

ARTICLE

Transforming Familialistic Youth Welfare Policies in East Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Changes in Higher Education Support Policies in Korea and Japan

Hyewon Park^{1*}  and Kosuke Sakai² 

¹Department of Advanced Social and International Studies, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan and ²Department of Advanced Social and International Studies, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan

*Email: faintkaia44@gmail.com

(Received 24 January 2022; revised 17 September 2022; accepted 29 September 2022)

In East Asia, higher education support policies (HESPs), as the core of the social policies targeting young people, have undergone a significant transformation since the 2000s. The aim of this article is to articulate the reformation process of HESPs by focusing on the National Student Loan system and to investigate whether support for youth is still considered a family responsibility in the post-2000s environment. The findings offer a crucial clue in understanding the transformation of the familialistic East Asian welfare regime. The analysis reveals that Japan continues to respond to the expansion of youth support through family policy, but Korea is attempting to provide support for youth directly to individuals as an independent welfare target. This implies that HESPs are gradually losing their family-oriented characteristics, although these characteristics remain present in Japan, and that the familialistic East Asian welfare regime itself may transform in the future.

Keywords: Youth policy, student support, higher education, transition regime, East Asia.

Introduction: Higher education support, youth policy, welfare state

A critical issue in contemporary social policy studies is understanding young people's welfare and relevant supporting policies (Walther, 2006; Wallace and Bendit, 2009; OECD, 2010; Majamaa, 2011; Chevalier, 2015). Social scientists have investigated higher education support policies (HESPs) as a subfield of social policy for youth through international comparison. Garritzmann (2016) comprehensively scrutinised the politics of tuition fees and subsidies in OECD countries and distinguished student finance worlds into four tuition–subsidy regimes: 'low tuition–low subsidy', 'low tuition–high subsidy', 'high tuition–low subsidy', and 'high tuition–high subsidy.' This typology classifies Korea¹ and Japan as having high tuition–low subsidy regimes.

However, although Garritzmann's (2016) analysis engages in the large-N comparative study of student finance systems through case studies, including Japan, it lacks detailed research regarding the situation of East Asian countries since the 2000s. First, Garritzmann (2016) did not consider the transformation of HESPs since the 2000s, after which point they became oriented to high tuition–high subsidies (e.g., the foundation of a public-based non-refundable scholarship in Korea and Japan). Second, a long-term description of political history and a detailed analysis of the short-term process of political justification by policy-makers faced with the contemporary socioeconomic situation are needed. This ideational dimension of HESPs is possibly related to the transformation of HESPs in East Asia. Thus, the research question of this article focuses on how

HESPs were transformed after the 2000s in Korea and Japan. The findings of this investigation are expected to offer insight to better understand the characteristics of the East Asian higher education system in terms of its welfare regime.

According to Brazzill (2021), the transformation of HESPs is being brought about by neoliberalism. Although this explanation can be relevant, several variations on what impact neoliberalism actually has need to be considered. There can be multiple pathways to the rationale for policy shifts, target changes, and perceived contemporaneous problems. Moreover, East Asian characteristics may influence such modifications and their plurality. Indeed, Korea and Japan, which are located in the same East Asian region, have experienced different HESP transformation processes due to global competition and fiscal issues.

In comprehending HESPs and their changes, first, we should not overlook the characteristics of the citizenship and welfare regime in which HESPs are embedded (West and Nikolai, 2013). Previous research has emphasised the close relationships between HESPs and welfare (Malinovskiy and Shibanova, 2022). Second, East Asia generally has a different social policy structure from that found in Western Europe (Takegawa and Lee, 2006; Kim, 2016). One of the reasons for the changes in HESPs being restructured as welfare for young people, especially since the 2000s in Korea and Japan, may lie in the characteristics of the East Asian welfare regime. We need to pay attention to the peculiarities of the East Asian welfare system. Nevertheless, third, East Asia is not monolithic (Ochiai, 2019). Thus, we need to consider the differences in the social and economic conditions present within East Asia while also considering the typical characteristics of welfare regimes in East Asia. A comparative social policy analysis of HESP transformation would, in turn, contribute to clarifying the features of the East Asian welfare regime and its restructuring, considering the differences in the circumstances of each country.

Theory and method

HESPs and familialism

This article traces HESP reconstruction and the related justification practices. Specifically, we analyse how the restructuring of the National Student Loan (NSL) systems in Korea and Japan has been discussed in parliament. According to Garritzmann (2016), the NSL systems in both countries have remained almost unchanged as the only HESPs of high tuition–low subsidy regimes since the postwar period. He elucidated the policy-making mechanism from the sequence and duration of different political parties in office based on the time-sensitive partisan theory. However, both countries' NSL systems have expanded and been heavily restructured since the late 1990s (Park, 2019). Thus, this article scrutinises the discussions about the HESPs regarding the NSL systems that have occurred in parliament since the 2000s.

