

# KOREA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM AND POLICY

- KOREAN'S 'ZEAL' FOR EDUCATION AND POLICY FOR THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

**PROFESSOR SOO JEONG LEE**

DEPT. OF EDUCATION,  
DANKOOK UNIVERSITY

# ■ SOCIAL · ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN KOREA ■

❖ **Rapid industrialization after liberation**

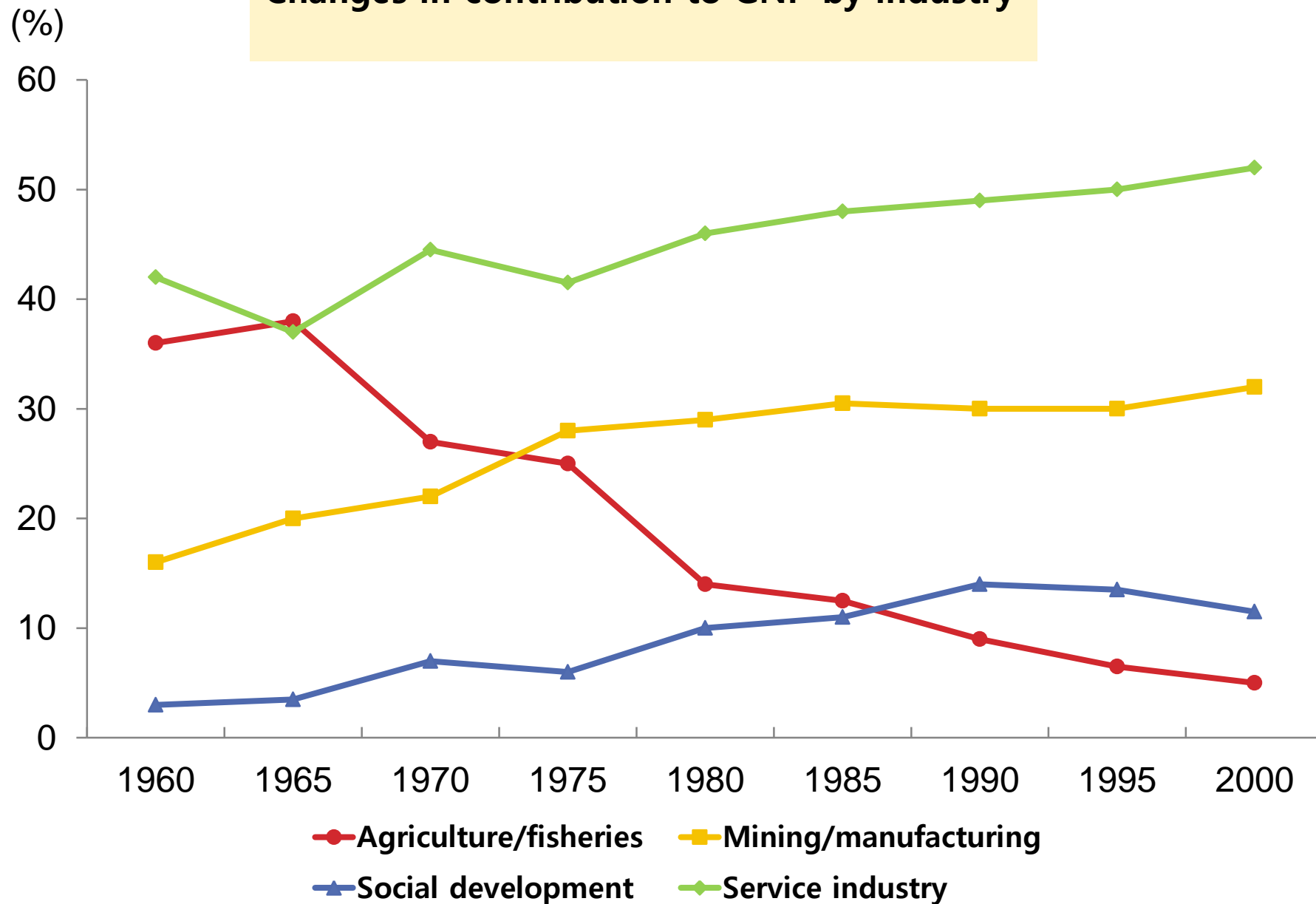
❖ **Educational development preceded  
economic development**

- Achieved a remarkable economic growth in 40 years
- Dubbed 'Miracle on the Han River'

