schools. In addition, it is because these schools are considered an

[7] https://newsis.com/view/?id=NISX20200225_0000931029&cID=10205&pID=10200

obstacle to introducing the high school credit system that the education authorities intend to implement. In order to keep the purpose of the high school credit system, the current high school personal grading system needs to be changed from a relative evaluation system to an absolute evaluation system. However, in this case, the education industry observes that autonomous private high schools and special-purpose high schools are highly likely to become 'completely flawless' schools that are advantageous for university admissions[8]. On the other hand, those schools and parents strongly protest and express that they would file a constitutional complaint when the law is promulgated.

Higher education is offered to high school graduates or individuals with equivalent educational backgrounds as authorised by relevant laws and regulations in South Korea (MOE, 2020). Higher educational institutions include four-year universities, two or three-year junior and technical colleges, and graduate schools. In addition to regular four-year universities, there are particular types of universities depending on their purpose of establishment, such as universities training primary school teachers, industrial universities for lifelong learning, etc. (KEDI, 2019). Universities, in general, select students based on applicants' CSAT results, school transcripts, and other factors that indicate their readiness for tertiary education (MOE, 2020). A distinction is drawn between national institutions (funded and managed by the Ministry of Education), public institutions (funded and managed by local management boards), and private institutions (funded and managed by individuals or organisations). The majority of higher education institutions (372 out of 430 in 2019) are private in South Korea. The three most prestigious universities are Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University, commonly abbreviated together in South Korea as 'SKY'. The national universities also have a good reputation (Nuffic, 2015; MOE, 2020).

The CSAT, first introduced in 1994, falls under the responsibility of KICE (Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation), with the examination taking place every year in November. It is made up of six subjects: Korean language, Mathematics, English, Korean history, exploratory (with students choosing between Social Studies, Science, and Vocational Education), and foreign languages or Chinese characters (Nuffic, 2015; MOE, 2021). For individuals to be accepted to university, they need recognition of their high school academic abilities (for prospective graduates and/or those with equivalent abilities based on the law) and the criteria used to select university students to include high school transcripts, the CSAT score, result of university-administered examinations, and so on. University admission screening procedures examine high school transcripts, comprehensive school records, essays, performance screening (including special ability screening), and CSAT scores; the respective weighting applied to each of these criteria is decided by the individual university. Since 2007, more emphasis has been placed on screening comprehensive school records, which evaluates students' talents, aptitudes, and extra-curricular activities more than academics to move beyond a grade-oriented university screening system. In addition, to improve the quality of high school education, the government has directed universities to screen applicants based on high school anecdotal records and has worked to implement policies regarding university entrance procedures and provide easy access for students and parents (MOE, 2021).

[8] https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/view/2021/05/514881/

2.1.2. Educational administration system

The educational administration system in South Korea is composed of two levels. The first level is the central government, consisting of the president, the prime minister, the National Council on Education, and the Ministry of Education, which decides educational policies on the national level. The second level is that of local governments, which have the authority to determine educational policies significant to local communities (KEDI, 2014; KEDI, 2019).

At the national level, the Ministry of Education plays the role of the executive body of the central government, which has administrative control over planning, implementing, and monitoring educational policies that direct South Korean education. The Ministry of Education is responsible for creating policies related to educational and academic activities in primary, secondary, and higher education and implementing them successfully. In addition, the Ministry of Education directs educational policies for the current administration, including university affairs and academic research, vocational education, higher education, school innovation, the national curriculum, educational welfare, student support, lifelong learning and future education, educational safety information and educational statistics (KEDI, 2019: 7).

While the Ministry of Education acts as the central governing body for educational policies, the Municipal, Provincial, and Regional Offices of Education are the governing bodies that direct the local education system. With the enactment of the Local Autonomy Law in 1991, the major direction of educational administration has been toward decentralisation and democratisation. As a result, the role of regional educational offices of education becomes more prominent in dealing with educational issues in the community. The Ministry of Education has delegated much of its decision-making authority over budget planning and administrative decisions to local offices of education. Under the direction of superintendents, who are elected by-election, diverse local educational demands and needs can be better identified and addressed at the local level. As of 2019, there are 17 Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education and 176 District Offices of Education. The District Office of Education serves as a local educational administrative agent that facilitates and supports the implementation of educational policies in local schools. The primary issue in educational administration is how the central government, represented by the Ministry of Education and the local administrative bodies, works cooperatively under different leaderships (KEDI, 2019: 7).

2.1.3. Educational statistics

With the qualitative and quantitative growth of education in South Korea over the last seven decades, there has been a simultaneous expansion in the school system. The number of schools at every level of education has increased over the years. Yet, these trends have levelled off recently with the constant population-based decline in the number of school-aged children. It is now anticipated that the number of schools will see a gradual decrease (KEDI, 2019).

Table1. Number of schools and students in 2020

Types of schools	No. of schools	No. of students
Preschools	8,705	612,538
Primary schools	6,120	2,693,716
Middle schools	3,250	1,320,759

High schools	General academic high schools	1,573	958,108
	Special-purpose high schools	160	64,493
	Specialised high schools	489	212,294
	Autonomous high schools	145	102,417
	Other	49	10,454
	Subtotal	2,416	1,347,766
Higher educational institutions	Universities and colleges	228	2,285,139
	Junior colleges	156	670,593
	Graduate schools	45	320,595
	Subtotal	429	3,276,327
Total		20,920	9,251,106

Source: MOE, 2020: 76-77

As can be seen in Table 1, the total number of schools as of 2020 (including preschools and primary, middle, and high schools and higher educational institutions) is 20,920. The total number of students has declined over recent decades. Low birth rates, a highly competitive educational environment, and a high level of societal competition may have been factors contributing to such a drastic decline in the number of school-aged children (KEDI, 2019). The total number of preschool, primary, middle, and high school students was 5,974,799 in 2020. The number of students attending both colleges and universities was 3,276,327 in 2020.

Table 2. School enrolment rate from 2000 to 2020

(Unit: %)

Classification	2000	2005	2010	2018	2019	2020
Preschools	26.2	31.1	40.3	50.6	48.7	49.0
Primary schools	97.2	98.8	99.1	97.6	98.7	98.4
Middle schools	95.0	94.3	96.5	98.0	96.7	95.7
High schools	89.4	92.1	91.7	92.4	91.3	91.4
Higher education	52.5	66.1	69.3	66.9	67.8	70.4

Source: MOE, 2020: 78

Table 2 shows that the increased enrolment rate at every education level reflects expanding educational opportunities trends. The remarkable growth lies especially with enrolment rates for preschools compared to that of 2000. Here, the enrolment rate was only 26.2 per cent in 2000 but reached 49.0 per cent by 2020. The enrolment rate in higher education is also on the rise, from 52.5 per cent in 2000 to 70.4 per cent in 2020.

Table 3. OECD PISA Rankings from 2000 to 2018

(Three-year cycle, Object: 15 years old)

Classification		2000	2003	2006	2009	2012	2015	2018
OECD Member Countries	Reading	6	2	1	1-2	1-2	3-8	2-7
	Mathematics	2	2	1-2	1-2	1	1-4	1-4
	Science	1	3	5-9	2-4	2-4	5-8	3-5
All participating countries	Reading	7	2	1	2-4	3-5	4-9	6-11
	Mathematics	3	3	1-4	3-6	3-5	6-9	5-9
	Science	1	4	7-13	4-7	5-8	9-14	6-10

Source: MOE, 2020: 83

The OECD's PISA provides data based on an analysis of each participating country's performance and its relationship to its educational context. South Korea has participated in the OECD PISA assessment since 1995 (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017). South Korea has received a great deal of global attention due to its high academic performance at primary and secondary education levels. It has maintained its top ranking in all sections since 1995, and its scores have even continued to improve (So and Kang, 2014). As can be seen in Table 3, according to the OECD's 2012 PISA report, South Korea was listed as one of the highest-performing OECD countries. South Korean students showed astonishing results in their level of achievement and performance in reading, literacy, and mathematics, scoring one of the highest average scores among 34 OECD countries. South Korean students scored 536 in reading literacy and 554 in mathematics, ranked 1st and 2nd among all participating OECD countries (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017). However, since 2012, the rankings have shown a slight downward trend.

2.2. Development of education in South Korea

2.2.1. History of educational development

After Japan's defeat in the Second World War in 1945, the Japanese colonial rule in Korea came to an end (Nuffic, 2015). The liberation of Korea from the Japanese occupation was a turning point in the history of South Korean education (Lee, 2001; IQAS, 2007). The Korean peninsula was divided in two, with the United States occupying the South and Soviet Forces occupying the North, subsequently establishing independent governments (Lee, 2001; Yoon, 2014; Nuffic, 2015). As a result, South Korea adopted the current 6-3-3-4 single ladder system based on the American educational system (IQAS, 2007).

The Ministry of Education (MOE) was set up following the establishment of the Republic of Korea in the south in 1948. The MOE placed great importance on personal development through education and took charge of educational policy, planning, and administration for all types of education in South Korea (Lee, 2001; IQAS, 2007; Yoon, 2014; Nuffic, 2015). In 1949, the new South Korean government announced a fundamental Education Law to set up a new educational system (Lee, 2001). This system and its related policies purported the ultimate value of education and the ideal character of the individual (Yoon, 2014).

<u>The 1950s</u>

Despite many difficulties that came as a result of the Korean War (1950-1953), South Korea achieved rapid growth in the field of education (IQAS, 2007). The focus was placed on reconstructing the education system, emphasising democratic education (Yoon, 2014; Nuffic, 2015). Much effort was made to provide equal educational opportunities for all, and as a result, six years of primary education became compulsory in 1953 (IQAS, 2007). National universities and teacher training institutions were established, and textbooks for primary schools were created (Nuffic, 2015).

The 1960s

In the 1960s, dramatic growth in the student population demonstrated a quantitative success but presented challenges in terms of furthering the quality of education. Classrooms were overcrowded, and school facilities and qualified teachers were scarce (IQAS, 2007). The MOE launched several initiatives to revise the curriculum and improve teaching methods. Since then, various measures have been taken to more effectively regulate the system (IQAS, 2007; Nuffic, 2015). In 1968, South Korean education underwent significant reform. The Charter of National Education was promulgated to balance tradition and development (Lee, 2001; IQAS, 2007; Yoon, 2014). As the number of primary school students increased, competition for entry to middle schools also intensified. Therefore, in the same year, the middle school entrance exam was abolished as part of an effort to move from exam-based education to a more balanced one. The first university entrance examination was adopted in the same year to afford equal admission opportunities nationwide (IQAS, 2007; Yoon, 2014; Nuffic, 2015).

The 1970s

Interest in education continued to rise, and sustained economic growth led to a hike in income levels (Yoon, 2014). The government introduced more projects to improve the quality of primary and middle school education by revising educational objectives, curricula, and teaching methods. In the early 1970s, the government promoted the high school equalisation policy. The competitive entrance exam in individual high schools was abolished and replaced with a single qualifying examination. Instead of competing fiercely for a place in one of the more prestigious high schools, students had to pass the qualifying exam and were assigned to high schools through a lottery system (Yoon, 2014; Nuffic, 2015). Higher education also underwent a period of growth, change, and adjustment by establishing and strengthening national public universities, regional universities, and junior colleges. By 1990, more than 500 higher educational institutions had been established, up from 19 in 1945 (Yoon, 2014).

The 1980s

In 1980, the new military-based administration made a radical reform to normalise school education (Lee, 2001). An increasing rate of high school enrolment thereby caused over-competition for university entrance in the late 1970s (Lee, 2001; Yoon, 2014; Nuffic, 2015). High school students had to pass both a preliminary examination administered by the MOE and an entrance examination administered by individual institutions to gain admission. Students had to spend long hours studying at school and home, and many studied with private tutors. The overheated out-of-school private tutoring problem emerged as a social problem (Lee, 2001; Nuffic, 2015). This problem put pressure on students, and families spent large amounts of money on education. It also led to an aggravation of income inequality reflected in educational opportunities. The government perceived a negative impact on the school system, so it banned private tutoring for high school students in 1980 (Yoon, 2014; Nuffic, 2015). The MOE abolished individual college

and university examinations the following year, emphasised high school achievement in determining college and university entrance eligibility, readjusted curricula in terms of workload, and established university graduation quotas (Lee, 2001). The MOE introduced the Scholastic Achievement Examination for College Entrance for all high school graduates wishing to attend college or university. Admission was based on this written test as well as on high school records (Nuffic, 2015). The 1980s were characterised by qualitative changes, such as the introduction of a lifelong-learning system and renewed educational facilities (Nuffic, 2015). The enactment of the 1982 'Social Education Act' provided every citizen with a chance to receive lifelong education to supplement school education and improve civic consciousness (Yoon, 2014). The education tax of 1982 financed the expansion and modernisation of school facilities and improved the socio-economic status of teachers (Nuffic, 2015). In 1985, the Commission for Educational Reform became a consultative body for the President to reconsider educational competitiveness. With the purpose of 'cultivating Koreans to lead the 21st century,' it proposed measures such as university entrance system reform, school facility upgrades, science education promotion, and increased local and institutional autonomy (Lee, 2001; Nuffic, 2015).

The 1990s

In the 1990s, South Korean education continued to focus on various quality-related issues. New laws for promoting local autonomy were introduced in 1991, and educational district offices were set up at the provincial level. In 1994, the Commission on Educational Reform for a New Korea submitted a proposal to increase the education budget, strengthen the international competitiveness of university education, and promote the autonomy and accountability of private schools (IQAS, 2007; Nuffic, 2015). In 1995, the First Educational Reform Plan, consisting of nine core tasks, was released as a new framework of open education in preparation for the twenty-first century. The nine core tasks were: establishment of an open edutopian [educationutopia] society, diversification and specialisation of universities, creation of a democratic and autonomous school community, emphasis on humanity and creativity in curricula, innovation of the university entrance examination, development of diverse educational programs, establishment of a new evaluation and support system for schooling, remodelling of teacher training programmes, and an increase in the educational budget up to five per cent on the Gross National Product (Lee, 2001: 5-6). In 1998, the government established the Presidential Commission for the New Educational Community, an advisory agent to the President. Reviewing and assessing the progress of educational reform, the commission offered additional training and encouraged civic movements to support reform efforts. As a result, the commission carried out changes in schools and local communities by forming educational communities led by teachers, parents, and citizens' associations and by promoting bottom-up educational reform based on student needs and available resources (IQAS, 2007: 8).

The 2000s

The national school curriculum was revised periodically to meet national and social needs. The latest curriculum (the seventh version) was introduced to primary school students in 2000 and extended to the whole school system in 2004. The new curriculum attempted to break away from the traditional emphasis on rote learning by reducing study loads for each subject, allowing for more flexibility to meet individual student needs, and increasing self-directed learning activities. In 2002, with the enrolment rate in primary education at 100 per cent, three years of middle school education was made compulsory nationwide. Since the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, the government carried out reforms to higher education, perceived by many as a rigid

system. Due to a dwindling pool of university-age students and a substantial increase in university capacities, more than 80 per cent of general academic high school graduates went to college or university. In 1998, the government launched the 'Brain Korea 21' plan to improve the international standing of its universities. The programme resulted in a dramatic increase in the publication of internationally recognised research papers and significant growth in scholarly exchange with overseas institutions (IQAS, 2007: 8-9).

The 2020s

Most recently, the MOE (2020: 35-65) introduced four goals centred on innovation and inclusion for the future direction of South Korean education. The first goal encompasses the government's plan for innovation in the public education sector, which includes: 1) supporting the development of student competency through customised career education; 2) innovating the education system with digital technologies; and 3) building teacher competency as agents of innovation. Second, education policies are dedicated to ensuring equal educational opportunities for all, from early childhood to higher education, to strengthen public accountability for education. Third, the government and universities work together to transform the educational ecosystem, emphasising autonomy and innovation with more robust cooperation between universities, research entities, and industries in response to the decreasing school-age population and to meet the future society's needs. As part of the final goal, South Korean education would ensure lifelong vocational education by supporting them to better adapt to the changing societal environment.

2.2.2. Development strategies

Three distinctive strategies characterise the development of South Korean education. The first strategy is a stepped approach. The South Korean government focused on primary school first, followed by middle school, high school, and higher education. When the overall system was first established, expanding access to primary education was critical to building a solid foundation. The policy was initially focused on building as many primary schools as possible nationwide to accommodate citizens' educational needs (KEDI, 2019).

Table 4. School enrolment rates from 1951 to 2020

(Unit: %)

Classification	1951	1959	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Primary school	69.8	96.4	92.0	97.7	100.5	97.2	99.1	98.4
Middle school	-	-	36.6	74.4	91.6	95.0	96.5	95.7
High school	-	-	20.3	48.8	79.4	89.4	91.7	91.4
Higher education	-	-	5.4	11.4	23.6	52.5	69.3	70.4

Source: Kim, 2005: 16 and e- national index[9]

[9] https://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1520

As shown in Table 4, the period when enrolment rates for each school type reached or exceeded 90 per cent was 1959 for primary school, 1990 for middle school, and 2000 for high school, indicating that quantitative growth occurred in stages.

The South Korean government launched its first six-year plan for free compulsory primary education in 1954 and completed it in 1959, with an enrolment rate of 96.4 per cent. During the course of expansion, most of the education budget was allocated to primary education. With the goal of universal primary education fulfilled, competition for entrance into middle schools in general and elite schools, in particular, became so intense that numbers of students having to repeat the year and those using private tutoring soared, quickly becoming a serious social concern. The government virtually eliminated all elite middle schools, ensured increased school places, and strived to equalise middle schools in terms of school inputs, such as teachers and facilities (Kim, 2002). As a result, as of 1990, the middle school entrance rate had reached 91.6 per cent.

The second is a sequential approach. The sequence of South Korean educational development is described from quantitative to qualitative. Efforts towards quantitative expansion that characterised South Korean education took place largely during the 1960s and 70s. This expansion included an increase in the student population, the expansion of educational facilities, and the number of teachers. South Korean education in the 1980s endeavoured to normalise and enhance the quality of education (Kim, 2005). Implementing policies first focused on expanding access to primary education, even though it resulted in many overcrowded classrooms. The government then worked on reducing the number of students per classroom by building more primary schools, which resulted in improved quality of education. Expansion of secondary education also focused first on increasing the availability of middle and high schools, which depended on private funds. The government later provided quality control over secondary education by abolishing middle school entrance examinations and implementing the high school equalisation policy (KEDI, 2019).

Third, the history of educational development in South Korea often coincides with economic development. South Korea achieved remarkable economic growth in a relatively short period of time following the Korean War. The driving force that made such outstanding growth possible is often said to be education, as well as people's fever for education. Moreover, during the rapid process of industrialisation, a well-educated and trained workforce contributed to the development of the nation, which had few natural resources but ample human resources. As a result, South Korea grew to become one of the major donor countries of the Official Development Assistance of OECD (KEDI, 2019). The following chapter will further discuss economic growth and educational development in South Korea.

2.3. Economic growth and educational development

South Korea has experienced rapid and unprecedented economic achievement and educational development (Kim, 2014; Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017). Going from one of the poorest countries in the world after the Korean War, it achieved the fastest economic growth among 197 countries from the mid-1960s, when industrialisation was first pursued, to the mid-1990s (Kim, 2014). South Korea has grown to become the tenth-largest economy in the world, with a GDP of

the US $1.73 trillion and a per capita income of US $33,429 in 2018[10]. Scholars and policymakers at home and abroad interested in national development argue that education has been the driving force behind the nation's development in terms of its rapid economic growth and educational development. Developing countries also want to learn from South Korea's case. On the other hand, since the Asian financial crisis of the mid-1990s, there have been suggestions that the developmental models of East Asian countries, including South Korea, and their limitations, should be re-examined (Kim, 2014). Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that education was a priority for national development and a major factor contributing to the country's phenomenal economic growth and social development.

"Over the last 60-years, Korea achieved incredible economic growth and now hailed as a modelling case which overcame poverty and became the 13th largest economy in the world. Korean educational development is closely related to national economic development. For the last 60 years, the South Korean government developed and adopted a proper education policy to meet the industrial demand according to the given industrial development stage. Through the combination with the economic development plan, from the reconstruction of the educational system in the late 1940s, education played a pivotal role in preparing and training the workforce that was required for the economic development" (KEDI, 2014: 4).

This quote is an excerpt from a South Korean government report entitled 'Korean Education Policy Development: education for the future', published in 2014 by the Korean Education Development Institute (KEDI). An analogy to help understand development and education in South Korea can be drawn from this paragraph. The top priority of South Korea's national development strategies has been to achieve productivity growth in order to overcome poverty and increase gross domestic product (GDP). South Korea is under-endowed with natural resources, which has inevitably pushed the country to develop its human resources in order to achieve its development goals, meaning that South Korea's rapid economic development correlates highly to its investment in human capital (Pillay, 2010; Oputa, 2015). The South Korean government has generally successfully provided education and expanded it as necessary in response to the industrial need for human capital. Each phase of investment in education has fueled economic growth in terms of national economic advancement.

Looking at the contribution of education in South Korea to economic growth by time period, during the period 1966 to 1975, the total contribution of education to economic growth (quantitative contribution and qualitative contribution) was 3.8 per cent (Kim, 2014). Converting this to the contribution rate based on the national income growth rate as 100 per cent means that 12.5 per cent of economic growth was achieved through education. The contribution of education from 1970 to 1975 was 11.2 per cent when the national income growth rate was 100 per cent, showing a similar trend to the previous period. From 1980 to 1994, the contribution of education to economic growth was 2.5 per cent. Comparing this with the national income growth rate as described above, education contributed 15.5 per cent to economic growth, indicating that the contribution was larger than in the 1960s and 70s. When looking at the contribution of education to economic growth by school level, in 1981, the marginal contributions of university education and that of high school education were almost identical, but since then, the contribution of university education has been significantly greater. In addition, while the contribution of high school education to economic growth has been on a downward trend since 1982, the contribution

[10] https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=101&tblId=DT_2KAAG01

of university education was at a high of 0.6 per cent or above until 1983 and then dropped to the level of 0.4 per cent in 1994. This shows, however, that the contribution of education to economic growth since the 1980s is mostly due to the increase in university education levels.

Thus, the human capital perspective is solidly entrenched in South Korea as an approach to development and education. South Korea has undergone a remarkable transformation since 1945 as the South Korean government developed and adopted a proper education policy to meet the industrial demand according to the given industrial development stage (Pillay, 2010; Seth, 2005b). South Korea has experienced rapid and sustained economic growth since the 1960s. One of the most significant contributors to this achievement has been the education system and its development policy, which has created a demand for talent and enabled schools to meet that demand. South Korean educational policy was planned and implemented in connection with the Five-year Economic Development Plan, which served as the backbone of South Korea's economic development (Sorensen, 1994; KEDI, 2014; Yoon, 2014).

South Korea's industrialisation policy underwent significant changes over time, with the nature of the human capital required for each period also changing accordingly.

The 1960s: Primary education, adult literacy, and early labour-intensive industrialisation

In the 1960s, when primary education became commonplace in South Korea, industrialisation based on the economic development plan began in earnest. Early industrialisation was characterised by export-led industrialisation biased toward the labour-intensive light industry. The 1st economic development plan (1962-1966) was established in response to the internal demand for a transition from an aid-dependent consumption economy to a self-reliant industrialised economy. Meanwhile, the 2nd plan (1967-1971) attempted to build key industries around steel, machinery, chemicals, and so on in order to develop import substation industries. It developed the existing light industry as an export industry to incorporate South Korea's industrialisation into the international division of labour. As the 1st and 2nd five-year economic development plans were promoted, the industrial structure was also reorganised, resulting in a decrease in the primary industry's share and a significant increase in that of the secondary industry, especially the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector, which accounted for 9.1 per cent of total national income in 1962, increased to 17.9 per cent in 1970, and the light industry sector accounted for more than half of the added value created in the manufacturing sector throughout the 1960s. The rapid universalisation of primary education contributed to South Korea's rapid economic growth by supplying abundant high-quality, and simple labour for labour-intensive industrialisation in the 1960s. At that time, since economic development was in its early stage, the demand for highly skilled workforces was not great, and workforces with only general primary education were sufficient. Accordingly, the human resources necessary for the development of labour-intensive light industry were abundantly available. In 1960, 80.4 per cent of production workers had completed primary education, resulting from the rapid expansion of primary education after liberation. Only half of the primary school graduates in the 1960s went on to middle school (54.3 per cent in 1965), and the majority of those who didn't were young, unskilled workers employed in labour-intensive industries (Kim, 2002; Pillay, 2010; Jones, 2013; Kim, 2014).

The 1970s: Industrialisation through secondary education and selective fostering of capital-intensive heavy and chemical industries

Entering the 1970s, as advanced countries shifted to protectionism in trade, it became difficult to increase exports without advancing the products to be exported. Therefore, from 1972, the government started export-led heavy and chemical industrialisation by substituting imports in the capital goods industry. As a result of the implementation of the 3rd and 4th five-year economic development plans, the proportion of light industry among the added value created by manufacturing decreased from 54.3 per cent in 1970 to 44.1 per cent in 1980, while the proportion of heavy and chemical industry increased from 48.6 per cent to 55.9 per cent. Thus, the proportion of light industrial products among export products decreased from 69.6 per cent in 1970 to 49.4 per cent in 1980, while the proportion of heavy and chemical industrial products increased from 12.8 per cent to 41.5 per cent during the same period. Meanwhile, in the labour market, as labour absorption from agriculture to manufacturing was almost completed, wages in the manufacturing sector began to rise. As a result, South Korea began to lose its comparative advantage in labour-intensive industries as wages rose compared to other developing countries. Due to these changes, the industry could no longer maintain competitiveness with unskilled workers who received only primary education (Kim, 2002; Kim, 2014).

In the 1970s, the government promoted a policy to foster vocational high schools. As a result, the number of vocational high school students increased significantly, and South Korea was able to secure a higher number of excellent students. The policy of fostering vocational high schools in the 1970s seemed to contribute to heavy and chemical industry-focused industrialisation by meeting the demand for skilled workers and strengthening vocational training offered by the Ministry of Labour. In the case of production workers, the majority (80.4 per cent) completed primary education in 1960, and only 18.5 per cent completed secondary education. However, the proportion of those who completed secondary education increased, changing to 50.9 per cent and 46.9 per cent in 1975 and 34.6 per cent and 58.5 per cent in 1980, respectively. This was partly because the introduction of the middle school no-examination system in the late 1960s and the implementation of the high school equalisation policy in the early 1970s resulted in a significant expansion of the secondary education population, shifting the composition of the social-based workforce from primary school graduates to middle and high school graduates. However, this was mainly because the labour market structure required skilled workers at the secondary education level, and the expansion of technical high school duration and vocational training systems contributed to the smooth supply of such human resources (Sorensen, 1994; KEDI, 2014; Kim, 2014; Yoon, 2014).

The 1980s and early 1990s: Higher education, technology, and knowledge-intensive industrialisation

Higher education expanded according to the government's laissez-faire higher education quota policy immediately after liberation in the 1950s, but due to the small number of school-age populations, the scale of expansion was not very large. In the 1960s, the strong quota control policy suppressed the growth of higher education. In the 1970s, there was a partial expansion, but only in the fields necessary to fulfil the demand for industrial human resources, and the policy of restraining expansion continued. Therefore, until the first half of the 1970s, South Korea's higher education enrolment rate was not very high compared to other countries and maintained a level similar to the average enrolment rate across Asia. However, higher education in South Korea began to expand in the late 1970s and saw rapid expansion in the 1980s. By 1980, South Korea had exceeded the global average enrolment rate, and in 1985, it had rates higher than the average enrolment rate in any region except North America (Kim, 2002; Kim, 2014).

In the late 1980s, the high unemployment rate among university graduates and the abolition of the graduation quota system temporarily suppressed the university quota. However, the high-tech industry complained of a shortage in skilled workforces, so the government only decided to expand this field, despite the high unemployment rate among university graduates. As a result of this increase in the number of students in science and engineering in the 1990s, the proportion of the total number of students studying these subjects at university increased from 39.3 per cent in 1989 to 43.6 per cent in 1995. During this period, the growth of the electronics field in South Korea was remarkable, supplying since the 1980s the technical human resources required for the fast-growing electronics industry and the human resources needed for the research and development activities of industries that have been rapidly expanding since the late 1970s. In particular, the fact that the number of graduate students, which is the centre of R&D human resources, has increased very rapidly since the late 1970s, suggests that higher educational institutions have met the demand for human resources required for the rapidly increasing R&D activities of industries (Sorensen, 1994; KEDI, 2014; Kim, 2014; Yoon, 2014).

2.4. South Korean education fever

In the past decades, the concept of education fever has been widely used to explain South Korean parents' aspirations and support for education. However, education fever encompasses not only parents' strong interest and motivation towards education but also a complex social system that reflects collectivistic perspectives on education, economic reward systems, the structure of educational systems, and dynamics in educational testing (Kim, Lee, and Lee, 2005: 8).

On the positive side, this fever for education has led to the rapid expansion of education and the development of the national economy, but at the same time has caused various social problems. In this sub-chapter, I will discuss the causes of this fever for education, the various changes and characteristics of South Korean education brought about by the passion for education, and the side effects and issues related to education fever.

2.4.1. Background of education fever

Education fever's historical and cultural conditions

South Koreans following the tradition of Confucianism have had a respect for learning since early times. Confucianism traditionally offered the proper way of training gentlemen, involving constant self-cultivation through education (Lee, 2006: 1). From the traditional perspective, Confucian culture in South Korea, which emphasises academic knowledge and admires those possessing such knowledge, is one of the reasons why education is the most critical issue in South Korea (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017). Also, during the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1897), only those who passed the public examination could become top government officials. Thus, South Koreans have tended to perceive a strong connection between education, high test scores, and gaining power. The Japanese colonial government also established an employment system in which people were assigned different jobs according to their academic abilities, reinforcing the need for school diplomas to enter the upper class (So and Kang, 2014). After the Korean War in the 1950s, the newly established government in South Korea emphasised a system in which people's societal positions and responsibilities depended on their intelligence and abilities, not on their parents or wealth. In such a situation, education has become the key to social mobility (Lee, 2011). At the

same time, there was a sudden increase in the demand for highly qualified human resources as a result of rapid economic growth, and education levels were regarded as objective indicators of success in South Korean society (So and Kang, 2014). Thus, a high level of education and going to university have been considered the most impartial and fairest way to guarantee better educational opportunities and social success (Lee, 2011). Therefore, the educational fever for university education is inevitable today.

Social conditions and education fever

Various socio-cultural environmental factors, such as the careerism that prevails throughout society, the relative importance of university names to success, the importance of academic ties, the effect of academic success on success in work or social life, and the desire to rise in status constitutes a high level of education fever in South Korea (Lee, 2009). Most observers point out South Korean society's academic elitism as forming the socio-cultural background for the formation and reinforcement of education fever. The term 'academic elitist society' refers to a society in which academic background is a decisive factor in determining social position. In such a society, rather than looking at a person's humanity and capabilities in and of themselves, people evaluate others' humanity and capabilities based on their academic background (Lee, 2001; Lee, 2009; Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017; Lee, 2017). In modern South Korean society, academic attainments and cliques are usually more powerful determinants than individual ability when applying for a job or obtaining a promotion. In addition, college or university graduates normally earn higher incomes than high school graduates, regardless of their abilities. Furthermore, elitism in contemporary South Korean society creates personal ties on the basis of academic attainments and cliques, resulting in their leading a considerable part of contemporary South Korean politics, economy, society, culture, and education (Lee, 2006: 9).

And in this South Korean society, various certificates such as academic background certificates, transcripts, and graduation certificates evidence the educational background. Therefore, the final destination of South Koreans' fever for education is admission to a prestigious university. As highlighted previously, Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University are regarded as the most prestigious universities in South Korea. And the important thing here is 'admission' because, in South Korea, admission to a university is equivalent to graduation. It is generally accepted that a very strong connection exists between good education, high income, and a stable and respected job. In this process, it can be said that a cultural phenomenon in which South Korean society recognises education as a means of success is naturally formed (Lee, 2001; Lee, 2009; Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017; Lee, 2017).

Family conditions and education fever

The unique nature of South Korean family culture and parent-child relationships has a significant influence on education. In a society with Confucianist traditions, parents' strong attachment to their children's education and achievement is a given (Lee, 2009). As a result, students have a solid tendency to study not only for their own sake but also for that of their families. According to one study, when asked what they should do to create harmony in the family, South Korean students answered that it was important to obey their parents and study harder for the sake of their family (So and Kang, 2014).

Interestingly, South Korean parents perceive their children's academic success and development as playing a key role in successful family life. In other words, parents recognise their children's success as their own as well as their family's success. Such social-psychological mechanisms can

be interpreted as a solid educational fever phenomenon in which South Korean parents support their children's education with all their hearts. Thus, it is clear that children's academic achievement is a crucial part of the family's agenda in South Korean society (Lee, 2009; So and Kang, 2014). Thus, South Korean households are convinced that the path to a successful career, and life, is a good education; that is, a degree from a prestigious university. As the CSAT is very competitive and prestigious university places are limited, South Korean families spend a large share of their income on private tutoring academies (Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017).

Many South Korean families with children are education-oriented. In particular, the daily life of full-time homemakers is centred on support for their children's education. A full-time homemaker's afternoon schedule is aligned with the child's after-school schedule. Non-working mothers are immersed in supporting their children's academic performance. Many mothers act as academic managers for their children. It is commonplace to see mothers picking up their children according to the schedules of various private educational institutes, and they accept it as a parental duty. Many dual-income parents also plan their children's after-school schedules (private educational institutes) and check and manage them over the phone (Lee, 2009).

2.4.2. Education fever and changes in education

Education fever and quantitative growth in school education

Seth (2005) evaluates education fever in South Korea as the driving force that has transformed South Korea into an excellent educational nation. This education fever actively contributed to expanding educational opportunities and developing education (high enrolment rate, entrance rate, high school graduation rate, and low dropout rate). In South Korea, primary and middle schools are mostly publicly run, but at the high school and university level, private schools are the most common educational structure, and education fever is largely reflected here as well. When the state could not establish more educational institutions due to a lack of finances, the private sector provided deficient forms of education such as 'tent schools' with no academic background. The driving force for many students to enrol in such poor educational institutions was the education fever of their parents (Lee, 2009). Thanks to this high social demand for schooling, even at a time when South Korea's resources were limited, the government was able to pass on the financial burden of education to students and families. Parents, even the poor, made great personal sacrifices to send their children to school (Seth, 2005a).

Education fever and economic growth

Both South Korean and foreign scholars have used the concept of education fever to explain how South Korea recovered economic power after the Korean war (Kim, Lee, and Lee, 2005; Lee, 2017). The OECD report also highlights that South Korea's strong fever for education is one of the fundamental driving forces of economic growth and that South Korea has made a dramatic economic development in the twentieth century through human capital formation (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017). Education fever was the primary force that provided high-quality human resources. Unlike other east Asian countries, South Korea lacks sufficient natural resources. Thus, human resources were the only things that South Korean people could develop to recover the economy. Many also believe that human resource development was possible because of South Korean parents' education fever. In other words, it was South Korean parents' education fever that was used to rebuild its economic structure by utilising high-quality human resources (Kim, Lee,

and Lee, 2005: 8). Economic growth and educational development in South Korea were described in more detail in previous separate sub-chapters 2.3.

Education fever and changes in the entrance exam system

Education fever has greatly influenced educational policies and systems. It is no exaggeration to say that South Korea's education policy has been a series of recognition and response to the seriousness of entrance exam-oriented education and entrance exam competition in each era. The introduction of the middle school no-examination admission system in 1968 and the school equalisation policy in 1973 resulted in the moving of the core of entrance exam competition from the middle and high school entrance exam to the university entrance exam. As a result, it became inevitable that the expression of education fever would bottleneck at the level of university entrance exams (Lee, 2006; Lee, 2009). This has caused the 'entrance exam hell' and increasing social dissatisfaction, so political circles have constantly changed the university quota system and entrance exam system. As a result, the government's involvement in universities increased, especially in the entrance examination system (Lee, 2009).

Education fever and private education

The education fever that expanded school education has had a great impact on the expansion of private education. Private education in South Korea almost matches the size of public education in quantitative terms, and the amount spent on private education is comparable to that of public education (Lee, 2009). It is estimated that the total private education expenditures of primary, middle, and high school students amounted to 21 trillion won in 2019 and that the average monthly spending per student at primary, middle, and high schools amounted to 321,000 won (US $280)[11]. These expenditures directly result from South Korean culture and families placing an extremely high value on higher education (Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017). For example, in a 2010 government survey asking parents the reasons for the high level of spending on private tutoring, the answers focused on the difficulty and importance of gaining entry to prestigious universities, which select students primarily based on entrance exam scores (Jones, 2013).