In particular, we analyse the transformation of the HESPs in Korea and Japan with a focus on how familialism is embedded in the HESPs and how this familialism has changed. Familialism is the idea that the family should be responsible for its members' welfare regarding income distribution and care provision. Theoretically, familialism was introduced in addition to conservatism, liberalism, and social democracy as a new type of welfare regime to characterise the welfare state in the Southern European region and the emerging East Asian welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 2009). Especially in East Asia, political, economic, and demographic modernisation as a precondition for the welfare state occurred in a compressed manner over a short period, forcing the formation of social policies in a way that accommodates familialism (Ochiai and Molony, 2008; Ochiai, 2010). The persistence of such strong familialism and the diversity of its development may also characterise the rapid reforms of HESPs made since the 2000s.

To distinguish whether HESPs treat young people in East Asia in a familialistic manner, we introduce three analytical scopes to reveal its diversity – namely, target groups, the position of youth, and the problem/aim, reconstructing the previous analytical methodologies used to identify different trends in youth policies (Wallace and Bendit, 2009; Chevalier, 2015).

First, the ‘target groups’ of HESPs are generally separated into three categories: the ‘whole generation of youth,’ ‘disadvantaged youth’ and the ‘specialized group of youth’ (Wallace and Bendit, 2009). If the NSL system is accessible to all those who want to enter higher education, regardless of their grades or income, then the target of the NSL system will be the whole generation of youth. Conversely, if the target is disadvantaged youth, then certain groups, such as those from rural areas and low-income groups, are expected to be the main target group. When the users of the NSL system are those with special abilities, such as those with excellent grades, the target group becomes the specialised group of youth. This distinction by target group is a criterion for measuring familialistic tendencies, depending on whether one targets the household to which a youth belongs or the individual directly. In Korea and Japan, the target of the NSL systems tended to be families of a specialised group before the 2000s.

Second, the position of youth – whether those in the position of youth should be considered children or adults – is significant in changing the direction of a HESP. When young people are considered children, the family is responsible for supporting the education of the young people, and the NSL system sets the income of their parents (family) as a criterion for screening the usage and the interest rate. Conversely, if young people are considered adults, they can use the NSL system regardless of their parents’ (family’s) income. In both Korea and Japan, the position of youth in the NSL system has long been understood as that of children under the protection of their families, and the availability of the NSL system and its interest rates was ultimately determined by family income before the 2000s. However, we expect that this condition has transformed drastically and that both countries have experienced some reform of familialism in regard to their HESP.

Last, problem/aim refers to the focus on the significant problem and aim of the NSL system. In Korea and Japan, equality of opportunity, the debt delinquency problem and the burden of tuition fees have been highlighted as fundamental problems surrounding the NSL system since the 2000s. As with global trends, the main aim has been to reduce the burden of paying for higher education (Callender and Jackson, 2005; Czarnecki *et al.*, 2021). However, a more discursive and ideational analysis is also required to understand how these major problems/aims were regarded as relevant policy agendas and how they changed in East Asia through the discursive process of policy-making in parliament.

Data and methodology

Drawing on the minutes of the National Assembly of Korea and the Diet of Japan from 2000 to 2020, we analysed the reformation process of HESPs. In the case of Korea, we scrutinise how issues related to the HESP are discussed in the Education, Science and Technology Committee (ESTC, Education Committee until 2008), which is a standing committee that addresses education issues. Of the ESTC minute data available on the web, we collected all topics and statements about the NSL system and tuition from 2000 to 2020. In the case of Japan, issues related to higher education support are not handled by a specific committee; rather, they are handled by various committees. We narrowed them down to committees in which the keywords ‘student loan (shōgakukin)’ were found in the online full-text database of the Minutes of the Diet (<https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp>). We chose to analyse the minutes of the House of Representatives, which has a relatively large number of members and shorter terms of office and thus can react more quickly to changes in public opinion and related policies.

We conducted a comprehensive and descriptive analysis of the materials collected through the above-mentioned procedure and identified topics or issues across the data. The common topics identified included public scholarships, free or half-price tuition, investment in the next generation, treatment of low-income groups, and so on. After coding these topics, we reanalysed and organised the collected data by period. The results were then recoded along with the analytical

framework for the classification of youth policy as target groups, the position of youth, and the problem/aim. The method described above is a typical qualitative data analysis that combines data-driven and concept-driven coding using the minutes (Ritchie *et al.*, 2014; Gibbs, 2018).

Political process leading to the changing of a HESP

The case of Korea

Korea has a presidential system, and a new National Assembly is formed every four years. Thus, the period from 2000 to 2020 was divided into five periods for analysis (the Conservative Party was the ruling party from 2008 to 2017, whereas the Liberal Party was the ruling party for the rest of the period).

