

Improvement of the Rural Education Environment by the 'Nong-Whal' Program

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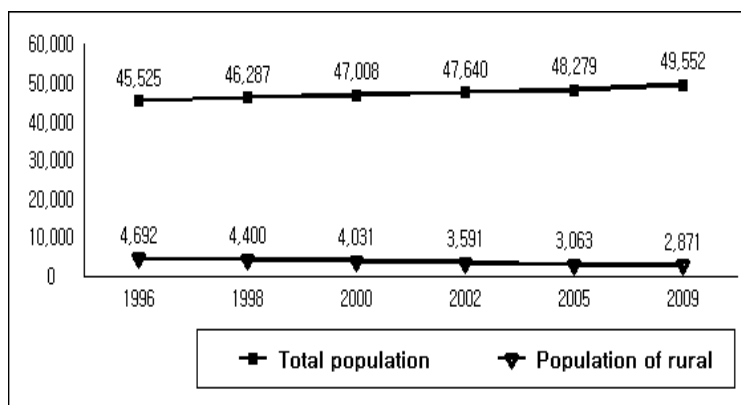
Introduction

Korea has rapidly accomplished economic improvement by the policy of development which is industry-centered in recent years.

Therefore, a population concentrated in urban areas, and the population of rural areas has been shrinking rapidly more than a half of population. It's getting serious problem to be an aging society because people who are older than 65years old are increased more than 2 times, and then again especially youth who are younger than 15years old are decreased. That's why many schools in rural areas have been amalgamated, and the rural education environment get worse. So a situation is that the parents in farm villages entrust their children to the school because a family in rural areas does not have enough time to teach their children or take care of them due to a farm-work. So the parents naturally can not be concerned about their children. It makes smart students move into an urban areas due to a lack of facilities, teachers in numbers in comparison with an urban education environment. As a result, a score gap of rural and urban areas is getting wider and wider.

Figure 1. Changes in the Population of Rural Areas

Source: Korea National Statistical Office, www.nso.go.kr



The government of Korea has been doing many things; investment, Introduction of political plans to solve the continual problems. For example, a special education for the student living in rural, an exception entrance into a school, supporting behind merit pay for the best

teachers, improvement of teaching environment, offering free school bus, creating more scholarship, learning from native English teachers and etc.

However, these efforts can not solve all of the problems.

Therefore, I want to suggest that university students like us help solving the problems by the Nong-Whal program. I think that this program can solve some of the problems which can not be solved by the supports which is one government suggested. I

suggest that the rural educational problems in comparison with urban and rural education environment in this essay. And I predict that someday Korea would face a difficult situation for a continual improvement if this kind of problems is not solved well. So I suggest that we, university students actively engage in 'Nong-Whal' program, and solve the problems.

The actual conditions of the rural education environment

We can explain about the changes of rural areas by much view, but it can be more clearly understood with urban society than simply the process of changes inside of rural areas because the change of rural areas is more influenced by the change of entire Korea society, industrialization and urbanization than by the developmental change of inside of rural areas. We can group the situation of rural areas into three: a school environment, a society environment and a home environment to explain about the actual conditions of the rural education environment.

The school environment in rural areas

As a result of that the population of rural areas has moved into urban areas since 1970s, the population of rural areas has been shrinking. That's why the number of student in rural areas has great decreased. Not only that but also family regulation the size of their families make that the number of children of school age has decreased from 4,340,000 in 1993 to 3,440,000 in 2007. Most of the entire situation is that especially, the number of school age has decreased in rural areas. As a result of decrease the number of students in rural areas, much small school has increased, and then the number of the amalgamated small schools is increased since 1991.