Table 5. Percentage of public and private education expenditure compared to GDP

(Unit: %)

Classification		Primary and secondary education			Higher education		
		Total	Government funded	Privately funded	Total	Government funded	Privately funded
2000 (2003)	Korea	4.0	3.3	0.7	2.6	0.6	1.9
	OECD	3.6	3.4	0.3	1.3	1.0	0.3
2005 (2008)	Korea	4.3	3.4	0.9	2.4	0.6	1.8
	OECD	3.8	3.5	0.3	1.5	1.1	0.4
2010 (2013)	Korea	4.7	3.9	0.9	2.6	0.7	1.9
	OECD	4.0	3.7	0.3	1.7	1.1	0.5

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https://www.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/view.do?boardID=294&boardSeq=79996&lev=0&searchType=null&statusYN=W&page=1&s=moe&m=020402&opType=N

2015 (2018)	Korea	4.0	3.5	0.5	1.8	0.7	1.2
	OECD	3.5	3.2	0.3	1.5	1.0	0.5
2016 (2019)	Korea	3.7	3.1	0.5	1.7	0.7	1.1
	OECD	3.5	3.1	0.4	1.5	0.9	0.5
2017 (2020)	Korea	3.5	3.0	0.4	1.6	0.6	1.0
	OECD	3.5	3.1	0.3	1.4	1.0	0.4

Source: MOE, 2020: 81

Expenditure on educational institutions in South Korea has remained above the OECD average in both primary and secondary education and higher education. However, government funding is lower than the OECD average, and private funding is higher. In particular, the difference in higher education is even more remarkable, and privately funded is more than twice as high as the OECD average.

2.4.3. Side effects and problems of education fever

As seen above, education fever permeates and affects all aspects of South Korean education. It is clear this has been a great asset and resource for educational development, as well as a source of problems (Seth, 2005a). As I pointed out previously, I will look at the negative aspects of education fever more here.

Decreased interest and excessive stress in education

Academic achievement generally has a close relationship with learning interest (Chan, Wong, and Lo, 2012; So and Kang, 2014). South Korean students achieve high scores on PISA but have negative attitudes toward learning. Many South Koreans have pessimistic views on South Korean education, which is in stark contrast to Finland, which has also had continued good results in PISA, solidifying their educational confidence (Lee, 2009). These external expectations and reward systems that depend on academic performance have made South Korean students oversensitive to their scores and overly focused on obtaining knowledge for tests rather than enjoying the learning process itself. As a result, South Korean students feel unsatisfied with their overall lives as well as their learning. According to a survey conducted by the OECD, when asked to rate their general life satisfaction on a scale from 0 to 10, South Korean students who had only completed primary education reported an average of 4.5, much lower than the OECD average of 6.2 (OECD, 2011; So and Kang, 2014). Education fever in South Korean society puts an excessive burden on students, which in turn increases academic stress. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defined South Korea's extreme early education and entrance exam-oriented education as a representative social environment that infringed on children's human rights and demanded that it be improved (Lee, 2009).

According to the WHO, South Korea has the highest suicide rate in the world, at 28.3 per 100,000 people in 2015 (World Health Organization, 2017), which amazingly is about 2.5 times the rate it had in 1995. Suicide is now the most common cause of death in South Korea for those under 40 (OECD, 2015), including teenagers (Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017). One leading cause of the rise in teenage suicides in South Korea is the overwhelming stress tied to academic achievement. The National Statistical Office (2010) reported that 10.1 per cent of students had experienced suicidal urges, with the primary reason being poor test scores and the pressure to attend a prestigious university. According to the 2015 MOE survey data, 118 middle and high school students committed suicide in 2014. Among them, 89 student cases were surveyed, and the

number of students who were roughly identified with their worries at the time of suicide was 75. A mark on the test at school was the most common cause of suicide (26.8 per cent), and some of them even ranked high in school[12]. This pressure stems from the great importance placed on academic achievement in South Korean society, as discussed above (So and Kang, 2014).

Negative impact on public education

Many South Korean researchers argue that education fever is an important factor negatively affecting the public education system in South Korea. As discussed in detail in the previous sub-chapter, private tutoring is the most representative example of how education fever affects the public education system. In addition, due to the high fever for education in South Korea, many parents send their children to private educational institutions to prepare for the CSAT. As a result, South Korean students rely on teachers at private educational institutions more than public education (Kim, Lee, and Lee, 2005). Thus, secondary education is in deep trouble in South Korea. Most public high schools, for example, have almost given up their role of adequately educating students. Teachers are also aware that students have already studied the subjects in private educational institutions, even if they are supposed to study these at school. So some teachers routinely tell students to study on their own (Lee, 2001).

In some ways, South Korean education has gone beyond the flourishing of private education and the decline in the competitiveness of public education, and a reverse phenomenon in which public education relies on private education has emerged. In other words, when a public education policy to reduce private education is introduced, policies such as 'operating after-school programmes to reduce private education' or 'schools without private education' are applicable (Lee, 2009).

University entrance exam-oriented education

Another major problem presented by education fever is its focus on competitive entrance examinations. It also affects school teaching methods. South Korean education has been centred on entrance exams so much that it has been criticised for decades. Now that the university entrance examinations are comprised of questions related to Korean language, Mathematics, English, Korean history, exploratory (Social Studies, Sciences, Vocational Education), foreign languages, or Chinese Characters, obtaining satisfactory marks in these subjects has become a shortcut to university admission. Primary and secondary education have become preparatory courses for university entrance examinations, focusing on a cramming method that emphasises learning by memorisation (Lee, 2006). Education and teaching methods that focus on entrance exams may temporarily increase academic achievement but do not foster creativity, form self-directed learning abilities and habits, and decrease interest in learning (Lee, 2009; So and Kang, 2014).

2.5. Higher education and South Korea

Today, the goal and destination of South Korean education fever, as discussed in the previous sub-chapter, is to be admitted to a prestigious or higher-ranking university. Since the meaning of higher education and university in South Korea has been examined above, this sub-chapter

[12] https://www.donga.com/news/It/article/all/20150525/71446025/1

discusses the current status of university admissions in South Korea and the problems and challenges facing higher education.

South Korea now has a tertiary education sector as large as those in developed countries. Enrolment rates at higher educational institutions remained below 10 per cent until the 1980s, but there has been a sharp rise in enrolment, eventually reaching 70.4 per cent in 2020, with a growing passion for education. The university admission system was reformed, and more universities were established. The number of higher educational institutions was 80 in 1960 and steadily increased to 372 in 2000 and 429 in 2020 (MOE, 2020). In terms of higher education opportunities, the competitiveness is much higher than that of economically similar countries. Higher education in South Korea has now reached the stage of universalisation from the stage of popularisation (Kim, 2009).

Table 6. Education advancement rate by year

(Unit: %)

Classification	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Primary school → Middle school	66.1	95.8	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.9	100.0	100.0	100.0
Middle school → High school	70.1	84.5	95.7	98.5	99.6	99.7	99.7	99.7	99.7
High school → Tertiary education	26.9	27.2	33.2	51.4	68.0	82.1	79.0	70.8	72.5

Source: KEDI, 2005: 16 and e-national index[13]

The expansion focused on primary and then secondary education gradually moved to the expansion of higher education. As a result, more and more students have pursued university and advanced degrees (KEDI, 2019). Advancement rates approached almost 100 per cent for high school by 2000, making South Korea one of the few countries in which graduation from high school is almost universal. More than half of high school graduates went on to tertiary education in 1995, and the advancement rate to tertiary education steadily increased until 2008. It peaked at 83.8 per cent in 2008 and has fallen slightly every year but has been on the rise again since 2018. In 2020, 72.5 per cent of high school graduates continued to tertiary education.

The purpose of the establishment of specialised high schools is to nurture professionals, and by providing vocational education and training, schools and students aim for employment rather than admission to a university. However, the university admission rate for specialised high school graduates is on the rise. It consistently exceeded the 30 per cent range, reaching 36.1 per cent in

[13] https://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1520

2015, 35 per cent in 2016, 32.8 per cent in 2017 and 36 per cent in 2018, and rose to 42 per cent in 2019.[14]

Table 7. Tertiary education completion rate by year

(Unit: %)

Classification		Tertiary education completion rate		
		25-34 yrs. old	55-64 yrs. old	25-64 yrs. old
2005 (2007)	Korea	51	10	32
	OECD	32	19	26
2010 (2012)	Korea	65	13	40
	OECD	38	23	31
2017 (2018)	Korea	70	-	-
	OECD	44	-	-
2018 (2019)	Korea	70	-	49
	OECD	44	-	39
2019 (2020)	Korea	70	24	50
	OECD	45	28	40

Source: MOE, 2020: 80

By investing heavily in education, South Korea has produced one of the most highly educated labour forces in the world. As a result, the proportion of those between 25 and 34 years old who attained tertiary education in 2019 was 70 per cent, compared to the OECD average of 45 per cent, the highest among OECD countries (KEDI, 2019; MOE, 2020).

Three elements characterise the South Korean university system: having a large proportion of private universities, a high private spending on tertiary education, and a long-standing national culture of raking universities (Shin, 2012). Due to a large number of private universities, education costs fall on students and their parents, but South Korean parents are willing to pay expensive tuition fees for their children's education (Hur and Bessey, 2013). The long-standing national culture of ranking universities is shown through two abbreviations commonly used by South Koreans when talking about universities. The first is the aforementioned 'SKY', referring to the three most prestigious universities: Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University. The second one is 'Seo-Yon-Ko-So-Sung-Han-Chung-Kyung-Oe-Si' [15], which is comprised of the first character of the university's name according to its ranking, beginning with Seoul National University.

A top university's good educational record is highly valued in South Korea. South Korean students' academic records form one of the most valued requirements for admission to a prestigious university, and students believe that this forms the beginning of a successful career (Kwon, Lee,

[14] http://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1541

[15] **Seo**ul National University-**Yon**sei Univesrity-**Ko**rea University-**So**gang Univesrity-**Sung**kyunkwan University-**Han**yang Univesrtiy-**Chung**ang University-**Kyung**hee University- ***Oe****gugeo Deahaggyo* (Korean pronunciation at Hankuk University of Foregn Studies)- ***Si****lib Deahaggyo* (Korean pronunciation at University of Seoul)

and Shin, 2017). Thus, entry to a top university has traditionally led to a prestigious, secure, and well-paid job. As such, South Korea's fever for education and individuals' desire to get into a prestigious university is higher than in any other country in the world (Malejane and Diraditsile, 2019). Moreover, academic accomplishment is a significant factor in determining social position, income, and marriage. In other words, it is an essential means by which to obtain socio-economic status in contemporary South Korean society (Lee, 2006).

Although there are opportunities for early admission to most universities that require applicants' high school academic records and interviews and/or essay writing tests, students still need a CSAT score to receive their final offer. Hence, the biggest influencing factor in the university entrance system is the CSAT result. The Korean SAT, CSAT, is designed to measure students' academic capabilities necessary for continuing university education. Since its introduction in 1993, the CSAT has been developed and administered by the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) and operates as the most critical standardised tool for university admission (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017: 66).

The test is offered every November, but the exact dates may change annually. So far, there have been four cases in which the CSAT date has been postponed. The CSAT date was delayed by about a week in 2005 and 2010 when the APEC and G20 summit was held in South Korea. In 2020, the academic schedule was changed several times due to COVID-19, and the CSAT date was also delayed by two weeks. All the schedule changes were announced in advance at the beginning of the year, so there was no significant confusion. However, in 2017, an earthquake occurred in some areas the day before the scheduled CAST day, causing cracks in some school buildings that were supposed to be used as test sites. In the end, the MOE held an emergency briefing and announced a one-week delay in the CSAT. The students experienced great confusion due to the unprecedented situation where the schedule was changed just 12 hours before the test. Schools and teachers also struggled to prepare for the modified academic calendar.

Usually, on the day of the test, the allocation of buses and tubes is expanded to avoid traffic jams in order to make sure students get to their test site on time. If there are students who are likely to be late for various reasons, police officers also escort students to their test site. Parents, teachers, and high school juniors and sophomores flock in front of each testing site to pray and cheer for test takers' success, and aircraft take-offs and landings are even prohibited during the listening test of the English section. Everything in South Korean society on that day seems to be oriented around the test.

Image 1. Front view of the test site on the day

Image 2. Students cheering for test-takers

Source: http://www.nwtnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=23922

Students, parents, and teachers believe that the CSAT score will determine which university the student will be admitted to and that admission to a prestigious university will be the key to their future success. Approximately 600,000–650,000 students take the CSAT annually, and 20 per cent of them are 're-takers'. This high rate of re-takers implies that demand for a higher CSAT score is crucial to gain a better chance of being admitted to a more respected university. Therefore, the CSAT serves as a gateway to future life decisions, determining the range of benefits one can expect after receiving a higher education (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017: 66-67).

Higher education currently faces challenges in enhancing global and domestic competitiveness. Ironically, South Korea still does not have a top-ranking university on a global scale. Therefore, South Korea has been focusing on transforming its universities into 'world-class' ones. The comparatively low level of academic competence of South Korean universities by international standards has drawn attention. Although there is a pronounced hierarchy and ranking culture in the South Korean university system, the global standing of South Korean universities is comparatively low (Hur and Bessey, 2013: 114). Furthermore, regional universities are experiencing difficulty recruiting students due to the dominance of universities in South Korea's capital, Seoul, and graduates from regional universities often have considerable trouble finding a job. Many projects are being implemented with the aim of enhancing the competitiveness of regional universities. Specialisations are offered that match the demands of the regional economy so that graduates can provide a boost to these economies (Nuffic, 2015). In addition, the mismatch between the supply of university graduates and the demands of the labour market must be addressed by educating students more pragmatically and restructuring universities so that they are better equipped to prepare students for society (KEDI, 2019).

Another issue facing higher education in recent years has been the fact that there has been an increasing trend in the dropout rate of university students every year. The percentage of students dropping out of four-year universities nationwide from 2016 to 2018 has continued to increase every year to 4.1 per cent, 4.3 per cent, and 4.6 per cent (Chung, Sun, and Jeong, 2015; Lim, 2020). There are cases of dropouts based on discipline, such as warnings from school or exceeding the school year, but most of the dropouts came from failing to register, not returning to school, or were simply voluntary. Considering the fact that a large number of dropouts occur even at the highly-preferred major universities in Seoul, it is estimated that there are many cases where students were not satisfied with their major or university and chose to study for the next year's exam in order to study at a different university or choose another major.[16]

The high participation in higher education is needed to be located internationally because this is not a feature that only can be seen in South Korea. Trow (1974) conceptualised the development of higher education into three stages; elite, mass, and universal systems. When enrolment exceeded 15 per cent of the relevant age group, from elite to mass higher education, and when it exceeded 50 per cent, from mass to universal higher education (Scott, 2019). In terms of Trow's concept, higher education in South Korea has reached the universalisation stage (Kim, 2009). Between 1972 and 1992, the worldwide Gross Tertiary Enrollment Ratio (GTER) moved modestly from 10.1 per cent to 14 per cent. In the next two decades, world GTER more than doubled,

[16] https://news.unn.net/news/articleView.html?idxno=219316

reaching 32% in 2012. The rapid expansion of higher education participation in South Korea enabled 58 per cent of adults in 2012, and the GTER reached 98.4% in South Korea in the same year. South Korea had the highest GTER in the world (Wright and Horta, 2018; Marginson, 2016).

Decades-long expansion of higher education participation in high-income countries with universal higher education systems has opened more opportunities to previously excluded groups, including women and individuals from low socioeconomic status family backgrounds (Wright and Horta, 2018). Notions that only some people are capable of higher education are fading. A growing number of high-income countries are experiencing continued growth in universal participation rates and have entered a new stage in the challenges of higher education systems.

The recurring concerns about over-education, graduate unemployment, and inequality does not disappear (Marginson, 2016). Young people face increasingly uncertain employment outcomes, with precarious employment or unemployment commonplace. There is evidence that tension in graduate employment has become increasingly common around the world, with reports concerning graduate unemployment, graduate under-employment, and stagnating graduate salaries in high-income countries, including South Korea. Moreover, rates of "under-employment" in excess of 30 per cent were noted in Japan, Ireland, Canada, the Czech Republic, South Korea, Estonia, the USA, and the UK – all of them 'high-income' countries with universal higher education systems. The crucial point to note here is growing evidence that a degree may be increasingly necessary but not sufficient for success in modern labour markets (Kim and Choi, 2015; Wright and Horta, 2018). However, in South Korea, Yeom (2016) demonstrated that higher education participation had significantly increased over the past 30 years despite mounting concern over graduate employment and diminishing expectations about higher education as a means to upward inter-generational social mobility. Mok (2016) also noted such a trend would not significantly dampen demand for higher education so long as: "young people still have better prospects in the labour market with a degree than without" (Wright and Horta, 2018).

Growing inequality within higher education and among graduates may become a more important theme in graduate labour markets globally. The wealth, power, and prestige once commonly associated with graduates' occupational outcomes will likely be progressively limited to graduates of the most prestigious institutions, studying the most in-demand fields of study and attaining postgraduate credentials. In a competitive labour market, a concern is that students from high socio-economic status groups can use inherited economic (e.g., financial support), cultural (e.g., advice and guidance), and social (e.g., contacts and connections) resources to monopolise the attainment of higher education opportunities associated with the greatest economic rewards. Indeed, inequalities can be maintained in the context of the expansion of participation in education if individuals from high socio-economic status groups disproportionately access qualitatively superior or distinctive types of education (Wright and Horta, 2018). Along with the heightened role of the university ranking system (e.g., SKY and Seo-Yon-Ko-So-Sung-Han-Chung-Kyung-Oe-Si), a restored elite secondary school system (Kim, 2007) separates students by social class and test-taking ability, increases the effects of parents' socioeconomic status on educational/occupational standing, and causes diastrophism under the surface of the South Korean stratification system (Kim and Choi, 2015).

At the same time, inequality in availability and accessibility to higher education remains a concern. Availability relates to the overall number of places available and the existence of adequate facilities, teaching staff, etc. But, places are only required for those interested in studying at a

certain level and with the minimum level of preparation. Furthermore, availability would not necessarily require expanding individual institutions as long as there was sufficient capacity across the whole system (McCowan, 2016). Especially in South Korea, the number of university admissions exceeds that of high school graduates due to the decrease in the school-age population, leading to a reduction in the university's filling rate. So theoretically, there are sufficient places so that all students who desire and have a minimum level of preparation can participate in higher education.

However, the existence of places does not mean that they will be accessible, or at least not to all individuals or groups. Barriers exist, such as expensive tuition fees, severe competitive exams that disadvantage those with poor or less-quality previous schooling, the geographical location of institutions, and a range of other constraints. Accessibility requires the removal of these barriers, yet even in a context in which strategies are in place to ensure access of all students to the system, there is still the problem of stratification. In this case, there is a hierarchy of prestige and quality among universities, with disadvantaged students generally confined to lower-ranked institutions (McCowan, 2016).

Class-based educational inequality has been one of the most prominent educational issues in South Korean society since the 1980s. The discussion on educational equality seems to show significant changes around 2000. Previous discussions on educational equality had mainly focused on public education, but since then, private education has taken an important place in the discussion of educational inequality. This change of perspective occurred when universities rapidly expanded and at a time when the equality of public education was secured through various regulations. One of the main arguments against the prosperity of private education is that it is a cause of inequality in educational opportunities and should be suppressed because the wealthy receive more private tutoring and, as a result, end up in better schools and better jobs (Lee, 2009).

Private education causes differences in the growth of student identities based on interventions provided by private education. The differences can promote frustration in students who can not afford private tutoring and reproduce social and economic inequalities that hinder social integration (Yoon, 2014).

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the structures, politics, and policies that have guided the South Korean education system since independence in 1945 and how these pertain to South Korean education today. In attempting to provide an understanding of South Korea's educational landscape, I have examined the education sector, the historical background and strategies of educational development, and their relation to economic growth. I also have explored the high level of education fever and university admissions rate, which reveal from various angles the characteristics of the current education climate in South Korea.

The high value placed on and high fever for education has contributed greatly to the social growth and educational development in today's South Korea, and this is a fact that cannot be overlooked. Many scholars and policymakers around the world agree with and acknowledge this point. The high fever for education in South Korea was the driving force behind success, and various social problems also lay behind this achievement. The value and role of education and education fever, which has been on the path of growth and development for over 70 years, is now headed toward

entering university. Education focuses on university entrance exams, and education fever focuses on entering prestigious universities. Beyond parents' and individuals' strong interest and motivation towards education, a social system in South Korea that reflects collectivistic perspectives on education, academic elitism, etc., must be understood as an issue that must be discussed.

The target of all this education fever is South Korean students, with nearly 100 per cent of teenagers completing high school courses. After graduating high school and becoming adults, 7 out of 10 students choose to go to university. So, it implies that we should pay attention to what going to university means to South Korean students as an educational choice and/or career decision.

Chapter 3. Literature review on career decision-making

The previous chapter examined the South Korean educational landscape from various perspectives, as well as its controversial features. This chapter aims to locate the present study within the existing research on career decision-making and higher educational choice-making. In addition, this chapter will attempt to show how the present study contributes to the existing literature in South Korea.

The chapter starts by exploring international and South Korean literature related to career decision-making. I then take a closer look at career maturity, which is covered by a large volume of South Korean literature in the field of career decision studies. Lastly, I review how higher educational choice-making, one of students' career-related decisions after high school graduation, is being dealt with in South Korea.

By examining South Korean literature relevant to the current study in more detail, we understand how career decision-making and higher educational choice-making studies have been conducted and discover what role this study can play in the field of education in South Korea.

3.1. Examining the discourse surrounding career decision-making

Career decision-making, the process of choosing among career options, has become a frequent and challenging issue. People make numerous decisions throughout their lives. Of these choices, one cannot be said to be more important than another because the importance of each choice varies from person to person. However, career decisions are among the most important decisions individuals make in their lifetime (Gati and Tal, 2008). These decisions may involve choosing a general occupation and the related educational training, then a specific job and then whether to stay at a job or switch to another, what formal and informal advanced training to take, etc. (Kulcsár, Dobrean and Gati, 2020). However, this does not only mean that career decision-making is a collection of practical choices, such as occupational choice, job change, etc. Because a career decision refers to finally choosing a career path based on an understanding of oneself, information about the world of work, and one's values. Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) differentiated six tasks as core aspects of the career decision-making process: 1) orientation to choice (i.e., awareness of the need to make a decision and motivation to engage in the career decision-making process); 2) self-exploration (i.e., gathering general information about oneself); 3) broad exploration of the environment (i.e., gathering general information about career alternatives); 4) in-depth exploration of the environment (i.e., gathering detailed information about a reduced set of career alternatives); 5) decisional status (i.e., progress in choosing an alternative); and 6) commitment (i.e., strength of confidence in and attachment to a particular career alternative) (Germeijs and Verschueren, 2007: 224).

Each person's reaction or behaviour is different in a decision-making situation. Unfortunately, when facing such decisions, many individuals experience difficulties that often prevent making them or lead to choosing a non-optimal alternative (Kulcsár, Dobrean, and Gati, 2020: 2). Thus, initially, the research on career decisions started from the question of why some individuals are uncertain about their choice of a university major or future career, whereas others are committed to their choices (Callanan and Greenhaus, 1992; Wanberg and Muchinsky, 1992). Rather than how and why some people make career decisions, researchers were more interested in questioning people who could not make such decisions. Thus, the earlier studies conducted on career decisions mainly focused on career indecision, which indicates an individual's incompetence.

There are two main streams of research in the career indecision literature. One stream has sought to identify the differences between decided and undecided students in order to understand the factors that might explain a student's inability to choose a major or occupation. These researches have revealed various variables- demographics, personality, and environmental factors- influencing the existence and intensity of career indecision. The second research stream has attempted to isolate different subtypes of career indecision (Callanan and Greenhaus, 1992). Crites (1969) and Goodstein (1965) proposed two basic types of indecision: being undecided and being indecisive. These two types of indecision show the same 'not decided' state, but these two differ in reason. 'Being undecided' was viewed as stemming from limited experience and knowledge, so it was later understood as developmental indecision, whereas 'being indecisive' was seen as reflecting a more chronic inability to form a career decision, perhaps rooted in a personality disorder (Callanan and Greenhaus, 1992: 213). However, more recent research, rather than focusing on indecision, has been devoted to understanding the individual's status related to career path through the career decision level. These career decisions are made in the form of major choices when starting university and are materialised as occupational choices when entering the labour market (Hwang, 2007).

In the case of South Korea, research on the careers and career decisions of adolescents started in the 1980s with a focus on career education and has continued ever since (Jung and Roh, 2016). International organisations such as the OECD and World Bank emphasised career education, including analysing career guidance policies and practices, as a key national task (Watts, 2005). The importance of career education, highlighted globally, has also been emphasised in South Korea. In the case of South Korea, excessive private education has emerged as a social problem due to the aforementioned education fever. As a result, the importance of career education in the early stages was emphasised as a means to curb private education. A plan to strengthen career guidance was proposed in 2004 as a measure to reduce private education expenses. A council was formed for the active practice of career education, and a government-wide career education support system was established. In 2006, under the Human Resources Development Council, the 'National Career Education Special Committee' was formed, providing a forum for nine government ministries to discuss career education. Career education has rapidly risen in importance in the South Korean education field since the 2000s. Accordingly, to strengthen the human resources infrastructure of career education, career counsellors were deployed and put into operation, and by 2014, there were plans to deploy career counsellors in all middle schools and high schools (Jung et al., 2015). However, along with the discussion on the importance of career education, South Korean school education has been criticised for not being faithful to career education due to its entrance exam orientation. Students are unable to choose their higher education and career paths based on their aptitudes and career design but are being forced into excessive competition over entrance exams. Even if students recognise that aptitude should be considered the most important when choosing their career paths, including higher education, a mark on the test is a far more important determinant than aptitude. A pronounced hierarchy culture in the South Korean university system shows that higher-ranking universities require higher school grades and test scores. As I pointed out previously, a diploma from a high-ranking university is highly valued in South Korea, and students believe that admission to a prestigious university is the beginning of a successful career. Therefore, there is a tendency to apply to the highest-ranked universities that can be admitted with their test scores regardless of their aptitude in South Korea. For example, it is not rare to see choices such as a student with an aptitude for business administration deciding to enter the history department of a third-ranked university rather than entering the business administration department of a fifth-ranked university.

Conditions for career education at school are very poor, such as inadequate education opportunities and career information provision, lack of integrated management, dissatisfaction among students, etc. This also incurs various social costs due to a uniformised career path centred on higher education. Therefore, studies on career decisions since the 2010s have mainly focused on improving and strengthening the career support system to increase its effectiveness and help establish effective career education plans in South Korea (Kim and Bang, 2010).

Lim (2009) studied general academic high school students' career decision-making process, and the roles schools play in this process. Lim surveyed high school students' perceptions of career education and occupations in order to find an effective career education plan. Here, the career education Lim refers to is education that focuses on individual career choice, adaptation, and development. It encompasses the activities of teaching, guiding, and helping each individual at school, home, and society throughout their lifetime, starting from preschool age, so that each individual can recognise and explore themselves and the world of work and choose and perform work that is suitable for them. Lim (2009) conducted a study targeting 1st-year general academic high school students, and the research results are as follows. First, most of the students were found to be thinking about their own career paths. In terms of who they discussed their future with, friends were the most common, and the number of students who answered that they did not consult with school teachers was high at 39.84 per cent. Academic performance was considered the most significant difficulty in career choice. Second, many students answered that 'middle school' was the appropriate time to begin career education, and 76.56 per cent of students responded that the career education information provided by the school was insufficient. Students mostly learn about career paths through academic subjects at school: Social Studies, English, Korean, Science Studies, and Mathematics. Third, students recognised that aptitude and ability should be considered the most important when choosing a job. The main route for students to acquire job information was the mass media (52.34 per cent) and teachers (20.31 per cent). In the case of students from deprived family backgrounds, a relatively high percentage responded that they 'received job information from teachers'. Fourth, in terms of the question of who had the most significant influence on high school admission, parents came out highest at 46.09 per cent. As for the highest level of education they would like to pursue, 65.63 answered university, and the better their living conditions and grades were, the more they wished to go on to graduate school or higher. The most common reason for going to a general academic high school was 'to get the job I wanted', with 70.31 per cent of the students giving this answer.

White (2007) examined research relating specifically to post-16 career decisions in the late 1990s. Particular issues discussed include the timing of decision-making, the factors influencing choices, and the actors involved in the choice process. The timing of young people's decision-making is a complex topic to research. Therefore, many studies in the area have addressed the point when young people begin to consider their post-16 options. This is because decisions regarding career paths are not of the nature to be made instantaneously. In other words, rational career decisions are made at a mature level through long-term planning, information collection, and preparation processes, and therefore various internal and external variables surrounding the individual are involved in the process (Hwang, 2007). Unlike instantaneous decisions such as choosing a meal menu in everyday life, career decisions are made over time and through multiple processes. The problem that can be seen here is that each individual is different in terms of how they think about a career or career decision, and the level of career decision and the factors affecting it may vary depending on the timing. White (2007) pointed out that many studies do not address this important question. Thus, researchers must rely on students' accounts, and it is not clear whether

the students themselves are able to pinpoint exactly when they began thinking about their post-16 options.

Most of the career or career decision studies in South Korea have not paid much attention to the timing of decision-making. Although research has been conducted by dividing the subject according to age or grade, it is rare to find a study that emphasises the timing. The research subjects have been selected broadly among teenagers (Hwang et al., 2010; Choi and Lee, 2011; Park, 2016), high school students who are about to go on to higher education or to seek work (Lee and Han, 1997; Lee, 1998; Park, 2004; Jang, 2009; Lim, 2009; Kim and Paik, 2013), or university students who have chosen their majors (Jeong and Noh, 2008; Ha and Hong, 2013; Kang and Hwang, 2013; Kim, Lee, and Lee, 2015; Park, 2017). However, few studies have attempted to consider the timing of decision-making. Hwang (2007) selected as research subjects third-year high school students who were on the verge of starting university or seeking work. Im, Kim, and Kim (2015) conducted research with the same students in their second year of high school and first year of university twice in order to explore the significant relationships and changes in career maturity before and after choosing to go to university. The intention of choosing the two time points, the second year of high school and the first year of university, is that, in the case of the early adulthood period (in Super's career development stage, the early adulthood period corresponds to the search period [ages 15-24]), on the continuum of career development, it is considered that it is the period of completing the developmental task of the search period, which is carried out across the middle and high school period.

A large body of literature has documented the factors associated with South Korean students' decisions in South Korea. These studies sought to gain an understanding of whether and how students identified their career interests and determined their career paths. As previously mentioned, Lim's (2009) research findings revealed that students viewed poor academic performance as the biggest hindrance to career decision-making. A study by Park (2004) focused on career decision-making disorders. In relation to the importance of career decision-making in high school, Park emphasised that most studies focused on improving the career decision-making ability of high school students and how it is necessary to identify career barriers to aid effective career decision-making. Park (2004) attempted to analyse the career decision-making difficulties faced by South Korean high school students who are being affected the most in their career decision-making. Because the vast majority of South Koran students complete high school education, career decision-making refers to the career path after high school graduation, and high school students are closest to the moment of decision than students at any other school level. The main problem that students complain about in terms of career decision-making is in the process of deciding which career path is suitable for them. For this reason, students are not familiar with their interests, abilities, and ways of exploring the world of work, so they want someone to make a decision for them, delay or avoid making a decision, or show premature termination of a decision without sufficient exploration. This can be seen as meaning that difficulties arise in the career decision-making process, and as a result, making realistic and rational career decisions is challenging.

Park (2004) reconstructed and used the 'Career Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire' developed by Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) to measure career decision-making difficulties to suit the career decision situation of high school students in South Korea. Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) categorised difficulties broadly as *lack of preparedness, lack of information*, and *inconsistent information*. First, a lack of preparedness is proposed as a difficulty that may emerge before the career decision process begins. It includes a lack of motivation for making career

decisions, a lack of determination, and irrational beliefs related to career decision-making. Next, the lack of information and inconsistent information is proposed as possible difficulties that occur during the career decision process. Lack of information includes a lack of knowledge about the stages of the career decision-making process, a lack of self-understanding, a lack of information about various alternatives, and a lack of methods by which to use the additional information obtained. The inconsistent information includes internal conflicts that require compromise within the individual due to unrealistic expectations or contradictory preferences, such that students with low academic achievement think they will go to prestigious universities, and external conflicts that arise from being influenced by important others (Gati, Krausz and Osipow, 1996). Park's (2004) results obtained by surveying general academic high school students and vocational high school students are as follows. 1) There was a meaningful difference between general academic and vocational high school students in terms of career decision-making; general academic high school students showed stronger career decision-making than vocational high school students. 2) There was a meaningful difference between general academic and vocational high school students in terms of career decision-making difficulties; vocational high school students experienced a higher level of difficulties than general academic high school students. 3) For the general academic high school students, lack of information, career prejudice, lack of motivation, and mental burden all affected career decision-making negatively. 4) For the vocational high school students, lack of information, lack of motivation, and mental burden affected career decision-making negatively, but career prejudice was positively related to career decision-making.

Although some researchers differentiate between sources of information and sources of influence relating to post-16 decisions, separating the two is difficult in practice. Information can influence a decision, and actors can exercise their influence using information. The family and parents, in particular, are the most important influence on post-16 choices, even if their role is limited to initiating the decision-making process. They may also set the 'parameters' within which acceptable choices can be made, even if their children are unaware of this. Career teachers and officers are only influential in a minority of cases, confirming their minority status highlighted by career education and guidance researchers (White, 2007: 34).

Information can influence a decision. Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) propose six tasks as core aspects of the career decision-making process, and among these, the second, third and fourth tasks relate to information. These three processes are essential before decisional status. The second task refers to gathering general information about oneself, the third to collecting general information about career alternatives, and the fourth to gathering detailed information about a reduced set of career alternatives. Reasonable decisions can be made based on accurate information. Moreover, in our rapidly changing modern society, the importance of such information is further emphasised (Hwang, 2007; White, 2007). Also, two of the three types of career decision-making difficulties proposed by Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) mentioned earlier are related to information that is the lack of information and inconsistent information. Therefore, the lack of information subfactor was divided into four additional categories of career decision-making difficulties: 1) lack of information about the career decision-making process (i.e., not knowing how to make a career decision); 2) lack of information about the self (e.g., not having knowledge about one's capabilities, personality traits, or interests); 3) lack of information about occupations (e.g., not understanding what work is involved in specific occupations and not knowing about the wide range of occupational options available); and 4) lack of information about ways of obtaining career information (i.e., confusion about how to begin researching vocational options). The inconsistent information subfactor was divided into three categories of career

decision-making difficulties: 1) inconsistent information due to unreliable information (i.e., difficulties related to unreliable or fuzzy information); 2) inconsistent information due to internal conflicts (e.g., difficulties related to the evolving personal identity of the individual); and 3) inconsistent information due to external conflicts (e.g., conflicts involving significant others) (Morgan and Ness, 2003: 33).

In South Korea, Hwang (2007) also analysed factors that affect the career decision-making of general academic high school students and the factors that determine the level of acquiring 'career information' essential for rational career decision-making. Hwang (2007) noted that previous studies on career decision-making and career preparation were insufficient to confirm the mechanisms determining students' decision-making and career preparation levels. In particular, Hwang pointed out that while research on career decisions is quantitatively abundant, studies conducted on career information are scarce. Hwang (2007), therefore, tried to explore the factors influencing career decisions and the perceived level of career information available to general academic high school students. Since high school is a period for particular consideration of one's future career in South Korea, it is noteworthy that an attempt was made to understand the current status of career decision-making and their preparedness level targeting 3rd year general academic high school students about to enter university. First, the logistic regression analysis results show that gender, the male guardian's occupational status, ego-identity, and career-related dialogues and activities with family members are statistically significant factors influencing students' decisions related to their future careers. School career programmes, however, weren't shown to have any effect. Next, the study examined determinants of the perceived level of career information using structural equation modelling. The analysis found family support to be the most important factor, with ego identity and career guidance from school as the other positive factors impacting career information perception. These findings indicate that individual factors such as family background and support are much more influential on a student's career development than public resources such as school programmes (Hwang, 2007).

3.2. Career choice and career maturity

As mentioned earlier, research on youth careers in South Korea began in the 1980s with a focus on career education and has continued to be carried out ever since. In line with this trend, studies on career maturity have been the most common. In addition, as the need for social and policy support for careers has emerged, career maturity and sub-factors of career maturity are still studied in research on career development, which began in earnest in the 2000s (Jung and Roh, 2016).

The concept of career maturity is rooted in the work of Crites (1961) and Super (1955). Crites further developed the concept of career maturity after being introduced to it by Super. When first introduced by Super, it was the concept of result that shows the degree of preparation of individuals for career paths during the personal development phase. In other words, career maturity from a developmental perspective is a concept that represents the level of career readiness and the coping behaviours faced throughout the life cycle (Super, 1957). Crites (1978) and others emphasise the process aspect of career maturity by further expanding this concept and the ability to select and prepare for a more consistent, reliable, and realistic career path compared to students of the same age group. Later on, Hoyt (1997) came to define it as the ability to integrate students themselves into the career world. A standard part of these definitions is 'readiness', and this maturity includes the concept of 'development'.