First, from 2000 to 2004, several statements were made in the National Assembly about the rising tuition fees, and the main issue of discussion was that the NSL system did not adequately respond to the current situation. During this period, the NSL system was operated by a secondary supplementary formula, in which tuition fees were lent at a low interest rate through private financial institutions and the government compensated for a portion of the interest amount. Notably, the statements of National Assembly members strongly criticised the fact that the interest rate of the NSL was higher than that of private student loans of financial institutions. Several statements reflected such a concern regarding the operating conditions of the NSL;² these concerns were shared by both the ruling and opposition parties.

During this period, it was normal for parents to pay for students' tuition fees and living expenses; politicians often mentioned the suffering of parents rather than students. Furthermore, the NSL system required a joint guarantor, and the loan amount did not include expenses other than tuition fees, thereby making it difficult for students to enter college without family support, even if they used the NSL system. Thus, the position of youth in this period was to be treated as if they were children under the protection of their families. Additionally, the main aim of this period was to guarantee equal opportunities for higher education by lowering the interest rate and increasing the loan amount, and the disadvantaged groups (low-income families and students from rural/remote areas) were still the main targets.

From 2004 to 2008, tuition fees continued to rise, and the issue of tuition fees became a social problem.³ Politicians also began to pay attention to this issue and mentioned media reports such as 'parents committing suicide'⁴ and 'parents engaging in illegal activities such as organ trafficking'⁵ to pay for their children's tuition. Because of this situation, the debate in the National Assembly on the expansion of the HESP, such as through the 'reduction of tuition fees', 'post-payment of tuition fees' and 'limiting the rate of tuition increase', was progressing in a more specific direction.⁶ Particularly, to reflect public opinion, the opposition party made a campaign promise of 'half-price tuition' and actively promoted the expansion of the HESP.⁷ Although these discourses came from the opposition party, the ruling party also recognised the necessity of expanding the HESP in response to popular opinion, which means that the main objective during this period was to relieve the burden imposed by tuition fees.

Consequently, the government started running the NSL system directly, and the guarantor system was abolished in 2005. Additionally, lending decisions fell to the government and colleges instead of to financial institutions, and the selection process became less strict. Above all, the system was improved to allow various reasons for loans, to increase the amount that can be loaned (depending on one's major, etc.) and to lengthen the loan period/redemption period (freely selectable). Thus, active discussions in the National Assembly affected the reform of the NSL system, and the position of youth changed from being seen as children under the protection of their families to adults who are generally considered independent of their families. However, the NSL system remained targeted only at low-income families without undergoing any expansion.

Furthermore, the period from 2008 to 2012 was characterised by a growing number of social movements, especially among students, calling for the expansion of the HESP (Shin *et al.*, 2018). In this period, the government's main aim was to respond to students' demands and fulfil its own campaign of 'half-price tuition'; the establishment of the new NSL system called KOSAF (Korea Student Aid Foundation) in 2009 was the most important policy to enforce such aims. Simultaneously, the ruling party argued in the National Assembly that KOSAF could essentially cut the burden of paying for higher education imposed on students in half through the introduction of the income-contingent loan (ICL) system and grant-type scholarships.

However, while both parties shared a common opinion on expanding the HESP to respond to public opinion, they disagreed on whether it would be sufficient to establish a KOSAF.⁸ Especially in 2011, when social movements led to large demonstrations, politicians from the opposition party who participated in these demonstrations brought students' opinions on the issue of tuition fees directly to the National Assembly for further discussion. Here, the intention was to justify the further expansion of the HESP by listening to the opinions of the people (students). However, since the global financial crisis in 2007, both low- and middle-income families have suffered economic hardships; thus, there has been a demand for a significant loosening of standards on the income level required to qualify for student loans and the expansion of the HESP to include middle-income families.⁹

Consequently, there were repeated revisions and expansions of the NSL system, especially the ICL system. Discussions in the National Assembly began to fully reflect the opinions of students (social movements) and social conditions (the worsening economic situation of middle-income families), and youth were repositioned as adults who would take responsibility for their own higher education. Additionally, the target of the NSL system became more comprehensive, including both low- and middle-income families. These institutional changes suggest that the target group was extended to include the whole generation of young people.

From 2012 to 2016, the implementation of 'half-price tuition' continued to be a key issue in the National Assembly. The ruling party was initially reluctant to respond to opposition parties who questioned the fact that tuition fees had not actually decreased.¹⁰ Although the HESP had been expanded, it remained insufficient; therefore, the aim of this period was to develop more sustainable and innovative policies.¹¹

Additionally, the public amount of attention given to the situation of young people suffering from tuition problems did not abate. Media reports were mentioned often in the National Assembly – for example, the case of 'college students committing suicide' and 'students suffering from student loan repayments'¹² because of the burden of paying tuition fees. The opposition parties began to focus more on youth support policies. Particularly, by discussing the issue of the HESP together with other welfare policies such as free school lunches, the opposition party attempted to get the support of the public for expanding welfare policies.¹³ In response, the ruling party changed its passive stance, and with the presidential election coming up, it once again pledged to implement 'half-price tuition'.