# Industrial Development Status of Korea

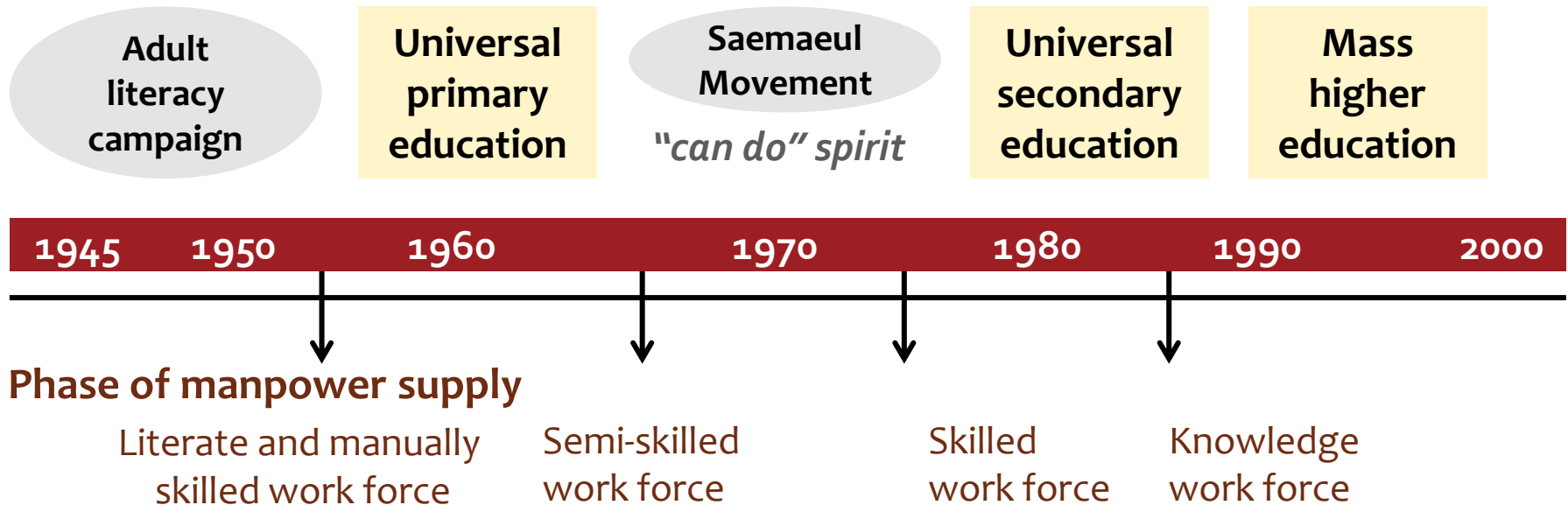
Classification / Year		1962 (1963)	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2009
Population	Population (thousand Person)	26,513	28,705	32,241	35,281	38,124	40,806	42,869	45,093	47,275	48,138	48,747
	Annual rate of Increase (%)	2.90	2.58	2.21	1.70	1.57	0.99	0.99	1.01	0.89	0.21	0.29
	Under Age 15/65+ (%)	-	-	45.6	42.0	37.8	34.4	30.7	29.3	28.9	28.3	27.2
GNI/GDP	Per Capita GNI (US\$)	87	114	249	592	1,598	2,229	5,886	10,823	9,628	17,531	17,175
	Growth Rate of GDP (%)	3.0	9.1	8.8	6.5	-2.1	6.5	9.0	8.9	8.8	4.0	0.2
Trade	Export (Million US\$)	54	175	835	5,081	17,504	30,283	65,015	125,058	172,268	284,419	363,534
	Growth Rate of Export (%)	34.0	46.3	34.2	13.9	16.3	3.6	4.2	30.3	19.9	12.0	13.9
	Import (Million US\$)	390	415	1,984	7,274	22,291	31,135	69,843	135,118	160,481	261,238	323,085
	Growth Rate of Import (%)	37.8	14.0	8.8	6.2	9.6	1.6	13.6	20.5	34.0	16.4	25.8
Employment by Industrial Sector (%)	Agriculture	(63.1)	58.6	50.4	45.9	34.0	24.9	17.9	12.5	11.6	6.4	5.3
	Mining & Manufacturing	(8.7)	10.4	14.4	19.1	22.6	24.4	27.6	23.5	19.9	18.2	16.8
	Social & Others	(28.2)	31.0	35.2	35.0	43.4	50.7	54.5	64.0	68.5	75.4	77.9

Changes in contribution to GNP by industry



# ❖ Educational development enabled supply of manpower which has been key to national economic development

## ▣ Phase of educational Development ▣



## ▣ Phase of economic Development ▣



# ❖ Efforts made to expand educational opportunity

## \* Educational system in Korea (School system)

- Preschool education
- 6-year primary education
- 6-year secondary education
  - : 3 years in middle school, 3 years in high school
- 2, 3 or 4-year college

## School system and Enrollment rate in Korea

Age	Grade	Course (No. of schools)		No. of students	Cost-bearing	Enrollm ent rate	
1~5	-	Preschool (8,538)		613,749	Partially subsidized by governme nt	44%	
6~11	1~6	Primary school (5,895)		2,951,995	Free	99.9%	
12~14	7~9	Middle school (3,166)		Altern ative school	1,849,264	Free	99.9%
15~17	10~12	General high school(1,529)	Specialized high school(823)		1,935,704	Paid	99.7%
18~21	-	University(226)	Junior college(163)	3,999258	Paid	71.3%	
22~	-	Graduate school (without undergraduate course)(43)	Graduate school affiliated with undergraduate course(1,134)	329,544	Paid	-	

※ As of 2013 (%)

## ❖ **Swift adoption and stabilization of compulsory education**

- \* Highly efficient school education provided at low cost**
- \* Met the educational needs of all classes including low income families in each educational stage in a short period of time**