These concepts of career maturity can be explained separately, not only by individual characteristics but also by the career attitude maturity influenced by the culture an individual belongs to (Fouad, 1993). In South Korea, Jang, Im, and Song (1990) define career maturity as the relative positions of individuals as compared to the same age group in terms of job selection, and Kim (2012) defines it as an integrated meaning of understanding the world of work and oneself, and the ability to choose an occupation and make decisions. The Korea Educational Development Institute (1991) emphasises career maturity in the process of planning and choosing one's career path based on the understanding of the self, work, and occupational world and considers the relative position of individuals of the same age or development stage. That is, according to previous studies, career maturity is a state of understanding and preparing for the career the individual wants.

Career maturity consists of a variety of sub-areas. The Career Maturity Inventory (CMI), developed by Crites (1978), based on the theory of Super (1957), measures the competence factor that encompasses the area of knowledge an individual needs to make a career decision and the attitude factor toward career choice (Lee and Han, 1997). The career maturity test for middle and high school students (South Korean version) developed based on the CMI is divided into a competence measure that confirms the ability to understand the world of work, the ability to choose a job, and rational decision-making ability, and an attitude measure composed of independence, determinism, and planning (Chang, Yim, and Song, 1991). Lee and Han (1997) developed and validated a career attitude maturity measurement tool composed of sub-categories such as decisiveness, preparation, independence, confidence, and goal orientation for middle and high school students in South Korea. In line with this trend, studies on the career maturity of adolescents tend to be divided into career maturity and career attitude maturity, a sub-domain of career maturity. More specifically, research on career maturity among young people is divided into studies that seek to elucidate the constructs of career maturity, studies that deal with the relationship between career maturity and related variables, and studies that examine the effectiveness of career counselling and programmes. In addition, the majority of studies have been conducted to recognise the importance of youth career maturity, clarify the factors affecting it, and promote the good career development of youth in various ways (Jung and Roh, 2016).

Domestic and international research on career maturity is ongoing, and recent studies have mainly focused on factors affecting career maturity.

Personal characteristics influencing career attitude maturity have been identified by Super (1957), who compared the differences in career attitude maturity between men and women. Lee (1992), who used Crites' Career Maturity Test (CMI) to examine the degree of career maturity of male and female middle and high school students in South Korea, also found that female students scored statistically significantly higher than male students. In addition, many studies show that female students have a higher level of career maturity than male students (London and Greller, 1991; Larson, Butler, Wilson, Medora, and Allgood, 1994; Watson and Van Aarde, 1986). Secondly, school and home environments also play an important role in socialisation and professionalisation (Crites, 1961). School is a variable that affects students' career attitudes and acts as a factor limiting their career attitudes. In middle and high school, students are exposed to career information both directly and indirectly. They face numerous decisions in order to choose a career that suits them from among the various sources of career-based information obtained through such education. According to studies examining whether there is a difference in the degree of career attitude maturity according to the curriculum, students who have completed

vocational courses (vocational high school students) show a lower degree of maturity in career attitude than students who did not (academic high school students) (Lee, 1992; Fitzgerald and Betz, 1994). Third, self-concept and career attitude maturity are some of the most important variables in developmental theories about career attitudes. These theories propose that the general self-concept transforms into a professional self-concept and influences career attitudes and argue that career attitude maturity and self-concept are positively correlated (Kim, 1989; Lee and Han, 1998). According to Super (1983), who looked at career attitudes from the whole life perspective, human development is the process of realising one's self-concept, and personal career development is closely related to the self-concept. Much research shows a significant correlation between an individual's self-esteem and career maturity (Oppenheimer, 1966; Taylor and Betz, 1983; Gati, Krausz, and Osipow, 1996). In the case of South Korea, Kim's study of 1,613 male and female middle and high school students in 1989 showed a positive correlation between career maturity and self-concept. Fourth, there is a great deal of research results that show work value as an important variable in choosing a career (Phyllis, 1987; BenShem and Avi-Itzhak, 1991). Those who place work values on intrinsic values (such as a sense of achievement, creativity, intellectual stimulation, etc.) show a higher level of career attitude maturity than those who place values on extrinsic values (peer relationships, economic rewards, stability, work environment, etc.) (Gade and Peterson, 1977; Lee, 1992). According to Super (1957), one of the major developmental processes of adolescence is clarifying work values. In general, it can be seen that there is a relationship between work values and career attitude maturity. As an individual grows older and career attitudes mature, work values change from extrinsic to intrinsic (Lee and Han, 1998). Fifth, studies show a significant positive relationship between internal-external locus of control and career attitude maturity (Rotter, 1966; Jung, 1988). In general, people who show internal control are more independent in their career attitude, whereas people who show external control show a dependent and intuitive type in their career choice attitude, so the internal control group has a relatively higher degree of attitude maturity (Locan, Boss and Putsula, 1982). In addition, various research has shown that students who make internal attributions for career decisions are more likely to make better career decisions. The more externally attributable, the higher the characteristics of undecided career paths (Jung, 1988; Gati, Krausz, and Osipow, 1996).

Since the 1990s, Lee and Han (1997; 1998) have carried out a great deal of research examining career attitude maturity. Their findings are referenced in numerous career-related studies in South Korea. Lee and Han (1998) investigated the degree of career attitude maturity according to high school students' personal characteristics and psychological variables in South Korea. They were interested in attitude maturity in career maturity because career-related activities were viewed as closely related to continuously changing developmental aspects rather than a static state occurring at any one time. The career path was understood as a comprehensive concept that includes both the internal and subjective aspects of an individual, such as personal attitudes and values, and career-related activities that reflect objective and external aspects. The subjects for their study consisted of 2007 students from 7 high schools in Seoul. They measured the relationship between constructs of career attitude maturity: decisiveness, goal orientation, confidence, preparation, and independence, and personal characteristics: gender differences, curricula, and grade level, and psychological variables: self-esteem, work value, and locus of control.

In general, it is known that the degree of career attitude maturity is higher in female students than in male students. But Lee and Han (1998)'s findings in South Korea were different from those of previous studies. In terms of goal orientation and preparation, female students showed a high degree of career attitude maturity; on the other hand, in terms of confidence and independence,

male students showed a high degree of career attitude maturity. Students in academic schools showed a higher degree of career attitude maturity than students in vocational schools, but there were no differences across high school students' grade levels. As a result of a relationship between career attitude maturity and psychological variables, students with high self-esteem tend to score higher than those with low self-esteem, students with intrinsic work values tend to score higher than those with extrinsic work values, and those with internal locus of control score higher than those with an external locus of control (Lee and Han, 1998). In their study, foreign testing tools from abroad were adapted and modified according to the South Korean situation in order to measure students' career attitudes, self-esteem, work values, and internal and external locus of control. The career attitudes test used was based on the CMI created by Crites in 1978, self-esteem is the self-concept test developed by Fitts in 1965, the work value scale developed by Kilpatrick in 1968, and the internal and external locus of control test developed by Rotter in 1966.

Lee and Han (1998) accurately defined career attitude maturity as a sub-dimension of career maturity. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the five sub-factors of career attitude they employed. First, 'decisiveness' measures the degree of certainty about the direction of a preferred career and is a dimension that indicates the extent to which one's desired career and occupation have been determined. Second, 'preparation' is the degree of prior understanding and preparation required for a career decision. It also indicates the degree of interest in the career path, indicating the ability to collect the career information needed to choose a career path. Third, 'independence' refers to whether one decides one's own career path autonomously or depends on others to make decisions. Fourth, 'goal orientation' refers to what an individual wants to achieve through his or her occupation. It indicates the degree to which one seeks social recognition, such as self-realisation, social service, and interpersonal relationships, rather than to meet social and economic needs. Finally, 'confidence' indicates the degree of belief and confidence in the career choice issue. It shows the degree of personal belief and confidence in how successful one will be in the future when one follows the chosen career path. In particular, it is interesting that the independence dimension focuses on the student's autonomy in career decision-making, which is one of my research's core concepts. Of course, autonomy does not seem to have been more precisely defined or studied. Even if the students respond that they make decisions autonomously, it is also necessary to find out what motives or reasons they have and how they were influenced by the society or surrounding environment to which they belong. In addition, even if they depend on others, there are cases where they choose autonomously to rely on others, so more in-depth research is needed in relation to autonomy. Various discussions of autonomy are explored in more detail in chapter 4.

A recent meta-analysis study by Jung and Rho (2016) aimed to identify the relationship between career maturity and multiple variables (individual-related, career-related, family-related, school-related, and peer-related). The researchers collected data using keywords, such as 'career development' and 'career maturity', and ran these through domestic academic search databases. For data analysis, 121 research articles published between March 1995 and January 2016 were systematically reviewed. This meta-analysis provides a helpful resource for understanding the trends and characteristics of career-related research in South Korea between 1995 and 2016.

Jung and Rho (2016) observe that adolescents' career maturity is shaped and changed by not only individual psychological characteristics but also environmental factors such as family, friends, and schools. Based on their findings from the 121 research papers they examined, they divided the variables affecting career maturity into individual, career, family, school, and peer-related variable groups, producing results as described in the following paragraph.

First, the individual variables that affect the career maturity of adolescents include self-esteem, self-identity, self-concept, self-resilience, self-control, self-efficacy, self-differentiation, and academic self-efficacy, as examined by numerous research papers. Most studies have reported a positive relationship to career maturity. Next, emotion-related variables such as basic psychological needs, emotional intelligence, emotional control, and internal and external control also showed a positive relationship with career maturity. In contrast, anxiety and learned lethargy showed a negative relationship. Achievement motivation, life goals, and optimism were also found to influence career maturity positively, and decision-making patterns and youth activity experiences were also reported as career maturity-related variables. As such, individual-related variables are analysed as variables influencing career maturity in a relatively large number of studies compared to other variables (Moon, 2000; Kwon, 2001; Cho and Choi, 2007; Kim and Kim, 2007; Yeom, 2008; Park, 2009; Song, 2009; Kim, 2010; Ahn, 2011; Ko and Kim, 2011; Kim, 2011; Yoo, 2011; Lee, 2012; Park, 2012; Yoo, 2012; Kwon, 2013; Won, 2013; Kang, 2014; Bae, Choi, and Jang, 2014; Kang, 2015; Kwon and Oh, 2015; Lee, 2015; Oh, 2015; Seok, 2015). Second, career-related variables, such as career identity, career decision self-efficacy, career decision level, and career aspiration, have been found to have a positive relationship with career maturity in a number of papers. On the other hand, career barriers, dysfunctional career thinking, and career stress are considered to have a negative effect. In addition, career guidance experience and career guidance satisfaction were found to have a significant impact on career maturity. Attempts to reveal career-related variables that increase or decrease career maturity are mainly found in papers intended to contribute practically to fields such as career education or counselling (Ku and Park, 2005; Choi, 2007; Park, 2009; Kwak, 2011; Yoo, 2011; Lim, Choi and Kim, 2012; Oh, 2012; Park and Yoo, 2012; Yoo, 2012; Bae and et al., 2014; Cho and Kim, 2014; Han and Oh, 2014; Kim, Bae, Min and Jang, 2014; Lee, 2014). Third, adolescence has a large influence on families due to its developmental characteristics. As such, various family-related variables are treated as variables affecting the career maturity of adolescents. Parental attachment and parental support seem to have a positive effect on career maturity. Still, according to sub-categories, parenting attitudes and communication types show a different relationship with career maturity. Next, parental participation in education, parental supervision, parental career support, parental autonomy support, and separation and individuation from parents are mentioned in several papers as having a positive relationship to career maturity. In addition, variables related to family functioning, such as family structure, economic level, and family health, were also studied variables related to career maturity (Kwon, 2001; Lee, Song, Lim, and Jeon, 2004; Ko, 2009; Park, 2009; Hwang 2011; Kwak, 2011; Kim, 2012; Kuem, 2012; Oh, 2012; Han and Lee, 2013; Han and Oh, 2014; Kang, 2015; Kim, 2015; Lee 2015; Oh, 2015; Park, 2015). Fourth, school-related variables that positively affect the career maturity of adolescents include academic performance, relationships with teachers, such as teacher attachment and teacher support, and adjustment to school life. School is an important space for cultivating basic abilities for career exploration, and it can be seen as an environment directly or indirectly highly related to youth career maturity. However, the variables showing the relationship between adolescent career maturity and school environment are not as diverse as others (Ko, 2009; Kim, 2011; Kim, 2012; Oh, 2012; Yoo, 2012, Kwon, 2013; Jung, 2014; Kim, 2015). Fifth, positive interactions with friends influence teenagers' capability building, such as sociality and confidence. The influence of friends, important social support for adolescents, on career maturity is examined in the form of friendship attachment or friendship support. In other words, the higher the level of friendship attachment and friendship support, the higher the reported level of career maturity reported (Ko, 2009; Kim, 2011; Kim, 2012, Han and Lee, 2013). Finally, one of the major drivers affecting the career maturity of adolescents is social support. In previous studies, social support evaluates direct and indirect

support from important others, focusing on the subject, and measures emotion, information, material, and evaluative support based on the content. In addition, all of the social support measured, based on subject and content, was, shown to have a significant positive relationship with career maturity (Ko, 2009; Cho and Choi, 2007; Hwang, 2011; Kim, 2011).

The study's most significant findings were as follows. First, there are a total of 16 variables affecting career maturity, with the average effect size from highest to lowest as individuals, career and school, peer, and family-related variables. Second, students' career attitude maturity was clearly influenced by 52 variables, and the average effect size came out in a different order: career-related, individual-related, social support-related, peer-related, family-related, and school-related variables. Third, the school-level moderating effect on the variables affecting students' career maturity was found to be statistically significant in terms of self-esteem and self-efficacy among individual-related variables, career decision self-efficacy and career guidance experience among career-related variables, and academic performance and teacher attachment among school-related variables. Fourth, regarding the career attitude maturity of students, among individual variables, self-esteem and self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation ability, anxiety, learned lethargy, vocation among career-related variables, parental attachment, parental career support, separation and individuation from parents, positive parenting attitude of father and mother among family-related variables, teacher attachment among school-related variables, and friend support among peer-related variables show differences in effect size by school level.

Among studies looking at students' careers in South Korea, I have focused on those examining career maturity, given that this has been the area most frequently examined. By considering the studies by Lee and Han (1997; 1998) in the late 90s, critical researchers within the field of career maturity, and the relatively recent study by Jung and Roh in 2016, I have comprehensively reviewed the research on career, career maturity and career development in South Korea. What the research so far has shown is that students' career maturity is affected by many factors and variables, and their influence is also presented as different results (Jung and Roh, 2016). In the case of Lee and Han (1998), they focused on personal characteristics and psychological variables, while Jung and Roh (2016) paid attention to the influence of various environmental factors in order to identify the overall factors influencing career maturity. However, it is not easy to find South Korean studies that focus on students' autonomy or exercising of agency in career choice or decision-making. Lee and Han (1998) focused on independence as one of the five sub-factors of career attitude and tried to determine whether students made their own choices. Jung and Roh (2016) treated self-related variables such as self-esteem, self-identity, self-concept, self-resilience, self-control, self-efficacy, self-differentiation, etc., as influencing factors. These are interesting points, but it is still not easy to find research data that focuses on the students themselves and their perceptions and voices regarding their career decision-making.

3.3. Career choice: going to higher education

The decision students most commonly face is whether to stay in education and train or seek a job at the end of their compulsory education or high school education in South Korea. Since the 1960s, questions of how and why students make higher educational choices have been studied through the lens of different sociological theories (Andres, 2016). The expansion of higher education has been observed in many parts of the world, particularly throughout the 20th century and

afterwards. In 2009, 19 per cent of post-secondary students entered higher education worldwide, increasing to 38 per cent by 2019[17].

Historically, the higher educational institution choice process has been framed by sociological, psychological, and economic perspectives. Since higher educational institution choice is often studied under one of these three paradigms, numerous models have been developed and proposed as ways to understand the process (Henry, 2012: 8). The three-stage model developed by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) is the most widely cited and provides a consensus framework that can be applied to student choice of higher educational institutions and used to analyse the process.

The first stage is where an individual decides whether or not they want to go to university (predisposition stage); the second comes the consideration of which universities to explore further (information search stage); and finally, the selection of a preferred university (Henry, 2012; McManus, Haddoc-Fraser and Rands, 2017). The predisposition stage tends to be associated with sociological influences such as whether parents have attended university, teachers' encouragement, and the student's potential career interests (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000). Foskett and Johnston (2010) also emphasise the importance of social networks in the decision to participate in higher education, finding that family, friends, and teachers have an influential role in this choice, as well as relationships with current and previous employers. In the information search stage, both the medium of information transmission and the type of information is considered relevant. The university prospectus has been the most influential source in the past, but with the advent of greater online engagement, the internet has become more important. University websites are becoming the most influential source of information for students (McManus, Haddoc-Fraser, and Rands, 2017). In other words, students want more information about their schools of interest and seek information via campus visits, internet searches, or university fairs. The internet was also found to be the number one source of information for high school students in South Korea before applying to universities. The second was ‘university prospectus’, and the third was 'TV and radio', while the 'professional career counselling agency' was the lowest-ranked information source. This can be interpreted as showing individuals’ behavioural tendency to search for information by their own will and effort rather than the behavioural type of entering necessary information with the help of other institutions or experts. This second stage, the information search stage, lays the groundwork for what the student is looking for in a postsecondary institution (e.g., academic major, size, location, and environment) (Henry, 2012: 8). The influences and processes involved in both the ‘predisposition stage’ and ‘information search stage’ (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000) are many and complex and have been studied extensively in the literature in relation to a student’s university choice. The third stage, choice, refers to how students decide on an institution from among those considered in the previous stage. The choice stage attributes provided during the ‘information search stage’ have the greatest influence on university choice. Students start with a broad view of higher education opportunities open to them and refine their perception of the choice of a single institution (Henry, 2012: 9).

South Korea has undergone a rapid expansion in its higher education system since the 1980s. It has hitherto had the most significant proportion amongst all OECD nations of the young population going on to higher education. Enrolment rates at higher educational institutions in

[17] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRR?end=2020&start=1970&view=chart

South Korea reached 70.4 per cent in 2020. In terms of advancement rate, since more than half of high school graduates went on to tertiary education in 1995, in 2020, 72.5 per cent of high school graduates continued into tertiary education. Furthermore, 70 per cent of the population of 25-34 year-olds have higher education degrees, the largest population ratio in terms of higher education among all OECD nations.

The fact that such a large number of people go to university or college in South Korea has drawn great attention. This interest seems to be divided into two main research branches: why and how people go to university or college. In South Korea, most higher educational institutions (372 out of 430 in 2019) are private. Due to a large number of private universities, education costs fall on students and their parents, but South Korean parents are willing to pay expensive tuition fees for their children's education (Hur and Bessey, 2013). Chung (2018), therefore, raised the question as to why people go to college or university despite the considerable education costs in South Korea. Intriguingly, Chung's study was constructed based on the theoretical framework of rationality in economics and the sociology of education. The study investigated the behaviour of individuals regarding the expected value of higher education and the factors driving them to pursue higher education. The underlying assumptions of the individuals' rationality framework implied that individuals are utility maximisers, making choices that yield the best outcome within given resources.

Chung's results show that individual and socioeconomic factors significantly affect individuals' higher educational choices. Parental effects and economic status, among others, are key explanatory factors related to higher education expansion in South Korea. The estimations of a father's education level show that a father with a higher education degree is more likely to have a child going to college or university. In this respect, it can be interpreted that educated parents intend to avoid downward social status by influencing children's educational decision-making. In addition, the family's expected academic level for their children is a very influential determinant of the choice of higher education. It may reflect the motivation of family or parents to move up the social ladder by means of education (Chung, 2018) because parents in South Korea recognise their children's success as their own and their family's success. Such social-psychological mechanisms underline parents' motivations, which can be interpreted as a solid educational fever phenomenon in which South Korean parents support their children's education (Lee, 2009; So and Kang, 2014). Parents' fever and expectation for education have played a fundamental role in South Korean education's quantitative and qualitative growth. When the state could not establish more educational institutions due to a lack of finances in the past, the private sector provided deficient forms of education. The driving force for many students to enrol in such poor educational institutions was the education fever of parents, which was present no matter whether they were rich or poor (Lee, 2009). Moreover, academic accomplishment is a significant factor in determining social position, income, and marriage in South Korea. Thus, parents also regard education as an essential means by which to build socio-economic status in contemporary South Korean society (Lee, 2006). The parental effect, such as parents' expectations and approval of their children's university entrance, is also revealed in my research's findings in chapters 6 and 7.

The most intriguing result comes with regard to the economic background. This finding explicitly shows that the choice of higher education is more affected by an individual's academic ability and their family's educational and social background than their economic status in South Korea (Chung, 2018). After the Korean War in the 1950s, the newly established government in South Korea emphasised a system in which people's positions and responsibilities in society depended on their intelligence and abilities, not on their parents or wealth (Lee, 2011). Opportunities for

education have been provided extensively in South Korean society since then so that individuals have been exposed to a better environment where they can decide on a pursuit of higher education irrespective of economic condition. It might be the rationale behind the unprecedented proliferation of higher education across society (Chung, 2018: 1). In terms of higher education opportunities, higher education in South Korea has now reached the stage of universalisation from the stage of popularisation (Kim, 2009). A lower economic status does not discourage students from pursuing higher education as much as they have the scholastic ability to enter either college or university (Chung, 2018).

Chung (2018) also identified, despite the insignificant coefficients of the expected value of education, that the individuals who chose to pursue higher education gained higher monetary and non-monetary benefits than those who did not continue further education after high school. In reality, college and university graduates in South Korea usually receive higher incomes than high school graduates, regardless of abilities (Lee, 2006). As for job satisfaction individuals with higher levels of education tend to have higher levels of job satisfaction (Chung, 2018). Chapter 7, which examines my research findings, will also be presented with students' expectations of gaining higher monetary benefits with a higher education background than those who do not.

Chung (2018) furthermore assumed that there might be other factors associated with educational choice. Chung pointed out the social stigmatisation with references to elucidate academic level as a peculiar phenomenon in South Korea and suggested further study. More specifically, the societal stigmatisation of people with lower levels of education may influence educational decision-making. The magnitude of stigma may motivate individuals to avoid being less educated compared to others. Hence, stigmatisation in itself may function to incentivise individuals to pursue further education. Some of the students I interviewed in my study also expressed negative perceptions of leaving education after high school and concerns about the discrimination they would face in society after only graduating high school or without a university diploma (these findings are presented in chapters 6 and 7).

On the other hand, many studies in South Korea have attempted to identify the processes by which students go to university or college, that is, the factors and characteristics that influence individuals' choices to pursue attendance at higher educational institutions. According to a survey on career choices of high school students by the Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education & Training (KRIVET) in 2001, 82.7 per cent of general academic high school students decided to go to a four-year university after graduation, and 8.3 per cent of students considered applying to college. The next most common responses were 'going to university or college and working alongside' and 'no plan at all' (Han et al., 2001).

Roh (2012) studied all 1st-year students from one large university campus in order to understand the factors and characteristics that affected their choice to go to university. The subjects of this study were 754 1st-year students from one department with 16 majors. A self-report questionnaire was used. The questions included the number of universities they applied to, why they applied to this university, how they became aware of this university, and when they decided to apply. Regarding the department choice, questions surrounded the timing of department choice, people who influenced the choice, the reason they applied to this department, and whether they were aware of the department or not. The result showed that the number of universities they applied to was 3 or 4. It was found that the university and major were mainly decided during the third year of high school and considered majors more important than university. It was found that the family was the most affected when choosing to go to university. The criteria for selecting a

department were aptitude considerations and job prospects in that order, and students had prior information and knowledge about the department they were applying to and selected a university with a high probability of admission. High school teachers/schools and the Internet were the most common ways through which students came to know the university, and there were a few cases where they found out through TV, radio, and newspapers (Roh, 2012).

Recently, even the university entrance rate for graduates from specialised high schools aimed at preparing students for employment rather than university admission is on the rise, reaching 42 per cent in 2019. Thus, numerous studies have looked at university admissions amongst specialised high school students. Although the government has been actively promoting vocational education and employment promotion in specialised high schools for a long period of time, a large proportion of graduates from specialised high schools have continued to go on to university (Kim, Kim, and Kim, 2017). Why do so many specialised high school students modify their career paths and choose to go to university instead? Kim, Kim, and Kim (2017) conducted an in-depth interview with ten students preparing for university while attending a specialised high school to understand why specialised high school students choose to go to university and what this turn means for them. The key reason reported by students for changing career paths to go to university could be summarised as that they experienced (re)discovery of aptitude while attending a specialised high school. Three groups of students were identified: those who found their aptitudes were not compatible with the specialised high school's specific major, those who found that the practical realities of their future work field did not match their aptitudes, and those who chose to go to specialised high school without actively identifying his or her aptitude. For the study participants, the meaning of going to university was to 'find out what they want to do', but they were also influenced by the opinions regarding South Korean universities of meaningful adults in their lives. In particular, parents of high school graduates supported and encouraged their children to go to university when their children were thinking about changing their career path from employment to university (Kim, Kim, and Kim, 2017). Parental effects are also key to elaborate on higher education admission among specialised high school students.

Choi (2020) also compared factors determining whether specialised and general academic high school students in South Korea subsequently graduate from university and, if so, whether from 2-year or 4-year courses. The results show that coming from a specialised high school (compared to a general academic high school) is negatively correlated with going to university, especially to a 4-year university. Among general academic high school graduates, the most important determinant of attending a 4-year rather than a 2-year university is the teacher's assessment of the student's performance; the father's education and income have no effect on either males or females. The results also show that specialised high school graduates' university choice is determined by a combination of individual characteristics, including being male and by having attended a specialised high school. In contrast, the choice between 2-year and 4-year university depends negatively on the father's education for males but not for females and on the father's income and the number of siblings for both genders (Choi, 2020: 1).

My research does not separate students by the types of high school in the analysis. Although very few of the interviewees are graduates of specialised high schools, I do not analyse their cases through a different lens.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to illuminate texts on career decision-making, career maturity, and higher educational choice. By drawing on the career decision-related literature of various South Korean and international researchers, I have attempted to reveal what the discussion of career decision studies is trying to identify and what differences exist between preceding research and this study.

Germeijs and Verschueren's (2006) six tasks as core aspects of the career decision-making process and Gati, Krausz, and Osipow's (1996) three types of career decision-making difficulties have interesting commonalities that should be noted in relation to the study. The first task Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) present is an orientation to choice, which means awareness of the need to make a decision and motivation to engage in the career decision-making process. Also, the first difficulty people might encounter before the career decision process begins, proposed by Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996), is a lack of motivation for making career decisions. These show that awareness of 'choice' and motivation to choose a career should be preceded in the career decision-making process. And both of these studies emphasise self-exploration. Gathering general information about oneself, that is, the absence of self-understanding could be an obstacle to career decision-making. In addition, Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) explain broad exploration of the environment as the next third task and emphasise the collection of information about alternatives for selection, and Gati, Krausz, and Osipow (1996) also see the lack of information about various options could be difficulty in career decision-making. As such, recognition of engagement in the choice is necessary prior to decisional status, and sufficient information about oneself and various options should be collected in the process to make a final career decision.

However, career-related studies from South Korea have focused more on variables affecting students' career decisions and mainly evolved in the South Korean context. The range of variables is massive and depends on each study, but essentially, a large proportion of studies has focused on factors influencing choices and sources of influence. Personal characteristics (gender differences, curriculum, grade level, etc.), psychological variables (self-esteem, work value, locus of control, etc.), disorders, etc., are all identified as factors influencing choices. The sources of influence involved in the choice process include families, peers, and (school) teachers, with students being greatly influenced by their families. It is necessary to look at career decision-making as a process rather than examining only the result of choice. Therefore, there must be an approach to understanding the agent of choice and their perception along with studying the variables that influence career decisions.

There is much less study on the capability approach in career choice-related research in South Korea. In particular, there are few attempts to study the interplay between capabilities and agency for university students to understand their choice to come to university. Walker (2018) says that capabilities are the platform for the agency, and the agency involved in making decisions and choices is significant. Thus, this study draws on the capability approach to explore individual stories and the interactions between agency and capabilities which shape career choice. In addition, neither there is a significant number of studies incorporating the capability approach or self-determination theory.

As discussed previously, perhaps the way forward in understanding students' choices is to eschew the question, 'How do students make a certain career choice?' and instead ask, 'Why do students choose a certain career path?' Such a question would foster analyses that are generated from within a situation or context, primarily through the voice of students; it would also engender an

understanding of students' autonomous agency in the choice-making process from the students' perspective. Thus, I will now examine an analytical framework to provide a new space in which to understand and reflect on students' choices and agency in South Korea.

Chapter 4. An analytical framework

The previous chapter presented a discourse on career decision-making and higher educational choice from South Korea and across the world. The literature review provided evidence for the meaning of the current research and how it can contribute to the South Korean context.

Among the frameworks and theories used in international development and education., in this research, I decided to use the capability approach and self-determination theory. Chapter 4 will explore the capability approach and self-determination theory as I have come to understand them. First, I examine the concepts and factors of the capability approach in order to explain why it is used for this research. Even though Amartya Sen did not directly discuss education in his approach, it is nonetheless highly relevant. Thus, the value and role of education in the capability approach are presented. While the concept of agency is very important in the capability approach, I discuss its limitations and explain how I extend agency theory by applying self-determination theory.

Next, I examine self-determination theory (SDT) and its utility in facilitating measuring autonomy through its motivation framework. Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, including four regulations, and the core concept of the self-determination theory, autonomy, will be presented. The fieldwork for this research was conducted in South Korea. Some studies on self-determination theory have raised the question of whether autonomy is only of value in particular cultures, so this controversial issue of the theory will be discussed.

4.1. Towards the conceptualisation of a framework

Before examining the theoretical framing, I would like to briefly explain how I began to pay attention to students' choice, agency, autonomy, and particular approaches and theories. I was born and raised in South Korea, and I spent 16 years of schooling: 6 years in primary school, 3 years in middle school, 3 years in high school, and 4 years in university. It is the most commonplace path that many students go through in South Korea. This path is predictable and almost obvious so most students just accept this path without thought or question. Various students I met for an interview in the fieldwork are also going through the same route as I did. One of them described his life up to now as that *I have been continuing to flow like the water of the river without thinking about where and why I go*. This sentence is an apt expression of the educational experiences of average students in South Korea. I graduated from each school and became a university student. Personally, I had a question about what I like and what I want to do, in my third year of university, for the first time in my life. To find answers to these questions, I tried to undergo various experiences such as volunteer work at home and abroad, college clubs, internships, etc. And then, I decided to work for NGOs in Malawi and Myanmar in 2009 and 2013 to improve the educational environment in these developing countries.

These experiences affected my interpretations of the literature surrounding broader frameworks and theories used in international development and education. For example, during my master's degree studies in 2011 and 2014, I found that my experiences of being educated in South Korea and working in Malawi and Myanmar had given me room to expand my views of the value and role of education in its development. I started to study the economic impact of education and

Human Capital Theory to question how South Korea has achieved fast economic growth and educational development. After that, my understanding was broadened to human rights-based approaches and social justice. These frameworks and theories led me to self-reflection about whether I was autonomous as an agency in my educational process and choice and whether my country, South Korea's education development, had the capacity to enable student agency. Eventually, I felt drawn to the capability approach because the analysis in this approach shifts from the economy to the person. The capability approach puts the individual in the centre and regards an individual as the end, not the mean, also attaching importance to agency and choice issues.

I am not suggesting that this study is based on a grounded theory, approach, or methodology. However, my experience provides an informal set of data and reflections that prompted an informal analysis, which drew me to the capability approach and the self-determination theory as components of a potential framework for students' agency and autonomy in career choice.

4.2. Understanding the capability approach

It is helpful to look at the development of Amartya Sen's capability approach to understand his perspective. Sen started to critique mainstream welfare economics and utilitarianism in the 1970s. He did not agree with the traditional framework's descriptions of how individuals obtain income and achieve well-being. In 1979, he introduced the concept of capability for the first time in his paper 'Equality of What?' Sen criticised the argument that equality should be used to evaluate desire fulfilment or the command of primary goods. He adopted the perspective of basic needs, which emphasises that people have to meet fundamental needs to achieve well-being, but added the notion of freedom. He focused on the intrinsic value of life rather than goods' instrumental value and regarded growth as a means, not an end. In other words, he focused on people rather than commodities and put them at the centre of development. Sen's concept of human capability was introduced in the annual Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990 (Saito, 2003). Therefore, the answer to his core question, 'Equality of What?', is capabilities rather than goods, services, or income (Walker, 2006).

This sub-chapter explores the core concepts and factors of the capability approach in order to understand how this approach works and is used. The capability approach is a broad normative framework for evaluating and assessing individual well-being and social arrangement and the design of policies and proposals about social change and intervention in society (Robeyns, 2005b; 2006a; 2006b; 2009). The capability approach focuses on what each individual is able to do and be, and their 'valuable doings and beings', in making meaningful choices from a range of options in their life (Walker, 2005). People must be put at the centre of the capability approach's concerns, so in evaluations, we must look at each person not as a means to economic growth or social stability but as an end of development (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007; Alkire and Deneulin, 2009).

4.2.1. Core concepts of the capability approach

Core ideas and specific terms are associated with the capability approach - functionings,

capabilities, and agency – and each idea is crucial in understanding it. The distinction between functionings, capabilities, and agency is critical.

1) Functionings and capabilities

Functionings consist of beings and doings. Sen (1999) defines functionings as "the various things a person may value doing or being." For instance, being healthy and well-nourished, being safe, and being educated are all functionings. Functionings are unlimited, as each person has different valuable doings and beings based on their capabilities and choices; they can be complicated or straightforward. Even though the capability approach criticises evaluations that compare the resources people hold, this approach does not underestimate the value of resources and goods. The reason is that all functionings are related to goods, resources, and income, but the capability approach focuses on what people can do or be with those goods and resources, not the goods and resources themselves (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009).

Otherwise, capabilities are the substantive freedom to enjoy various functionings. Sen (1999) defines capability as "the various combinations of functionings that the person can achieve. Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another to choose from possible livings." Functionings are outcomes or achievements, and capabilities are real opportunities or the potential to achieve valuable beings and doings (Robeyns, 2005b; Walker, 2006). Each person also can choose to put the capability into action or not (for example, students may not choose a university, even though they could have gone) (Walker, 2020).

Distinguishing between capabilities and functionings is important because if we simply evaluate functionings, we will not be looking enough at people's real capabilities or freedom (Brighouse and Unterhalter, 2010). For instance, say there are two people who are in a state of malnutrition. If we simply evaluate functionings, both people are equally assessed. However, what if one person is fasting and the other is suffering from starvation? They may seem very similar in their physical condition, but there is a big difference. The fasting person has decided not to eat by her own choice because she has some reasons to fast, and if she wants, she can decide to start eating again. In other words, this person has the resources or goods for eating but has chosen not to. However, the starving person cannot eat, even though she surely wants to get out of hunger because there is no opportunity to eat. This person does not have the option to choose by herself even if she thinks being healthy and well-nourished is an important functioning in her life. Thus, people may look similar when comparing only functionings, but their capabilities often show significant differences. Therefore, in the capability approach, we should not evaluate only functionings (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009).

2) Agency

The last core concept in the capability approach is agency. Sen's writings have articulated the importance of human agency as the capability approach views people as active agents (Alkire, 2005b; 2008). A person with an agency is "someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements are to be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well" (Sen, 1999). In other words, individuals with an agency are active in shaping their own personal values and objectives; they are not passive spectators (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009). So people who enjoy high levels of agency are engaged in

behaviours and activities congruent with their values. When people are not able to exert agency, they may be alienated from their behaviour, compelled into a situation, or simply passive (Alkire, 2008). A lack of agency or constrained agency results in disadvantages when making choices. Thus, the agency helps a person shape their own life rather than allowing it to be shaped by others in terms of how to think and what decisions to make (Unterhalter and Walker, 2007).

Agency is plural in both concept and measurement. In Alsop and Heinsohn's (2005) work, the agency is presented in the context of an analytical framework for measuring and monitoring empowerment processes and outcomes. They argue that personal agency and opportunity structures influence the extent or degree of an individual's empowerment. Agency refers to the components of measuring empowerment, defined as "an actor's capacity to make meaningful choices; that is, the actor is able to envisage options and make a choice" (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005: 6). Samman and Santos (2009) define agency as an actor or group's ability to make purposeful choices. The value of agency is intrinsic and instrumental because "agency is considered to be an important end in itself and instrumentally, agency matters because it has been hypothesised and many times confirmed that it can serve as a means to other development outcomes" (Samman and Santos, 2009: 6).