Such competition between the two parties over policies supporting young people prompted the expansion of the HESP from 2012 to 2015, and the NSL system was more universally restructured as the youth support system. In 2015, the qualifications for using the NSL system were eliminated, making the HESP available to any young people (subject to an age limit) who wanted to pursue education. Since 2015, the interest rate has been the same for both low-income and middle-income borrowers. In short, the target group has become the whole generation of young people. Additionally, the scale of grant-type scholarships has continued to expand, and the ratio of higher education expenses shouldered by the people to GDP in Korea decreased significantly from 1.9 in 2010 to 0.9 in 2015 (OECD, 2016). This means that the government is becoming the main actor in supporting higher education for young people and that the position of youth has completely shifted away from being treated as children under the care of their families.

Finally, during the period 2016 to 2020, the debate on the HESP stopped in the National Assembly. Nevertheless, the main aim remained the same – that is, to reduce the burden on

students – and there were still debates over whether ‘half-price tuition’ had been achieved. There were also calls for more progressive policies, such as the demand to eliminate interest to relieve the burden on young people. In response to such a request, student loan interest rates continued to be adjusted, dropping from 7.05 per cent in 2006 to 2.0 per cent in 2020. Meanwhile, there has been no change in the position of the youth and target groups.

The case of Japan

Japan has a parliamentary cabinet system, and for a long time, the ruling party has been led by a conservative coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Komeito. Although there was a change in government in 2008, there were no major differences in attitudes toward the HESP before and after the change in government. Thus, for ease of analysis, the period from 2000 to 2020 will be divided into five periods, as previously shown in the case of Korea.

First, from 2000 to 2004, the focus of the discussions in the Diet was mainly on the privatisation of the NSL system. Several statements pointed out the need for efficiency and transparency in the Student Loan Association (*Ikuēkai*), which ran the NSL system at that time. This was connected to the privatisation of public services by the Koizumi Cabinet, which had been strongly promoting the privatisation of Japan Post Co. Ltd. and other public services from the late 1990s to the 2000s (Kim and Huang, 2021). It also called for the reform of the NSL system to require students to be self-reliant (*jikosekinin*) and to self-invest (*jikotousi*) to reduce the attendant burden on parents.¹⁴

Ultimately, the Kibo 21 Plan was implemented; it greatly relaxed the grade and family income requirements in the NSL system and expanded the recruitment quota, whereas the repayment exemption program, which had been offered to those working in education, was reduced or eliminated (POSSE, 2016). Thus, the government’s main aim during this period was to rationalise the NSL system; however, it encouraged students to become more independent, and it positioned young people effectively as children under the protection of their families because the reason for the reform was to reduce the burden on their parents. Additionally, the target group changed slightly from the specialised group of young people – high-achieving students – to the disadvantaged groups – motivated and qualified low-income students.¹⁵

In the period from 2004 to 2008, the high interest and delinquency problems of the NSL system became the main issue. Particularly, in 2006, when the Koizumi Cabinet’s ‘structural reform’ included statements such as ‘eliminating the 3 per cent cap on the interest rate on the NSL system’, many politicians started expressing their opinions against the NSL system.¹⁶ There was an emphasis on the fact that the NSL system was an educational institution, not a financial institution, and there was concern that privatisation would weaken the NSL system’s role as a youth support policy.¹⁷ Thus, there is a tendency to resist neoliberal reforms that simply regard students as consumers.

Notably, HESPs, including the NSL system, have already been positioned by the government as part of its strategy of addressing the issue of the declining birth rate. Their main aim is to reduce the burden of higher education linked to having children by expanding HESPs. There has been a distinct move made to promote the NSL system in the Diet as a policy to reduce the burden on parents, along with the children’s allowance, and to justify the expansion of the NSL system as a strategy to equalise opportunities for low-income families and address the declining birth rate.

At this time, young people were still treated like children, and the target was disadvantaged groups – mainly low-income families – although the interest-bearing and institutional guarantee programs had expanded their coverage.