## ① Beginning of compulsory education: 1945 ~ 1952

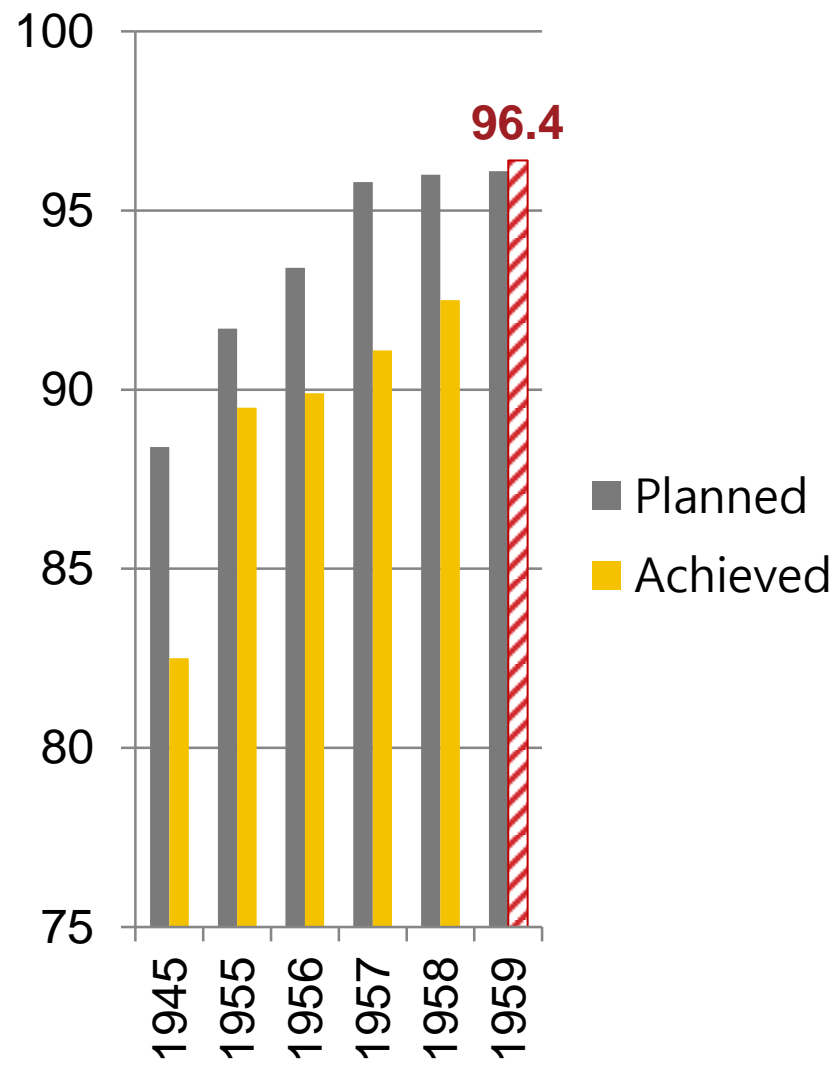
- After the establishment of the government in 1948, the constitution and Education Act which stipulate a complete compulsory primary education have been enacted.
- Provisions have been introduced regarding imposition of educational tax which is required for free compulsory education.
- Compulsory education was suspended due to the outbreak of the 'Korean War' in 1950.
- Compulsory education has been pursued in earnest with the proclamation of the Regulations for Education Act on 23 April 1952.

## ② Laying the foundation of compulsory education: 1952 ~ 1960

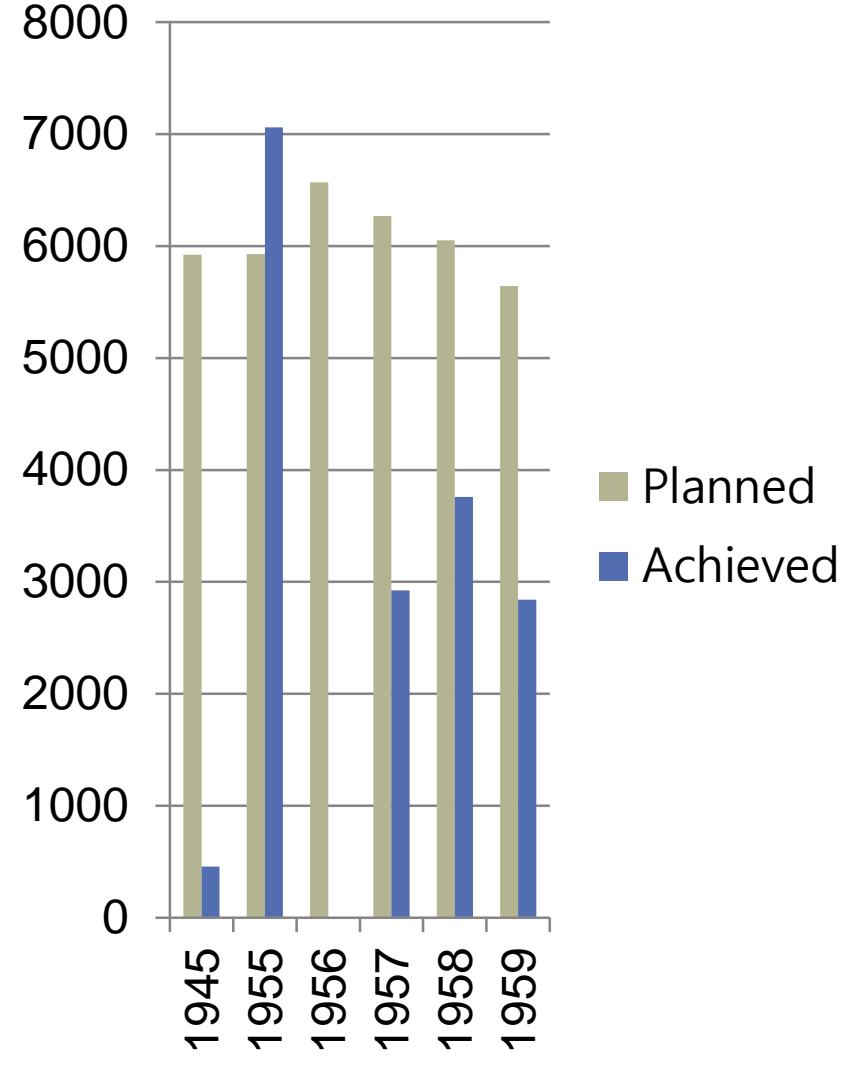
- There were approx. 1.6 million schoolchildren in 2,937 primary schools, right after liberation: 3.2 million school-age children did not go to school.
- Compulsory primary education has been completed in the 1950s.
- More than 75% of the Ministry of Culture and Education's budget was allocated for compulsory education in the 1950s, and more than 80% in the 1960s.