As the number of student decreased in each school, a teacher teach in the elementary school which is less than 10 students on the average , two teacher for the school which is less than 30 students on the average, three teachers for which is less than 45 students on the average. So it's hard to have a regular curriculum for the students.

year type	1999	2001	2003	2005	2007	2008
branch school	739	631	578	533	461	416
Principal school	5,544	5,322	5,463	5,646	5,756	5,813

Table 1. The Number of Elementary Schools

Source: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology,

<http://cesi.kedi.re.kr/index.jsp>

The social environment in rural areas

Most of all the elementary schools in rural areas are located one by one in the central village, so students living near the village can attend school. but, it's hard to go to the school because the schools are also going to be merged together into a school. In the case of middle school, it's hard to go to school for the students living in the up-country because a middle school is located each small town one by one. In the case of high

school, students should take lodgings or lent a room near the school, and also it can be possible to take a car for 20min to 30min because a high school is located in the big town areas. Although it's not take a long time to get to school due to private cars and a good paved road these days, there are still some of problems. The people living in rural areas have a great inconvenience that they should go to the near city to learn something: private institution for better school works, computer, art, music and etc. because they don't have not much chance to learn more except regular school. So it makes the people who are living in the rural area are worried about their pocketbooks.

The home environment in rural areas

Parents of student don't have time to teach their children enough or take care of them because families in farm villages are very busy with agricultural affairs. So the situation in farm villages is that they entrust their children to the school and can not concentrate on children teaching in addition that not enough chairs and desks from their physical environment.

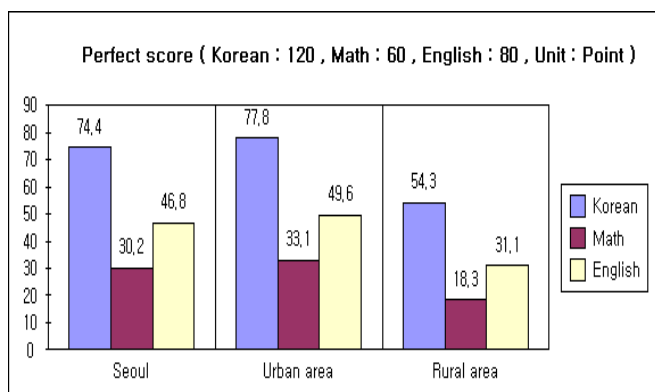
Moreover, families in farm villages have a difficulty because of high educational expenses in comparison with families of urban areas. The educational expenses in each family of rural areas show that it's rapidly increased for the several years; 555,000 won in 1985, 862,000won in 1990, 1,041,000won in 1992, more than this in 2000s. This mean that the educational expanses of each rural is higher than 10% in the total their spending.

On the other hands, the educational expanses of each urban is lower than rural areas. That is families in rural areas spending much more educational expanses in the worse education environment.

The problem of education environment in rural areas

It's hard to explain entire rural education environment with one of the three actual conditions that I've suggest on the passage.

However, it is obvious that the rural education environment is much poor than urban areas' from the score gap between urban and rural areas. The following Table 2 shows the score of each area high school students. This test was made for the valuation of entire high school students in Korea.



<Table 2. High School Test Score of Urban & Rural Area>

Source Korean Educational Development Institute,
<http://www.kedi.re.kr>

It shows that the score from the students living in rural areas was much lowers that the students living in urban areas.

Many of well-educated parents living in rural areas moved into urban areas because of the problems: children's educational problem, social problems, and economic problems. So, the lack of parents how have to have a interested in a school and many smart students moving to urban areas makes an atmosphere of studying is getting worse.

Moreover, a weak sense of rivalry because of decrease in the number of students, being low in national standards of culture, much difficulty preparing of course books and many of teacher don't have a deep affection for the students because they commute from another province, makes the results of that.

The actual condition of the urban education environment.