From 2008 to 2012, delinquency became more serious, and the burden on college students, not their parents, was discussed in the Diet.¹⁸ While referring to the situation described in the media, especially by opposition parties, as being characterised by ‘high tuition fees making life harder for students’,¹⁹ politicians considered HESPs as groups of ‘college students’ problems’ rather than as a burden placed on families or an issue of equality in educational opportunity. Thus, the direction

of the discussion on the delinquency problem gradually shifted from issues related to the moral hazards of students, and the main aim became solving the delinquency problem by strengthening repayment processes. Additionally, from 2008 onward, the NSL system started to implement the so-called blacklist program, which registers information on those who were delinquent for more than three months, with their personal credit agency and the continued implementation of other programs that strongly demanded responsibility from young people (POSSE, 2016).

This means that the Diet's discussion focusing on students rather than parents who suffer from repayments and the NSL system strongly demanded responsibility from the users (the young people) rather than their family (parents), indicating that the position of youth had shifted away from that of being treated as children to adults who must take responsibility for their own education expenses. However, the target group remained low-income families, and there was no move to expand the target.

The period from 2012 to 2016 was characterised by an increase in mentions of harsh repayment methods and social circumstances, with terms such as 'ruthless repayments'²⁰ and 'debt hell,'²¹ present in the Diet; the interest in young people struggling to repay their student loans increased. The main aim was also revised to relieve student burdens instead of demanding strong self-responsibility; furthermore, various programs of repayment began to be relaxed in 2014. Notably, the activities of lawyers supporting students suffering from delinquent loans and the discourses in social movements such as black student loans were also mentioned in the Diet.²² Thus far, there has been no mention of action taking place in the Diet by actors other than bureaucrats and experts (scholars), such as NPOs, who play a significant role in advocating and supporting activities to help young people.

Additionally, starting in this period, the NSL system began to be more strongly discussed as an issue for the younger generation (students) than for the older generation (parents). Comments such as 'We need to expand the NSL system as social security for youth'²³, 'Student loans are not only applicable for low-income families but also extend to middle-income families'²⁴ and 'We need grant-type scholarships, and Japan is the only country in the OECD that does not have such scholarships'²⁵ were expressed in the Diet, thereby calling for a more inclusive strategy to support youth.

Nevertheless, there was a significant difference in opinion between the ruling and opposition parties on ideas regarding an inclusive strategy. The only policy that gained consensus from both parties was the establishment of a grant-type scholarship as an expansion of support for low-income families. Additionally, the eligibility rule (grades) was made less strict from the previous requirement of 'those who are willing and qualified' to receive grant-type scholarships. However, it remained selective in terms of who was eligible for support, saying that help should only be given to 'those who truly needed public assistance'.²⁶ The NSL system implemented various mitigating policies regarding repayment, such as deferring or reducing the amount of repayment for low-income families from 2014, and preparations were made for the adoption of grant-type scholarships and an ICL system for low-income families. This implies that there is still no consensus within the whole generation of young people as to the target of support, and only the disadvantaged groups are considered the target group who deserve support.

Thus, the position of youth in this period remained the same as that seen in the previous period; as for the target group, although there were arguments on the part of social movements and opposition parties that all young people should be targeted more widely, the government could not be persuaded, and low-income families remained the only target.

From 2016 to 2020, there were significant changes made in the NSL system, beginning with the implementation of grant-type scholarships and the ICL system for low-income students in 2017. Looking at the statements in the Diet, remarks that attempted to position the expansion of the NSL system as a social investment rather than a welfare policy stand out: 'We want to make the

NSL system not just a welfare policy, but a system where people can be proud of getting loans',²⁷ 'contributing to society in the future'²⁸ and 'it is important to consider education as an investment in the future'.²⁹ These statements are in harmony with the campaign of the ruling party to justify the expansion of youth support as a strategy to counter the declining birth rate; however, it is different from the situation in Korea, where the NSL system is positioned as a welfare policy.

It was also during this period that discussions about the issue of free higher education began to take place. As in the case of grant-type scholarships, this issue was also fiercely debated between the ruling and the opposition parties. The ruling party argued that free education should be limited to a few low-income families, saying they should be 'ensuring that free higher education is provided only to children who truly need it'³⁰ to which the opposition countered, 'By the word 'truly,' I think you mean selectively, not for all low-income people, so why not for all?'³¹

Consequently, a twofold support system was finally established: support for low-income families was provided from the new system for supporting the study of higher education, which either exempts or reduces tuition fees and provides grants, and support for everyone else continued to be provided through the NSL system. Thus, although the overall target of the HESP has been expanded, it has now been effectively divided into low- and middle-income families – each of which is given a different type of support. Additionally, because the main criterion of classification is household income, young people are still closer to being treated as children and not adults, and the traditional way of supporting them through their families is maintained.

Findings

As shown in Table 1, for the target group, the position of youth and the problem/aim of support policies shifted significantly in both Korea and Japan between 2000 and 2020.