The definitions from these different authors reveal a common feature in the understanding of agency. Namely, people are viewed as active agents in making choices regarding the good and valuable things in their lives. Sabina Alkire actively researches agency-related issues, especially agency measurement. Sen's work has directly informed her research on agency (Alkire, 2005a; 2005b; 2008; Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007). Sen's agency centres on autonomy, which this research explores because, in the capability approach, autonomy and agency are important elements in contextualising human development (Bruni, Comin, and Pugno, 2008). Current agency measurements mainly focus on what people value, and although it is a key feature of agency, this only measures values rather than examining people's opinions and perceptions. To investigate autonomous agency, measurements should incorporate what people value and how they value their agency or lack thereof. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) observe that these two concepts, the exercise of agency and the value a respondent assigns to this agency, must be measured separately.

Alkire (2005a: 222) reviewed that subjective measures of human agency have several identifying characteristics. First, they reflect the internal experience of the respondent – including their own judgements and values about how well they are functioning across various dimensions. Second, they may include positive as well as negative experiences. Third, they focus on enduring evaluations rather than fleeting emotional states. These aspects of subjective studies make them particularly appropriate for engaging with the capability approach, which stresses practical reason and seeks information on valuable states of being and doing. Practical reasoning is important in the Capability Approach, as Sen (1985) also emphasises because agency freedom is "the freedom to achieve whatever the person, as a responsible agent, decides that he or she should achieve" (Austin, 2018).

Freedom is a concept underpinning the capability approach. An expansion of people's capabilities and functionings in the capability approach has two distinct freedoms. Sen (1999) distinguishes between opportunity freedom and process freedom (Samman and Santos, 2009). The former concerns what beings and doings people can achieve as they pertain to what is valued, which is understood as capabilities. The latter refers to people's freedom of choice and ability to act as

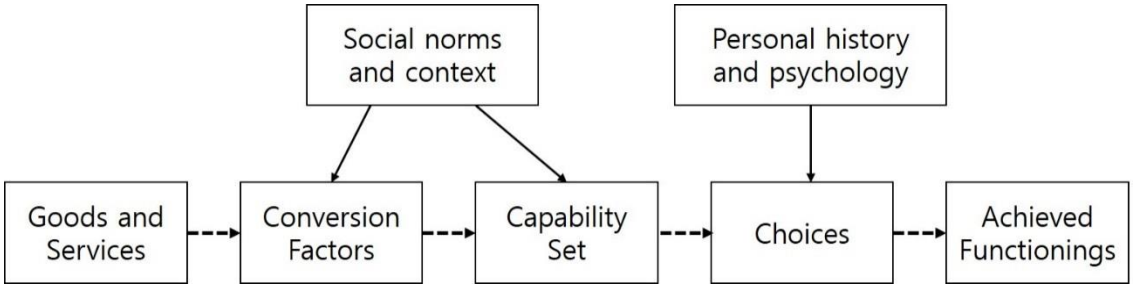
agents regarding their capabilities, which is related to agency (Alkire, 2008; Davis, 2015). In other words, opportunity freedom relates to people's freedom to achieve that which they value and have reason to value. Process freedom concerns people's ability to freely exercise their practical reasoning and make choices about their way of living (Austin, 2018). Much work on the capability approach has been devoted to opportunity freedom and how people's capability sets can be expanded. Less attention has been dedicated to process freedom and how people's freedom of choice and agency can be strengthened. This is partly due to the difficulties associated with explaining the nature of agency and the determinants of freedom (Davis, 2015: 2).

Ironically, Sen's interpretation of agency contains room for the possible constraint of individual freedom. One issue stemming from agency relates to adaptive preference. Nussbaum (2000) explains that people's preferences and choices are subjective, so they are shaped by society and public policy. Different social and political circumstances bring out different opportunities and capacities, and it affects people's choices (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007). Therefore, we must pay attention to adaptive preferences because this is related to real opportunities and freedom in making choices to achieve valuable being and doing. For instance, imagine that a girl values only a very low level of education. If she has access to a high level of education without obstacles but she decides to have only a very low level of education, we may consider her to have agency in her life choices. However, she may make this choice only because she is forced to do so by her family or by her society (such as one which regards girls as needing less education than boys). As a result, she may believe that she requires less education than her brother to achieve socially expected functionings (Brighouse and Unterhalter, 2007).

Agency is related to other approaches that stress self-determination, authentic self-direction, autonomy, self-reliance, empowerment, voice, etc. (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009). The definition of autonomy in self-determination theory arose not from development-related social sciences but from psychology and had apparent affinities with Sen's capability approach. The authors describe autonomy as follows: a person is autonomous when their behaviour is experienced as willingly enacted and when they fully endorse the actions in which they are engaged and/or the values expressed by them. Therefore, people are most autonomous when they act in accord with their genuine interests or integrated values and desires (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007). Since the ability to measure autonomy accurately across cultures is also deeply contested within psychology, this indicator has been challenged and subsequently tested and used extensively internationally (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan, 2003; Ibrahim and Alkire, 2007). The self-determination theory applied to this research will be explored more in the following chapter 4.4.

4.2.2. Factors of the capability approach

Figure 1. Rendering of the capability approach factors



Source: Robeyns (2005b)

Figure 1 is a modified rendering of the capability approach factors from Robeyns (2005b). It shows the distinction between means, such as goods and services, and functionings and capabilities. Three conversion factors, choices, and social norms and context affect how goods and services are converted to functionings.

Here, capability refers to what people are actually able to do and be rather than what goods and services they hold or have access to. Thus, capabilities are important when measuring development. We need to look at people's opportunities and freedom to formulate their capability set and their valued doings and beings (Unterhalter, 2003a; 2003b; Walker, 2005; 2006).

In Figure 1, the argument of the capability approach is clearly contrasted with the use of economic wealth and income as an indicator of development. Goods and services are the means of development, so they are instrumental in reaching the goal of development, but they are not the end of that goal. However, as mentioned above, the capability approach does not underestimate the value of goods and services because it is instrumental input relating to capabilities and functionings. If inputs such as goods and services are insufficient in quantity and superior in quality, capabilities, and functionings will have adverse effects.

According to the capability approach, the end of development should be conceptualised regarding peoples' capabilities. Most important is that people have the capabilities to lead the lives they want (Robeyns, 2006a; 2006b).

1) Three conversion factors

Conversion factors are a critical element of the capability approach as these affect choice (Walker, 2020). Robeyns (2005b) argues that three groups of conversion factors influence the relationships between goods and services and functionings; these include personal, environmental, and social conversion factors.

"Personal conversion factors include intelligence, training, and skills; environmental conversion factors include geographical location and logistics; and social conversion factors include social norms and power relations" (Tao, 2010: 8). For instance, imagine a boy who performs poorly on tests. When we think about why this problem exists, there could be various reasons based on the three conversion factors. In the case of personal conversion factors, he may frequently be absent from class, lack time to study due to chores, have a dislike and fear of school, or have a learning disability. In terms of environmental conversion factors, he may have a problem due to a lack of textbooks, or his teacher may often be absent from class. Finally, with regards to social conversion

factors, marks lower than 50 per cent are considered normal, or only a handful of students are classified as smart and expected. All these factors are potential conversion factors, so conversion factors should be considered carefully in the capability approach (Tao, 2010).

These three conversion factors affect how goods and services are converted to functionings through capability (Roybens, 2005b). In this conversion, one stage, in particular, is required to achieve functioning, that is, the process of choice. In other words, at the first stage, goods and services are converted into capabilities via conversion factors at the personal, environmental and social levels. Then, at the next stage, once the capability set is thus determined, an act of choice sets in motion a chain of actions designed to lead to its transformation into an actually achieved functioning (Austin, 2018). Even if capability is expanded, it does not guarantee that a given functioning will be achieved. That means that the achieved functionings of two people can be different based on their choices, which in turn are based on unique values and ideas, even if those two people have identical capabilities (Tao, 2009). In choice making, individuals should be subjects making choices to achieve beings and doings in line with what they value.

The capability approach framework is more complex than the input and output models. In other words, even when sufficient input, such as goods and services, is provided, a person may not be able to use them because conversion factors interrupt the expansion of the capability set.

2) Choice issue

Advocates of the capability approach aim to enhance people's range of choices in all areas of their life. 'Choice' is an everyday word but here, enlarging people's choices refers to what is seen as valuable for people to be or do (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009). So, people should be able to make choices that matter to them for a valuable life (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007).

In addition to the three types of conversion factors, choices can also affect capabilities and functionings. For this reason, an expanded capability does not guarantee that a particular functioning will be achieved. Two people's achieved functionings can be different based on their choices, and they may have unique values and ideas even if they have identical capabilities (Tao, 2010). Each person with an agency makes his or her own choices.

Alkire and Deneulin (2009) argue that there has been misunderstanding regarding the choice issue. This is because the UNDP states 'expanding people's choice' in the Human Development Report. The phrase 'expanding people's choice' sounds very positive because it is easily understood. But, 'expanding people's choice' in the capability approach does not mean that expanding all choices regardless of values and more choices is better. Sometimes people prefer to make a few good choices rather than many unmanageable choices. Also, the choice is not carried out only individually because, in the process of making choices, people are also affected by family, community, and society (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009).

Sen also argues that an increase in choice itself does not necessarily lead to an increase in freedom. The added options may not be the ones we cherish anyway. Besides, an increase in freedom of choice, no matter how valuable the options are, can limit our ability to live a "peaceful and unbothered life'' (Sen, 1992: 63). Sen writes, ''Indeed sometimes more freedom of choice can bemuse and befuddle, and make one's life more wretched'' (1992: 59) (Alkire, 2005b: 121).

3) Social norms and social context

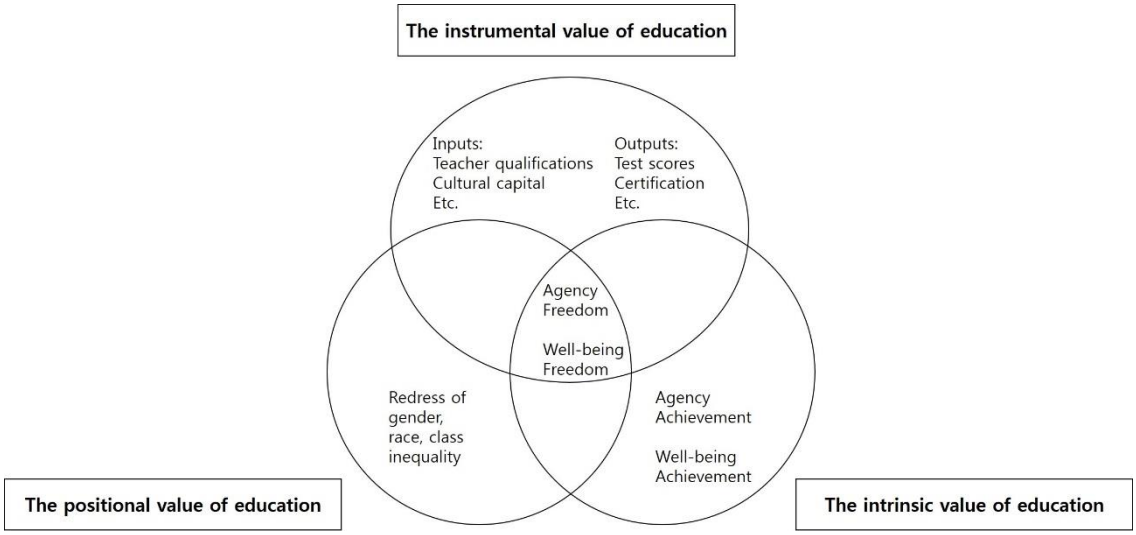
Sen (1999) recognises that individual freedom is a 'social commitment', and agency is 'inescapably qualified and constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us'. Therefore, it is important 'to give simultaneous recognition to the centrality of individual freedom and to the social influences on the extent and reach of individual freedom' (Walker 2020: 4). As Sen argues, social norms can expand or diminish human agency, so individuals' choices will be somewhat dependent on social context and norms (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007). Sen emphasizes that "being free to live the way one would like maybe enormously helped by the choices of others, and it would be a mistake to think of achievements only in terms of active choice by oneself" (Sen 1993: 44). Therefore, subjective preferences and choices are informed or deformed by social and institutional norms and contexts such as public policy. People living in unequal social or political circumstances have unequal opportunities and capabilities to make choices. In this situation, people adapt their preferences and choices according to the limited ways they can think (Walker, 2006). It is also linked to the adaptive preference discussed above in Sen's interpretation of agency. People's preferences and choices are subjective and shaped by society and public policy. Thus, different social and political circumstances bring out different opportunities and capacities, and this affects people's choices (Nussbaum, 2000; Walker and Unterhalter, 2007).

4.3. The capability approach and education

This sub-chapter aims to relate education to the capability approach. It is essential to understand how education can contribute. The key idea of the capability approach is that development should aim to expand people's capabilities to achieve what they value doing and being (Unterhalter, Vaughan, and Walker, 2007; Alkire and Deneulin, 2009). This chapter will discuss why education is important in terms of the capability approach. Sen has not directly addressed the notion of education in depth in his approach, but the capability approach is significantly related to education in many ways (Saito, 2003).

4.3.1. Intrinsic and instrumental values of education

Figure.2 The values of education



Source: Brighouse and Unterhalter (2010)

In Figure 2, Brighouse and Unterhalter (2010) argue that the three values of education are positional, instrumental, and intrinsic. We need to look at these values to understand the relationship between education and the capability approach. Intrinsic value and instrumental value are the most important because the capability approach illuminates this concept. In other words, education is important in the capability approach for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons (Saito, 2003; Robeyns, 2006b).

Education has an instrumental role, as it can help people achieve many goals, such as getting jobs and discovering economic opportunities. A lack of education harms human development as education itself serves an instrumental social role by providing greater literacy and fostering social and political arrangements (Walker, 2006). The instrumental value of education is closely related to the human capital perspective on education. In the human capital theory, each individual is regarded as having inherited and acquired abilities, and human capital analysis only considers acquired capacities developed through formal and informal education. The key concept of this human capital perspective is that education is an investment to promote human capital; this makes the individual more productive. The value of education in human capital, which increases individual and social rates of return, has been widely adopted in national and international policy (Unterhalter, Vaughan, and Walker, 2007). Early studies measuring human capital focused on national enrolment or literacy rates. Barro and Lee (1994) started to use data regarding the years of schooling in each country to measure human capital. However, many researchers have raised the problem of inadequate measures of human capital, as all these indicators represent only the quantity of human capital in a country. Therefore, there has been a need to focus on the quality of education to measure human capital adequately across nations. The international tests of student performance, such as the PISA of the OECD or the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), measure the quality of education. Hanushek and Woessmann (2008) argue that a nation's schooling quality should be measured by scores on international tests of math and science skills. Therefore, the human capital model highlights only the instrumental economic roles of education (Robeyns, 2006b).

Education is also of intrinsic importance because being educated itself is a valuable achievement. The intrinsic value of education also means that some benefits are not instrumental but may still be useful by having an education. Education also has an interpersonal impact, as those with education use it for their own benefit and that of others. Thus, this interpersonal impact can contribute to society as a whole (Unterhalter, 2009). In addition, regarding the value of agency in education, individuals who are actively involved in shaping their own lives have more opportunities to contribute to positive social change (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007).

Sen (1999) argues human capabilities play three roles, which are composed of both intrinsic and instrumental values:

"1) Their direct relevance to the well-being and freedom of people

2) Their indirect role through influencing social change, and

3) Their indirect role through influencing economic production" (Sen, 1999: 296-297).

In these roles, both human capabilities and human capital are expressed. All three roles are related to human capability, but only the third role relates to human capital. However, education serves more roles than just raising human capital. For instance, education plays a significant role in broadening human capability, including human capacities (Saito, 2003).

Therefore, education expands capabilities for a number of reasons, given the instrumental role it plays. It can help people access many things, such as employment and economic opportunities. Education is also intrinsically important, as being educated helps a person expand other capabilities, such as having an agency to make choices that they have reason to value (Walker, 2006). Ultimately, education's instrumental and intrinsic aspects related to enhancing capability and freedom are central to the capability approach (Terzi, 2007).

4.3.2. The roles of education in the capability approach

Core ideas and factors of the capability approach and the relationship between education and the capability approach discussed in the previous sub-chapters contribute to arguing the roles of education. First, education itself is a valuable functioning, and second, education is a central capability that expands other capabilities. Finally, education can promote and exercise agency. These three roles of education will be explained in detail.

1) Being educated as functioning

In Sen's view, education is one of "a relatively small number of centrally important beings and doings that are crucial to well-being" (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007). Among many functionings, being educated is one of the most basic and has intrinsic value. Education itself has intrinsic value, so being educated can be functioning by the terms of the capability approach. In other words, being educated is itself crucial to the functioning, so the absence or lack of educational opportunity seriously harms an individual (Robeyns, 2006b; Terzi, 2007). Therefore, having more access to good quality education and achieving many other capabilities through education allows people to flourish in their life (Saito, 2003; Robeyns, 2006b; Terzi, 2007).

2) Expanding capability

At the same time, education is a central capability that contributes to expanding other capabilities. Saito (2003) argues that there are two aspects of capabilities. One is the expansion of a child's capability; for instance, education enables children to acquire the ability to read. The other is the expansion of the child's opportunities; a child who learns how to read will have more opportunities to become a writer, journalist, or whatever else she wants to become. Unlimited numbers of capabilities can be expanded by achieving one capability through education. Other capabilities expanded through education are achieving literacy and numeracy and gaining skills that can contribute to future opportunities, such as continuation to higher education and gaining other instrumentally and intrinsically important capabilities (Unterhalter, 2003a; 2003b; Tao, 2010). Expanding capabilities through education means people can have more opportunities to choose what they value doing and being in their lives. Even though some factors could affect converting expanded capabilities to functionings, having more expanded capabilities through education enhances their freedom.

Education contributes to the formation and expansion of both present and future capabilities. About this issue, Sen highlights the importance of the freedom children will enjoy in the future. If we only focus on a child's freedom now, there would be many limitations. For instance, a child may want to exercise his or her present freedom to avoid going to school, but we have to think about the child's future freedom by educating the child now. Not being educated now will limit the expansion of other capabilities in the future. Suppose a child refuses or is restricted in terms of access to education. In that case, this will be a disadvantage now and also reduce opportunities throughout his or her life by restricting future freedom and agency (Walker, 2006). Thus, when we consider a child, we must consider the child's freedom now and their future freedom (Saito, 2003).

Sen therefore highlights the importance of compulsory education as an ideal concept for future capabilities concerning education and children (Terzi, 2007). He says, "I think the main argument for compulsory education is that it will give the child when grown up much more freedom and, therefore, the educational argument is a very future-oriented argument" (Sen in Saito, 2003: 27). Therefore, there has been researches seeking to apply the capability approach within the modality of formal schooling by focusing on expanding student capabilities. However, compulsory education does not guarantee an expansion of capabilities; this depends on the quality of education, which differs significantly among schools and education systems. Even if there is a country where compulsory education is provided for all children for free, if the quality of education is deficient, there are limitations to expanding capabilities or enhancing freedom for children (Saito, 2003; Unterhalter, 2003a; 2003b; Walker, 2006; Tao, 2010). In other words, providing compulsory education is not enough to enhance children's capabilities, although important and necessary for compulsory education. In a country, for instance, where a very successful compulsory education system is in existence, this compulsory education does not necessarily enhance children's capabilities. If the education system takes an extremely 'top-down' approach and stresses competitiveness, children tend to study subjects that are required for examination success. Under this kind of education system, children find difficulties in learning to become autonomous. In this case, the children have no choice but to follow what others tell them to do and are considered to have limited capabilities even though compulsory education is

provided (Saito, 2003: 27-28).

South Korean education has had many tangible achievements in terms of expanding capability through education. Just as Sen highlights the importance of compulsory education, primary and middle school education is compulsory in South Korea. Although high school is not compulsory yet, from 2020, except for some private schools, free high school education is now provided. As of 2020, the enrolment rate for each school level is also high, at 98.4 per cent for primary school, 95.7 per cent for middle school, and 91.4 per cent for high school (MOE, 2020). In addition, South Korea has made efforts not simply to provide free compulsory education to all children but to improve the quality of education. Expanding access to primary education caused overcrowded classes, so the government reduced the number of students per classroom and assigned more qualified teachers to improve the quality of education. Also, after expanding secondary education, the government carried out quality control over secondary education through acts such as abolishing the middle school entrance exam and implementing the high school equalisation policy (KEDI, 2019). As a result, the results from both the PISA 2012 and TIMSS 2011 reported that South Korea was one of the top countries in academic achievement in reading literacy, mathematics, and science, showing a steady improvement in scores and average over time (Kwon, Lee, and Shin, 2017). These objective indicators show that South Korean education enables children to acquire abilities such as reading, arithmetic, etc., and expands children's capabilities. Behind these quantitative and qualitative achievements of South Korean education, decreased interest and excessive stress in education, extreme competitiveness, and university entrance exam-oriented education have arisen as problems (Lee, 2009). Under this education system, children may have limited capabilities of agency, which affects their freedom. At this point, we can ask the following question: Do expanded capabilities that come as a result of South Korean education guarantee that an individual is becoming an autonomous agent?

3) Promoting and exercising agency

The importance of agency is highlighted in sub-chapter 4.2.1. Agency is one's ability to seek goals that one values, and so is crucial for an individual's life (Walker, 2006; Unterhalter and Walker, 2007). Agency is important within the capability approach because it plays a pivotal role in people's life choices. Real and valued choices are made by people who are autonomous and have agency.

Education makes a child autonomous in terms of creating a new capability set for the child. White argues that 'the child ''must'' become autonomous, to be sure, on the completion of his education' (White, 1973: 23). He says that it is entirely up to students whether they choose to stay autonomous or not once they become autonomous. In order for children to be able to make choices in their life, they need to become autonomous through education (Saito, 2003: 27). White (1973) and many authors have highlighted the importance of becoming autonomous through education. Every individual, through education, should become an autonomous person for them to be able to make choices in their own life because autonomy enhances individuals' ability to identify what is valuable for them and live accordingly (Saito, 2003; Unterhalter and Walker, 2007). Individuals need to develop their understanding of what it means to live well and to be able to compare different ways of living so that they can choose good lives for themselves (Unterhalter and Walker, 2007). Education can provide this opportunity for children and young students by promoting and exercising agency. Therefore, education plays the meaningful role of

helping them to be autonomous and have the capability to reflect on their own goals and values critically.

Tao(2010) applies this to primary school students in order to understand how agency issues can be applied and analysed. Specifically, "agency achievements for children means having individual agency in class will enable the ability to identify the type of life they value in the future. To achieve and exercise agency in education or school, the following conditions are required: 1) being able to have a voice and participate freely 2) being free to act without repercussions of violence or shame, 3) being able to aspire and strive to do well (to be encouraged and expected), and 4) being able to feel respect and recognition (which boost one's self-confidence and self-esteem)" (Tao, 2010: 17). Therefore, even if capabilities are expanded through education if education is limited in its ability to promote and exercise agency, the individual misses their opportunity to become autonomous in making choices to realise their valued functionings.

Even if there are few studies that directly discuss the agency issue and the autonomy of students through education in South Korea, related discourse can be found in career education at the school level, as mentioned in chapter 3. Lim (2009) argues that to serve as a happy and productive member of society and to realise oneself, above all, it is necessary to choose a career that suits one's aptitude and develop the appropriate abilities. In addition, the ability and knowledge to deal wisely with all life's problems are required. From this perspective, career education has emerged as an education that integrates academic and career guidance. In other words, career education is a process that helps individuals choose their own career paths wisely and continue to develop within the chosen career path. Here, even if career education in South Korea emphasises promoting and exercising agency through education, although limited to career issues, career education at the school level should fulfil its role so that it can help students choose their career path and continue to develop afterward. As a consequence, it seems appropriate to argue that education that plays a role in expanding the child's capabilities should be a kind of education that makes people autonomous (Saito, 2003).

4.4. Limitations on agency in the capability approach

When Sen defined agency in the capability approach, he used the expression 'reason to value', which means "agency is the ability to pursue goals that one values and has reason to value." (Sen, 1999: 19). Reason to value has generated much debate in terms of individuals' actual freedom and there have been criticisms of Sen's approach to utilitarianism (Sugden, 2006; Qizilbash, 2011). Before discussing why the idea of reason to value is problematic, it is important first to contextualise Sen's approach. First, Sen puts a strong emphasis on the concept of reason (Sugden, 2006). Second, Sen focuses on the intrinsic value of life rather than on the instrumental value of goods. Sen's capability approach suggests certain functionings, the various things a person may value being or doing, which are intrinsically valuable for all human beings regardless of individual desire. Nussbaum wrote about this issue in her paper, 'Nature, function, and capability: Aristotle on political distribution':

"Sen seems on the whole to think that we remove the problem by moving from the utilitarian emphasis on desire to his own approach's emphasis on the valuation of capabilities. But the valuation procedure that is involved in capability selection seems to me, at least without further

description, to be no more incorruptible than desire itself is" (Nussbaum, 1987: 39).

A reason to value inevitably evokes collective judgement of what is rational for individuals to value. Individuals' actual desires, what is deemed valuable in their lives, and how they should live should only be determined by the individual alone, not by other people's judgements (Qizilbash, 2011). Sugden (2006) criticises Sen's capability approach based on how his view allows for collective social decisions or the theoretician's judgements of what is best for people, thus restricting individual liberty. Even if made by theoreticians, collective social judgements do not coincide with individuals' actual desires; here, certain values will be highlighted and promoted that may degrade other values that people actually desire, those out of sync with collective judgments. This view encroaches upon people's real freedom to do whatever they value or desire. As John Stuart Mill argues, an argument that Nussbaum echoes, people should be allowed the freedom to act on their own desires insofar as doing so does not harm others (Sugden, 2006; Qizilbash, 2011). The widespread collective judgement that establishes certain values in a society deeply undermines how an individual can develop his or her own view of values and infringes the freedom of individuals to act as agents, i.e., individuals are taught not to desire or value certain things.

Thus, Sen's expression 'reason to value' in his understating of agency does not reveal whether students are autonomous in their choice-making. Students can make a meaningful career choice after graduation based on their values, but that does not always guarantee that they are autonomous agents since those values could have been 'imposed' upon them. Looking only at their choices and the values that lead to said choices is important in understanding how they exercise their agency in choice-making. However, the individual's autonomy in the choice-making is unascertainable if they have 'reason to value' something, even if the choice made is affected by collective judgements or decisions. Therefore, one should not overlook the fact that the choices and values made and held do not indicate whether the choice-making is autonomously engaged and unrestricted. Factors that affect the free exercise of agency in choice-making should also be examined to reveal students' autonomy through their perception of agency valuation.

In light of these limitations and constraints on freedom in Sen's view of agency, I have sought an alternative and complementary concept for understanding whether individuals are autonomous as subjective agents when making choices.

4.5. Understanding self-determination theory

Rather than acting as a replacement, self-determination theory is integrated alongside the capability approach. The rationale for using self-determination theory lies in its ability to offer a measurement of agency that reveals whether a student's exercised agency is indeed autonomous. Self-determination theory is a multidimensional and validated measure of students' agency and how they perceive making certain choices via types of motivation and regulation. I will examine how and to what extent a self-determination theory can interface with capability approach concepts in order to generate an analytical framework that can link agency with autonomy in students' career choice process. That said, a brief discussion of self-determination theory is in order.

Self-determination theory was developed by psychologists Richard Ryan, Ed Deci, and colleagues. It is a theory of human motivation, personality development, and well-being, and it primarily

provides a theoretical framework for motivation (Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Trenshaw, Revelo, Earl, and Herman, 2016). Many other theories have conceptualised motivation as how much motivation people have for particular behaviours or activities. This is because most theories of motivation treat motivation as a unitary concept. But self-determination theory focuses on types of motivation rather than the amount. People have not only different amounts but also different kinds of motivation. Concern for the orientation of that motivation, rather than the level of motivation, allows seeking the why behind behaviours or activities (Ryan and Deci, 2000b; Deci and Ryan, 2008). Also, self-determination theory is a framework to find out factors that strengthen or weaken different types of motivation, and so it is broadly used to understand directly relevant issues in education (Ryan and Deci, 2020).

The central distinction made by self-determination theory is between types of motivation based on the different reasons for a choice or action. The most basic distinction is between intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. People have an intrinsic motivation to do something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, but when external factors control people, they feel pressure to think, feel, or behave in particular ways (Ryan and Deci, 2000b; Deci and Ryan, 2008). Thus, even though the outcomes look alike, their types of motivation or reason might be dissimilar based on each person who makes a choice. In self-determination theory, humans are assumed to have active and endogenous tendencies for psychological growth. Because of this, the theory addresses human motivation with importance placed on internal resources for development and behaviour regulation. However, motivation cannot be taken for granted because environmental and social factors can either enhance or diminish the innate tendency to meet one's needs (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000b; Deci and Ryan, 2008; Painter, 2011).

Self-determination theory is informed by autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are the cornerstones of human motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Huta, and Deci, 2008; Ryan, 2009; Trenshaw, Revelo, Earl, and Herman, 2016). Specifically, these needs are considered essential for understanding motivation and following outcomes, which are behaviours, activities, and choices (Deci and Ryan, 2000). First, autonomy concerns initiative and ownership in one's actions. Autonomy refers to the behaviour as volitional and reflectively endorsed by the self. When people are autonomous, they initiate and regulate their behaviours with a high degree of volition and a sense of choice (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2020). Autonomy is a core concept in this research, so the following sub-chapter 4.7. will explore the issue in more detail. Second, the need for competence refers to the experience of behaviour as effectively performed. It is satisfied within well-structured environments that afford optimal challenges, positive feedback, and growth opportunities. When people are competent, they feel that they can succeed and grow, so people desire to exercise their capacities. Finally, relatedness is about a sense of belonging and connection. It is the need to establish close and secure attachments with others. The relatedness is facilitated by respect and caring, so people feel emotionally connected to and interpersonally involved in relationships (Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2020).

4.5.1. Intrinsic motivation

Self-determination theory began by focusing on intrinsic motivation, which represents a prototype of autonomous activities. These activities are performed naturally and spontaneously

when people feel free to follow their inner interests and enjoyment (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan, Huta, and Deci, 2008; Ryan and Deci, 2020). Furthermore, intrinsic motivation pertains to activities done 'for their own sake', so people with inherent motivation do not depend on external pressure but rather provide their own satisfaction and joys (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2020). Thus, intrinsically motivated individuals perceive themselves as the causal agent of their own behaviour (Taylor et al., 2014).

Many studies have examined the relationship between motivation and school achievement, including improved performance and learning, using the self-determination theory. The benefits of intrinsic motivation are obvious within formal education. For example, Grolnick and Ryan (1987) found that primary school students who reported greater intrinsic motivation for doing schoolwork displayed greater conceptual learning and memory compared to students with less intrinsically oriented forms of motivation (Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008). Significant correlations have also been found between intrinsic motivation and achievement as measured by standardised achievement tests in specific subjects, such as mathematics and reading for early-primary, late-primary, and middle school students (Gottfried, 1985; 1990). Taylor et al. (2014) also pointed to a significant role of intrinsic motivation in school achievement through a meta-analysis. The meta-analysis reviewed cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that have assessed the relation of motivation types to school achievement according to self-determination theory. Taylor et al. (2014) followed this meta-analysis with additional studies of high school and university students in Canada and Sweden, and their findings showed that intrinsic motivation was consistently associated with higher performance, controlling for baseline achievement.

These are interesting studies seeking the relation of intrinsic motivation to the achievement of students, but my research considers students' motivation itself, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in their career choice and its process, which are factors more important than results, such as performance and achievement.

4.5.2. Extrinsic motivation

Although intrinsic motivation is an important type of motivation within self-determination theory, it is not the only type. Instead, self-determination theory specifies four distinct types of extrinsic motivation that vary in the degree of autonomy (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). Extrinsically motivated behaviours are characterised by four types of regulations (i.e., external, introjected, identified, and integrated), and each can vary considerably in its relative autonomy. For example, some extrinsically motivated actions are clearly pressured or compelled by outside forces (external and introjected). Conversely, other extrinsically motivated actions can have an internal perceived locus of causality (identified and integrated) (Painter, 2011).

Compared to external regulation, other types of extrinsic motivation result when a behavioural regulation and its value have been internalised. Internalisation is defined as people taking in values, attitudes, or regulatory structures, such that the external regulation of behaviour is transformed into an internal regulation. SDT posits a controlled-to-autonomous continuum to describe the degree to which an external regulation has been internalised. The more fully internalised, the more autonomous the subsequent, extrinsically motivated behaviour will be. It

is important to note that the SDT model of internalisation is not a stage theory and does not suggest that people must invariantly move through these 'stages' with respect to particular behaviours. Instead, the theory describes these types of regulation to index how people have integrated the regulation of behaviour or class of behaviours. As such, SDT proposes that, under optimal conditions, people can, at any time, fully integrate a new regulation or can integrate an existing regulation that had been only partially internalised (Gagné and Deci, 2005: 334).

In early childhood, we have more freedom to be intrinsically motivated and are able to carry out an activity for its inherent satisfaction. But as people grow up and become members of a family, school, society, etc., they face situations and environments where their motivation and choices are influenced by external factors such as social pressures and new responsibilities. Strictly speaking, it is not possible for people to carry out all activities for their own interests (Ryan and Deci, 2000a). Then the real question is how individuals acquire the non-intrinsic motivations to implement certain practices and how this motivation affects autonomy.

In terms of self-determination theory, the difference between extrinsic motivations is not a simple one (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Deci and Ryan have implemented a widely used measure of autonomy that asks people to rate four possible reasons why they engage in the practice of making choices (Deci and Ryan, 2000; 2008; Alkire, 2005a; 2005b; Ryan, 2009).

1) External regulation

A minor autonomous type of extrinsic motivation is external regulation. This regulation is the classic case of extrinsic motivation, in which specific external regulations control people's behaviour. So, people act to obtain a reward or to avoid a threatened punishment. In other words, this is a form of motivation typically experienced as controlled and non-autonomous (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Chirkov, Kim, Ryan and Kaplan, 2003; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2020). Moreover, such externally controlled behaviour is poorly maintained as a person might not concur once the external controls are removed or withdrawn (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). And this type of extrinsic motivation has been typically contrasted with intrinsic motivation and undermines intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000a).

2) Introjected regulation

The next type of extrinsic motivation is introjected regulation. This regulation is a somewhat more partially internalised form of regulation than external regulation. A classic kind of introjected regulation is ego involvement. When the ego is involved, a person feels internal pressure, and his behaviours are acted to satisfy internal contingencies (Ryan, 1982; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). Put differently, behaviours are performed to experience self or other approval for success, to avoid a feeling of guilt, shame, or anxiety, or to attain ego enhancements such as pride, self-esteem, etc. Introjected behaviours still have an external perceived locus of causality and have not been assimilated to the self. As a consequence, the resulting behaviours are not self-determined. Therefore, in some studies, external regulation and introjected regulation have been combined to form a controlled motivation composite. However, the difference between the two regulations is that external regulation is interpersonally controlled by others, and introjected regulation is interpersonally controlled by the individuals themselves (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Chirkov, Kim, Ryan and Kaplan, 2003; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2020).

3) Identified regulation

Accordingly, both external and introjected regulations represent relatively controlled forms of motivation. But extrinsic motivation can also be autonomously enacted, and somewhat more autonomous is identified regulation. This regulation is the process through which people recognise and accept the underlying value of behaviour. In identified regulation, behaviours reflect a conscious value as having personal significance and importance. People have internalised its regulation more by identifying with a behaviour's value and importance. As a result, behaviours possess a relatively high degree of volition or willingness (Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2020). The resulting behaviours would be more autonomous, although still extrinsically motivated, because the behaviour would still be instrumental rather than being done for spontaneous enjoyment and interest (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

4) Integrated regulation

Finally, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation. The person recognises and identifies with the value of the behaviours and synthesises them with other values and interests. So, integration occurs when identified regulations are thoroughly evaluated and brought into congruence with one's other values and needs (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Chirkov, Kim, Ryan and Kaplan, 2003; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2020). In some studies, identified and integrated regulations have been combined to form an autonomous motivation composite. Autonomous extrinsic motivations, which are identified and integrated regulations, share many qualities with intrinsic motivation, but integrated behaviours are still considered extrinsic. Because integrated motivations are based on a sense of value, people consider the behaviours as worthwhile, even though not enjoyable (Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Ryan and Deci, 2020).

5) Amotivation

SDT postulates that autonomous and controlled motivations differ in terms of their underlying regulatory processes and their accompanying experiences. It further suggests that behaviours can be characterised in terms of the degree to which they are autonomous versus controlled (Gagne and Deci, 2005: 334). However, in self-determination theory's self-determination continuum, there is an amotivation that stands in contrast to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Autonomous and controlled activities involve different types of regulatory processes, yet both are instances of intentional and motivated behaviour. In contrast, amotivation is a state in which people lack the intention to behave and thus lack motivation as the term is defined in the cognitive-motivational tradition. According to SDT, people are likely to be amotivated when they lack either a sense of efficacy or a sense of control over the desired outcome - that is when they are not able to regulate themselves for a behaviour. As a result, the absence of motivation happens when an individual does not experience intentionality or a sense of personal causation (Taylor et al., 2014). All forms of extrinsic motivation, even the most controlled, involve intentionality and motivation Amotivation represents the lack of both types of motivation and, thus, a complete lack of self-determination with respect to the target behaviour (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 237).