➤ **6-year Plan for the Completion of Compulsory education (1954-1959) and Achievements**

**School-age children enrollment rate(%)**



**Classroom construction (number)**



### ③ Expanding capacity: 1960 ~ 1969

- Special Education Subsidy Act aiming at expansion of facilities was enacted. Teachers' colleges were founded.
- Foundation of private primary schools were encouraged.  
22 private primary schools in 1962 → 46 in 1963 → 59 in 1964 → 94 in 1966
- It was decided to discontinue the accreditation of private primary schools after 1965.

### ④ Compulsory primary education taking root: 1970 ~ 1979

- Full enrollment rate has been achieved since the late 1960s.
- Efforts were made to improve the contents and method of education, improve curriculum, offer textbooks free of charge and provide school lunch (1979).

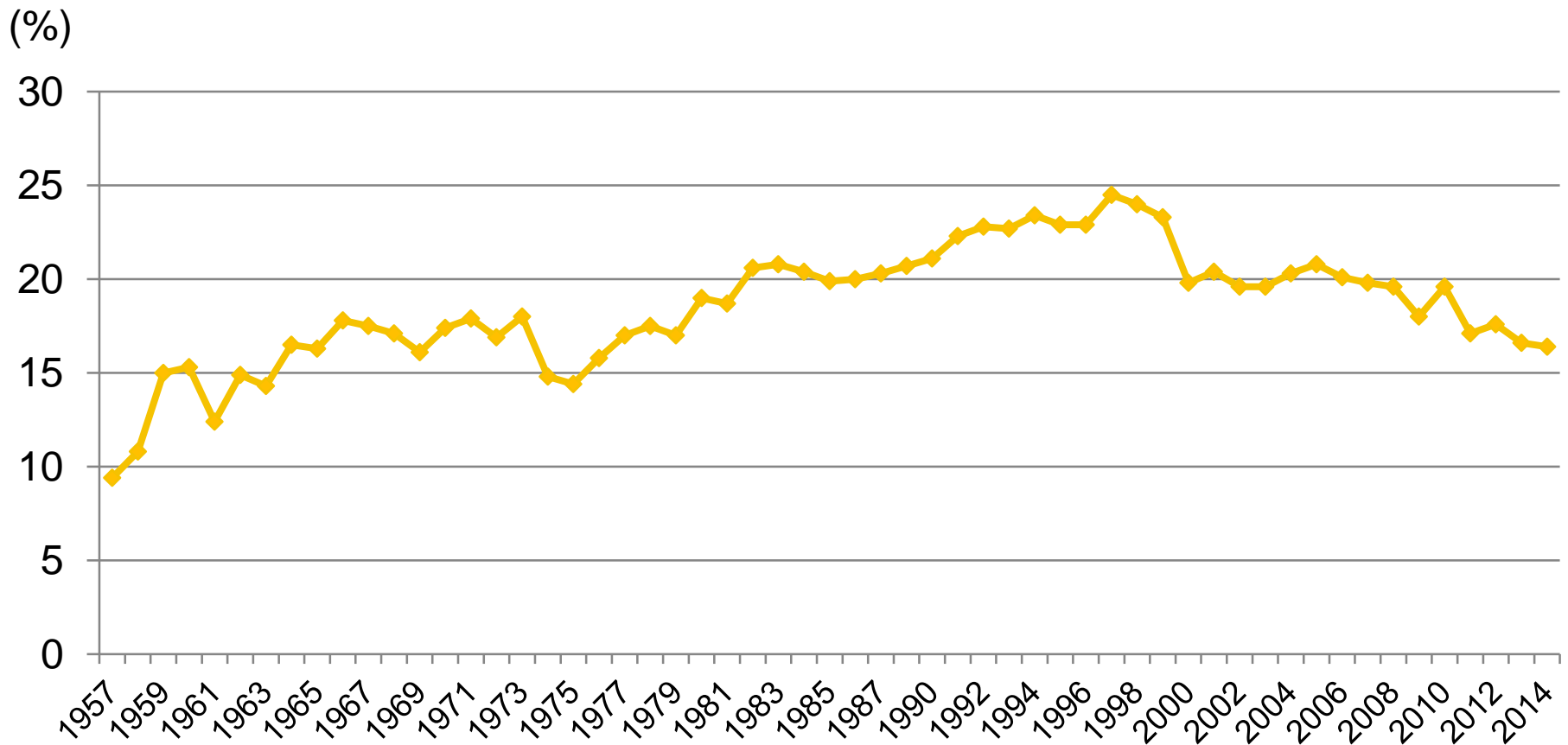
### ⑤ After 1969: Quasi-compulsory middle school education

- Admission to middle schools without entrance examination: in 1969, with expanded capacity of middle schools and to seek standardization
- 'Compulsory middle school education' was pursued with a detailed plan as part of the 5<sup>th</sup> 5-year Economic Development Plan (1982-1986).
- Currently, middle school education is compulsory and provided at no cost (completed in 2004) .