We need to talk about the education that can learn extra such as a private extracurricular lesson, except regular school education to know the actual condition of the urban education environment. Examination of the actual condition of private extracurricular lesson and private academy can be a very important cause for the score gap between rural and urban areas. According to the survey between rural and urban areas, students in school A can learn extracurricular lesson out of school more than 54%, students in school B is 18%, students in school C is 14%, students in school D is 10%. The reason why students in school B don't learn private extracurricular lesson although there are many of private extracurricular lesson institutes near the area is that the students have to stay and study by their selves till late at night in school. This is the rule of the school. The students who have enough money, thus, can have a private extracurricular lesson or academy class except regular school class to eke out slowness at learning. And the educational inequality causes the score gap between urban areas and rural areas is getting wider. I researched environmental factors out of education: the job of parents, a home environment, social position and an economic standard, which is related to the score of study.

	Urban area				Rural Area				T n
	A		B		C		D		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Private institute	24	44	3	6	4	9	2	4	33
group study	2	4	3	6	2	5	3	6	10
private teacher	3	6	3	6	0	0	0	0	6
studying alone	25	46	41	82	37	86	42	89	145
Total	54	100	50	100	43	100	47	100	194

< Table 3. The way to study in Urban & Rural area >

Source: an educational theory & Practice 7th edition - 1st

As you can see on the Table 4, 74% parents of total are graduated from a high school or university. It means that they were well-educated in comparison with the others, but there is a gap of background. The school A, parents are very well-graduated. University graduate Are 30%, high school graduate are 56%. The school B, University graduate are

16%, high school graduate are 80%. The school C, University graduate are 9%, high school graduate are 63%. Middle and elementary school graduate are 28%; the school D, middle and elementary school graduate are 59% more than 59%. It shows clearly that literacy levels of the parents are getting lower from the urban to rural areas. The gap of an educational background of parents in each area can make the parents living in urban areas give more attention their children, so it occurs that many of students living in urban areas can get a high score.

	Urban area				Rural Area				n
	A		B		C		D		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
University	16	30	8	16	4	9	4	9	32
High school	31	57	40	80	27	63	15	32	113
Middle School	6	11	2	4	10	23	19	40	37
Elementary School	1	2	0	0	2	5	9	19	12
Total	54	100	50	100	43	47	47	100	194

< Table 4. > An Educational Background of Parents in Each Area
 Source: an educational theory & Practice 7th edition - 1st

How can we solve this kind of problems?

These kinds of problems can be solved from the government. However, supporting of the government is limited. Therefore, I think it is the best solution as we can do that to go to a farm by yourself, and experience about the cultures of rural community disappearing nowadays, to help many of farmers, so we can solve the problems of rural areas one by one.

What is the 'Nong-Whal?'

The mean of 'Nong-Whal' is the abbreviation of some Korean words. It is the program that university students and general people go help the people living in rural areas when they need hands. It is usually spring and fall or on occasion. One of group can stay and help them what they need to work from a few days to a half of month. We can think this program is a just volunteering, but 'Nong-Whal' is a little bit different compared with a volunteering.

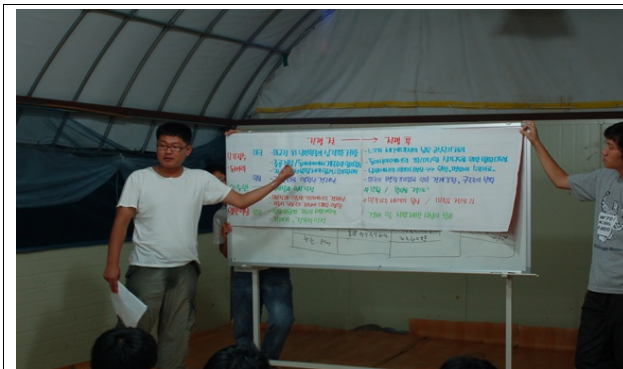


The college of Agriculture and Life Sciences students in Kyongpook National University students went to Yungju in 2007 We helped a farm work when they really needed hands. We were doing a farm work.