4.6. Self-determination theory and autonomy

Self-determination theory describes autonomy in the following manner:

"A person is autonomous when his or her behaviour is experienced as willingly enacted and when he or she fully endorses the actions in which he or she is engaged and/or the values expressed by them. People are, therefore, most autonomous when they act in accord with their authentic interests or integrated values and desires" (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003: 98).

The term autonomy literally means regulation by the self (Ryan and Deci, 2006; Ryan, Huta, and Deci, 2008). According to self-determination theory, the issue of autonomy concerns the extent to which one fully accepts, endorses, or stands behind one's actions (Deci and Ryan, 1985; 2000). Thus, in self-determination theory, the degree of autonomy allows specifying various motivations to act (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003). As is immediately apparent, this definition is the closest to Sen's concept of agency because it focuses on capabilities that the person values (Alkire, 2005a: 242). Autonomy also refers to a sense that people control their own choices and can exercise their freedom of choice to proceed in whatever way they see best (Trenshaw, Revelo, Earl, and Herman, 2016). The need for autonomy represents individuals' inherent desire to feel volitional and to experience a sense of choice and psychological freedom when carrying out an activity (Painter, 2011).

With these aspects of self-determination theory, many psychologists are questioning the reality and import of autonomy and closely related phenomena such as will, choice, and freedom by using the framework of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2006: 1557).

One controversial issue regarding self-determination theory is how we distinguish autonomy from several related concepts: dependence/independence and individualism/collectivism (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003; Alkire, 2005a). Although some dictionary definitions of autonomy and independence overlap, these terms can be used in a more differentiated way. According to self-determination theory, the opposite of autonomy is not dependence but rather heteronomy (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003). Heteronomy refers to controlled regulation from outside by external forces or regulation that occurs without self-endorsement (Ryan and Deci, 2006; Ryan, Huta, and Deci, 2008). An autonomous act is one done freely and willingly by the actor. It is imperative to note that autonomy does not require acting in the absence of constraints or demands, nor does acting in opposition to a constraint or demand necessarily imply autonomy. Specifically, if one behaves in accord with constraints or external influences, the key issue is whether the person reflectively concurs with them (Ryan, Huta, and Deci, 2008: 157). Therefore, self-determination theory argues that a person can be autonomously dependent, willingly relying on his or her care, particularly if the other is perceived as supportive and responsive or autonomously independent (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003; Alkire, 2005a). An autonomous person might, for example, welcome others' influence and be responsive to sound advice, or a person might be inclined to resist any external influences (Alkire, 2005a). Indeed, recent work shows that people are more prone to depend upon others who support their autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2006: 1562-1563).

Similarly, the issue of conformity concerns that of following an external influence. People often experience a lack of autonomy when pressured to do something they do not believe in or to follow

social norms with which they do not identify. However, one can willingly follow an external influence or even an order provided one fully consents to, concurs with, or identifies with that influence (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003: 98). A person could be acting within rules set by a parent, social norms, or law, and doing so autonomously because the person internally endorsed those rules (Alkire, 2005a). We can easily find such cases in our day-to-day lives. For example, if one believes in the value of traffic laws, one can experience following these rules as highly autonomous. Similarly, if one fully concurs with and endorses group norms, one can experience conforming to them as volitional and autonomous (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003: 98).

4.7. Autonomy and cultural values

Some psychologists define autonomy as a specific cultural value. However, they do not understand autonomy as a form of behavioural regulation and criticise the idea of culture (Ryan and Deci, 2006). My research deals with the subject of autonomy in the South Korean context and considers South Korea's two cultural dimensions of Confucian and collectivism, as well as the typical cultural and psychological traits within Asian society (Park, Rehg, and Lee, 2005). Deci and Ryan (2000: 246) point out that in a collectivist culture, people may resonate with group norms, so acting in accord with them might lead them to experience relatedness and autonomy insofar as they have fully internalised the collectivist values of their culture. Thus, people may feel more volitional and autonomous when endorsing and enacting the values of those with whom they identify.

In a similar vein, some cross-cultural researchers have argued that the fundamental propositions of self-determination theory should not apply to students in Eastern cultures. Their argument is based on the thought that autonomy is not a universal concept that applies to all cultural values. They distinguish Eastern cultures from Western cultures. They see the people of the East as valuing collectivism and emphasising values such as conformity, social harmony, and family interdependence. On the other hand, Western people value individuality, uniqueness, and independence. Therefore, these critics have noted that Eastern cultures do not value the experience of autonomy in the same way that Western individualistic cultures do (Jang, Ryan, Reeve, and Kim, 2009).

To test whether autonomy was valued in collectivist cultures,– Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan (2003) tested a cross-culturally valid methodology for measuring autonomy. The study first asked respondents whether they engaged in certain practices, testing autonomy defined across four countries (Turkey, Russia, the US, and South Korea). They showed that the issue of autonomy could be similarly understood across diverse cultures. They suggest that it is precise because humans in different cultures must learn and adopt different practices and values that the issue of autonomy, or the degree of internalisation, has been imported.

Proponents of self-determination theory respond to their cross-cultural critics by making two key points. First, proponents argue that it is a conceptual error to equate the concept of autonomy with concepts such as individuality, uniqueness, and independence. As mentioned previously, the error arises by not differentiating the concept of autonomy from those of independence, separateness, or individualism. Autonomy connotes an inner endorsement of one's behaviour, not a separation of oneself from one's ties. Hence, it is perfectly consistent for individuals to be autonomously interdependent, act autonomously in accord with the communal good, and

embrace autonomously endorsed collectivistic values. Second, some cross-cultural researchers have implied that a cultural valuing of social harmony necessarily means that members of that society do not need autonomy or at least have a lesser need for autonomy. However, just because society values social harmony does not mean that its members do not also need autonomy or that its members do not also benefit from having their autonomy supported (Chirkov, Kim, Ryan, and Kaplan, 2003; Jang, Ryan, Reeve, and Kim, 2009). In sum, members of a culture who strongly value interdependence and social harmony still need autonomy, benefit from autonomy support and suffer from autonomy frustration (Jang, Ryan, Reeve, and Kim, 2009). The concept of autonomy is relevant across cultures and societies much in the same way that Sen understands agency to be applicable across cultures (Alkire, 2005a).

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the explanation of a student's particular choice or decision should consist of the free exercise of agency and autonomy. The framework discussed in this chapter drew on the capability approach and self-determination theory to illustrate how choice, agency, and autonomy are organically related. Through this framework, we can provide an understanding of students' choice-making.

Overall, the reasons for using the capability approach are threefold. First, it puts an individual in the centre and regards an individual as the end, not the means. The capability approach is a broad normative framework for evaluating and assessing individual well-being and social arrangement. When in evaluation, it looks at each person not as a means to economic growth or social stability but as an end of development. Secondly, the capability approach components of functionings, capabilities, and conversion factors let us scrutinise in a detailed manner what agency means in the choice issue. It focuses on what each individual is able to do and be, their 'valuable doings and beings', in making meaningful choices from a range of options in their life. A person with agency is free to act in pursuit of whatever goals or values they regard as important, and their achievements are judged in terms of their values and objectives. Third, the capability approach is significantly related to education. Education makes a student autonomous in terms of creating a new capability set for the student. Thus, the education that plays a role in expanding the student's capabilities should be a kind of education that makes people autonomous.

However, these reasons for using the capability approach are not without their problems, which is why the self-determination theory has been helpful. The choices and values made and held do not indicate whether the choice-making is autonomously engaged and unrestricted. Factors that affect the free exercise of agency in choice-making should be examined to reveal students' autonomy through their perception of agency valuation. In light of these limitations and constraints on freedom in the capability approach's view of agency, self-determination theory is used to offer a measurement of an agency that reveals whether a student's exercised agency is indeed autonomous.

Self-determination theory is a multidimensional and validated measure of students' agency and their perception of making certain choices via types of motivation and regulation. The theory began focusing on intrinsic motivation, representing a prototype of autonomous activities, but it is not the only type of motivation. The theory specifies four distinct types of extrinsic motivation that vary in the degree of internalisation and autonomy. According to self-determination theory, autonomy concerns the extent to which one fully accepts the motivations behind one's choices.

Autonomy refers to a sense that people can exercise their freedom of choice to proceed in whatever way they see as valuable, and the degree of autonomy allows specifying various motivations to choose.

Thus, the capability approach and self-determination theory framework presented in this chapter aims to provide a more holistic understanding of students' agency and autonomy in choice-making. The following chapter examines the strategies and methods used to generate data for these ends.

Chapter 5. The methodological approach

The previous chapter discussed how the capability approach and self-determination theory could be applied to understand students' agency and autonomy in choice-making. This chapter will examine the research methods used to generate data related to the proposed capability approach and self-determination theory frameworks. It begins by discussing the research design and the strategic and methodological approach. The university and student selection are described, and the fieldwork stage of the research is addressed. The ethical considerations are then discussed before the methods of data analysis are examined.

5.1. Research design

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate students' agency and autonomy to examine whether they have free will when making career choices, and to reveal what motivations led them to make a specific choice. This research focuses on the educational decisions made by 1st-year university students as they transitioned from school to university rather than other destinations after high school graduation.

A qualitative design was employed in this study. My goal was not to establish objective truths but rather to investigate the truth as the students perceive it while they reflect on their educational life choices. The strength of qualitative research lies in the fact that it stresses the importance of context and the subject's frame of reference (Burns and Grove, 2010). As students' personal experiences of the choice process are central to this research, it is necessary to elicit some form of account from the students themselves. Semi-structured interviews were judged to be the best tool for this purpose as participants can be questioned at length and can elaborate on their responses. At the same time, there is a common structure across interviews, and the researcher can 'cross-examine' the participant to explain questions or seek clarification (White, 2007).

Before the main study, two research pilots were conducted with groups of parents and university students. The first pilot was with a group of parents living in my area near Busan, and this was primarily exploratory in nature, aiming to locate the current educational issues and debates. The first pilot was a rather informal conversation and allowed me to try some questions and develop new ones. Besides, parents discussed current educational policies and shared their opinions about various educational issues in South Korea. Educational policies and trends in South Korea are changing rapidly. The first pilot helped me understand the current education environment beyond secondary data analysis.

The second pilot was with a group of the 1st year university students and was based on semi-structured interviews with open questions. The aim was to test my questions with students as well as to improve my ability to conduct interviews and probe respondents. I designed and conducted the second pilot interviews trying to make them as similar as possible to the main study. The interview process in the second pilot study revealed several factors to be taken into consideration before the main study. For example, I could appreciate the complexity of student sampling which is described in sub-chapter 5.3. I also realized that using a voice recorder is necessary for this type of research, as this facilitates smooth interviews, as I could solely concentrate on interviewers' answers and reactions. During the two research pilots, I learned by trial and error, and I was then able to apply the lessons I learned to the main study. In addition, pilot interviews were used to test and refine the specific interview questions and foreshadow any issues relevant to interviewing young people about their decision-making process.

5.2. Strategy and methodological approach

5.2.1. Time as an important concept driving methodological choices

It is useful to present this thesis's strategic and methodological approach by first clarifying two aspects of 'time' that are vital in this study: the notion of liminality and the timing of the interview.

First, it is important to stress an understanding of 'time' as liminality. This research aims to investigate student agency through the educational choice of 1st-year university students in South Korea. At least 91.4 per cent of 15-19 year-olds were enrolled in education in 2020[18], which means that in South Korea, it is generally expected that adolescents will attend high school. Virtually all South Korean students complete high school education. As primary and middle school education is obligatory in South Korea, students, in principle, should choose their next step in the final year of middle school. However, 99.7 per cent of students who graduated from middle school entered high school in 2020[19]: such a high percentage casts doubts on whether students really be said to *decide* whether to go to high school or not. The real choice they seem to make is which type of high school they go to rather than whether to go to high school or not. Being out of the academic path is not an option in most middle school students' cases. Therefore, students in their 3rd-year of high school are at the end of an educational process and are required to make a decision on what direction they will take after graduation. In other words, they are in a situation of liminality.

Arnold Van Gennep (1960) identifies the term 'liminality' in his understanding of a particular social transition which is rites of passage. Rites of passage are relevant to all stages of life and their transitions and changes, which is the fundamental feature of human life (Carson, 2016). Victor Turner (1987) extends the work of Van Gennep, and he articulates liminality as an inter-structural situation faced by people undergoing a rite of passage. Van Gennep and Turner define a process for rites of passage as structured with three main phases: pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal for Van Gennep and separation, limen, and aggregation for Turner (Canda, 1988). Liminal means transitional, which is 'betwixt and between', and Turner focuses on the intermediate phase among three phases which is a transitional period. In a condition of being neither here nor there, the liminal state is where core experiences of transition take place (Lertzman, 2002: 5-6).

[18] https://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1520

[19] https://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1520

Image 3. High school graduation ceremony

Source: https://www.hankyung.com/society/article/201902122116i

Image 4. University entrance ceremony

Source: https://www.snu.ac.kr/snunow/press?md=v&bbsidx=125037

Students in their 3rd year of high school in the liminal stage no longer hold their pre-status as high school students, yet they have not begun the transition to the status of professionals, university students, etc. Students stand at the threshold of criteria, time, and space during such liminal stages, separating their previous status and their soon-to-choose status. The transition takes place in some memorable form, such as through a ceremony or ritual (Bigger, 2010), and as shown in images 3 and 4, students have a high school 'graduation ceremony' in February and a university 'entrance ceremony' in the following month. The subjects of this study, 1st-year university students, have just gotten through the stage of liminality and experienced the moment of deciding to enter university as their following path after graduating high school. This research is about the choice they made and their agency in the 'time' of liminality.

The second point important to stress is the 'timing' of the interviews. The timing of decision-making has been a subject of both substantive and methodological interest for researchers in the area. Deciding exactly when to ask students about their decisions involves a compromise (White, 2007: 41). Conducting fieldwork after students have settled into their new destinations guarantees that all the respondents will have completed their decision-making process. The later young people are asked about their choices, the greater chance that students may engage in post hoc rationalisation of their decisions. At the same time, White (2007: 41) has also raised problems with asking students about their decisions before they have finalised their choices. As the primary aim of the study is to examine students' experience of the choice process right after the transition from high school education, it was decided that the interviews with students should take place in the first semester of the first year.

5.2.2. Life histories and interviews

Given the above considerations, the life history research method is chosen as the primary data collection strategy in this research. Life history research is a method for capturing people's perceptions of their lives. In life history research, the intention is to understand how the patterns of different life stories can be related to their broader historical, social, and political contexts (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Gorard et al., 2006; Ojermark, 2007). One strength of life history interviews is the strong emphasis on holism. Lives are seen as a whole because lives are contextual;

for that reason, I chose the life history methods in my research insofar as this approach provides insight into long-term changes (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

Although this research considers 1st-year university students' educational choice-making, the decision is not made separately or exclusively at this stage. Education is acquired from primary school or preschool and the home/family, and this is connected to students' current educational situation and condition. Furthermore, this research explores students' choices and how and why the student made particular choices, such as going to university. The process of choice-making and the reasons for these choices are examined to answer this study's three research questions. While some students share the same educational decisions after high school graduation, they may have different views and reasons for their choice. Moreover, there is an interactive relationship between perceptions and experiences in each student's 'lifetime' that influences one's choice at certain stages. Students in the final year of high school can be influenced by long-term factors in their academic and familial lives. Opportunities and experiences at each stage of education may play a key role in career choice-making during this final year of high school education. Therefore, educational life history interviews can deepen an understanding of how and why students are engaged in the practice of making a specific choice. This methodology places people at the centre of research, which is congruent with the perspective of putting students at the centre of educational development in the capability approach. This allows for the exploration of complexity and interrelationship in terms of student's choice-making between students' educational life history and phenomena of choice-making. A core principle of a life history approach is that all aspects of life interact with and have implications for one another. In working with students to gather their educational life histories, I seek to understand connections between different aspects of their lives. Therefore, the data collected is indeed the life story data of 81 1st-year university students through their voices in South Korea.

Informal face-to-face interviews, the most commonly used strategy for data collection in life-history research, were carried out. These enabled an in-depth understanding of students' choices, agency, and the relationship between the two. The interviews were semi-structured, and the rationale for adopting this instrument to collect information is related to the fact that it can provide both quality and quantity of information. The main questions asked during semi-structured interviews are usually predetermined; at the same time, semi-structured interviews permit more considerable latitude in the answer as well as the possibility for a considerable amount of interviewee-specific follow-up questions. A semi-structured interview is performed with a specific theme in mind, but it allows interviewees to develop their responses. In such interviews, the interviewer may clarify and elaborate on the answers given for qualitative information about the topic and collect further information during the dialogue. In addition, this type of interview allows interviewees to answer in a more natural language compared to structured interviews or surveys (Willis, 2006; May, 2011). I believe that a semi-structured interview is an adequate method for this research due to the type of information needed and the target interviewees. For example, answers sought from students are not standardised; instead, responses should contain or at least consider students' own thoughts and ideas. In this regard, semi-structured interviews can be understood as the most appropriate method to address my research needs, covering important and direct aspects that can improve the research and providing the space and opportunities for students to express their perspectives in terms of their choice-making and agency.

5.3. 10 Universities and 81 students

The first stage of the fieldwork was sampling students for interviews. As a researcher, I should understand the most appropriate way of drawing a sample that will yield rich data relevant to the research questions (Gibbs, Kealy, Willis, Green, Welch, and Daly, 2007). Qualitative research often employs purposive sampling. Purposive sampling enhances understanding of selected individuals or groups' experiences or develops theories and concepts. Researchers seek to accomplish this goal by selecting 'information-rich cases', that is, individuals, groups, organisations, or behaviours that provide the most significant insight into the research question (Devers and Frankel, 2000: 264). In this research, one characteristic common across the whole sample was that they were all 1st-year university students, unlike other factors such as the university, major, gender, etc. I investigated the most appropriate way to approach students with diverse backgrounds. In the pilot study, I met and interviewed students from one department of the university. It was a convenience sampling. I do not generalise as their answers have parallels in many points, so those data are not rich for the purpose of my research. Researchers must be able to explain the use of purposive sampling in any particular study and discuss the implications for the research results (Devers and Frankel, 2000). This research aims to explore 1st-year university students' choices regarding going to university, so purposive sampling was necessary. Identifying suitable sites and subjects and securing their participation in the research was essential. If the researcher cannot ensure the subjects' participation, the study cannot take place (Devers and Frankel, 2000).

5.3.1. The selection of universities

As of 2020, there were a total of 429 higher educational institutions in South Korea (MOE, 2020). Universities accounted for the largest proportion, with 228 (53.1 per cent), followed by 156 colleges (36.3 per cent). These two types of schools account for almost 90 per cent of all higher educational institutions. South Korea's universities have their own website, and most have a platform that allows schools, students, and graduates to communicate. However, this platform mainly delivers one-sided information from the school to students, the possibility for communication is limited, and students rarely use it. Some universities have independent community websites which are actively used for a long time among their students, such as 'Koreapass' of Korea University, 'Seiyon Net' of Yonsei University, 'SNULIFE' of Seoul National University, and so on. Recently, the mainstream of the online university community in South Korea is 'Everytime'. Application 'Everytime' was produced by Sungkyunkwan University students, and students from all universities have been actively using it since 2015, when mobile app usage increased rapidly. There are around 400 online communities of higher education institutions in 'Everytime', and students and alumni can only access their school community through online verification using their student' numbers or ID. Recently, it has been found that most students prefer 'Everytime' over their school website or independent community website. Students share all sorts of information and ideas in 'Everytime', and the app also provides functions to create timetables, calculate credits, etc.

I decided to post the advertisement for interview participants on university websites, independent online communities, and 'Everytime' in order to approach a vast pool of students. Given that I needed the appropriate login details to access these, I had to ask enrolled students or graduates to post the advertisement. Accessing existing social networks (e.g., colleagues, friends, and other personal contacts) can be useful for obtaining necessary information and facilitating entry (Devers and Frankel, 2000: 266). I had help from friends, acquaintances, and their

connections, so eventually, I had twelve people who were willing to assist me. I approached 10 universities (across 12 campuses)[20], located in four cities. People posted the advertisement on the university websites, independent online communities, and 'Everytime' on my behalf. The noticeboard is accessible to the target interviewee of this research, 1st-year students. I explained the topic and purpose of the study to my acquaintances and asked them to post it on the most relevant noticeboards

5.3.2. Selecting the students

The advertisement was posted in March 2019, when the new semester began, and students started to contact me via email and Kakao Talk. I replied to them and asked them to send me information, including their name, university, campus, major, and contact number, if they would like to participate.

Looking for Interview Participants My name is Hyunyoung Kim, and I am a Ph.D. researcher at the International Development and Education, University of East Anglia, U.K. I am researching for my Ph.D. thesis. **Purpose of the study** My study aims to investigate the agency and autonomy of students in terms of making educational choices after graduating from high school in South Korea. **I am looking for current 1st-year university students to interview in person (in Korean)** **Date:** Apr. 29 to Jul. 26 2019 The interview will be approximately 60 minutes in length. The exact date and time will be set after individual contact. **Place:** The interview will take place in a public area of campus. The interview will be audio-recorded, but your name will be kept confidential.	**신입생 인터뷰 참가자를 모집합니다 (OO 대학교)** 안녕하세요. 영국 University of East Anglia 박사 과정 연구원(한국인)입니다. 박사 논문에 필요한 자료 수집을 위해 아래와 같이 신입생을 대상으로 인터뷰를 진행하고자 합니다. 고등학교 졸업 후 진로 선택을 주제로 한 연구이며, 질문에 대한 본인의 경험과 생각을 솔직하고 편하게 이야기하면 됩니다. 인터뷰는 최대 한 시간 가량 진행됩니다. 1. 모집 대상 OO 대학교 1 학년 신입생, 전공 무관, 성별 무관 2. 인터뷰 안내 - 기간: 2019 년 4 월 29 일(월) ~ 5 월 17 일(금) - 시간: 평일 오전 10 시부터 오후 5 시 사이 - 장소: OO 대학교 캠퍼스 내 (장소 추후 전달)

[20] Dongguk University, Hanyang University, Hongik University, Korea Univeristy, Pukyong National University, Pusan National University, Seoul National University, Sogang University, Sungshin Women's University, Yonsei University

How your data will be used I will use the interview data primarily for my Ph.D. thesis and may also use it in other publications, presentations, or outputs. If you would like to participate, please send a text to me at youngie1213 (Kakao talk ID) or email at hyunyoung.kim@uea.ac.uk with the below information: Name: Gender: University: Major: Contact Number: I would be pleased to share a summary of the findings of the interviews in due course. If you would like to receive this summary, please let me know by text/email or when we meet. Your participation will contribute to more and improved academic research. I hope that you will find it interesting to be part of this study. I also hope that you will enjoy sharing your experiences with me! Thank you in advance for your support of this research. Hyunyoung Kim	※ 정확한 날짜 및 시간은 개별 협의 후 확정됩니다. 3. 신청 방법 인터뷰에 참가하고자 하는 학생은 아래의 신청 양식을 작성하여 이메일(hyunyoung.kim@uea.ac.uk) 혹은 카카오톡(ID: youngie1213)으로 보내주시기 바랍니다. 1) 이름: 2) 성별: 3) 학교명: 4) 학과명: 5) 연락처(휴대전화): 신청 확인 후 개별적으로 연락 드리겠습니다. 많은 신청 부탁 드립니다. 감사합니다. ※ 해당 자료는 연구 자료 이외의 용도로는 사용되지 않으며 모든 내용은 익명으로 처리됨을 알려드립니다.

The number of participants which is feasible to include in any study is significantly affected by available time and resources as well as by the methods of data collection and analysis used in the research (White, 2007: 39). As discussed above in this chapter, for the purposes of the present study, it was decided that the most effective strategy was to use interviews. Practically, in this research, it was almost impossible to actively select the student sample for several reasons. In a way, I was in a position to be chosen because the students contacted me to decide whether to participate or not. No additional sample exclusion criteria were defined or applied other than being a 1st-year university student, and no students who volunteered were rejected for an interview. I could not capture a reasonable diversity of individual characteristics, so this is acknowledged as a limitation of my sample selection - the student sample of this research could not represent 1st-year university students across South Korea.

The total number of students who sent applications was 102, and I created a list with all information about students from applications according to university. I scheduled to visit each campus for three to five days and proposed possible dates to students. They were able to choose two available dates and times depending on their schedule. Based on students' availability and preferences, I carefully set up interview sequences without overlap and in a way that allowed plenty of time for the interview. I mapped out the interview schedule keeping in mind that a

student may arrive late or I may want to spend more time on a particular interview. I informed the participants that the venue for the interview would be a public space, such as a cafe on their campus, and it would be approximately 60 minutes in length. I confirmed the date, time, and venue in advance, and if a student wanted to change the date or time, I tried to find an alternative slot without disturbing other students' interview times.

In the end, I met 82 students. Unfortunately, I could not interview 20 students of the 102 who initially showed interest because they did not reply or suddenly cancelled without notice. One student I met was not a 1st-year student, as the student misunderstood the advertisement. I found out this after I started a conversation with the student, so I kept having an interview with her, counting it as interview practice. This student's information, however, is not included in the analysis. The mistake happened on the first day of the interview, so I did check once again whether they were 1st-year students when sending a confirmation message. Therefore, the sample is 81 students, composed of 54 females and 27 males. The number of female participants was more than twice the number of males.

5.4. Interviews with students

5.4.1. The first round interview

I sent students a text or email to confirm the date, time, and venue the day before the interview in an attempt to ensure the interview would go ahead. I scheduled each interview slot as at least one and a half hours, even though I informed participants it would be approximately 60 minutes in length, just in case a student came late or the interview was delayed due to unexpected reasons. I visited the campus early on the first day to look for a venue students could easily find and where they would feel familiar with and comfortable. I attended the interview with two voice recorders, a list of questions, and a notebook. I brought voice recorders so I could focus more on the conversations with the students. It was crucial to listen carefully to students' responses when they answered my question. I could continue a conversation with deepening questions and develop questions concretely depending on students' reactions and the nuance of their answers.

I started the conversation by introducing myself and the purpose of the study. I reconfirmed that the interview would be audio-recorded but that the student's personal and private information would be kept confidential. I asked if they had any questions before starting the interview and told them to feel free to ask anything they liked, even during the interview. Each interview began with a single question: *Why did you apply for the interview*? Their answer helped me to gather what had made them participate in my project. This first question allowed me to open the interview and lead the conversation smoothly. The responses were diverse. Some students said it just seemed interesting, and some were curious about participating in the interview as they had not done this kind of thing before. Some of them decided to participate because they wanted to have various experiences as a university student. Interestingly, some said they were interested in the research topic or had something to discuss with regard to the research topic.

After the first questions, the following questions were directed toward their daily life and educational histories. These questions were intended to put the interviewee at ease and establish a degree of 'rapport'. The interview was planned as a semi-structured interview, so there are ten guide questions with sub-questions. During every interview, I tried to follow the order of

questions as presented below, but in some cases, new questions were added, and/or the order was changed due to students' answers and reactions during the interview.

1. How are you? How is your campus life?
2. When did you decide that you would go to university after high school?
3. What were your reasons or motivations for making that choice?
4. Who was the person you talked with most during the process of decision-making?
5. Have you ever considered other options besides university?
   5.1. If so, what were the other options you considered?
   5.2. Why did you choose to go to university over other options?
   5.3. Do you think you thoroughly considered the options you had?
   5.4. What kind of activities or actions did you engage in to help you make your choice?
   5.5. If not, why do you think you didn't consider other options?
   5.6. Do you think applying to university is a matter of choice?
6. Do you think that coming to university has been important and worthwhile?
   6.1. If so, in what way do you think so?
   6.2. If not, why did you decide to go to university?
7. Let's suppose you chose not to go to a university. Do you think you would feel guilty, ashamed, or anxious?
   7.1. If so, what factors would cause those feelings?
   7.2. If not, why?
8. Did you think people around you approved of you applying to university?
8.1. Do you think it affected your decision?
9. Let's suppose you decided not to go to university. Do you think you would be punished in some way?
10. Do you think you will be rewarded for going to university?
11. Could you determine how autonomous you were in choosing to come to university?

As the collection of data relating to students' decision-making was of paramount concern, questions about the ways in which they approached the transition were crucial, as were also enquiries about their longer-term plans. Specific decisions, future intentions, and aspirations were explored in as much depth as possible. The purpose was to elicit information relevant to the choice behaviour and reveal whether certain types of choice behaviour were associated with particular motives. When students showed their interest in a specific question, for example, they answered longer than other questions, talked about things I did not even ask, or said things like, *Oh, there is a lot to talk about*. I asked more in detail to understand them better. Sometimes they gave a short answer, and in that case, I asked in another way in order to identify whether they were not comfortable with the question or did not understand the question correctly. If I found they did not want to talk about the specific issue, I respected that and tried to broaden the discussion by raising other issues.

At the end of the interview, I indicated that I might contact them again if I wanted to talk more with them based on the first interview in autumn. Students were free to allow me to contact them again or refuse to be contacted, and the date and time would be confirmed later when I got in touch with them. I was not sure who would be the interviewees for 2nd round interview, so I asked all the students whether they would be willing to be interviewed a second time. I also allowed students to make additional remarks on the conversation if they wanted to. The interview lasted about one hour, and all students consented to be voice recorded.

5.4.2. The second round interview

Only students who agreed to a second interview were considered for the second round of interviews. I listened to the recordings of students who agreed to do an interview again and analysed the conversations I had with them. I also considered students' attitudes to the interview, so I selected students who actively and thoughtfully responded to the questions. Along with their attitudes, the richness and interest of each student's story were also taken into account. In the end, I selected 25 students among 83, 19 females and 6 males - gender, university, and majors did not play a role in my selection of students for the second round of interviews.

I sent 25 students a message by email and Kakao Talk to ask if they were still available to see me again and explained what I mentioned at the end of the last interview. All students, except one, replied to me with an affirmative response. They were asked to specify a day and time in September and October, and the venue was set in consultation with them. The place of 1st round interview was on each university's campus, given that I met many students from the same university across 3 to 5 days. But as I scheduled the interviews individually for the 2nd round, I met them at either a cafe on campus (as I had for the first interview) or near their home.

I established a rapport with students through the first interview, so I found that they were more comfortable with me during the 2nd round of interviews. Qualitative research is primarily dependent on building good interpersonal relations between the researcher and the participant. This is necessary for generating rich data while at the same time ensuring respect is maintained between researcher and participant (Guillemin and Heggen, 2009; Prior, 2017). I opened the conversation by asking how they were getting along. They started talking about not only their daily life but also content related to the first interview. The first question was how they found the interview and the experience they had with me, and their answers were impressive. Most of them said they reflected on themselves during and after the first interview, and this is considered in the following chapter. The questions in the 2nd round of interviews were different depending on each student based on the first interview. I re-listened to the recordings of the 24 students and prepared questions that asked in more detail about specifics as well as new questions related to the first interview. Even though I had guide questions, some interviewees' views had changed, and their answers and stories were also diverse. In some cases, I asked the same question in a different way to confirm my understanding was correct or if I had found the original answer ambiguous. Students responded more actively during the second interview and answered in more detail than I had expected.

5.5. Ethical considerations

Research ethics is critical in social research because they are related to the integrity of the study. Unlike general definitions, ethics in social research are often "highly prescriptive and closely applied to the realities of the research situation" (Homan, 1991). In regards to my research, where I use a semi-structured interview as my method of collecting primary data, May (2011) rightly pointed out that ethics should be able to inform research actions and protect participants and the integrity of inquiry, in light of which the following aspects are considered.

First of all, research clearance was approved by the School's ethics committee, and the research was carried out with an awareness of possible ethical issues and adherence to the ethics policy. The participant recruitment post was drawn up to include details on my research project; the roles participants would play in the project, their rights as participants, and how the information

would be used in the future. I provided my contact information to encourage them to ask questions before deciding on their participation.

Informed consent is essential when conducting social research. It is an issue of fundamental human rights, which protects research subjects from mental or physical harm due to their participation (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). According to Bryman (2008), informed consent means that potential participants should have as much information as needed to make an informed decision about whether they wish to be part of the research. As the British Sociological Association (BSA henceforth) suggests, sociologists, or researchers, in this case, have the responsibility to introduce the study in relevant detail "and in terms meaningful to participants" (BSA, 2002: 3), such as what the study is about, why it is undertaken, and how it will be disseminated and used. In consideration of the principles concerning informed consent, it is essential to guarantee that participants are informed about the research and that their participation is voluntary.

At the beginning of the first interview, I outlined the aims and nature of the research and the intent of the interview. The participants were encouraged to ask any questions before and during the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Informed consent was obtained with regard to the audio recordings, as well as using the data for my thesis and other publications. The participants were assured that confidentiality included anonymisation of their name, high school name and university name, major, and any additional information that could reveal their identity.

Data management is also crucial for social research. It is linked to the confidentiality and anonymity of research data, which are critical in protecting both researchers and participants. Confidentiality and anonymity guarantee participants' privacy and thus bring some advantages: people might be more likely and willing to participate, and participants might be more honest and responsive (Edinburgh Napier University, 2013). It also prevents participants, researchers, and others from harm. Proper data management, in this case, can avoid specific harms such as participants' personal career development and potentially harmful influences on people around them. All audio recording files were stored in three different hard drives with a lock-down feature. Students' names were replaced with a number in the written scripts of interview content to ensure privacy and to avoid exposing their identity. Some participants expressed concern that we had a detailed and private conversation that went far beyond what was expected for interview data, so I reminded them of the confidentiality and anonymity of my research data.

In terms of positionality, the researcher's reflexivity has been acknowledged as critical to qualitative research and is defined by Berger (2015: 220) as "the process of continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of the researcher's positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicit recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome." The researcher's reflexivity, which necessitates an ability to evaluate one's positionality and impact on the research process, is believed to encourage more rigorous research and higher ethical standards (Seidman, 2013). In general, reflexivity has two key elements: an understanding of the researcher's positionality and an examination of how this positionality affects the research process and outcomes. Interviews are complex dialogues where meaning is constituted between a researcher and a participant, who are inherently embedded in a relationship with an imbalance of power (Finlay, 2002). The researchers' responsibility in this context is to do one's best to be fair (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) believes that even though it is impossible to resolve all the inequalities pertinent to interview relationships, the researchers "do have the responsibility to be conscious of them" (p. 111). He further argues that "equity" must be the goal that researchers

strive for in in-depth interviewing. What he means here is “a balance between means and ends, between what is sought and what is given, between process and product, and a sense of fairness and justice that pervades the relationship between participant and interviewer” (p. 111). One way to show a sense of justice is to accept responsibility for the development and outcome of the research. The researcher's responsibility is to provide a supportive, non-threatening environment in which a participant feels comfortable sharing their experiences in-depth (Roulston, 2010).

Moreover, Seidman (2013) writes that we need to be good listeners in interviews, but I would take this a step further and state that we need to draw out what the participants wish to express. If dialogue does not spontaneously develop between the two parties, then that is generated through the interaction. However, as researchers who hold power in this relationship and as interviewers, I feel that we need to take more responsibility for the development or underdevelopment of the interview by reflecting on ourselves rather than blaming ‘problematic’ participants (Watanabe, 2016: 113).

I found that I empathised powerfully with my interviewees. I am an interviewer and researcher, and at the same time, I had the same experience as them. I had been educated in South Korea for 16 years, from primary school to university. After graduating from high school, I decided to go to university in a similar way as my interviewees did. This commonality helped very positively in cultivating the rapport that is necessary for the participants to be willing to express their views with a researcher. When an interview is a reflective conversation, an interviewer’s input, for example, responding to questions, might be helpful for the participants to facilitate reflection. It might also foster a stronger rapport with the participants. However, at the same time, as Seidman (2013) points out, it is crucial to “preserve the autonomy of the participant’s words and to keep the focus of attention on his or her experience” (p. 98) rather than on the researcher. Etherington (2004) cautions that the extensive and intensive focus on the researcher’s experience might make the research “self-indulgent or narcissistic” (p.48). Furthermore, Berger (2015) warns that researchers need to be careful in their disclosures so as not to be imposing or intrusive nor to prompt the interviewees to parrot back what the researchers have said. For example, some students asked questions about my experiences, choices, and opinions as they were aware that I had a similar experience. I tried to answer without giving too many details, which may influence my respondents, although I acknowledge that I may have had some influence. Refraining from answering their questions altogether would have possibly ruined the rapport and pleasant atmosphere we created; hence I preferred not to do so.