First, the target group of HESPs was gradually expanded from the 'specialized group of youth' to 'disadvantaged youth' in both countries. In Korea, however, the social movement and public opinions that regarded the HESP as social security were directly reflected in policy through the National Assembly, and the target of the HESP was further expanded to all youth. On the other hand, in Japan, since there was no such movement to actively position the HESP as a social security for the youth, the target was only expanded to 'disadvantaged youth,' and its speed of expansion was slower than that demonstrated in Korea.

Second, regarding the position of youth, the concept of young people in both countries was gradually redefined from children receiving family support to adults independent of the family (but not entirely). However, in the case of Korea, it did not take long to recognise that the burden of tuition fees was not placed only on the parents but also on the students and positioned youth as being closer to full adults who can take responsibility for their own higher education. In contrast, Japan took much longer to develop such an understanding.

Third, differences in the main aim and problem lead to the expansion of the HESP in both countries. In Korea, the discussions gradually focused on the burden of tuition fees and student loan repayment. Significantly, the NSL system was positioned as a welfare policy for young people, along with support for children and older people. Therefore, the expansion of the HESPs was justified as a response to young people's need for social security. Despite some delay in Japan's case, the burden of tuition fees and student loans similarly became major issues in approximately 2010. The Diet justified expanding the NSL system to respond to the low birth rate and aging population problems.

Although both countries have attempted to expand their HESP through restructuring the NSL system to deal with the burden of higher education, the justification mechanisms have been different – via the provision of social security for young people in Korea and a declining birth rate and aging population in Japan. That is, Japan continues to try to respond to the recent changes in

Table 1 Changes in the three areas of HESPs in Korea and Japan

	Target groups		Position of youth		Aim/Problem	
	Korea	Japan	Korea	Japan	Korea	Japan
(1) 2000~2004	low-income families	specialised group of youth	children	children	educational equality	educational equality
(2) 2004~2008	low-income families	low-income families	adult	children	delinquency problem	delinquency problem, declining birthrate
(3) 2008~2012	low/middle-income families	low-income families	adult	children	delinquency problem	delinquency problem, declining birthrate
(4) 2012~2016	low/middle-income families	low-income families	adult	children	burden of students	burden of students, declining birthrate
(5) 2016~2020	the whole youth	low/middle-income families	adult	adult	burden of students	burden of students, declining birthrate

the situation of youth through family policy, which maintains the positioning of youth as ‘children’ but does not expand the target group beyond low-income families. In contrast, however, Korea is attempting to provide support for youth directly to individuals rather than their families; we can say that it is beginning to recognise youth as an independent welfare target.

Thus, we can conclude that the HESP has been transformed into social policy in Korea, while the HESP is maintained as family policy in Japan. This means that the new trend of increasing young people’s support did not formally develop in the same way within East Asia because of the different local contexts, such as the Asian financial crisis and the social movement. The differences in what governments consider policy issues in such contexts and how they define HESP target groups also contribute to the differences in the HESP changes between the two countries. Such internal diversity within the region has been mentioned mainly only in Western countries³²; however, the findings of this article confirm the existence of this variety within East Asia as well.

Moreover, in the formation and restructuring of the HESP in Korea, the opposition party achieved the aim and problem setting against the ruling party, regardless of which party was the ruling party at the time, by advocating for the economic hardships of people with higher education. The social problem of tuition fees and the NSL system in public opinion was taken up in the National Assembly, creating a situation in which the ruling party had no choice but to deal with it. Conversely, in Japan, although the ruling coalition has been in power for a long time and there was a change of government in 2008, this did not cause a significant shift in the HESP. Instead, the conservative government was relatively autonomous from public opinion but gradually moved to establish grant-type scholarships and expand the scope of the NSL system in response to criticism from opposition parties after 2012, starting with fiscal efficiency and addressing the delinquency problem. These findings indicate that the expansion of the HESPs in Korea and Japan has been realised not necessarily by partisans and coalitions (Garritzmann, 2016) but by different ideational justifications of responses to the contemporary sociopolitical conditions.

Further discussion

The results of our study, as explained above, contribute three further valuable implications for understanding the characteristics of welfare regimes in East Asia.

First, the HESPs in Korea and Japan, similar to those in the East Asian welfare regime, have been characterised by a family-oriented system. Nevertheless, since the 2000s, the HESPs have been undergoing a transformation that can be described as dismantling this system. Thus,

HESPs are gradually losing their family-oriented characteristics, although such characteristics remain present in Japan. This implies that the familialism of the East Asian welfare regime itself may be transforming the future.

Second, the policies at the basis of the East Asian welfare regime, including those related to HESPs, may continue to vary more drastically in their framing than their Western counterparts. HESPs in Western welfare regimes have changed since their formation in the 1970s, but they are generally understood as static (Wallace and Bendit, 2009; Garritzmann, 2016). In contrast, in the case of East Asia, as seen in this study, policy framing such as target groups, the position of youth, and aim/problem have changed rapidly in the 20 years since the 2000s and now require an understanding of the dynamic nature of these changes. This may be related to East Asia's restructuring of its welfare regime to be more compressive than that found in Western Europe.