## ❖ Nationwide passion for investment in public education

- \* Continued increase in educational budget
- \* Educational budget gaining more weight in the government's total budget

**Educational budget vs. Total government budget (1948-2014)**



- **Top-notch investment in education**

- \* **High ratio of educational funding and high salary for teachers given the GDP level**

### Government funding for public education vs. GDP (1998-2002)

	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	4.07	4.35	4.82	4.65	4.82	3.55	5.48	5.88	5.75
1999	4.1	4.3	4.9	4.4	4.4	3.5	5.3	5.8	5.7
2000	4.3	4.3	4.8	4.5	4.5	3.5	5.2	5.7	5.5
2001	4.8	4.3	5.1	4.7	4.9	3.5	4.9	5.6	5.7
2002	4.2	4.4	5.3	5	4.6	3.5	m	5.7	5.9

### Educational cost vs. GDP – Korea vs. OECD average (2010)

Country	Total			Primary&Secondary			Higher education		
	Total	Gov.	Private	Total	Gov.	Private	Total	Gov.	Private
Korea	7.6	4.8	2.8	4.2	3.4	0.9	2.6	0.7	1.9
OECD	6.3	5.4	0.9	4	3.7	0.3	1.7	1.1	0.5

## \* Starting salary for primary school teachers

### : Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

**Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries(1998-2014) :  
Starting salary for primary school teachers**

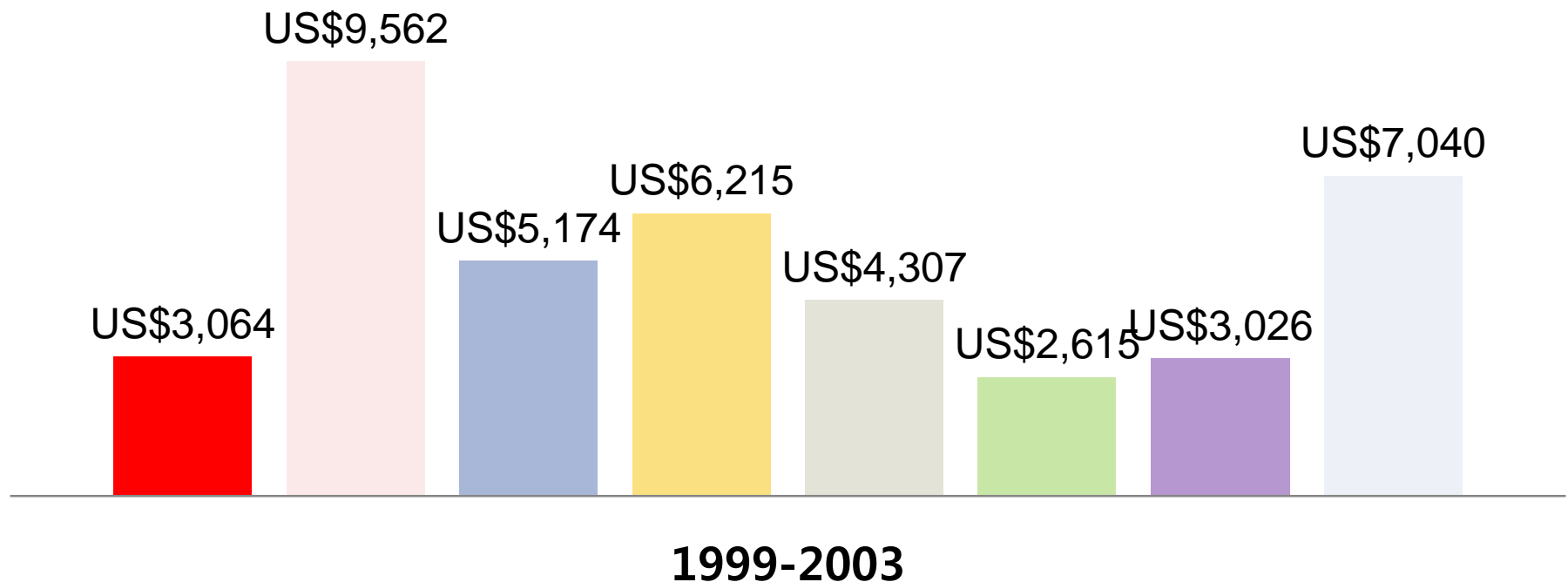
	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	24,150	28,654	26,165	22,393	19,444	21,899	-	20,080	19,183
1999	23,759	29,697	25,707	19,999	19,188	-	-	19,761	18,110
2000	26,300	31,213	27,631	22,428	20,927	22,670	-	20,199	18,489
2001	25,177	38,412	28,681	23,297	23,537	22,800	-	21,702	19,835
2002	26,983	36,934	29,513	25,403	22,915	23,493	-	22,688	26,647
2003	27,214	38,216	30,339	28,608	23,751	24,514	-	23,106	27,023
2003-1999	3,064	9,562	5,174	6,215	4,307	2,615	-	3,026	7,040
2012	26,776	46,456	36,858	30,204	27,015	25,454	34,443	24,334	29,029
2013	27,581	47,488	37,595	30,289	27,288	26,031	35,534	25,646	30,387
2014	28,591	50,007	36,333	-	27,786	27,067	37,145	26,247	32,148

## \* Starting salary for primary school teachers

### : Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries : Starting salary for primary school teachers

■ Korea ■ Germany ■ US ■ UK ■ Italy ■ Japan ■ France ■ Finland



## \* Starting salary for secondary school teachers

### : Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

**Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries(1998-2014) :  
Starting salary for middle school teachers**

	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	24,150	32,769	24,624	22,661	21,108	21,899	-	22,579	20,660
1999	23,613	33,196	25,155	19,999	20,822	-	-	21,918	20,394
2000	26,148	34,891	27,643	22,428	22,657	22,670	-	22,358	20,720
2001	26,045	39,853	28,693	23,297	25,400	22,800	-	24,016	22,320
2002	26,852	38,319	29,525	25,403	24,710	23,493	-	25,101	30,514
2003	27,092	39,650	30,352	28,608	25,602	24,514	-	25,564	30,336
2003-1999	2,941	6,881	5,728	5,947	4,494	2,615	-	2,985	9,676
2012	26,670	51,058	36,772	30,204	29,122	25,454	34,443	27,184	31,351
2013	27,476	53,026	37,507	30,289	29,418	26,301	35,534	28,653	33,034
2014	28,285	55,700	36,993	-	29,945	27,067	37,145	29,320	34,720