5.6. The organisational and analytical approach

On completing the fieldwork, I had 105 interview recording files to analyse. The objective of analysing qualitative data is to determine the categories, relationships and assumptions that inform the respondents’ view of the world in general and the topic in particular (McCracken, 1988). Throughout the analysis, researchers attempt to gain a deeper understanding of what they have studied and to refine their interpretation continually. Data analysis is the most crucial and challenging aspect of qualitative research, and the reason why it is difficult is that it is not fundamentally a technical exercise. Qualitative research usually lacks a division of labour between data collectors and analysts (Basit, 2003), and this was indeed the case for my research.

Several analyses were carried out in the two phases, both during the fieldwork and after its completion. This involved listening to the interview recording files; transcribing 105 interviews;

translating interviews from Korean into English; reading the transcripts multiple times; summarising the transcripts and choosing categories; coding statements; linking themes; selecting quotations; and ultimately, writing up to elaborate upon the textual data. The process of transcribing, translating, and analysing the data leaves room for discrepancies in interpretation. I collected data in Korean, which is my native language, but more layers of interpretation were added through the actual translation of data from Korean into English. Once I had completed the 1st interview with 81 students, listened to the recordings, and transcribed them in Korean, the primary purpose of this process was to select students for 2nd round interview. Qualitative interviews tend to generate large amounts of data (Neuman, 2007). That is, as Dörnyei (2007) indicates, a one-hour interview may take approximately six to seven hours to transcribe and generate around fifty pages of transcript. Delamont (1992) warns that there are no shortcuts, and one must allow plenty of time and energy for the task. Transcribing 81 interview contents into Korean demanded more time and took longer than I had originally planned, and thus I was not able to translate the transcripts into English before the 2nd round of interviews. After the 2nd round of interviews, I first repeated the same process for Korean scripts and then started translating in English for all 105 scripts. Listening to students' lives and recording their experiences presented challenges to me as a researcher. What is this moment of listening? Is it an authentic understanding of their experiences? How does it translate into the text of the transcript? How is the text to be read? I continued to ask myself these questions while transcribing and translating.

105 scripts themselves are intriguing, but coding constitutes the significant steps taken during analysis to organise and make sense of textual data. Coding or categorising and analysis are not synonymous, though coding is a crucial aspect of analysis. Coding or categorising the data has a vital role in the analysis. It involves subdividing the data as well as assigning categories (Dey, 1993; Basit, 2003). Consistent with my goal to understand the students' choices alongside the type of motivation, self-determination theory was chosen as a framework for interview analysis. First, to ensure familiarity with the data, I reviewed the 105 interviews multiple times before starting coding. Second, I coded the interview transcripts when students exhibited any motivational orientations around their choice. I kept in mind the definitions of self-determination theory's regulations and motivations while reading scripts and colourised sentences related to different categories with different colours. Once I found a sentence that did not clearly fit into a category, I also colourised the sentence and listened to that part from the recording file to argue the nuance and tone of voice, reaction, and mood at that moment. It was a dynamic, intuitive, and creative process of inductive reasoning and thinking.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the methodological, organisational, and analytical approaches that were taken toward this study. The subjects of this study, 1st-year university students, have experienced the moment of deciding to go to university as the next stage after graduating from high school. The purpose of this study was to investigate the agency and autonomy of students through listening to their own views in terms of their choice and choice-making process. My goal is to investigate the truth from the students' perceptions as they reflect on their life choices rather than establish objective truths. Thus, the qualitative life history research method is chosen to capture students' perceptions of a certain choice in their lives. Moreover, reflexivity regarding the judgements and interactions that constituted the interpretations was offered because the researcher's reflexivity must be done in relation to the situations and decisions in research.

Data collected from informal face-to-face interviews with 81 students are presented in the following chapters, which look at students' perceptions of going to university as a choice issue (chapter 6), motivations that led to the choice going to university (chapter 7), and students' determination of themselves as autonomous agents in the choice-making process (chapter 8). Each chapter will unpack different perceptions of students' choices from students' own views through a presentation of the data I collected through my two rounds of interviews.

Chapter 6. How are other options besides university not considered for students?

This chapter looks at students' perceptions of career choice, especially going to university. In this research, one of the most frequently used words is 'choice' because this paper set about its research with the idea that the 1st year university student 'chose' to go to university as their career path, among other options, after high school graduation. Thus, my initial question was why students choose to go to university and how they determine themselves as agents in choice-making.

As stated in chapter 2, the historical and social background of educational development in South Korea made its unique perspective on education. The top priority of South Korea's national development strategies was economic growth. People were assured that economic growth could be achieved through human resources, so education has been taken as the most crucial investment (Jones, 2013). Moreover, in modern South Korean society, it is a generally accepted fact that there is a very high connection between good education, high income, and a stable and honourable job. In this process, it can be said that a cultural phenomenon in which South Korean society recognises education as a means of success was naturally formed (Lee, 2001; Lee, 2009; Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017; Lee, 2017). As a result, the fever for education in South Korea is high, and it has been commonly discussed as a phenomenon that characterises South Korean education (Lee, 2009). Education fever encompasses not only parents' strong interest and motivation in education but also a complex social system that reflects collectivistic perspectives on education, economic reward systems, the structure of educational systems, and dynamics in educational testing (Kim, Lee, and Lee, 2005: 8). Therefore, today, the goal and destination of South Korean education fever have become attending a prestigious or a higher ranking university. As a result, in 2020, 7 out of 10 students chose university as their career path after graduating from high school. The proportion of those aged between 25 and 34 years old who had attained higher education is the highest among OECD countries. The majority of South Korean make the same career choice of going to university, and if so, it is necessary to examine the complex and multifaceted meaning that 'choice' implies in South Korea.

Given this particular background and situation in South Korea, one can't help but suspect that the significance of entering a university that most students choose goes beyond their personal aspects and has social implications, so it is important to investigate how students perceive the career choice of going to university. So, before examining why students choose to go to university, their motives, and how they judge their agency in the choice and its process, I will discuss students' perception of what the 'choice' to go to university means to students.

Going back to Amartya Sen, he defines agency freedom as ''what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important'' (Alkire, 2005a: 219). It should be noted here that 'goals or values an individual regards as important' could be formed by the influence of the surroundings or social factors, and the attitude or perception that considers it important may be formed in the same way. People's high value on university and their goal of going to university are also formed by the influence of surroundings and social factors.

Two students might choose the same options despite having different capability sets. Student A has carefully considered all her options and decided to go to university. Otherwise, student B decided to go to university because no one she knows well has ever chosen not to go to university, and it has never been discussed as an option for her. There may be a prejudice among her family,

teachers, and friends that options other than university are not for her. The more diverse and valuable the options in a person's capability set, the better off she is said to be, as human development involves the enlargement of people's capabilities (Sen, 1999). Therefore, student A is better off than Student B, even if Students A and B both end up at the university. Student A would have chosen this option from a wider set of valuable alternatives so she had greater effective freedom, which has intrinsic value in life (Austin, 2018).

The options of studying for a vocational qualification, looking for unskilled work, etc., other than going to university are objectively available to both students A and B but were not simply not within Student B's possibility. The distinction between opportunities that are objectively available to an individual, and opportunities that are effectively available, give the filtering effect of socially shaped practical reasoning. The later opportunity, which is effective freedom, is what Sen calls 'real opportunity' or 'real freedom in fact'. The issue raised here concerns the nature of the background influences on people's reasoning and reasons and the extent to which those background influences are constraining (Austin, 2018). The constraining factor is the processes of socialisation that shape a person's values and goals, and the background influences acts of choice. 'Background or surroundings' also can be related to the conversion factors in the Capability Approach as access. In the Capability Approach, three conversion factors which are personal, environmental, and social, are critical elements as these affect choice. In this conversion, the process of choice via conversion factors at the personal, environmental and social levels is required to achieve functioning, and then, once the capability set is thus determined, an act of choice sets to lead to its transformation into an actually achieved functioning (Austin, 2018). For example, students' family background, school surroundings, and societal background could act as conversion factors influencing their choice.

When asked 'why did you choose to go to university as your following path after high school graduation?', they answered back with the question, *Is it a matter of choice? I'm not sure.* So, these answers raised the question of 'Did students have any choice but to go to university?' Having choices has several meanings. Here, I do not argue that having fewer choices or no choices is meaningless or that having numerous choices is good. Depending on the types of choices and individuals' perceptions of having choices, the meanings could be different. For example, some people might feel uncomfortable at the effort involved in decision-making when presented with many options, and some could feel quite at ease and autonomous even if they had one option, as long as they concur with that option. So, the critical questions are 1) Did students have any choice but to go to university?; 2) If not, do students recognise they have no choices?; 3) How do students feel that they have functionally no choices?

These critical questions can probe students' awareness of the need to make a choice and engage in the choice process. If students accepted that university was the only career they could choose after graduating high school, this might not be a matter of choice for them. If so, the first task Germeijs and Verschueren (2006) revealed, orientation to choice, is absent or excluded. It means that students are either unaware of the need to make career decisions or have no motivation to engage in the career decision process.

Many students replied that they were not sure because they regarded going to university after graduating from high school as a natural course in South Korea. They, therefore, said that other options were uncertain for them at the time they made a choice, and some even felt they did not have any other options. The vast majority of students said the following during the interview. *It*

was so natural to go to university after graduating high school. 60 students stated this sentence almost precisely as it is, and some of the remaining 21 students said similarly.

The following are excerpts from some of the interviews with students who said it was natural for them to go to university in response to the question of whether going to university was a matter of choice or not.

> *I took for granted that I would go to university. It was not about whether to go to university or not but rather about which university to go to and what major to choose. I did not think it was a matter of choice. Maybe I couldn't think, I guess.*
>
> *It has been a given since middle school. In South Korea, there is a typical pattern in which students graduate from high school and then go to university to prepare for employment. I assumed I would follow that pattern too.*
>
> *Since I was really young, I'd assumed that I should go to university after graduating high school. I do not even know how long I'd thought that for.*
>
> *I did not particularly think that I should go to university, but I felt that my path was set as such.*
>
> *It is a natural social process. I did not think about it but just accepted it.*
>
> *To be honest, it was a natural idea because I live in South Korea. I do not think that I ever thought about not going to university.*

A socially formed perception of education affects students and their families, who are members of society and school. It organises people's thoughts, perceptions, motivations, and actions, so people in South Korean society regard educational background as important. Therefore, such students' cognition in their career choice-making is structured according to their social surroundings where the academic background is considered more important than others. Consideration, therefore, needs to be given to how students perceive education, acknowledging their active role in the creation of their own life paths and the simultaneous influence of social conditions.

In this chapter, I will present the empirical data related to career decision-making to reveal students' perceptions of going to university as a matter of choice. I use students' descriptions that link to social, school, and family background and surroundings that have constrained students' effective freedom in their choice and influenced students to take going to university for granted.

6.1. Social background and career choice

As Sen (2002: 80) puts it, "No individual can think, choose or act without being influenced in one way or another by the society around him or her.", social relationships provide the narrative web that enables a person to make sense of herself; a person's self-concept is derived from and sustained by her social relationships, and the goals and life plan a person develops are shaped by these fundamental influences (Austin, 2018: 25). A person's perceptions of herself and her life depend on her position in the social world, and these perceptions influence the way in which she plans her life and decides what would be best to do.

Inasmuch as we are all born and raised in a social setting, individual action and belief must be socially situated. We cannot choose which society we belong to. Even though the degree to which each person is affected by society can vary, the dispositions of individual perceptions and beliefs are located within social structures. Therefore, the thoughts and perceptions of an individual apart from society are unacceptable. For example, two people living in different societies enjoy different cultural values, so when they face the same issue, the judgment or decision may differ depending on the structure of each society.

In terms of education in South Korea, students have been acquiring in across their lives is accepting that they will go to university after graduating from high school without thought or question.

> *For me, going to university after high school graduation has been a foregone conclusion since middle school. It was so natural to follow the same pattern that other South Korean students take. I did not consider whether I was going or not, but of course, I was just going. (*Student #9, identified regulation)

> *University seems to be perceived as a gateway that every South Korean must go through. I reckon that it is a necessity, not an option. I feel there is some social pressure.* (Student #17, identified regulation & integrated regulation)

> *Going to university is just a socially-accepted natural process. I think I just accepted it without thinking.* (Student #27, introjected regulation)

> *Like many students, if I am educated in South Korea, it is natural to think that the standard course is the primary, middle, high school, and university. I never thought of going the other way.* (Student #62, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

Interestingly, students clearly recognise that their choice to go to university is socially embedded. Most students repeatedly used certain words in the answers that were 'in South Korea' or 'as a South Korean student'. It presents how deeply society has been structuring students' cognition, and they are framed in society. Therefore, students have a negative view of the idea of not going to university or choosing other options.

> *There is a social atmosphere in South Korea that requires one to graduate from university without exception. Life isn't easy for people who didn't go to university. I think like that.* (Student #15, introjected regulation)

> *There seems to be an aspect of being naturally brainwashed from primary school onwards in South Korea. When I hear the words 'high school graduate', I feel negative, if I'm honest. In that sense, there is a social atmosphere in which everyone implicitly accepts that they have to go to university.* (Student #65, identified regulation & integrated regulation)

Students explained the stigma that exists towards high school graduates who do not go to university. According to a KEDI survey (1992) regarding the evil of an academic attainment-oriented doctrine on lower school level graduates, 41.7% of the graduates responded that they did not receive desirable treatment in South Korean society (Lee, 2006). Thus, as Chung (2018) assumed, social stigmatisation with references to elucidate educational level is a phenomenon peculiar to South Korea. The societal stigmatisation of people with lower levels of education may have been structured by society may have structured people's stigmatisation.

Another interesting point is that students use the specific words 'option' and 'alternative' while explaining why they accept the path of going to university. Students are aware that there are options or alternatives, but they do not consider those as applicable. The socially formed perception of career choice makes students ignore other possibilities because choosing different paths would go beyond the confines of the perception they have. Some students even feel they have no other options other than going to university. Therefore, they didn't or couldn't carry out the exploratory behaviours, which are gathering general information about career alternatives and then reducing a set of career alternatives by collecting detailed information before making a decision (Germeijs and Verschueren, 2007).

> *I am a person who works hard at what is given to me, and if there were other options talked about in society other than studying, I might have considered them. But, as a primary school student, the only thing that I was asked to do was to study hard. So I studied hard, and in middle school, I was told to study hard and get good marks, and after I did that, I graduated and went to high school. And then, I was asked to study harder and go to university. So I worked hard. I mean, it was all for going to a good university[21]. I did not think I had any other options.* (Student #11, external regulation & introjected regulation)

> *There are many other options besides going to university after high school graduation, for example, in the US and the UK. If choices outside of going to university were the norm in South Korea, I would have thought about other options.* (Student #23, introjected regulation)

> *The social atmosphere in this country says that going to university is the 'default value' in life. If I'd decided not to go to university, I do not think I would have had any other alternatives.* (Student #56, external regulation)

> *I was born and raised in South Korea, so after graduating from high school, I am in an environment where I cannot choose or see a path other than university.* (Student #71, external regulation, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

> *First of all, South Korean society did not tell me what kind of work I could do without going to university.* (Student #73, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

6.2. Family background and career choice

Several studies have focused on the relationship between higher education choices and family socioeconomic status. Some of the literature focuses on the impact of socioeconomic status, for example, family income and parental education on children's enrolment (Nguyen and Taylor 2003; Frenette 2006; Belley and Lochner 2007; Steiner and Wrohlich 2012; Declercq and Verboven 2015). For example, according to Ball, Davies, David, and Reay (2002), their study of higher education choices shows that middle-class young people are characterised by an absence of decisions and reflect family traditions. In contrast, working-class young people who are the first generation of their family to consider higher education make a decision with doubts and deliberations. Other literature highlights the role of family socioeconomic status in maintaining

[21] The phrase 'a good university' appears many times in this paper. In South Korean context, this means a university with a high ranking.

quantitative (e.g., level of education) and qualitative (the content of education) educational advantages for children (Lucas 2001; Ma 2009). Other researchers explored gender and family socioeconomic status intersections in students' higher education choices (Liu and Morgan, 2020).

However, in this research, family socioeconomic status was not a significant consideration in students' choices. Questions to verify the family's socioeconomic status or parents' educational background were not directly asked, but students referred to information about their family when answering questions regarding their choice process and motivation questions. Some students' parents have greater academic expectations of their children, and their fever for a good university influence students. As discussed in sub-chapter 2.4., South Korean parents perceive children's academic success and development as a key factor in successful family life. Children's academic achievement is thus a crucial part of the family's agenda in South Korean society (Lee, 2009; So and Kang, 2014). Therefore, the views of family members are important to children as they come to formulate their own ideas about their future (Pimlott-Wilson, 2011).

> *My mum seemed to want me to go to university. And I felt like my mum wanted me to go to a good university. I reckon my mother's expectations of me were always high.* (Student #2, introjected regulation)

> *I think the biggest reason I came to university was my parents. My parents always had expectations of me. My parents spent money to educate me, and I think that was an investment in me. So, I think that going to a good university and getting a good job is the reward for that investment.* (Student #3, introjected regulation)

There was also no difference in the educational background of parents. Regardless of whether parents graduated from university or not, they wanted their children to go to university, and the students were also well aware of their parent's expectations. Parents, not university graduates, wanted their children to graduate from university and live a better or a different life from themselves. They reflect their expectations of a path they did not choose and their regrets about the path they chose in their children's choice-making.

> *My father did not study. He got a job to earn money. And he regrets making that choice a lot. He often says that he would have lived much better if he had chosen to continue studying.* (Student #11, external regulation & introjected regulation)

> *My mother was the most determined to go to university among my family members. She didn't make it in the end, so she always told me to go to university and become a professional; otherwise, I would end up living like her.* (Student #35, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

> *My mum and dad did not go to university. So they told me to go to a good university and do what I wanted to do.* (Student #62, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

If the student's parents had been to university, they did not seem to consider the option of their child not going to university in the first place because they thought their children would do just as they had done. Therefore, parents' normative thoughts and attitudes about going to university also affected their children. It also can be interpreted that educated parents intend to avoid downward social status by influencing children's educational decision-making. It may reflect the motivation of parents who do not have a higher educational background to move up the social ladder by means of their children's education (Chung, 2018).

Most of my mother and father's relatives are highly educated. So, going to university was quite natural. My relatives weren't keen on me studying art, but they accepted it when I came to this university to study it. (Student #64, introjected regulation)

I reckon my parents had a lot of influence over me. My mum and dad are both researchers. So, it would have been very unusual if I'd chosen not to go to university. (Student #23, introjected regulation)

6.3. School background and career choice

Whilst children inculcate family practices into their perception, social circumstances and schools can replicate or transform dispositions, changing the way children come to view their career decision-making. Especially, a school conveys particular views of higher education to students (Smyth and Banks, 2012). South Korean students spend a lot of time in an institution called a school for a total of 12 years, six years in primary school, three years in middle school, and three years in high school. As they spend sustained periods of time at school, students are exposed to certain views of schools that emphasise university admissions in the long term. For example, high schools in South Korea tend to provide a curriculum focusing on university entrance and support through the university application process. Therefore, students consider their high school as all about preparing to go to university.

The only thing the school taught was how to study for the College Scholastic Ability Test. (Student #23, introjected regulation)

In high school, lectures related to career issues were given only about university admissions. (Student #44, external regulation & identified regulation)

All classes and activities at high school were focused on university entrance. It was all about preparation for the entrance exam. My school was significantly worse than other schools. (Student #78, external regulation, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

Some schools are focused entirely on academic achievement and preparation for university, whereas others offer a more vocational and practical curriculum. Most interviewees in this research graduated from a high school where the priority was academic achievement and preparation for university. They are in an environment that inevitably has a limited view of career choice and the burden of achieving the goal of going to university.

The primary purpose of high school was to send students to university. The school teachers talked about nothing other than going to university for the whole three years. They disapproved of students who did not go to university in the first place. (Student #56, external regulation)

The school did not present any options other than going to university. The school said that we had to go to university without exception as if there was no other option. (Student #66, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

The daily routine of a high school student was a schedule for going to university. I do not think I had any friends who assumed they would not go to university. (Student #79, external regulation)

> *The atmosphere in high school was really intense. I knew that the world wouldn't come to an end if I didn't get accepted into university. But the atmosphere at school made me feel like if I didn't go to university, I wouldn't have been a failure, but it would've still been a huge problem.* (Student #80, external regulation & identified regulation)

School is where students spend most of their time, and teachers are the people students interact with most often in school, except for peers. As adults with relative authority and power within a school institution, a teacher is not only a person from whom students seek help or advice, but their remarks inevitably affect students a great deal. Therefore, many students show that they have been influenced by teachers' remarks and attitudes related to career and university admissions.

> *When I was in high school, teachers often said that high school was a springboard for university and that university is not a place of learning but a stepping stone for finding a job.* (Student #9, identified regulation)

> *I graduated from a general academic high school, and the teachers' goal was to send as many students as possible to a good university. I felt like we were a tool for the teachers' achievement, and that atmosphere was intense. For example, one of my friends worried about her career a lot, so she asked the teacher for advice. At that time, it was a bit shocking to hear that the teacher told my friend to think about it after studying and going to university. The teacher told her just to study and not waste time thinking about it.* (Student #11, external regulation & introjected regulation)

> *When I was in middle school, the school taught me that we would be losers or failures if we went to a vocational high school. Teachers told us that we should go to an academic high school and go to university.* (Student #62, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

Thus, within education settings, certain values and dispositions acquired through processes of socialisation continue to be endowed with greater value (Pimlott-Wilson, 2011).

6.4. Conclusion

South Korea's education, as it is well-known internationally, has shown remarkable successes: education was the driving force that made such outstanding national economic growth, people's high fever for education, notable educational statistical figures in both quantitative expansion and qualitative achievement, and a much higher entrance rate for higher education than developed countries of OECD, etc. These characteristics not only demonstrate South Korean education's successes and limitations but also imply that these characteristics have been shaping the unique perception of education. Thus South Korean society's perspective on education has been structuring students' thoughts, perceptions, motivations, and actions. Going to university after high school graduation has become the norm in South Korea. It is cumulatively formed in South Korean society because of the historical background of educational development and educational features I stated previously. By understanding this, we can see that the framework of opportunities limits students' choices and simultaneously predisposes students toward specific ways of behaving, which includes going to university.

Students educated in South Korea have been acquiring a unique perspective on education from

early in life. This perception supports the rationale for thought and choice within career paths. The long-standing perception of South Korean society, which places a high value and meaning on education, has been structuring students' cognition by taking going to university for granted. Interestingly, students recognise that their choice to go to university is socially embedded. Students have a negative view of going against their perception of choice because the socially embedded perspective on education and university has been structuring their cognition. Thus, even if they were aware that there were alternatives other than going to university, they did not consider those as applicable to them. Some students even felt they had no other options except to go to university. The educational institution, which is the school, is also shaped by the society in which it is situated. At the same time, school shapes students' choices and perceptions of career choice. In a high school where students spend most of their time, students are provided with a curriculum focusing on the university entrance exam. Teachers with relative authority and power within high schools inevitably affect students a lot and make an effort to send as many students as possible to university. The school constrains students from finding other choices available to them other than going to university. Schools conveyed a particular view that all students must prepare for university admissions and go to university. Thus, students' perception of going to university was further strengthened. In addition, parents had greater academic expectations of their children regardless of their own academic background, and their fever for their children attending a good university seemed to consolidate a more socially embedded perspective on education.

Thus, going to university is the standard value judgement that students should follow and uphold when making a career choice in South Korea.

Chapter 7. What motives lead students to choose to go to university?

The previous chapter examined students' perceptions of career choices. Even if many students take going to university for granted, given how they are influenced by their social, school, and family background, they are not amotivated when choosing to go to university. Self-determination theory incorporates the concept of amotivation, which is defined as a lack of intention to act (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000b; Gagne and Deci, 2005; Sexton, 2013). Amotivation involves having no intentions toward behaviour, so when individuals are amotivated, they either do not act at all or they really do not know why they are acting (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Painter, 2011). But the students I met did act which was choosing to go to university, and as a result, they have become university students. Different types of motivation lead students to choose to go to university, and concern for the orientation of that motivation allows us to seek the why of choices.

Self-determination theory has the ability to indicate whether choice-making is autonomously engaged and unrestricted. In chapter 7.1., the data are analysed according to motivation and regulation based on the self-determination theory's classification in order to understand what motivated students to come to university. I will explore students' cases based on different forms of motivation, starting with the form that exhibits the lowest level of autonomy, and the most controlled type of extrinsic motivation, which is external regulation. And then, I will examine cases in the order of introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. This order shows the progressively more self-determine to the one representing the level of autonomy in extrinsic motivation types. Based on the capability approach's concept of agency, there is the view that students with agency are active agents making choices based on their values and intrinsic motivations. Among the 81 students I interviewed, only three students showed an inherently autonomous motivation to go to university. In chapter 7.2., I investigate the cases of these three students. This research applies a life history method with semi-structured questions. I will deliver each student's detailed response in their own words to understand how and why they made a particular choice. Each student has their own story, so they underwent a unique choice process based on their experience and perception. I unpack their cases without over-interpretation or editing. I aimed to see if any characteristics depend on the individual's gender, major, school, and whether they were a test re-taker in chapter 7.3. Analysis based on students' backgrounds or conditions is not the primary consideration, so this chapter will only briefly present the result of the analysis. Chapter 7.4 examines changes in students' perspectives on topics covered in the first interviews, such as career, choice, autonomy, and agency, through the case of 21 students who were interviewed twice.

7.1. Choice-making based on extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is an important type of motivation, but most of the students' choices were not intrinsically motivated. Humans are social animals that require close relationships with others and society, so the intrinsic motivation experienced in early childhood diminished according to social demands, roles, and so on. People, therefore, act according to extrinsic motivation in many cases. Self-determination theory suggests different types of regulation depending on the degree of autonomy in extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000b; Ryan and Deci, 2000a). Ryan and Deci (2000b) say people vary not only in the level of motivation but also in the orientation of that motivation. How much students were motivated with the motivation to go to university is an interesting point, but this research does not address it. This research is more

concerned about *what* type of motivation students had than rather how much motivation. As this research applies a qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews, I try to reveal through conversation what type of motivation led students to a specific choice after high school graduation. That is, students have different motivations for coming to university.

The internalisation in the choice process is significant as it provides an answer to the motivational issues, why, and what for. So the questions asked students address the purpose of going to university, why they wanted to go to university, and what made them put effort into doing so. The internalization process occurs according to social values and regulations throughout the lifetime. It means that students can adopt a new regulation at any point depending on prior experiences and situational factors (Ryan and Deci, 2000b). So, for example, a student who has identified with the value of activity might lose that sense of value under social pressure and move into an external regulatory mode. Or another example would be a student that has engaged in the practice of making certain choices because of their parents' expectations. But at the same time, a student might also believe that it is worthwhile to behave that way. In other words, students can move to a new regulation entirely different from the previous one, or they can fall under multiple regulations at the same time.

81 students' interview scripts are identified, and motivation and regulation correspond with each student's case. The intrinsic motivation and four regulations in extrinsic motivation are demarcated by defining features under the self-determination theory. In this research, 1st-year university students' lifetime is connected to their educational choice-making. How, why, and what made the student pursue the particular choice of going to university is influenced by each student's perceptions and experiences in their life. So the various influences impacting students' choices cannot be separated out and compartmentalised (Reay, David, and Ball, 2001). Therefore, applying a student's case to only one regulation is not possible in some students' cases. While 55 students provided only one motivation for their decisions, 26 students provided more than two completely separate rationales for their choice.

Students' motivation toward coming to university can range from various forms of extrinsic motivation up to intrinsic motivation, which is a preferred motivational orientation. 47 students displayed some identification and identified regulation as the most common among students. 30 students exhibited tendencies toward introjection, and 20 students indicated external regulations. Next was integrated regulation to which 9 students belonged. Finally, only 3 students answered that they chose to go to university based on inherently intrinsic motivation.

Table 8. Interview results across all students

Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	
20 (18.3%)	30 (27.5%)	47 (43.1%)	9 (8.3%)	3 (2.8%)

7.1.1. External regulation

External regulation is the type of extrinsic motivation with the lowest level of autonomy and refers to the state of compliance with a set of rules (Ryan and Deci, 2000b; Barr, 2016). Motivation is controlled by external pressure, and behaviours are performed to satisfy an external demand or obtain an externally imposed reward. So people engage in the practice of making certain choices because someone insists on doing so or because they expect to get some kind of reward or avoid some kind of punishment (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

20 students indicated external regulation. Their controlled motivations differ from individual to individual, depending on their perceptions and experiences. As I describe in chapter 6, the social background is highly correlated to external regulation. Students try to satisfy the external demand for a high level of education that South Korean society today requires. The atmosphere of expecting students to go to university has been pernicious in South Korean society for decades. It has percolated through people, and educational background is considered very important. These external pressures had a significant influence on the students' motivation to choose to go to university.

> *I thought I should go to university because of what other people thought and that I'd be less credible as a high school graduate. I went to university because of what other people thought, so I thought I did not necessarily have to go to a university that has a poor perception of people. So, going to a lower-ranked university means nothing. That's why I decided to study for the entrance exam one more year.* (Student #20, external regulation)

> *I have wondered whether it was necessary to go to university. While preparing for the entrance exam, I thought about whether I had to go to university and whether I wanted to do something that required a university diploma. But, I always said that I have no choice because, in the end, South Korean society regards educational background as important.* (Student #57, external regulation & identified regulation)

Students described going to university as the 'default value' required for students living in South Korea. This refers to automatic selection when the user does not specify a value. Unless students in South Korea do not choose other paths, their career is automatically selected as going to university. Going to university is kind of like abiding by rules for these students.

> *I think it has become the default value. In society, the vested powers rank students as saying we should do this and that. So going to university is a standard for visible judgement for them. I don't think it is worth preparing an alternative to university.* (Student #43, external regulation)

In addition, some students describe going to university as a reward for the time, money, or effort they spent for years preparing for the university entrance exam. They accepted going to university as a reward in the context of receiving education centred on university entrance exams for a total of 12 years from primary school to high school.

> *My 12 years of studying hard in primary, middle, and high school are evaluated by the name of the university I entered. So I think it could be an objective indicator in a way.* (Student #6, external regulation)

University is very important in our society, and I think being accepted to university is a kind of reward for all the studying I have done so far. (Student #47, external regulation)

I thought a lot about going to university while studying for the entrance exam when I was in the third grade of high school. I felt it didn't make any sense not to go to university, given everything I'd been through preparing for the exam. I thought I had to go to university. I think it did work as a reward because I studied hard for 12 years in primary, middle, and high school. (Student #63, external regulation & identified regulation)

It was also a kind of reward because I could not help thinking about the efforts I went into studying in middle and high school. And after I studied for another year for the university entrance exam, I thought I would die if I didn't get accepted to university. (Student #71, external regulation, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

But some students who go to university with more autonomous motivation express disagreement that is going to university is a reward. They decided to go to university because of their interest in studying at university and the pleasure they get from it.

It doesn't make sense at all. I believe that a reward is something I receive based on something I did, such as work. But I do not think that learning is not something we can wish for as a reward. Of course, we take exams after learning to verify how well we studied. I can test well and or not. So studying itself cannot require a reward, and the result of the entrance exam also cannot be a reward, I think. (Student #7, identified regulation)

Some students say they decided to go to university because they could be somehow penalised if they did not go to university in South Korea. In the case of student no. 11, even though the student did not want to go to university, she decided to go because she thought there would be more difficulties in getting a job and promotions as a high school graduate. She even raised doubts about the educational aspect, which is the essential role of the university as a higher education institution. She said that everything she would learn at university could be learned through a private institute or the internet. Still, she came to university because of the social penalty she might face without a university diploma. In addition, even though it is not crucial for all students to go to university, most of the students I interviewed agreed that not going to university could disadvantage their lives. The penalties for not going to university that students showed concern about were limitations and discrimination in society.

7.1.2. Introjected regulation

Introjected regulation is a type of regulation that is still moderately controlled and somewhat more internalised. For example, people act to avoid guilt, anxiety, and shame, gain approval from people around them or build their ego, pride, and self-esteem (Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Gagné and Deci, 2005). According to internal pressure, people with this regulation manage external results (Leal, Miranda, and Carmo, 2013).

30 students chose to go to university to avoid external sources of disapproval or to gain externally referenced approval or internal satisfaction for themselves. Students express concern over not going to university, and this arises due to various factors. As mentioned previously, most students

in South Korea go to university, so students tend to perceive going to university as the standard path. Deviating from that path, therefore, makes students feel a sense of alienation and anxiety.

> *When I was in my second year of high school, I didn't think I had to go to university. But, when I started the third grade, everyone else was already preparing to go to university, so I was afraid of choosing not to go. I didn't have the courage to decide not to go to university.* (Student #31, introjected regulation)

> *I would have felt guilty or ashamed if I didn't go to university. I would've envied my friends who went to university and felt like I was missing out. I think it's because I compare myself to others a lot.* (Student #35, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

Students consider the people around them, such as parents, teachers, friends, etc. Students are therefore influenced by people who expect and approve of them to be university students. Theses expectations and approvals have solidified throughout their school years, influencing students' choice-making. The expectations and coercion of parents have a particularly significant impact on their children. Even if extrinsically motivated behaviours are not inherently enjoyable, the primary reason people are likely to be willing to carry out the behaviours is these behaviours are valued by significant others to whom they feel (or would like to feel) connected, whether that be a family, a peer group, or a society (Ryan and Deci, 2000b: 64). In self-determination theory, it is called a sense of relatedness. Self-determination theory maintains that understanding human motivation requires consideration of innate psychological needs, and one of these needs is relatedness. Relatedness refers to the desire to feel belonging and connection to others, which is centrally important for internalisation. (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Ryan and Deci, 2000a). Deci and Ryan (1995) say that conditional regard is perhaps the most pervasive and powerful force that controls behaviour. Because of the basic importance of relatedness, people are highly motivated to be recognised or loved by others. Yet parents, teachers, and peers often make their affection or regard contingent upon others meeting their expectations or sharing their views. Parental use of conditional regard leads children to introject the regulation of expected behaviours, undermining more autonomous motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2006: 1567).

Parents' desire to send their children to a good university, directly and indirectly, influences students' university admission and choice of university and department. Students are not free from their parents' expectations and coercions, which influence them from primary school onwards and cause them to equate their parents' choices with their own. At the same time, as is described in chapter 2, parents in South Korea tend to interpret their children's success as their own and their family's success.

> *I think my parents influenced me a lot. The neighbourhood I live in has a high level of academic enthusiasm. It is a place where many enthusiastic mothers and people with a high-level educational background live. All of the mothers have good educational backgrounds, even if they are now housewives. Children living in my area, including me, always think about going to a good school. So in the neighbourhood, it is exceptional to choose not to go to university, and I think it is hard to gain recognition.* (Student #23, introjected regulation)

> *Because my parents wanted me to go to university since I was young, I thought that going to university was what came next when high school ended. I was confused about whether it was my choice to go to medical school or whether I rationalised it because my parents told me to.*

(Student #24, introjected regulation)

I think my parents pushed me in that direction. They did not say so openly, but if I listened carefully to what they tried to say, they were saying like 'it would be nice to go to university'. I chose my department based on what my mum and dad suggested. (Student #27, introjected regulation)

I think my parents were 100 per cent sure I'd go to university. Not going to university was inconceivable. Ever since I was very young, I thought that I'd study hard to go to a good high school and university. (Student #58, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

I am one of three siblings. My older sister is in the art field, and my younger brother is in sports. I am the only one studying. My mum and dad had higher expectations for me, and I felt that they were uncomfortable when I considered options other than studying. Whenever I did other things, they showed signs of discomfort. When I told my mom, 'This looks fun. What about trying this?' She said that 'you have to study'. That kind of reaction from my parents affected me. I have never really thought deeply about any other paths other than studying to go to university, and I also thought that my parents just wanted me to study, and I felt a little sceptical. I don't think it influenced my decision to study and go to university in a good way. (Student #71, introjected regulation)

In some cases, students choose to go to university for their own self-esteem or sense of accomplishment. These students studied hard to go to a good university because they thought the university's name represented their success. Such satisfaction was important for students in the choice process, and some students chose to study for the CSAT another year to enter a higher-ranking university because internal pressures were not met.

I just wanted to go to a good university. Students think they will go to a good university when studying for the entrance exam. That is why I cannot keep lowering my standards. I could not get rid of my lingering feelings. That's why I studied for one more year for the entrance exam. (Student #13, introjected regulation)

I really wanted to go to a good university. I thought I needed to go to a university in Seoul. I had an obsession. I also had a sense of accomplishment. (Student #51, introjected regulation)

Success in my teens was to go to a good university. The way to prove my success was the university's name, so that's what I thought I should do. (Student #66, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

7.1.3. Identified regulation

Identified regulation is more autonomous than the types mentioned above because, in this case, some internalisation already exists through identification (Leal, Miranda, and Carmo, 2013). The person identifies with the personal importance of performance and accepts its regulation as their own (Ryan and Deci, 2000b).