Third, there are variations in the speed of these policy transformations, even within East Asia. This variation is related to the maintenance and restructuring of family-oriented policies. In particular, it has been assumed that the timing, speed, and content of changes differ between Japan, which achieved modernisation at an early stage, and Korea, which gained modernisation later (Chang, 2010; Kim, 2016; Ochiai, 2019). In terms of HESP changes, this theory suggests that the retraction of family-oriented policies has been limited in Japan. In contrast, such retraction was achieved with more clarity and faster speed and timing in Korea. Therefore, in understanding the internal diversity of welfare regimes in East Asia, it is essential to pay attention to the timing and speed of this restructuring of family-oriented policies. This also brings us to the further question of what form the maintenance, restructuring, and retreat of familialism will take in countries such as China, which is experiencing modernisation later and at a faster pace compared to Korea and Japan.

Acknowledgments. We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their insightful feedback on a previous draft of the article. This work was financially supported by the Konosuke Matsushita Memorial Foundation (grant number: 20-G38 'Social Changes in East Asia and Young Adults: Focusing on the National Student Loan System in Japan and South Korea').

Notes

- 1 South Korea is referred to as 'Korea' throughout this article.
- 2 Speaker: Choi Young-Hee (Millennium Democratic Party), the 243rd Committee on Education (Appendix, 2003/10/6).
- 3 The 256th Committee on Education (2006/2/6), the 258th Committee on Education (2006/3/31), the 267th Committee on Education (2007/4/13), etc.
- 4 Speaker: Choi Sun-Young (Democratic Labor Party (DLP)), the 267th Committee on Education (2007/4/13).
- 5 Speaker: Choi Sun-Young (DLP), the 271st Committee on Education (2008/1/30).
- 6 The 267th Committee on Education (2007/4/13), the 223rd Committee on Education (2008/5/2), etc.
- 7 The 259th Committee on Education (2006/4/10), the 265th Committee on Education (2007/2/21), etc.
- 8 The 298th Education, ESTC (2011/3/7), the 301st ESTC (2011/6/13) etc.
- 9 The 278th ESTC (2008/12/3).
- 10 The 309th ESTC (2012/7/12), the 313rd ESTC (2013/2/28), etc.
- 11 Speaker: Park Hye-ja (Democratic United Party (DUP)) and Lee Ju-ho (Saenuri Party New Frontier Party), the 311th ESTC (2012/9/13).
- 12 Speaker: Yoo Eun-Hye (DUP), the 309th ESTC (2012/7/25).
- 13 The 311th ESTC (2012/10/17).
- 14 The 155th meeting of the House of Legal Committee (2002/11/12).
- 15 Speaker: Ishihara Nobuteru (LDP), the 151st meeting of the House of Budget Committee (HBC) (2001/6/6).
- 16 Speaker: Koizumi Junichiro (LDP), the 162nd House of Representatives plenary Session (HRPS) (2005/1/25).
- 17 The 165th HBC (2010/2/18), the 168th HBC (2007/10/9), etc.
- 18 Speaker: Akabane Kazuyoshi (Komeito), the 165th HBC (2007/10/6).
- 19 Speaker: Ishii Ikuko (Japanese Communist Party (JCP)), the 169th meeting of the House of Representatives, Educational Science Committee (2008/5/30).
- 20 Speaker: Miyamoto Takeshi (JCP), the 183rd HBC (2013/4/1).
- 21 Speaker: Miyamoto Takeshi (JCP), the 186th HBC (2014/2/17).
- 22 The 183rd HBC (2013/4/1).
- 23 Speaker: Okamoto Mitsunari (Komeito), the 189th HBC (2015/2/4).

- 24 Speaker: Miyamoto Takeshi (JCP), the 190th HBC (2016/2/25).
- 25 Speaker: Sasaki Ryuzo (Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)), the 180th HBC (2012/3/2).
- 26 Speaker: Shimomura Hakubun (DPJ), the 185th meeting of the House of Representatives, Educational Science Committee (2013/10/30).
- 27 Speaker: Kobayashi Masayuki (Professor of the University of Tokyo), the 193rd House of Representatives Budget Committee Public Hearing (2017/2/12).
- 28 Speaker: Nishimura Yasutoshi (DPJ), the 193rd HRPS (2017/6/15).
- 29 Speaker: Katsumata Takaaki (DPJ), the 193rd meeting of the House of Finance and Banking Committee (2017/2/21).
- 30 Speaker: Hayashi Yoshimasa (DPJ), the 196th meeting of the House of Representatives, Educational Science Committee (2018/4/6).
- 31 Speaker: Murakami Humiyoshi (The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan), the 198th HRPS (2019/3/14).
- 32 Nordensvärd and Ketola (2018) examined how the impact of neoliberalism on higher education differs across European countries, depending on how social citizenship and welfare for youth are understood.