<Photo 1. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Students in Kyongpook National University at Young in 2007 >

Source: the college of Agriculture and Life Sciences in Kyongpook National University

A point of difference is that it is not only a volunteering, but also work together with people living in the rural areas, so we can learn about the culture we, university students, need to get, take about the anguish they have and feel something. The mean of culture in this essay is that the process we can ask and answer, so we can learn many things from it. The topic can be such as a FTA (Free trade Agreement) which was the top issue between U.S.A and Korea or a mad cow problems, and the problems what we should be worried about and etc.



We discussed about the top issue at that time. So we could learn what the other students think, and many things. This is the situation we were taking about the problems of Korea.

<Photo 2. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Students in Kyongpook National University at Young in 2007 >

Source: the college of Agriculture and Life Sciences in Kyongpook National University

The college of Agriculture and Life Sciences students in Kyongpook National University joined in ' Nong-Whal ' program in the kyongpook province Youngju city for nine nights and ten days in 2007. we didn't only help a farming which they needed more hands, but also taught a computer , how to play Korean traditional instruments that Ordinarily, they could not learn.

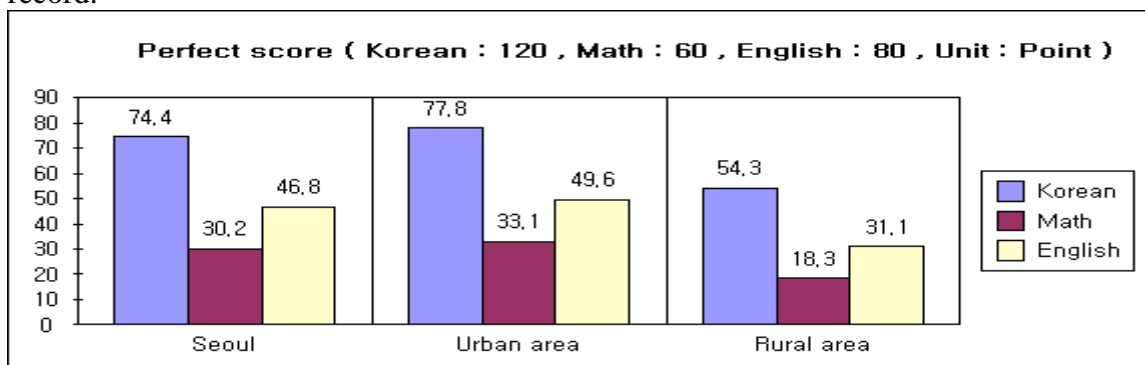


We could show the performance for farmers and taught them how to play.
This is the situation we were practicing Korean traditional musical instrument

<Photo 3. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Students in Kyongpook National University at Youngju in 2007 >

Source: the college of Agriculture and Life Sciences in Kyongpook National University

Not only my college, but also the other colleges left to many provinces, and they gave a private teaching: such as English, math the students living in the rural for supporting a record.



< Figure 2. The Number of Participants in Each Years >

Source: the college of Agriculture and Life Sciences in Kyongpook National University

This is the program called the ' Nong-Whal'. It seems to be very simple. The group comprised of university students go to rural and work together with farmers or help them. Sometimes we can teach them from our ability such as computer, art music and etc as well.

Improvement of the ' Nong-Whal ' program

It is so greet that the 'NongWhal' program makes more free time for the farmers, and give the chance to learn many things each other by help of university students when they really need a hand.

However, the 'Nong-Whal' program spends too much time for farm works.

In addition, there's no club which is always focus on the 'Nong-Whal' program in a university I think. So every time when they participate in the 'Nong-Whal' program, new members have to be asked to join .it is time consuming.

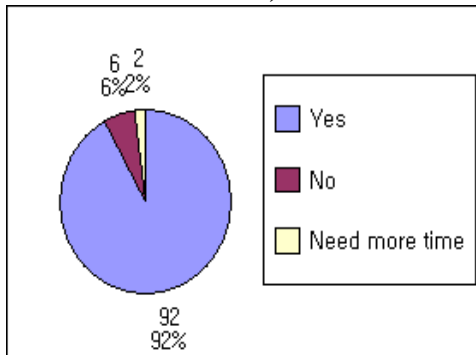
Therefore, I'd like to suggest following essentials to close a score gap between urban areas and rural areas.