Students with identified regulations decided to go to university because they personally believe that it is important and worthwhile to behave this way in order to achieve their goals. There are

several goals that students want to achieve through going to university. First, some students decided to enter university to feel more freedom and have various experiences as university students because of dissatisfaction with the limited experiences and opportunities provided in middle and high school.

> *There were limited opportunities to meet people until high school, so I wanted to go to university and meet lots of different people. I thought that networking at university was important, and I wanted to enjoy my life as a university student.* (Student #10, identified regulation)

> *There are many things I can do and learn over four years as a university student, and there are many people I can meet. I thought it was valuable because this is something you can only do as a university student.* (Student #78, external regulation, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

In addition, even if there wasn't a specific major they wanted to study or a future job that they wanted, some students thought it was important to go to university as a stage before entering society or as a means to expand opportunities for future employment. They believed in having a high level of education to achieve success and a social reputation.

It also can be interpreted that some students expect a monetary return for education. According to Chung's (2018) research, education has clearly positive effects on earnings. The higher the level of education the individual has, the higher the earnings. Individuals who face decision-making in terms of higher education will formulate their expected value of higher education by acknowledging the actual returns for education from the precedent decision-makers (Chung, 2018: 60). Aside from the monetary returns, what students see as important is to enhance their range of choices for the future jobs through the current choice, which is going to university. Students defer the exploration and choice process by going to university when they do not yet have thoughts or plans for a future career.

> *In fact, I think I chose to go to university and selected my department to get a good job and make a lot of money.* (Student #8, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

> *There is nothing wrong with going to university. Going to university in itself expands the opportunities I can have in the future. I think I can do anything I want at university. I can have time to think and take a leave of absence if I wish to. It would be good to find out what I want to do next after going to university. That is what I thought when I started university. I had no definite plan. Of course, I could've started earning money faster if I had gotten a job right after graduating high school. However, there's a difference between the average annual salary of high school graduates and university graduates.* (Student #26, identified regulation)

> *I thought I had to go to university to get a job. But, for example, if I wanted to work in the beauty field, I wouldn't need a university diploma. Still, I thought it was important to go to university because of the opportunities it would open up.* (Student #42, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

> *I hear everyone talking about getting a job, but no one, including me, knows what I am going*

> *to do in the future, so I think it is important to build a foundation so that my educational background does not become an obstacle when I feel like I want to do something.* (Student #46, identified regulation)

> *I can have more options when I try to get a good job or the job I want. Going to university does not necessarily mean I'll make a lot of money, but most successful people who earn a lot of money are graduates of good universities. I think it is important to broaden the scope of opportunities.* (Student #58, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

Some students decided based on a more explicit goal. They chose to go to university for the purpose of obtaining a diploma regardless of their major, given that they'd need a bachelor's degree or higher to apply for a job in the future. This is evidence that higher education in South Korea has now reached the stage of universalisation, and enrolment rates at higher educational institutions were at 70.4 per cent in 2020.

> *I have a dream, and that job requires a high level of education. In many cases, I'd need a bachelor's degree or higher from a good university. So I thought it would make sense to go to a good university.* (Student #62, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

> *I think access to the field I want to go to would be limited for those who've only graduated high school. The field is also a closed and conservative organisation, so I thought I should go to university.* (Student #63, external regulation & identified regulation)

> *I thought it was important to go to university because all the jobs I have in mind require a higher than high school education.* (Student #80, external regulation & identified regulation)

Lastly, most students in this category chose to enter university to study their favourite or interested majors at universities, gain expertise and experience, and work in related fields in the future. In the case of these students, the reason or motivation for their interest in a specific area or job was relatively clear. For example, students with a dream of becoming a professional choose to study to acquire professionalism by completing the necessary curriculum at university.

> *I had a dream, so I thought I should go to university for that dream. When I was in the first grade of middle school, I had an English teacher who taught well and was passionate. I wanted to become a teacher like her, so I prepared for the entrance exam with that goal.* (Student #1, identified regulation)

> *Since I was young, I've wanted to carry out research and experiments and become a professor in the field I am interested in. I like to teach and want to study in-depth and write papers.* (Student #29, identified regulation)

Even if a university diploma from a particular department is not required, students aim to major in their particular interests at university and work in a relevant field in the future.

> *Since I was a child, I thought it would be fun to be a broadcasting station producer whenever I watched TV. When I was in the first grade of high school, I went to a cultural space and had a fun experience. And then, in third grade, I had to choose a presentation topic and remembered that experience, so I looked into it in more detail and thought that was what I really wanted to do. So I became interested in cultural planning. I wanted to go to a*

university with a department related to cultural planning, so I searched and applied to this university. (Student #21, identified regulation)

I want to work in the advertising field. There are many departments related to advertising, and among them, I applied to universities that fit my exam scores. I did not come to university just because I wanted to study my major. I also came to get a job in a related field after graduating. (Student #36, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

I didn't have the opportunity to learn about art and design in middle and high school. I thought I would have to go to a specific department to get an education in the field I wanted, so I came to the university to make my dream come true. It is also important for me to earn a living, so my goal is to get a job at a good company with this major. (Student #40, identified regulation)

7.1.4. Integrated regulation

Finally, the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation is integrated regulation, although the focus remains on personal values and needs from carrying out the activity. People with integrated regulation thoughtfully consider alternatives and choose carefully so they feel free in their decisions and actions (Ryan and Deci, 200b). Autonomous extrinsic motivation differs, however, primarily from intrinsic motivation, which is based on interest and enjoyment because people with integrated regulation find themselves engaging based on values and needs, even if this is not enjoyable (Ryan and Deci, 2020). Integrated regulation means that people have fully assimilated the activity to the self, so they have considered alternatives and evaluated other values and needs. Behaviours identified by integrated motivation share many features with intrinsic motivation, although they are still considered extrinsic. Therefore, in some studies, identified, integrated, and intrinsic forms of regulation have been combined to form an autonomous motivation composite (Deci and Ryan, 2000a; Sexton, 2013).

9 students were classified under the integrated regulation category. Among the four regulations of extrinsic motivation, the smallest number of students falls under this regulation. These students considered other options in order to evaluate the choice of going to university and brought the choice into congruence with their values and needs.

Since I was an athlete for a long time, I had no intention of going to university. Then I was suddenly injured and unable to continue my career as an athlete. So I had to think about a different career path. I thought that I did not have any special talents in other fields and figured I could get a job and live without a big problem if I studied to a certain extent. I did a lot of part-time jobs while preparing for the exam. I worked at a whiskey bar because I liked drinking, and I was going to get the related license. Having had such varied experiences, I felt that studying was the best fit for me. Realistically, the best thing I can do well is a doing study and go to university, and I came here because there was also a major I wanted to study. (Student #67, integrated regulation)

I had a dream and thought about ways to become what I wanted to be. There are ways to get a job right away, or I could've taken the civil service examination and become a police officer, but I thought it would be better to go to university to have expertise in what I want

to do later. (Student #76, identified regulation & integrated regulation)

7.2. Choice-making based on intrinsic motivation

Ryan and Deci (2020) say that self-determination theory began with a focus on intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviours done in the absence of external impetus and is inherently interesting and enjoyable (Ryan and Deci, 2000a; Niemiec and Ryan, 2009). Thus, the person has an inherent interest and enjoyment in doing something, and performance is perceived as an end in itself (Ryan and Deci, 2000b). 3 students among 81 chose to go to university for enjoyment, interest, and inherent satisfaction. These students regard the university as an institution to gain an education and express their pleasure in learning itself. Students expect to study what they truly want at university. For these students, the university is not a means but an end in itself.

In this sub-chapter, I deliver 3 students' interview descriptions in as much detail as possible to understand the life choices they made. I excluded the contents which are too private and not related to the subject. Each student has their own story, so reading these 3 students' stories will help understand why these students' degree of autonomy is higher than others and how they manifest their agency in the choice process. I chose the life history research method as a primary data collection strategy. A core principle of the life history approach is that all aspects of life interact with and have implications for each other, so reading the interview scripts of 3 students will help to discover how each of the three student's different life stories is related to the autonomous agency in their educational decision-making context.

Here, like other students, these 3 students also agree that going to university is highly important and understand its implications in South Korean society. But they did not take it for granted for various reasons. Autonomy is essential to intrinsic motivation. They questioned themselves autonomously about going to university and what that choice meant to them. Student no. 22 did not graduate middle school due to personal reasons. But when student no. 22 was out of school, she began to doubt her past as a student studying hard to go to a good school. It seems that before dropping out of middle school, her parents greatly influenced her. She is a person who enjoys studying but tries to find out her own reason why she keeps studying. She tried to seek an alternative to studying because she thought she was indoctrinated by external pressure. She finally realised that she enjoyed writing and studying and decided to go back to high school and enter the university of her own accord. She was satisfied with her high school life because she decided to return to high school and even chose which high school she wanted to attend. She said she was enjoying university life as well.

Student #22

Q: When did you first think you wanted to go to university?
A: I dropped out of middle school because I struggled to adjust to school. So I studied alone and passed the equivalency exam for middle schools. But I always wanted to go to university. I think going to university gives me freedom and is somewhere I can learn what I want to. I admired those things, so I thought that I should go to university after passing the equivalency exams for high school.

Q: You said you went back to high school. What made you go back to school?
A: By chance, I found out that there was an arts high school with a department of creative writing. I had no idea that there was such a high school. When I stayed at home after dropping out of middle school, I found I couldn't organize my time well. So, since I wanted to go to university, I thought it would be much better to prepare within the high school system. I went to the arts high school, and although it was a high school, I had a major, and I really liked having a lot of major classes. High school life was really good because I searched and selected the high school myself. It was a great advantage to be able to learn what I wanted.

Q: What did you do when you were out of school?
A: When I was out of school, I thought a lot by myself. Why should I study? Why do I have to go to school? I asked this kind of question the most to myself. I took going to school for granted, took exams, and then moved to an upper-level school. I felt a lot of scepticism about that. I'd worked hard through life, but what was the point in all of it? I felt like that. My parents studied hard, so it was drummed into me that if I studied hard, I'd live a happy life, and I have been doing so. But why do I have to study hard to be happy? Why is that? I started asking myself this kind of question, so I did not study and go to school. At the same time, I thought a lot about finding something other than studying. But I felt the other paths didn't suit me. So I kept thinking about it and felt that I liked writing, and I continued to think about it even when I was in high school. I realised that I enjoyed writing and studying very much, so I came to university because I want to be a person who does living writing and studying.

Q: Since when did you like to write?
A: I've loved it since I was very young. But at first, I only thought of it as a hobby because everyone told me to study.

Q: Writing, or writing as a profession, is not something that requires graduating from university, is it?
A: Writing can be done without necessarily coming to university, but I also like studying. I think university is a school for study. So I came because I wanted to study more. And I want to go to graduate school to study further later.

Q: Why do you like studying?
A: I like to study because, for example, I am not too fond of maths, but when I work hard and solve maths problems, I feel pleasure. When I was in high school, I had to study for entrance exams, so there were some subjects I didn't want to study. Even though I did not like it, I felt some enjoyment. I did not study my major in high school deeply, as we were still high school students, but it was also fun to read and analyse other authors' writing.

Q: Why does everyone seem to go to university? What is your personal opinion?
A: I think it's because of social stigma in South Korea. Now, compared to the past, going to university is a like default value. Everyone goes to university, so not going seems like a minus in our society.

Q: What do you think about your autonomy in the choice process?
A: I think I had no autonomy before dropping out of middle school, but it became a big turning point, so I was able to choose what I wanted to do more autonomously.

Intrinsically motivated behaviours represent the prototype of self-determined activities. These activities are performed by people very spontaneously when they feel free to follow their inner interests (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Student no. 34 has been making choices by following internal interests. When she graduated middle school, she decided to go to a specialised high school but faced immediate opposition from people around her. Her goal was to be a novelist, and she thought she did not need to go to university in order to do so. She chose to earn money after graduating high school, and that is why she went to the specialised high school despite the opposition. In high school, she realised that it would not be possible the same as she expected: she could work and write simultaneously after graduation. She also thought that the type of occupation did not matter if she could earn money and write before starting the specialised high school. But what she learned in the specialised high school did not fit her. Contrary to what she had thought before coming to the specialised high school, she did not want to make money working in something that did not suit her. As she experienced and thought about it herself, her thoughts on career and occupation changed. Here, she made her own choice once again based on her inner interests and wishes. She had difficulties preparing for university in the specialised high school and getting help as the school mainly places priority on recommending employment to students. Still, she searched and made a plan to go to university and carried it out by herself. And the reason she wanted to go to university was that she enjoyed writing. Going to university to write was an end itself for her, not a means to achieve something.

Student #34

Q: What kind of high school did you go to?
A: I graduated from a specialised high school. In the third grade of middle school, there was a period of application to specialised high schools before applying to general academic high schools. After graduating high school, I wanted to save money by getting a job as soon as possible. At that time, teachers from specialised high school B came to my middle school to promote themselves, and I was persuaded. I applied because I thought it would be good to go to specialised high school B.

Q: Did you talk to the people around you when you made that decision?
A: My parents, teachers, and friends were all vehemently opposed. Most were of the opinion that I should go to a general academic high school, and no one was keen on specialised high schools B.

Q: Why did you apply despite the opposition?
A: When they promoted themselves, the school didn't seem bad considering the employment status of their graduates. I decided to go because I could get a scholarship as well.

Q: Why did you want to earn money after graduating high school?
A: My goal was to get a job after graduating from high school. I wanted to travel around the world, and there were many things I wanted to do, but all of them needed money. And my dream is to be a novelist, and I thought I didn't need to go to university. I thought I could write while working. So I thought it wasn't necessary for me to go to university.

Q: What was the reaction around you when you said you would get a job rather than go to university?
A: The adults around me said that university and educational background are still crucial in South Korean society. They also noted that even if I got a job right away, I'd have a hard time

getting promoted. I was also scared to hear that I would be looked down upon by society as a high school graduate. But I thought vaguely that it'd work out somehow. At that time, I was in the third grade of middle school and still young. I thought, 'I'm fine. I can do well'. My parents did not object too much and said, 'It's your life, so do what you want with it'.

Q: How was specialised high school B?
A: It was a little different from what I expected. I think they exaggerated a bit when they came to my middle school to promote the school. Although seniors are good at finding employment in large companies, publicly owned companies, and the financial sector, I found that they face difficulties in getting promotions, that the work is different from that of university graduates, and there is a big gap in salary. I also found out that my seniors ended up quitting their jobs and going to university in the end. What I learned in the specialised high school was accounting and trade subjects, but I thought it was not right for me, and I did not want to live my whole life working in that field.

Q: So, did you decide to go to university while attending the specialised high school?
A: I started to think, 'Do I need to go to university?' when I was in my second year of high school.

Q: What was the reaction around you when you decided to go to university?
A: The adults around me told me that it made no sense to suddenly prepare for university in my third grade of high school and that I should just get a job as planned because it was too late. But some were of the opinion that it would be better to go to university, so I should at least write an application. My parents tend to let me do anything when I say I'll do it on my own.

Q: Why didn't you apply for departments that would help you get a job?
A: I did think of that, too. I thought I would be able to write well even after I got a job. But when I saw my seniors and friends who'd got jobs, it didn't look easy. I heard they are busy taking a break after work. Looking at them, I thought I wouldn't have time to write. I wanted to have a lot of time to write, so I thought it would be good to go to the related department and take a writing class. And I felt it while attending the specialised high school. Accounting and trade didn't suit me well, and I didn't really like them. I kept thinking about whether I would be happy if I got a job in the accounting or trade field and made money, but I didn't think I would be.

Q: How did you get to hear about your seniors and friends who got jobs?
A: I got to know about it naturally because I often talked with my friends. And in the case of seniors, sometimes, when they visited the school, teachers brought them to the classroom and held a Q&A. When I started high school, I thought that money was the most important thing and that everything would be fine as long as I had money, but in the second and third grades of high school, I felt that I should do what I wanted to do, even if it wouldn't make me a lot of money.

Q: What was the reaction of teachers at the specialised high school when you said you would go to university instead of getting a job?
A: The school gives jobs in order of marks, and I was third place in my class. My form teacher put in a lot of job recommendations for me, so I thought they would be against me going to university. So I wrote about how I would prepare for going to university and how I would prepare for a job if I didn't get in. I also showed my writings what I had written so far. The teacher didn't allow it straightaway but told me to prepare it later.

Q: Has come to university been worth it?
A: The subjects I'm learning now are interesting, and I'm enjoying myself. I'm so happy that all I have to do right now is eat and write.

Q: You seem to be relatively straightforward about why you decided to go to university. Why do you think many high school students in South Korea choose to go to university?
A: I think it's because of the limited options. Not many of my friends had decided which path to take next before graduating from high school. So it seems that students are going to university. It appears that students are going with the mindset of 'Ok. Let's think about it once I'm at university'. We had fewer opportunities to explore our aptitudes. We only studied subjects such as Korean, English, Maths, Science, and so on at school. We didn't have a chance to find out what kind of work we'd enjoy or like. Many of my friends still didn't know what they were good at or liked when they were in high school. I wish there were more opportunities to experience which areas fit well with each student in the curriculum.
The university is designed for studying. I think employment is a separate matter. If I'm coming to university, I think I should study as much as I can. I came to university because I wanted to study. I'm here to write even if I might not get a job from writing.

Q: Do you think you were free in your choice to go to the specialised high school and university?
A: My mindset is that I'm responsible for my own life. I chose everything myself. I'm proud of myself because I don't think my parents or teachers forced me to choose anything, and I think I pioneered my way by myself.

Q: What if I ask again the biggest reason for deciding to go to university?
A: It was because of writing. I even thought I wouldn't mind just writing all day long. I thought I could do that in university.

Q: If, you can write by yourself anywhere, why do you prefer to write at university?
A: At the creative writing department, there are people who like writing and dream the same dreams as I do, and I'd never had the opportunity to meet those kinds of people before. I thought there'd be lots of people like that at university, so I thought how fun it would be to talk to them. Though I could've written alone, there would've been no one who could give me feedback on my writing. So I feel that it's beneficial to read and talk about each other's writing while hanging out together. I love it in itself. I like it because there are many like-minded people at the university.

Q: So you didn't come to university because you needed a university diploma, did you?
A: The learning process itself is important. And I like the people I meet here.

Q: What is the most important criterion when choosing?
A: Do I like this? Can I be happy? Will it be fun? I think about these things the most.

Intrinsic motivation involves people freely engaging in activities that they find interesting, and that provide novelty and optimal challenge (Deci and Ryan, 2000). Student no. 50 did not begin preparing for the university until the 3rd grade of high school because he wanted to pursue a career in music after graduation rather than go to university. However, he developed an interest in astronomy and decided to go to university. He remembers the preparation process to go to university as pleasant. It was a challenge to start studying for the entrance examination in the 3rd

year of high school. But he enjoyed this challenge because he was studying what he wanted to study, enjoyed earth science subjects at school, and prepared for a non-scheduled admission and interview. He is especially proud of himself as he was autonomous and made the decision by himself, trusting himself as the agent in the choice process.

Student #50

Q: When did you decide you wanted to go to university after graduating high school?
A: I played musical instruments until the 2nd grade of high school. Then, when I was a senior in high school, after reading the book 'Astronomy and Cosmos' I decided that I wanted to study astronomy. One of the subjects I studied in high school was earth science, and there was an astronomy part. That was the first time I thought I wanted to go to university to study astronomy.

Q: Was the book a deciding factor?
A: Reading the book and dreaming of becoming an astronomer was the decisive reason, but I think I became more interested in studying itself as I got first place in Earth Science subject at school. And the encouragement from school teachers who said that I would do well in this field was also a stimulant.

Q: So you didn't think about going to university before that?
A: I wanted to live freely by doing music without being obsessed with my academic background. I also wanted to be independent of my family. I wanted to do music, make records and hang out with people who do music.

Q: What was the reaction around you?
A: The opposition from my parents was severe. I think it's because they know how hard it is, as my parents were musicians too, and they can't help but think about the financial aspects. At school, my teachers and friends were a bit disappointed. Because I was quite a good student, but I said I wouldn't go to university.

Q: What were your concerns about the process of changing your path after graduation?
A: I thought about it a lot, made a final decision, and then told my parents. While reading the book, I realised that I was interested in astronomy. But since I was doing music at the time, I had to think about the right path for me and consider what my future would be like either way.

Q: Did you talk to people around you when you made your decision?
A: I usually think a lot by myself. One of the reasons I didn't ask around is that other people don't know me that well, even my parents. I was of the strong opinion that the person who knows me best is me. No matter how much I ask others, I'm the one who makes the final decision. I'm the one who knows what I like and what I want to do. I believed in myself.

Q: What does it mean for you to choose to come to university?
A: I'm proud that I believed in myself. In the past, I didn't believe in myself and didn't trust others. But I'm proud that I believed in myself for the first time and made that decision. I believed in something for the first time, and it was myself. And it's meaningful that I'm doing well without regretting my choices and their outcomes.

Q: What do you mean by pride in yourself?

A: It's not about the time I studied hard or the fact I was studying. It is a pride in the process of finding what I wanted to do and deciding to go to university by myself. Many high school students blindly study to enter university, but I felt that I should give meaning to my study. Not due to others or external factors. So I think it's good.

Q: What are the good things about coming to university?
A: There are many opportunities. Both in the field of astronomy and future plans. And there are opportunities to dream.

Q: How do you evaluate your autonomy in choosing to come to university?
A: If I can give myself a score, I'd like to provide it with full marks. I made a choice autonomously. Not because of my parents or teachers. I decided to make my own choices and take responsibility for them.

7.3. Analysis by gender, major, university, and test re-taker

This research does not aim to investigate students' motivation for going to university by their conditions. So, the results by gender, major, and school in this sub-chapter are not representative of their categories. For example, I only interviewed one student from University F, so her result cannot be representative of University F. The information on gender, major, and school was collected when I received the applications from students. The purpose of collecting this information was to know basic information about students in advance and use this information in the interview to guide my questions to students. I analyse the results of each group by gender, major, and school and briefly compare them to the results for all 81 students. Also, 17 of the 81 students were CSAT re-takers. This information was not collected beforehand and was confirmed during the interview. I analyse the results of these students separately to see if there are any characteristics.

7.3.1. Results by gender

Table 9. Interview results by gender

Gender	Number of Students	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
		External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	
M	27	4 (14.8%)	8 (26.9%)	17 (63.0%)	3 (11.1%)	1 (3.7%)
F	54	16 (29.6%)	22 (40.7%)	30 (55.6%)	6 (11.1%)	2 (3.7%)

In terms of gender, one-third of 81 students were male, and the other two-thirds were female. The percentage of both male and female students for each group went in order of identified, introjected, external, integrated regulation, and intrinsic motivation, which is the same as for students overall. However, relatively, female students tend to be more affected by external and introjected regulation and less affected by identified regulation than male students. In particular, in the case of external regulation, which is a form of motivation typically experienced as controlled and non-autonomous, it was found to be almost twice in female students. It seems that the behaviour of female students choosing to go to university was more influenced by specific external pressure than male students.

7.3.2. Results by major

Table 10. Interview results by major

	Number of Students	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
		External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	
Humanities	42	15 (35.7%)	15 (35.7%)	23 (54.8%)	3 (7.1%)	2 (4.8%)
Natural sciences	21	3(14.3%)	10(47.6%)	10(47.6%)	3(14.3%)	1(4.8%)
Art, music, and PE	11	1(9.1%)	3(27.3%)	9(81.8%)	1(9.1%)	0(0.0%)
Free major	7	1(14.3%)	2(28.6%)	5(71.4%)	2(28.6%)	0(0.0%)

Results by major are divided into four categories. As a concept mainly used in South Korea, students preparing for the College Scholastic Ability Test must choose one of 3 streams of study: humanities, natural sciences, art, music, and PE. There is a difference in the subjects chosen when taking the test depending on these 3 streams of study. When students write the university application form, they can only apply for the relevant majors. There are a small number of departments that students can apply to regardless of the Humanities and Natural Sciences tracks selected in high school, but not many. So, students' current majors in university are classified into these 3 streams of study. The other one is the 'Free major'. It is a system in which university undergraduate students freely take classes in their first year, explore various majors, and then decide on their major from the second year. Some universities place restrictions on the admission of candidates for the humanities to natural science majors or vice versa, and some universities do not have such restrictions. Colleges of pharmacy, medicine, dentistry, oriental medicine, veterinary medicine, nursing, and education, etc., are special colleges in which a 'license' is given by a specific method, such as a national examination after graduation. There is an issue of equity, so some colleges are excluded from the majors that students in free majors can choose. Each university calls it by a different name, so the English notation is different. In this research, I will call it a free major.

Half of the interviewees' majors were related to humanities. All 4 groups by majors have a similar pattern as for all 81 students' results, identified regulation and introjected regulations are most common. But within the humanities major group, there are as many students with external regulation as introjected regulation. In addition, introjected regulation shows the same number as identified regulation, and integrated regulation is comparatively higher than the overall average across 81 students for natural sciences. Only one student is affected by external regulation in art, music, and PE, and it is much lower than the overall average of 81 students. And a remarkably higher number of students from art, music, and PE majors decided to go to university based on identified regulation. In the free major group, integrated regulation is comparatively higher than other groups' results.

7.3.3. Results by university

Table 11. Interview results by universities

University	Number of Students	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
		External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	
A	7	1	4	3	0	0
B	10	5	3	6	0	0
C	9	3	4	3	1	0
D	4	0	2	1	2	1
E	5	1	1	3	0	0
F	1	0	1	0	0	0
G	8	3	3	4	1	1
H	12	1	3	9	2	1
I	4	1	0	3	0	0
J	8	3	4	6	0	0
K	3	0	2	2	1	0
L	10	2	3	7	2	0

81 students are grouped into 12 universities, and the number of students from each school varied greatly. This is because there was no intention to match the ratio of the same number of students for each university, so all volunteered students were included in the interview without a screening process. Based on the interview results of all students (Identified regulation > Introjected regulation > External regulation > Integrated regulation > Intrinsic motivation), Universities A, C, D, and K show the same or a slightly higher number for introjected regulation than identified regulation, although there are not many differences. University B has a relatively large number for external regulation, and University D does for integrated regulation. University C shows a relatively low number of identified regulation but a high number of external regulation. For Universities E and G, external regulation has the same number as introjected regulation. University H has a relatively high number of students with integrated regulation, and University I does not have any students in introjection and integrated regulation. University J has a similar result pattern compared to all 81 students, and I have not analysed University F because I met only one student for an interview. There is no student equivalent to external regulation at University K, and University L has a relatively large number of integrated regulations. Analysing differences by the university does not appear to be significant based on the data.

7.3.4. Re-taker results

According to the education statistics service, the average rate of test re-takers among those admitted to a four-year university in the last 10 years (2010-2019) was 20.8% on average. Looking at the trend of applicants for the CSAT over the past 11 years, the number of high schools graduate applicants and re-takers for the CSAT in the 2010 academic year was 130,658 (16.3 per cent), and after that, it has been consistently in the 20 per cent range except for the 2011 academic

year (19.5 per cent) and the 2014 academic year (19.6 per cent). In particular, in the case of the 2020 CSAT, the re-takers rate was 25.9 per cent, the highest in the last decade.[22]

Of the 81 students I interviewed, 17 were test re-takers, which is about 21 per cent, similar to the national average. Test re-takers were not intentionally included in the study, but the information was confirmed during the interview. As with the results for all students, identified regulation was the most common, followed by introjected, external, and integrated. There were no students in this group with intrinsic motivation. Identified regulation is relatively higher when compared to the overall student results.

Table 12. Re-taker results

Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	
3	5	11	2	0

7.4. Changes in students' perspectives

I interviewed 21 students twice over a period of about 4-6 months. I expected that students might change their perspectives and how they think about subjects covered during the first interview. After the first interview, they had a different experience during the first semester and summer vacation as a university student. Contrary to my expectations, I did not find many changes in the students. However, I was able to hear interesting stories from some of the students related to what they shared in the first interview.

First of all, some students were enjoying a feeling of choice. After months of university life, they are satisfied that more choices are provided, and they have more freedom to choose what they want to do compared to the past. Students recognise their autonomy and try to take time and opportunities to think about themselves and their choices.

> *When I was in high school, I lacked choice in every aspect of my life, and I did not think I could choose. But now that I have choices, I feel free. My department tells us to find out what we want to do, and I have time to spare, so I can look it up. It would have been nice to have had an opportunity like this in high school, but I do not feel students can accept the opportunity within the South Korean education system if I think about it. When I was in high school, I thought my options were either going to university or getting a job after graduation. I am still not sure what I can learn and gain in university, but I think my perspective on the world has expanded a lot in the meantime.* (Student #11, external regulation & introjected regulation)

> *Compared to the past, I think the best thing now is that I have no restrictions. When I was in school, I was constantly being asked to do something such as that I have to study well, do well on exams, or go to a good university. So I think a lot that there were no such things as freedom*

[22] http://www.dhnews.co.kr

back then. I think that constraint has disappeared a bit now. No matter what choice I make, I like to make a choice and take responsibility. That's the best. It's not that I didn't have such an opportunity before, but I think I restrained myself more because I was a high school student. (Student #63, external regulation & identified regulation)

Unlike when I was in high school, I am happy that I can make choices now. I feel I have more freedom. I can choose the classes I want to take and how I want to spend my time. Though it's a burden to be responsible for such choices, I can do it. I love it. (Student #73, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

Students no. 58 and no. 66 say they have changed their view of university. Both of them indicated introjected and identified regulations as motivation for going to university. They thought only about going to a good university during high school. They believed the university name would represent them and that it would prove their success. They have expanded their horizons by meeting people with diverse perspectives and experiences, so the meaning of university changed for them.

My goal when I was in high school was to go to a good university. Until the last time we met, I thought the name of the university represented me. But I have realised that coming to university is not everything. All my friends thought the same way as me. About going to a good university. I had a lot of set ideas, and I felt that I wanted to break away from this. At university, I am able to meet and talk to people who have various life goals and paths. (Student #58, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

I think my values have changed a lot since the last interview. At that time, I thought that *university was everything in my life and that coming to university here was something to be proud of and show off. But I don't think that way now. Instead, I think I can do something more valuable if I want to and work hard in university. When I was in high school, it was an environment in which there was nothing I could do other than go to university.* (Student #66, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

One student said she did some self-reflection after the first interview. She felt a lot of pressure to go to university from her parents and society. She was one of the students who greatly regretted choosing a university and department according to the opinions of those around her. After the first interview, she thought about her past choices during the vacation and felt she wanted to be a person who makes her own choices autonomously. She said that she applied again to the university she'd wanted to go to originally, as seen in chapter 8.2.

I want to be my own person so that I can make choices autonomously in the future. I came to this thought because, during the summer vacation after the interview, I considered the choices and decisions that I had made so far. It made me keep saying, "Oh, this is not right". And one day, I thought about what colour I like, what I want to do, and other questions like that, but I couldn't figure it out. So, I'm trying to find my own point of view, starting with the little things. (Student #3, introjected regulation)

7.5. Conclusion

The 81 students I interviewed were 1st-year university students. Being a university student or starting university is functionings from the view of the capability approach because functionings are outcomes or achievements (Robeyns, 2005b; Walker, 2006). Students' functionings all look

the same if we compare only functionings. However, simply evaluating functionings is not enough to look at students' capabilities. Coming to university as functioning is an outcome, and the capabilities we should look at are students' real opportunities and freedom to achieve functionings. This chapter has attempted to discuss and demonstrate students' motivations in order to find out why students achieved the functionings of going to university, using the self-determination theory as a framework. I have tried to reveal students' real opportunities and freedom in the career choice-making process.

A student's choice should be determined by the student alone, not by other people's judgements. Thus, I applied self-determination theory to reveal from the students' perspectives whether students were autonomous in their choice-making. 81 students made a career choice as going to university based on their reason to value, but the student's autonomy in the choice-making is unascertainable if their reason to value is affected by collective judgements or external factors. Self-determination theory offers a multidimensional and validated measure of whether a student's exercise agency is indeed autonomous in making a certain choice via types of motivation and regulation.

In fact, of the 81 students, 78 students indicated extrinsic motivation as the reason to go to university. According to the degree of internalisation and autonomy, students are classified into four regulations, from external regulation to integrated regulation. There is not necessarily one motivation that drives students to choose to go to university. So, in the case of some students, they showed motivations corresponding to more than one regulation. 47 students displayed some identification, and 30 students exhibited tendencies toward introjection. 20 students indicated external regulations, and the following was integrated regulation to which 9 students belong to it. Identification regulation is in line with their goals and identity, and introjected regulation is that students partially take in the choice by effectively replacing an external force with internal pressure. These two regulations are the most common. That is, 47 students chose to go to university because they personally believe that it is important and worthwhile for their goals. The goals they put a value on are to feel more freedom and have various experiences at university, to experience it as a stage before entering society or as a means to expand the opportunities for future employment, to obtain a diploma, or to study the majors they are interested in, in order to work in related fields in the future. 30 students were somewhat partially internalised as they made their choices to experience self or other approval, to avoid a feeling of shame or anxiety, or to attain ego enhancements. The main motivations for these 30 students were that they would feel a sense of alienation and anxiety if they deviated from the path of going to university, which is regarded as standard in South Korea. Or this was because of parents' expectations and approval of going to university, or their own self-esteem or sense of accomplishment as they believe the university name represents their own success. These two regulations are located at the centre of the self-determination continuum. The implication from this is that students' motivation tends to be somewhat controlled and autonomous, as identified regulation is moderately autonomous motivation, and introjected regulation is moderately controlled motivation.

However, when comparing the least autonomous external regulation and the most autonomous integrated regulation in extrinsic motivation, it is 20 to 9. That means that students whose motives for choosing to go to university are controlled by external pressure are more than twice the number of those who considered alternatives, evaluated other values and needs, and then freely assimilated the motives of their choices into themselves. 20 students' motivations were controlled by external pressure and showed the lowest level of autonomy. Collective perspectives on education in South Korean society, which is that high school graduates should go to university,

percolated through to students, so they accepted it as the 'default value' required for them. Or otherwise, they regarded going to university as a reward for the time or money they spent or efforts they went to in preparing for the entrance exam. They also showed concern about not going to university because it could bring penalties such as limitations and discrimination in society. 9 students recognised and identified with the value of choice and synthesised this with other values and interests because integrated regulation is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. These 9 students considered other options to evaluate the choice of going to university and brought the choice into congruence with their values and needs. But, integrated behaviours are still considered extrinsic.

The other 3 students chose to come to university based on intrinsic motivation. Through each student's life history, I investigated how and why these students fully exercised their agency and autonomously made a choice to come to university. Each of the students has their own life history, but some commonalities were revealed among the three students. It can be interpreted that, first of all, all three students did not take going to university for granted. Secondly, they tried to find inherent enjoyment and interest. Thirdly, there were times when they considered other paths, not only university. Finally, their goal was to study something they were interested in at university, and thus the educational institution in itself was seen as an end and not a means to achieve results. Above all, they were aware of the need to make a decision and to have the motivation to engage in the career choice process and engaged in self-exploration as they gathered general information about themselves (Germeijs and Verschueren, 2006). These processes allowed them to enjoy the freedom of choice and the ability to act as agents regarding their capabilities in shaping their own personal values and objectives. Their reason to value going to university is identified as intrinsic motivation, which is autonomous and internalised, so they exercise their agency in the choice-making process.

This chapter has also attempted to discuss the students' motivations to go to university according to their conditions. But as previously mentioned, the results by gender, major, university, and test re-taker do not represent the groups as a whole. Analysis carried out according to these conditions did not reveal any remarkable differences compared to the group as a whole.

Chapter 8. How do students determine their agency in career choice-making?

The previous chapter examined students' motivations for choosing to go to university and elucidated each motivation based on students' descriptions and the regulations of self-determination theory. This chapter will explore how students view themselves as agents in career decision-making by examining their own voices and perceptions.

One strength of the life history interview approach is in its capturing of people's perceptions of their lives. Students talked about their personal situations and experiences and expressed their thoughts, perceptions, and feelings related to their life. Students revealed information as to the long-term changes they'd undergone to both themselves and me. I asked students whether they engaged as an autonomous agent when making a choice to come to university. I asked this question during the latter part of the interview when we discussed their choices and the processes behind them in detail. Then, I asked how they determine themselves as an agent, and students' responses produced a series of interesting findings.

To investigate autonomous agency, measurements should incorporate what students value and how they value their agency or lack thereof. What students value in terms of career choice and the choice of going to university has been explored in the previous chapter. This chapter will attempt to understand how students assign value to the agency in choice-making. This prompts questions about agency related to the choice and will help to reveal students' determination of their agency. Do students have experiences of exercising or perceiving agency in choice-making? How do students articulate the reasons why they could not be autonomous? Why are students unable to determine their agency in choice-making?