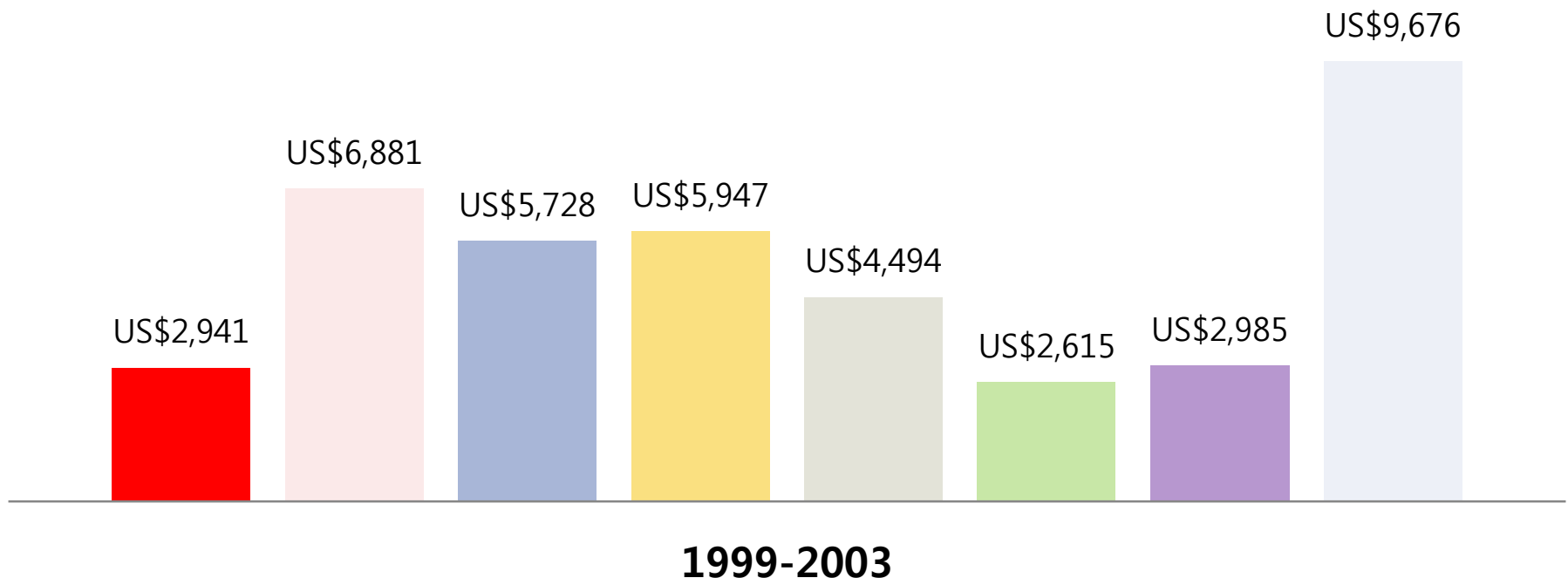


## \* Starting salary for secondary school teachers

### : Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries : Starting salary for middle school teachers

■ Korea ■ Germany ■ US ■ UK ■ Italy ■ Japan ■ France ■ Finland

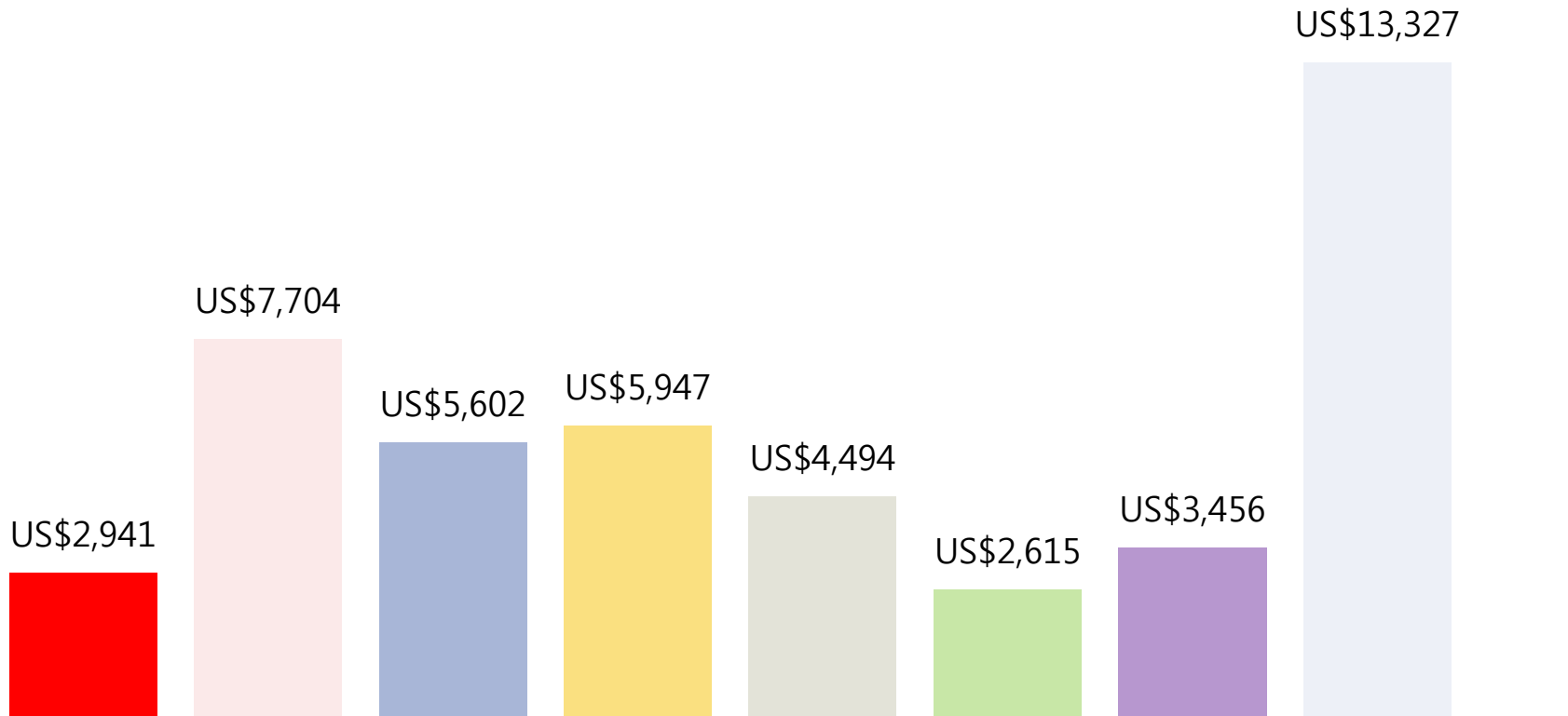


## Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries(1998-2014) : Starting salary for high school teachers

	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	24,150	35,177	24,869	22,661	21,108	21,899	-	22,579	m
1999	23,613	35,096	35,546	19,999	20,822	-	-	21,918	21,047
2000	26,148	37,394	27,751	22,428	22,657	22,670	-	22,358	21,517
2001	25,045	43,100	28,806	23,297	25,400	22,800	-	24,016	23,104
2002	26,852	41,441	29,641	25,403	24,710	23,493	-	25,563	32,136
2003	27,092	42,881	30,471	28,608	25,602	24,514	-	26,035	34,374
2003-1999	2,941	7,704	5,602	5,947	4,494	2,615	-	3,456	13,327
2012	26,670	53,963	37,267	30,204	29,122	25,454	34,588	27,420	32,276
2013	27,476	57,357	38,012	30,289	29,418	26,301	35,534	34,008	34,008
2014	28,485	60,528	38,433	-	29,954	27,067	37,294	29,320	36,817

**Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries :  
Starting salary for high school teachers**

■ Korea ■ Germany ■ US ■ UK ■ Italy ■ Japan ■ France ■ Finland



**1999-2003**

\* Salary for primary school teachers with 15 years of experience

: Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries (1998-2004):  
Primary school teachers with 15 years of experience

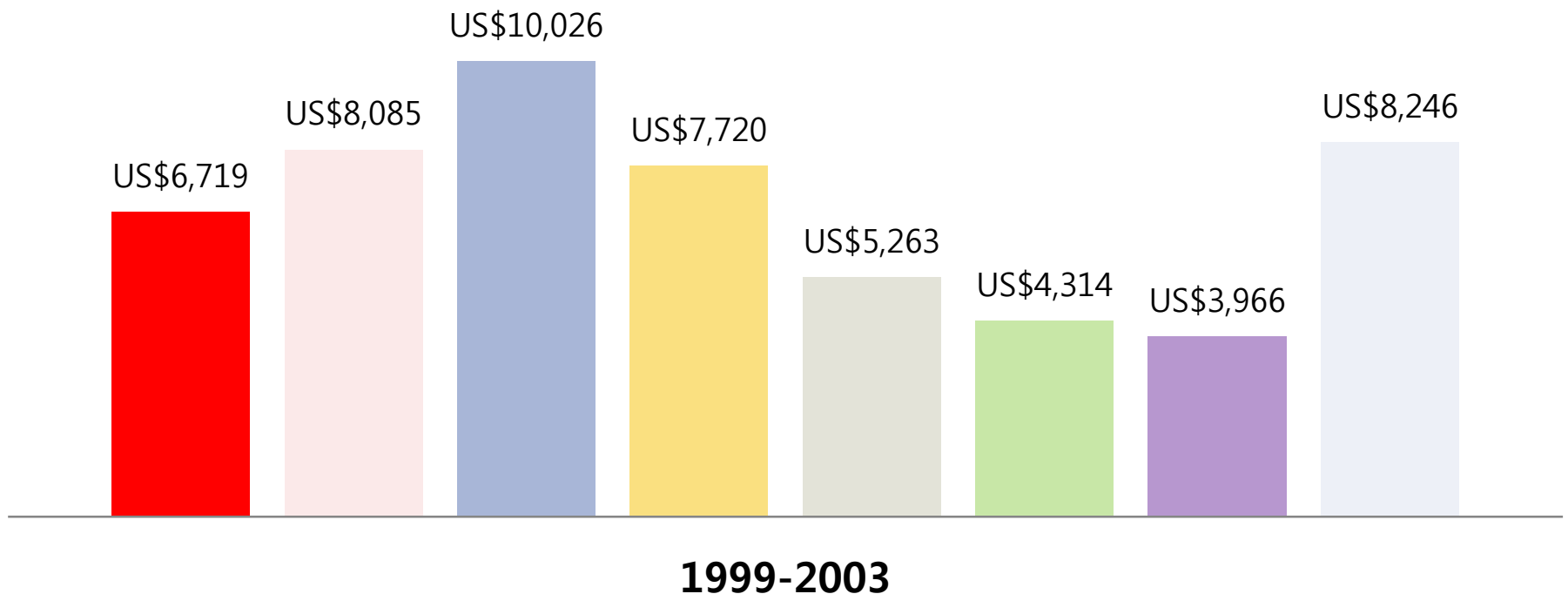
	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	39,921	38,138	33,973	34,087	23,468	41,201	-	27,116	23,539
1999	39,411	36,046	34,705	33,540	23,137	-	-	26,599	24,799
2000	43,952	37,905	40,072	35,487	25,115	42,820	-	27,172	25,183
2001	42,845	46,459	41,595	36,864	28,483	43,043	-	29,193	27,175
2002	46,400	44,671	42,801	39,350	27,726	44,345	-	30,519	31,687
2003	46,640	46,223	43,999	41,807	28,731	45,515	-	31,082	31,785
2003-1999	6,719	8,085	10,026	7,720	5,263	4,315	-	3,966	8,246
2012	46,338	55,771	45,226	44,145	32,658	44,788	54,978	32,733	37,455
2013	48,251	58,662	46,130	44,269	32,969	45,741	56,349	33,152	37,886
2014	50,145	62,195	45,998	-	33,570	47,561	58,495	33,994	39,445