Bibliography

- Brazzill, M. (2021) 'The development of higher education in Japan and the United Kingdom: the impact of neoliberalism', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 75, 3, 381–97.
- Callender, C. and Jackson, J. (2005) 'Does the fear of debt deter students from higher education?', *Journal of Social Policy*, 34, 4, 509–40.
- Chang, K.-S. (2010) *South Korea Under Compressed Modernity*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Chevalier, T. (2015) 'Varieties of youth welfare citizenship: towards a two-dimension typology', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26, 1, 3–19.
- Czarnecki, K., Korpi, K. and Nelson, K. (2021) 'Student support and tuition fee systems in comparative perspective', *Studies in Higher Education*, 46, 11, 2152–66.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (2009) *The Incomplete Revolution: Adapting to Women's New Roles*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Garrizmann, J. L. (2016) *The Political Economy of Higher Education Finance: The Politics of Tuition Fee and Subsidies in OECD Countries, 1945-2015*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gibbs, G. R. (2018) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC/Melbourne: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Kim, C. and Huang, M. (2021) 'The privatisation of Japan railways and Japan post: why, how, and now', in F. Taghisadeh-Hesary (ed.), *Reforming State-Owned Enterprises in Asia*, Singapore: Springer, 133–56.
- Kim, S. (2016) *Fukushi-Kokka no Nikkan-Hikaku [Comparison of Japan and South Korea as Welfare States - Employment and Social Security in a 'Latecomer']*, Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.
- Majamaa, K. (2011) 'Dismissed intergenerational support? New social risks and the economic welfare of young adults', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14, 6, 729–43.
- Malinovsky, S. and Shibanova, E. (2022) 'Higher education in welfare regimes: three worlds of post-Soviet transition', *Journal of European Social Policy*, DOI: doi.org/10.1177/095892872211013.
- Nordensvärd, J. and Ketola, M. (2018) 'Rethinking the consumer metaphor versus the citizen metaphor: frame merging and higher education reform in Sweden', *Social Policy and Society*, 18, 4, 555–75.
- Ochiai, E. (2010) 'Reconstruction of intimate and public spheres in Asian modernity: familialism and beyond', *Journal of Intimate and Public Spheres*, 0, 2–22.
- Ochiai, E. (2019) 'The logics of gender construction in Asian modernities', in J. Liu and J. Yamashita (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Gender Studies*, London: Routledge, 13–35.
- Ochiai, E. and Molony, B. (2008) *Asia's New Mothers: Crafting Gender Roles and Childcare Networks in East and Southeast Asian Societies*, Folkestone, Kent: Global Oriental.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2010) *Off to a Good Start? Jobs for Youth*, Paris: OECD.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2016) *Education at a Glance*, Paris: OECD.
- Park, H. (2019) 'Shōgakukin' no hensen to sisaku no saikento' [Reconsidering the changes and policies of JASSO's student loan (JSL)], *Komaba Studies in Society*, 28, 37–54.
- POSSE (2016) *Zetsubō no Kuni no hukōna Shōgakukin [Unhappy Student Loans in the Land of Desperation]*, Tokyo: Horiuchi Press.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M. and Ormston, R. (eds.) (2014) *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, 2nd edn, Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore/Washington DC: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Shin, J., Kim, J. and Jeong, B. (2018) 'Sahooundongen eoddeoke bosujeongdangui bokgijeongchekul bakkununga?' [How do social movements change welfare policies of the conservative parties?], *Korean Journal of Sociology*, 52, 1, 1–37.
- Takegawa, S. and Lee, H. (eds.) (2006) *Fukusi-Rejimu no Nikkan-Hikaku: Syakai-Hosyō, Jendā, Rōdō-Shijō [Welfare Regimes in Japan and Korea: Social Security, Gender, and Labor Markets]*, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

- Wallace, C. and Bendit, R.** (2009) 'Youth policies in Europe: towards a classification of different tendencies in youth policies in the European Union', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, **10**, 441–58.
- Walther, A.** (2006) 'Regimes of youth transitions: choice, flexibility and security in young people's experiences across different European contexts', *Young*, **14**, 2, 119–39.
- West, A. and Nikolai, R.** (2013) 'Welfare regimes and education regimes: equality of opportunity and expenditure in the EU (and US)', *Journal of Social Policy*, **42**, 3, 469–93.

Cite this article: Park H and Sakai K. Transforming Familialistic Youth Welfare Policies in East Asia: A Comparative Analysis of Changes in Higher Education Support Policies in Korea and Japan. *Social Policy and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746422000604>