8.1. Regretting the heteronomous choice

Theoretically and ideally speaking, people can choose how to act even under adverse conditions, as some existentialists claim (Ryan and Deci, 2006). But in real life, this is not as easy as it sounds. Factors blocking students' autonomy are ubiquitous. Factors could be either internal or external or both. Moreover, each individual is different in determining the degree of difficulty of factors that impede their autonomy and responding to it. Students often feel they cannot be autonomous regardless of their potential to be autonomous agent in a situation such as making a choice. There are varied reasons why students' agency is restricted. Social controls, evaluative pressures, rewards, punishments, and outside awareness can powerfully constrain behaviour (Ryan and Deci, 2006).

When asked whether they engaged as an autonomous agent in the process of making a choice to come to university, some students talked about their past choices in which they were not autonomous. They said they regret their past choices, as they relied heavily on other people's judgment, especially close adults such as parents and teachers. Of course, deferring to others is not a problem in and of itself. As discussed in chapter 4.6., people can be autonomously dependent, freely and willingly relying on others if they perceive them as supportive. It also means people can be autonomously independent. If a person decides to follow other people's judgement because they concur with them, they autonomously depend on others. So, in this case, people exercise their agency as they behave in accordance with external influences.

But this was not the case for the students who talked about choices that were not autonomous in the past. They had different opinions from their parents and teachers regarding particular choices,

and they were aware of that when they made the decision. The student did not or could not exercise their agency, and now they regret not pursuing their wants or interests. This does not mean that these students do not have the potential or capability to be autonomous, but external factors influence students at the point of decision-making, and the key issue is whether or not students autonomously concur with other people in their choice-making. Therefore, instead of asking questions about their inability to make a heteronomous choice, I continued to ask questions by focusing on why they thought they were not autonomous and how to feel about it.

The current career choice, that being the chosen path following high school graduation, is connected to the student's past choices. General academic high school education offers two different curriculum tracks: the *Munka* (Humanities) track or the *Yika* (Natural Sciences) track, and students should have to decide on one curriculum before entering their second year of high school. The decision is pivotal for students, given that each curriculum limits the subjects students learn at high school, and these will be the test subjects they take for the CSAT later. The chosen curriculum also restricts the choice of major when students apply for university after the CSAT. After choosing one curriculum track, changing to another track is difficult or almost impossible in some cases because the track-based curriculum is implemented at the classroom level, not individually.

> *In high school, I had to choose between Munka (Humanities) and Yika (Natural sciences). I actually wanted to choose humanities. But my mum told me unless there was a specific job I really wanted to do in the future, to choose natural sciences, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do or what I liked. So I chose natural sciences as my mum suggested. But I regretted it a lot once I applied for university after taking the CSAT. When I tried to apply, I realised that the fields I was interested in were all humanities-related departments*. (Student #2, introjected regulation)

> *I found out about the special-purpose high school I attended when I was in middle school because my parents recommended it. They said the school would help me get into a good university. So I went to that school. Students at the special-purpose high school only study humanities subjects, and there's no other curriculum track we can choose. I did not seriously consider this limited track choice when I decided to apply to that high school. But when I was in my third year of high school, preparing for the CSAT, I realised I wanted to attend medical school. Few medical schools accept humanities students, so I studied hard, wanting to go to a school that did. There was no field related to humanities that I was interested in, but I wanted to study psychiatry. After the CSAT, I thought I wouldn't get in when I applied for the medical school I had in mind, and in the end, I didn't. After that, I selected my university and major and came here because it was the highest-ranking university I could get into with my test score. But I'm not enjoying my major, so I am considering a double major. I vaguely thought that I could get into a good university and went to that high school without thinking about what I really wanted to do. When I found out what I wanted to do and study, it was too late to change. So I really regret that choice.* (Student #74, external regulation)

These two students accepted their parents' advice and judgment when choosing a high school and curriculum tracks, and this influenced their choice of university and major later. They followed their parents' decision, even though one wanted to make a different choice, and the other did not seriously consider what she was interested in or wanted to do.

Student no. 3 has a similar experience to students no. 2 and no. 74 in terms of choosing curriculum tracks in high school. She was aware that she was more interested in the general humanities field

than the natural sciences field, but she chose the natural sciences because she simply thought she liked science subjects. So when she chose the track, she was not influenced by the adults around her. But when she applied to university after the test, she did not exercise her agency because of her parents' opposition and her teacher's pressing advice. Now she deeply regrets her past choices.

> *My teachers' advice played a crucial role in choosing a university. I myself strongly tend towards humanities, but when I had to choose between humanities and natural sciences in high school, I just preferred science subjects to social studies. That's why I chose natural sciences. I should've considered it more seriously. When I applied for university, I wanted to apply for at least one humanities-related department, but my parents were opposed to the idea. I didn't put it in, so now I regret it a lot. I also regret that I applied to two universities based on what my teacher told me, even though I did not want to go to either of them. I knew what I wanted and didn't want. So I regret so much that I followed the advice of my parents and teachers. After all, it's not about the school my parents or teachers go to, but the school I attend and the major I study for the next four years.* (Student #3, introjected regulation)

8.2. Experience of perceiving autonomy

Contextual events affect intrinsic motivation and the quality of functioning because they influence the extent to which people experience autonomy while engaged in an activity. Thus, according to self-determination theory, providing choices and acknowledging feelings can provide satisfaction with the need for autonomy and result in more positive outcomes (Deci and Ryan, 2000). For example, Reeve and Deci's (1996) intrinsic motivation study showed the mediating role of perceived autonomy. They examined the effect of competition on participants' intrinsic motivation to solve puzzles in a controlled versus uncontrolled environment. Results indicated that forcing people to win by setting up competition within a controlled context induces less intrinsic motivation than competition within an uncontrolled context. Also, participants' perceptions of their own autonomy mediated this effect (Deci and Ryan, 2000: 234).

Some students have the experiences of being provided choices and acknowledging their feelings after experiencing diminished agency in past choices. They regret not acting autonomously in making past choices. After experiencing this regret, they perceived themselves as the source and initiator of behaviour in a new context, considered options, and decided autonomously. Student no. 3, whom I mentioned previously, said she reapplied for university even though she was already attending university. She really regretted her past choices. She had not fully considered her likes and wants when choosing her curriculum track in high school. This meant that she had limited choices when she applied for university. She also felt that she did not exercise her agency when she applied because she focused on others' opinions rather than her inner voice. She commented on her decision to reapply to university as below:

> *I'm not going to retake the test, but I can write the application again this year without taking it. So I applied to the universities I'd wanted to apply to last year. The results haven't come out yet, but I feel pretty good about it. I regretted listening to other people too much, so I tried my best not to do that when I applied this time. I think it would be ok if the result isn't good enough because this time, I made the decisions myself, which means a lot to me.* (Student #3, introjected regulation)

Student no. 60 was relatively more assertive than student no. 3 in his career choices and acted in a self-reliant manner. In the past, he wanted to major in art and attend an art academy to prepare to enter university as an art major, but he gave up due to strong opposition from his parents. He was in a slump because of the frustration of not being able to do what he really wanted to do while at odds with his parents. Alkire (2005b) said when people are not able to exert agency, they may be alienated from their behaviour, coerced into a situation, or simply become passive. Student no. 60 was not committed to his high school life and did not study hard for the test. He said he could not find any reason to study hard then. He took the CSAT and applied to universities regardless of his opinion with poor test scores. As Alkire said, he was very passive in the process of going to university, so his parents and teachers took over the process. Even though he got offers from several universities, he did not want to register at any of them. He then recognised himself as the initiator of his choices and actions and decided to exercise his autonomy fully, so he took the test again after one more year of study and entered the university where he wanted to go despite many outside objections.

> *The university I applied to and got an offer from last year was a national university. But there was a university in Seoul I wanted to go to. I'd always wanted to major in art, so I wanted to go to a university famous for art. So I wanted to study one more year, retake the test, and go to that university. But when I decided to prepare for the test for another year, my parents were against it, so I argued a lot with them. My parents wanted me to register and graduate from that national university and get a job after graduating. So there was a lot of opposition. But I'd already experienced giving up on art once because of my parents' opposition. I felt a lot at that time. It's my life, and I thought I had to be sure of what I wanted to do, so I stuck to my guns and decided to study again. The experience of going through what I wanted to do in that way meant a lot to me. I feel like I can do anything I want now. I have no regrets not at all about the choice to study one more year, and I think I can plan my future career as I wish at this university.* (Student #60, identified regulation)

Self-determination theorists have suggested that choices that allow one's actions to reflect personal values, goals, or interests will greatly affect motivation (Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008). Thus, people who enjoy high levels of agency are engaged in actions congruent with their values (Alkire, 2005b). Student no. 60, for example, his interest in art and the goal of studying art at a university of his choice allowed him to take autonomy, which greatly influenced his motivation to go to university. He now has a strong belief in himself and confidence in his future choices, given what he has learned from past experiences. He now enjoys high levels of agency and makes choices that concur with his values.

This experience of regretting one's past choices or behaviour and acknowledging oneself then exercising agency through one's free will and intrinsic motivation was rare among the students I met for the interview. However, being provided choice and acknowledging one's inner experience enhances intrinsic motivation and augments confidence in one's performance (Decy and Ryan, 2000). The need for autonomy represents individuals' inherent desire to feel volitional and to experience a sense of choice and psychological freedom when carrying out an activity. So it is the degree to which individuals perceive themselves as the source and initiator of behaviour (Decy and Ryan, 2000; Painter, 2011). The more autonomous individuals perceive themselves in activities, the more intrinsically motivated they will be (Painter, 2011). Thus, although several factors are essential to intrinsic motivation, perceived autonomy is a necessary condition (Ryan and Deci, 2006).

8.3. Lack of options other than going to university

In the case of the previous two students, they regretted their past choices of school or department and exercised their agency later when they had an opportunity to do so. However, not many students are offered options for various reasons. Neither of the two students said they had any choice but to go to university after graduating high school. When I asked students about career options after graduating high school and their autonomy when choosing to go to university, many students, including these two, said they did not know what the other options were and even had no choice but to go to university. They were, therefore, unsure whether it was their autonomous 'choice' to go to university. As stated earlier, having a lot of options does not result in autonomous choice-making, and the absence of options does not always make autonomous choice impossible. The difference here is that students recognised that they did not have alternatives but to go to university as their career and showed a negative view of it.

Student no. 7, for example, was interested in and enjoyed learning in and of itself. She had a field she wanted to study and something she wanted to do in the future. She said that she didn't mind not going to university as long as she could study what she wanted. However, she said she didn't know what other options there were other than going to university. She was one of the few students who were very active in exploring other options in order to make the best choice. So she asked the adults around her, such as her parents and teachers, but no one told her about other options. The career decision-making difficulty she encountered was a lack of information about ways of obtaining career information (Gati, Krausz, and Osipow, 1996). Eventually, as a high school student in South Korea, the option she was most familiar with was going to university, so she chose to do so even though it was not the best option for her. Currently, she is not satisfied with her choice to go to university because the quality of classes at university is not up to her expectations.

On the lack of options other than going to university, the students commented:

> *It is a shame that there were no options other than going to university. If I had other options, I would have considered them and made a decision. I think it would have been better if I had.* (Student #33, introjected regulation)

> *I do not think there were many options other than going to university. I cannot imagine what I would've been doing now if I hadn't gone to university. If I had a lot of information about the options, I could have after graduating from high school and might have made a different choice.* (Student #38, identified regulation)

> *I never knew there were other options. I was told that from middle school, I had to study hard to get into a particular high school so that I could go to a good university. When I was in high school, people said that I had to have good school records from the 1st year to apply to a good university in my 3rd year of high school. Even adults don't seem to know what options we have other than university.* (Student #66, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

> *It would be hard to say that my choice to go to university was of my own free will. I don't think I chose it after considering all the information regarding options other than going to university. South Korean society did not tell me much about what other options I could have if I did not go to university.* (Student #75, identified regulation)

Choice has several meanings. Some students might feel overwhelmed by the effort entailed in decision-making when they have many options and do not feel autonomous. Alternatively, some

students think entirely autonomous even if they have only one option that functionally involves no choice, as long as they truly endorse that option (Ryan and Deci, 2006). However, providing choice could be the most obvious way to support a person's experience of autonomy. Self-determination theory argues that choice should result in positive motivational and performance outcomes (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000a). Students will thus be more intrinsically motivated to persist at a task to the extent that the activity involves their personal choice and provides opportunities to make choices (Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008). In addition, studies that constrain other controlling conditions with support for autonomy have reliably found that supporting autonomy, such as an opportunity for meaningful choice, facilitate intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2006). For example, Iyengar and Lepper (1999) found that Caucasian American students performed best when they made personal choices about which tasks to engage in rather than having their chosen task. Similarly, children provided with options demonstrated greater learning, as measured by the number of problems answered correctly on a math test (Cordova and Lepper, 1996 in Patall, Cooper, and Robinson, 2008).

8.4. Lack of time and opportunity to think about a career

I asked the question of whether students were autonomous in their choice to go to university and in the process of implementing that choice. Most of the students I interviewed answered that they were not. I asked the following question, why did you determine you were not autonomous? One of the answers stated that there had been very little time and opportunity to explore and think about themselves, including with regard to career issues. As Walker(2020) says, the narrower opportunities, the less freedom to choose what matters to them. Also, these answers led to statements about the problems and limitations of the South Korean education system.

To date, South Korean students have often not had enough time or energy to reflect on their dreams or talents because they have been too busy preparing for tests. This has led to 34.4 % of middle school students and 32.3 % of high school students saying that they had no future dreams or hopes (Ko, Kim, Roh, Byun, and Kim, 2008). In particular, even if self-exploration is necessary for them to make career decisions after graduation, most high school students do not have enough time or experience to explore their aptitude, values, careers, etc. This is due to excessive competition in the university entrance exams, so they do not accurately understand the aspect of themselves, such as their personality, aptitude, interests, or abilities (Germeijs and Verschueren, 2006; Roh, 2012).

As described in chapter 2, students in South Korea spend a lot of time studying both in school and out of school for the purpose of getting into university. According to the 'International Comparative Study on Life Patterns of Children and Adolescents', it is found that 15-24 year-olds in South Korea spend 7 hours and 50 minutes on weekdays, including school classes, private tutoring, and self-study. Compared to youth from other OECD countries, which is around 5 hours, it means that the time to invest in studies is 2 hours longer. The study time of adolescents is 6 hours 6 minutes in Finland, 5 hours 55 minutes in Sweden, 5 hours 21 minutes in Japan, 5 hours 4 minutes in the US, and 5 hours 2 minutes in Germany. In addition, South Korean adolescents study 49.43 hours a week, 15 hours more than the OECD average (33.92 hours). Since the survey is conducted for 15-24 year-olds, South Korean middle and high school students will spend more

time studying if university students are excluded.[23] Practically speaking, spending so much time studying in an environment that focuses solely on going to university means that students do not have the time to think about their careers or themselves.

> *Sometimes, I think it would have been better if I could have experienced more things at school. I spent too much time studying for the CSAT at schools and private educational institutes. Looking back, I only remember studying. I did not think that I should look for anything other than going to university in my career search.* (Student #71, external regulation, introjected regulation & identified regulation)

> *When I was in high school, I was just following the school curriculum and preparing for university, so I had no idea what I liked or what I wanted to do. Now, I'm thinking about my future, and I feel I should know more about myself. I need to take a break and have time to think. That is the reason why I want to take time off from university. I did not have the mental space to think about myself while attending school.* (Student #3, introjected regulation)

> *The high school curriculum doesn't give us time to think about or develop our career paths. That's why students like me have no idea about our career paths. Nevertheless, we study hard because we believe that we can go to a good high-ranking university if we get a high score. But it was not easy for me to study with such a simple goal. I didn't know what the point of studying to go to university was without a goal.* (Student #7, identified regulation)

Schools in South Korea develop and operate career experience programmes, field trips, visiting lectures, etc. The purpose is to expand and promote career exploration opportunities for middle and high school students through experience programmes in various occupational fields in consideration of students' interests and aptitudes. And each school has a department and a teacher or counsellor in charge of career education. Theoretically speaking, students can discuss matters, including career issues, with a teacher or counsellor whenever they want. However, due to the lack of integrated management of career education, it is difficult for students to find a teacher or counsellor who can counsel their career path, so they do not receive help from career education. 49.44% of students and 59.21% of parents were dissatisfied with their studies and career guidance, and 31.7% of middle school students, 52.5% of general academic high schools students, and 40.5% of vocational high schools students answered that they were not satisfied with the school career education. In addition, the proportion and level of career education covered in the teacher training are deficient, so teachers' overall awareness and preparation for career education are weak (Kim and Bang, 2010). Therefore students commented that programmes and counselling did not provide enough time or opportunity to discuss their career issues, including their interests and concerns.

> *There was a career activities programme in my high school. These included visiting a broadcasting station or having a visit from a flight attendant who came to my school to give a lecture. To be honest, such programmes only gave basic explanations about each job, not about what people in that job liked or why they chose that job. It was such a perfunctory programme that it did not really help me. I do not think I had a chance to think about my career or myself through these experiences.* (Student #9, identified regulation)

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[23] https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/3714933#home

One student, interestingly, noted a regional imbalance. The population concentration in the metropolitan area is a big social problem in South Korea. In 2020, for the first time, the metropolitan area's population overtook the non-metropolitan area, and the population was driven to the metropolitan area because of jobs and education. Although the metropolitan area accounts for only 12% of South Korea's area, more than 50% of the population, industry, capital, hospitals, universities, and cultural facilities are concentrated[24].

> *I lived in a rural area until I came to university, and there wasn't much infrastructure, so there was not much that middle and high school students could experience. Even if I tried to do volunteer work, there were no activities related to my interests or future career. So I guess I didn't know what I wanted to do because there were lots of things I couldn't do. In the environment I lived in, even if there had been something I wanted to do, I wouldn't have to know what it was. There was no way to think about it or find out more. But in Seoul, if I want to do something, I believe there are many opportunities to experience it*. (Student #18, external regulation & introjected regulation)

Intriguingly, many students said they had never once considered whether they wanted to go to university or not and why. Awareness or motivation for the need to make career decisions was not internalised, and there was no experience of external stimulus for this.

> *I'd never been asked whether I was going to university or not or if I wanted to go to university or not. No one asked me those questions. I was only asked which university I was going to. So I think I internalised the idea of going to university without realising it. I'd never thought about whether to go to university or not and now I'm thinking about which university to go to.* (Student #11, external regulation & introjected regulation)

> *For example, no one asked why I thought I had to go to university or why I came to the university as you did in today's interview. Everyone just told me to go like it was the obvious thing to do.* (Student #21, identified regulation)

Some students expressed how they felt sorry for themselves because they did not have the time and opportunity to think about themselves earlier. Student no. 20 took time to think about herself while studying for another year to retake the CAST because she practically had more time than when she was a high school student. Student no.21 thought about it for the first time in her life when she wrote a cover letter for a university application. The opportunity to think about herself was a means for application, not an end, as she'd already decided on the university and major.

> *At first, I decided to prepare for the test one more year to improve my exam scores. I thought a lot during that year, and I looked back on myself and reflected a great deal. The saddest thing was that I had not thought about it until that time. I did not think about myself, what type of person I was, what I was good at, etc. I was so sad about that. I know that I could not afford to think about that when I was in middle and high school, but it would have been better if I had done it back then. I always thought that I would do what I wanted to do after the CSAT, but when the exam was over, I didn't know what made me happy and what I liked. With that thought in mind, after the exam was over, I felt very empty.* (Student #20, external regulation)

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[24] https://www.ajunews.com/view/20200629101633626

I thought about myself too late. In high school, I had to write a cover letter for my university application, and I heard someone talk about writing a good cover letter. The person said that the letter would be well written if I seriously thought about why I wanted to go to the department and listed the things I really wanted to do. That was the first time I thought seriously about it, and I do not think I'd had time to think deeply about what I liked and why I wanted to do it before. That was so sad. (Student #21, identified regulation)

8.5. Uncertainty about students' own agency

Research on other factors for internal motivation argues that when external rewards are introduced for doing inherently interesting activities, people tend to feel controlled by rewards, so the causality for behaviour shifts from inside to outside. People feel less about the origin of their actions and therefore show less intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000). And people can easily miss important values, and when prioritising external rewards, people tend to report less autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2006).

Here, even though no student is introduced to external rewards such as money for going to university, the external factors, which are the social norms, context, and collective judgements in South Korea, significantly affect students' determination of agency. Many students were uncertain as to what extent their decision was based on autonomous agency and to what extent their choices were made because of external factors.

Some students said that they chose to go to university because they obviously wanted to do so and had goals to achieve this, but they added the sentence, *But I am not sure* at the end. The goals they want to reach are aspirations for the future. They had aspirations when they chose to go to university, but aspirations are not only individual but always formed in interaction and social life. Thus their aspirations are significantly influenced by the social and educational context people find themselves (Walker, 2018). The social system that reflects collective perspectives on education and the economic reward system has infiltrated these students who have spent 12 years in the South Korean school system, talking somewhat negatively about their autonomy and the value of choosing to go to university. All students have the potential to act as they want to do and be, but many factors are influencing their capabilities and the unlocking of their agency (Walker, 2018). These factors also make students uncertain about determining their own agency.

I think my career choice, that is, the choice of going to university, was somewhat autonomous. But I believe some part of my choice was influenced by my social environment. So I thought I decided on my own, but in the end, I felt it may have been due to societal pressure. (Student #29, identified regulation)

It's too difficult to answer about my autonomy. That's why it's taken me so long to reply. I'm now thinking about reapplying to another university this year, and I told my mum about this. But my mum kept saying how I wanted to go to university, and I was the one who chose the university I'm attending now, and she asked why I wanted to change. Listening to my mother, I question whether I made a choice or whether the people around me or society brainwashed me, and I do not even know. (Student #33, introjected regulation)

I think there must be something I picked up from society without even realising it. And I think those things learned were linked to my will. So, if I had lived in a foreign country where I

would not have been looked down upon, even if I hadn't gone to university, I think my choices might have been slightly different. (Student #55, identified regulation)

I tried to be autonomous, but I don't think I made my decision autonomously. I tried to be autonomous, but I made a compromise with the world. It's hard to choose between doing what I want to do and doing what the world demands. I am still thinking about it. (Student #11, external regulation & introjected regulation)

I do not think everything I've done so far has been of my own free will. It was definitely my choice, but my decision came out of worrying and contemplating a combination of other factors. I do not think I have become a university student because I planned and implemented my life on my own. (Student #37, identified regulation & integrated regulation)

8.6. Conclusion

As Alkire's (2005) review showed, students' subjective measures of their agency have several identifying characteristics. First, students reflect on their internal experience, including their own judgements and values about how well they are functioning in choice-making. Second, they include positive as well as negative experiences. Third, they focus on enduring evaluations rather than fleeting emotional states.

The analysis in this chapter has looked at the students' determination of their own agency in career decision-making. Only a few students autonomously decided to go to university based on intrinsic motivation and determined themselves as active initiators and agents of choice and behaviour in the career decision-making process. Most of the other students were uncertain in terms of their agency. They say they had not been autonomous or that it was difficult to determine precisely how autonomous they had been. They felt they could not be autonomous and exercise agency in choosing their career path because various factors constrained their thoughts and behaviour. Understanding this, the adverse and equivocal determination of their autonomy is related to the findings discussed and demonstrated in the previous two chapters about extrinsic motivations. This chapter has attempted to understand that students' agency is perceived and determined through their own point of view, not by external judgements.

Some students who valued agency regretted the past choices they'd made heteronomously, and under the influence of meaningful adults around them, parents and teachers influenced their career choice a great deal. Some students did not just end up regretting their past choices but experienced perceiving their own agency in another choice. They explained that being provided choices and acknowledging feelings allows them to perceive autonomy in the choice process, and they showed satisfaction from being an autonomous agent in their choices. As a result, they put more value on agency. They identified the reasons why they were not an autonomous agent in their choice-making: a lack of options other than going to university and a lack of the time and opportunity to think about their career and themselves. In South Korea, middle and high school students spend most of their time at schools and private academies. Students, therefore, pointed out that South Korean education does not play a role in providing information on choices other than going to university or providing opportunities or time to ponder and explore one's career and oneself at all. As explained in chapter 2, today's education in South Korea is excessively university entrance exam-oriented, and parents and teachers in public and private education are also emphasising university admission. Many authors have highlighted the importance of becoming autonomous through education. They argue that education can develop students'

understanding of what it means to live well and help students to be able to compare different ways of living so that they can choose good lives for themselves (White, 1987; Saito, 2003; Unterhalter and Walker, 2007). Education can make students autonomous by promoting and exercising agency, but the current South Korean education can not.

Finally, students were unable to determine their agency. This is mainly because the perception of education in South Korean society has infiltrated students' lives, even passing on from their parents' generation to their own generation. The perception is so profoundly unconscious that students show difficulties in determining what extent they had agency in their choices and to what extent their choices were influenced by other things. They were unsure how to build a boundary between the two. Even students who showed a high degree of autonomy and internalisation hesitated when determining their agency. Thus, the collective perspective on education in South Korea influences not only career choice-making but also students' perception in viewing and determining their agency.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

This thesis began with a personal reflection on my past educational choice and agency in that choice. Over time during my education, I realised that when it came to making a choice, no one, including myself, was asking me 'why?' and as the agent of making a choice, I did not fully exist in that choice. Thus, this thesis was prompted by the question of why many students in South Korea choose to go to university as their career path after high school graduation and how students determine their own agency in that choice. In an effort to provide a more comprehensive understanding of choice, this study has attempted to reveal students' perception of choice, which is going to university and the orientation of motivation led to choice. Also, this study has paid attention to students' own words to understand how they determine their autonomy in the choice-making process and why. By understanding the students' perception, motivation, and agency determination surrounding the choice, we have been able to see why students eventually make the specific choice; and how their agency is exercised.

In this conclusion, I embrace discussions in relation to how this study has attempted to provide an alternative approach to the choice of going to a university in South Korea. I also reflect on some of the limitations of this study. Lastly, I will consider what the wider implications and contributions of my findings might be.

9.1. What has this study found?

This thesis started with a detailed analysis of precisely what is involved in the development of South Korean education through various perspectives. It is known that South Korea has undergone rapid and unprecedented economic achievement and educational development (Kim, 2014; Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017). And its rapid economic development correlates highly with investment in human capital (Pillay, 2010; Oputa, 2015). There was an increase in the demand for highly qualified human resources due to rapid economic growth, and high education levels were regarded as key objective indicators in South Korean society (So and Kang, 2014). Along with historical and traditional backgrounds that put a high value and meaning on education, South Korea's socio-economic reward system has also strengthened this value. Thus, today, a person's academic background is decisive in determining her social position in South Korea. In this process, the cultural phenomenon in which South Korean society recognises education as a means of success was naturally formed (Lee, 2001; Lee, 2009; Hultberg, Calonge, and Kim, 2017; Lee, 2017). And this phenomenon is also visible through the high enrolment rates at higher educational institutions, as 7 out of 10 high school graduates entering the higher educational institution in 2020. Also, the proportion of those aged between 25 and 34 years old who had attained tertiary education in 2019 was 70 per cent, compared to the OECD average of 45 per cent, the highest score among OECD countries (KEDI, 2019; MOE, 2020).

This study has been constructed based on the theoretical framework of the capability approach and self-determination theory. First, the capability approach puts people at the centre of the capability approach's concerns (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007; Alkire and Deneulin, 2009). It focuses on what each individual is able to do and be, their 'valuable doings and beings', in making meaningful choices from a range of options in their life (Walker, 2005). Second, functionings are outcomes or achievements in the capability approach, and capabilities are real opportunities or the potential to achieve valuable beings and doings (Robeyns, 2005b; Walker, 2006). The capability approach argues that we should look at people's real capabilities and freedom by

distinguishing capabilities and functionings (Brighouse and Unterhalter, 2010). Third, Sen has articulated the importance of human agency as the capability approach views people as active agents (Alkire, 2005b; 2008). People who enjoy high levels of agency are engaged in behaviours and activities that are congruent with their values.

However, when Sen defined agency in the capability approach, he used the expression 'reason to value' (Sen, 1999). A reason to value inevitably evokes collective judgement of what is rational for individuals to value. The widespread collective judgement that establishes certain values in a society deeply undermines how an individual can develop his or her own view of values and infringes on the freedom of individuals to act as agents. Thus, Sen's expression of 'reason to value' in his understating of agency does not reveal whether students are autonomous in their choice-making.

Therefore, I have utilised the theoretical work of self-determination theory to consider this aspect. By locating capability approach concepts with self-determination theory, I have endeavoured to make theoretically grounded links between agency and real freedom to understand whether students are autonomous as subjective agents when making choices. The self-determination theory offers an approach to agency measurement that reveals whether students' exercised agency is indeed autonomous. The tool provided by self-determination theory is a multidimensional and validated measure of students' agency and their perception of making certain choices via types of motivation and regulation. Importantly, the aim of the exercise was not to compartmentalise students' motivation into conceptual boxes. Rather, the point of this endeavour has been to provide a more fine-grained understanding of the motivation and autonomy of choice. These measurements are unpacked and explained by considering students' values, contextual conditions, and deliberations and responses to the choice.

In sum, throughout the thesis has endeavored to shed light on the choice of going to university as a career path after high school graduation by exploring students' perception, motivation, and agency in a South Korean context. By framing students' agency in career choice-making through the lens of the capability approach and self-determination theory, this study attempted to make several theoretical and practical contributions.

With respect to the results of my analysis, it is clearly emerging that collective judgment has established that going to university is a valuable choice in society. The widespread perspective of education in South Korea has strongly undermined how students can develop their own independent set of values in terms of career paths. This perspective of education has been structuring students' cognitive structure so that going to university is taken for granted and is not questioned. Interestingly, students recognise that their choice to go to university is socially embedded, so students have a negative view of being against their choice. In addition, the school and family are also influenced by the society in which they are situated. As a result, school and family further strengthened students' perception of going to university. South Korea's collective perspective on education organises students' thoughts, perceptions, and motivation in career choice.

Even if many students take going to university for granted as they are influenced by South Korean society and school and family background, they are not amotivated when choosing to go to university. Different types of motivations lead students to choose to go to university, and concern for the orientation of that motivation allows seeking the reasons for choices. Of the 81 students I interviewed, 78 had extrinsic motivation, and 3 decided to go to the university by intrinsic

motivation. In addition, 47 students chose to go to university because they personally believe that it is important and worthwhile for their goal, and 30 students partially internalised as their choice are made to experience self or other approval, to avoid a feeling of shame or anxiety, or to attain ego enhancements. For 20 students' motivation was controlled by external pressure and showed the lowest level of autonomy. These students accepted the choice of going to university as the 'default value' required by society for them. They regarded going to university as a reward for the time or money they spent or efforts to prepare for the entrance exam and showed concern for not going to university because it could be a penalty such as limitation and discrimination in society. On the other hand, 9 students considered other options to evaluate the choice of going to university and brought the choice into congruence with their values and needs. The students' motivations for choosing were found to be many in order of identified regulation, introjected regulation, external regulation, and integrated regulation, and it can be seen from this result that relatively many students chose with motives that are moderately autonomous or moderately controlled in terms of the degree of autonomy of motivation.

As mentioned above, only 3 students out of 81, chose to go to university for intrinsic motivation. They were aware of the need to make a decision and motivation to engage in the career choice process. It means they did not take it for granted that they were going to university and considered alternatives. Also, they did self-exploration to gather information about themselves, so they tried to find out their inherent enjoyment and interest and followed it. These experiences allowed them to enjoy the freedom of choice and the ability to act as agents regarding their capabilities in shaping their own personal values and objectives. Their reason to value going to university was identified as intrinsic motivation, which is fully autonomous and internalised, so they freely exercised their agency in the choice-making process.

In terms of determination of agency, most students I met were uncertain about judging their own agency in choice-making. This is mainly because South Korean society's collective perception of education has permeated students' lifetimes. This perception is so profoundly unconscious that students showed difficulties in determining to what extent their own agency made their choices and to what extent other things influenced their choices. Thus, it can be seen that the collective perspective on the education of South Korean society influences not only career choice but also students' perception to view and determine their agency.

9.2. Some limitations of this study

Given the findings and analyses of this study, there were several limitations. First and foremost, the research design of this study is small-scale. This type of research is valuable as it allows the examination of complex processes, which can then be related to the individual biographies of students. However, a key problem of my study, which is common to most interview-based studies on career choices, is the small and unsystematic nature of these samples (White, 2007: 25). Thus, because of the relatively small size as well as non-representative nature of my sample, the temptation to make wide-ranging generalisations was resisted.

The second methodological limitations of this study are that it only considered students from 10 four-year universities based in major cities in South Korea. It is clear, therefore, that my study cannot shed light on possibly different phenomena occurring in other contexts. While the main issues discussed in this thesis around the role of education are certainly widespread throughout the whole country, and the observed student-choice dynamics are likely to be widespread in the

country, the representativeness of South Korea as a whole cannot be claimed. A study that included students from other types of higher educational institutions and areas in South Korea would have brought to the fore potentially different stories. In addition to this, a study conducted with students who choose other paths than going to university might also highlight different values, perceptions, and motivation in terms of career choice compared to 1st-year university students.

Lastly, this study did not aim to investigate heterogeneity across domains such as gender, major, school, and test re-taker. A brief analysis was carried out according to these characteristics, but no remarkable differences were found. This was possibly also because no sample exclusion criteria were defined or applied other than being a 1st-year university student. A sample selection process that systematically included other criteria might have yielded additional findings.

9.3. Educational implications and the contribution of this study

Research on the career choice of youth in South Korea can be largely divided into studies that seek to clarify the constructs of career paths, studies that deal with the relationship between career paths and related variables, and studies that examine the effectiveness of career counselling and education programmes. Students' career path is affected by many factors, and findings are not always consistent. In terms of research on career choice or higher educational choice in South Korea, it is difficult to find studies that explore the motivations and implications of the choice of going to university, students' perceptions of this choice, and the autonomy of choice motives. Moreover, studies focusing on students' agency in their choices are scarce.

It is an irrefutable fact that education in South Korea has achieved remarkable growth in terms of human capital. As a result, national development, economic growth, and quantitative and qualitative development of education were achieved to high standards. The number of adults with higher education is higher than the OECD average, and the high academic achievement of South Korean students in large-scale standardized tests like PISA has received international attention. And today, the South Korean education system is characterized by a 'fever' not merely to go to university but to go to a highly ranked university. However, education's value and role are beyond what is shown in numbers or rankings and human capital perspective. The roles of education in the capability approach are that 1) education itself is a valuable functioning; 2) education is a central capability that expands other capabilities; 3) education can promote and exercise agency. Above all, promoting and exercising agency through education is important as it plays a pivotal role in students' choices about leading their lives. Thus, many authors have highlighted the importance of becoming autonomous through education. Individuals need to develop their understanding of what it means to live well and to be able to compare different ways of living so that they can choose good lives for themselves (Unterhalter and Walker, 2007). Education can provide this opportunity for children and young students by promoting and exercising agency.

This study unravelled various stories of choice through research on career choice, more particularly the choice of going to university, among the various choices students encounter in life. Specifically, regarding the career-related studies of South Korean students, it is necessary to consider what role South Korean education should play to expand those capabilities that allow students to autonomously choose their careers after high school education via exploring and considering alternatives. In addition, this study has identified that South Korea has a collective perspective on education in choosing to go to university as a career choice after high school

graduation. A major difference in terms of student's process freedom exists between going to university as a result of a choice where the student enjoyed high levels of agency or as a result of choice made without agency. More broadly, I hope that this study is useful as a first step in thinking about the current state of South Korean educational development; specifically, how education should enable students to fully and freely exercise their agency so that students can choose according to their genuine values and preferences when facing choices in their lives.

In addition, it is hoped that the research documented in this paper will be useful not only to academic researchers but also to practitioners. While no single piece of research can provide definitive answers to questions, this study provides an original contribution to the study of students' career choices and agency. This research can provide an account of how students make educational and career choices. It can also highlight issues such as students' agency that have previously been ignored or gone unnoticed.

9.4. Final remarks

Despite some limitations, this study is an important first step in the joint implementation of the capability approach and self-determination theory as frameworks for inquiry to understanding students' career choices and their agency. Importantly, it is anticipated that this study opens an avenue of investigation to further elaborate on the students' agency issue in choice-making along with the role of education, aiming to understand better, promote and exercise students' agency in the choice process. The perception of choice, choice motivation types, and agency issues in choice-making developed in this study are intended to serve as "heuristic devices" (White, 2007: 170) rather than definitive descriptions of choice-making.

In researching students' agency in education, looking at their choices is important in understanding how they exercise their agency in choice-making. However, the individual's autonomy in the choice-making is unascertainable if they have 'reason to value'. Therefore, the choices made and held do not indicate whether the choice-making is autonomously engaged. Using Self-determination theory in conjunction with the Capability Approach would benefit as the Self-determination Theory could offer a measurement of agency that reveals whether an individual's exercised agency is indeed autonomous. It is hoped that this study provides, at the very least, a starting point for the development of more sophisticated and solid concepts and constructs.

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