First, To make the Nong-Whal program club in a university.

There is much kind of clubs around us, but there is no Nong-Whal program club. If Nong-Whal program club is made in a university, the member of the Nong-Whal program can not only help farmers more practically from the personal assignments, but also give an educational support for the students living in rural areas with more members.

If applicants are asked to join the Nong-Whal program with no educational preparing, there is not enough good teacher for the students living in rural areas because it is hard to teach them if they don't prepare to teach although university students already studied. They can forget many things what they already learn.

Second, To create the Nong-Whal program class during a season semester.



There are many classes for the domestic volunteering or international volunteering, but no class for the Nong-Whal program. If the Nong-Whal program class can be created, more students would join the Nong-Whal program. And it can be comprised of the students who have many type of major, so we can teach more regularly.

Third, to make the educational Nong-Whal program.

The purpose of the past Nong-Whal program was mainly to awake people from ignorance and laziness, so it was aimed to increase productivity of agriculture, and be worried about the problems together in Korea.

However, it has been solved a lot these days. So lately the Nong-Whal program attaches importance to help a farm work. If we can improve the Nong-Whal program like this way, we can not only give a hand, but also teach their children. It will be great help. It would be great help to solve the problem of a score gap between urban areas and rural areas. Table 3 on the bottom is a result of survey from the 100 kyungbook national university students.

Among them, 92 students want to participate in the Nong-Whal program, only 6 students don't want to. And among the students who wanted to join the Nong-Whal program, 57 students said that to create the Nong-Whal program class during a season semester is good way to close a score gap between urban areas and rural areas, 25 students said that to make the educational Nong-Whal program, 11 students said that to make the Nong-Whal program club in a university. As we can see, I think the university students have a great passion to the Nong-Whal program.

< **Figure 3. Do you want to participate in 'Nong-Whal' program?** >

Source: Seo, Sung ho - Survey for Kyoungbook national university
100 students

Conclusion

A score gap between urban and rural areas is getting wider and wider. We can group three causes that make a score gap between urban areas and rural areas. These are the school environment, the social environment, the home environment in rural areas. Many of smart students living in rural areas move to urban areas because of these causes. So it makes a score gap between urban and rural areas getting wider. I expect that this score gap between urban and rural areas would be an obstacle to develop continuous Korea in the future. I'd like to say that the Nong-Whal program can solve the problems. The Nong-Whal program is that to teach something they can not learn on the ordinary times while a group of university students or general people give a hand to farmers and spend time with them together. The Nong-Whal program doesn't mean a normal volunteering to help the people living in rural areas. It means that not only a volunteering, but also the opportunity we can discuss all together about the problem Korea has nowadays, and many problems rural areas have.

Moreover, the Nong-Whal program shows new environment to the students who have lived only in rural areas, and makes them be interested in agriculture.

However, it has some of problems to close a score gap between urban and rural areas. These days, the mean of the Nong-Whal program has been changed a little bit. So almost participants pay attention to do farm works, and every time when they participate in the 'Nong-Whal' program, new members have to be asked to join. It is time consuming. The Nong-Whal program is not running practically by these kinds of problems.

So I think that these problems can be solved from the improvement of the Nong-Whal program: to make the Nong-Whal program club in a university, to create the Nong-Whal program class during a season semester, to make the educational Nong-Whal program. And I think these would close a score gap between urban and rural areas.

According to the survey, if there is a chance to participate the Nong-Whal program, many of university students want to join it. It can be a chance to close a score gap between urban and rural areas which can not be solved from the government. I hope that these kinds of the problems of the Nong-Whal program are solved as soon as possible, so it will happen that a score gap can be closed completely, and more students will be interested in agriculture. So they can do much to help to develop the country.

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