\* Salary for primary school teachers with 15 years of experience

: Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries:  
Primary school teachers with 15 years of experience

■ Korea ■ Germany ■ US ■ UK ■ Italy ■ Japan ■ France ■ Finland



# \* Salary for secondary school teachers with 15 years of experience

## : Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries (1998-2004):  
Middle school teachers with 15 years of experience

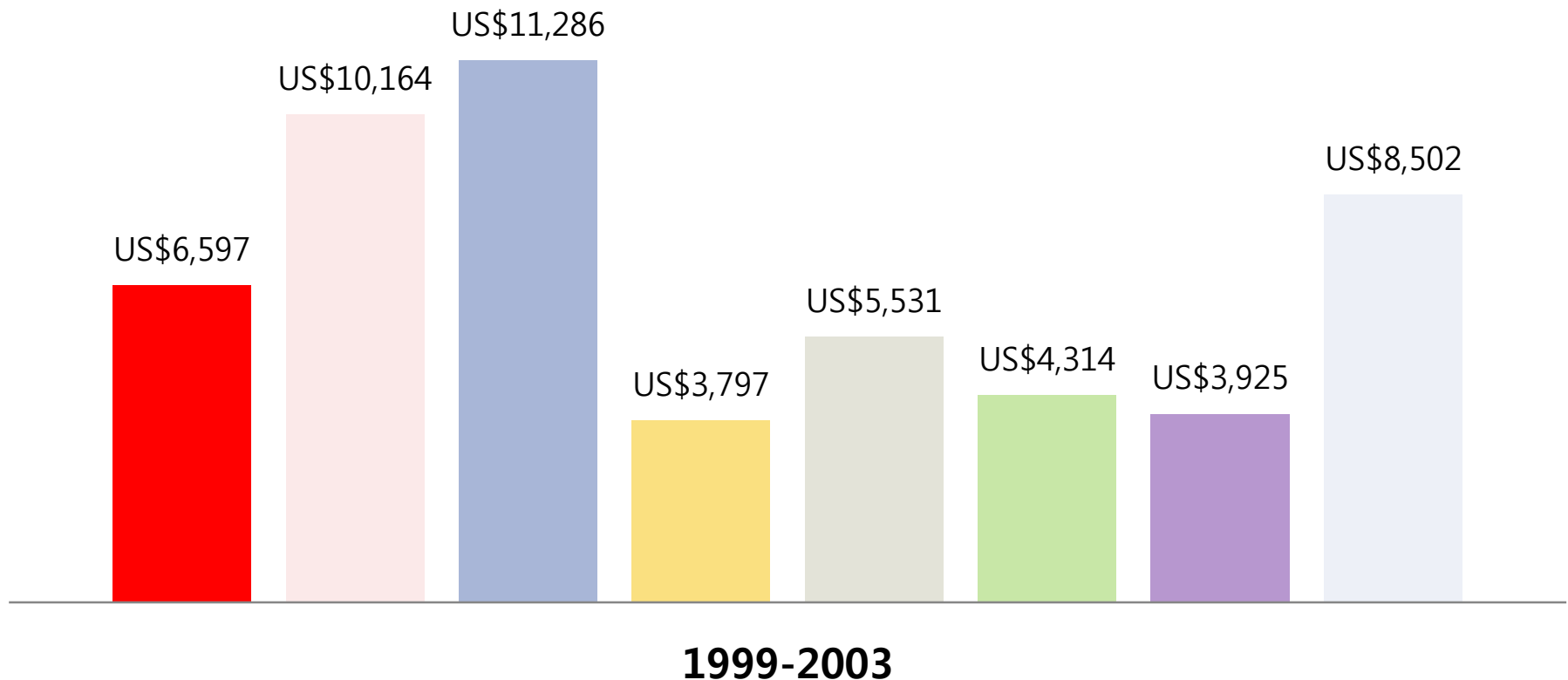
	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	39,921	38,640	32,713	38,010	25,773	41,201	-	29,615	27,942
1999	39,265	38,596	33,418	33,540	25,397	-	-	28,757	28,225
2000	43,800	40,561	40,072	35,487	27,507	42,820	-	29,331	28,690
2001	42,713	49,053	41,595	36,864	31,072	43,043	-	31,507	30,945
2002	46,269	47,165	42,801	39,350	30,220	44,345	-	32,933	36,552
2003	46,518	48,804	43,999	41,807	31,304	45,515	-	33,540	36,444
2003-1999	6,597	10,164	11,286	3,797	5,531	4,314	-	3,925	8,502
2012	46,232	61,784	45,049	44,145	35,583	44,788	54,978	35,583	40,451
2013	48,146	64,491	45,950	44,269	35,922	45,741	56,349	36,159	40,917
2014	50,040	67,736	47,046	-	36,577	47,561	58,495	37,065	42,601

\* Salary for secondary school teachers with 15 years of experience

: Top-notch salary level compared to other countries

Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries:  
Middle school teachers with 15 years of experience

■ Korea ■ Germany ■ US ■ UK ■ Italy ■ Japan ■ France ■ Finland



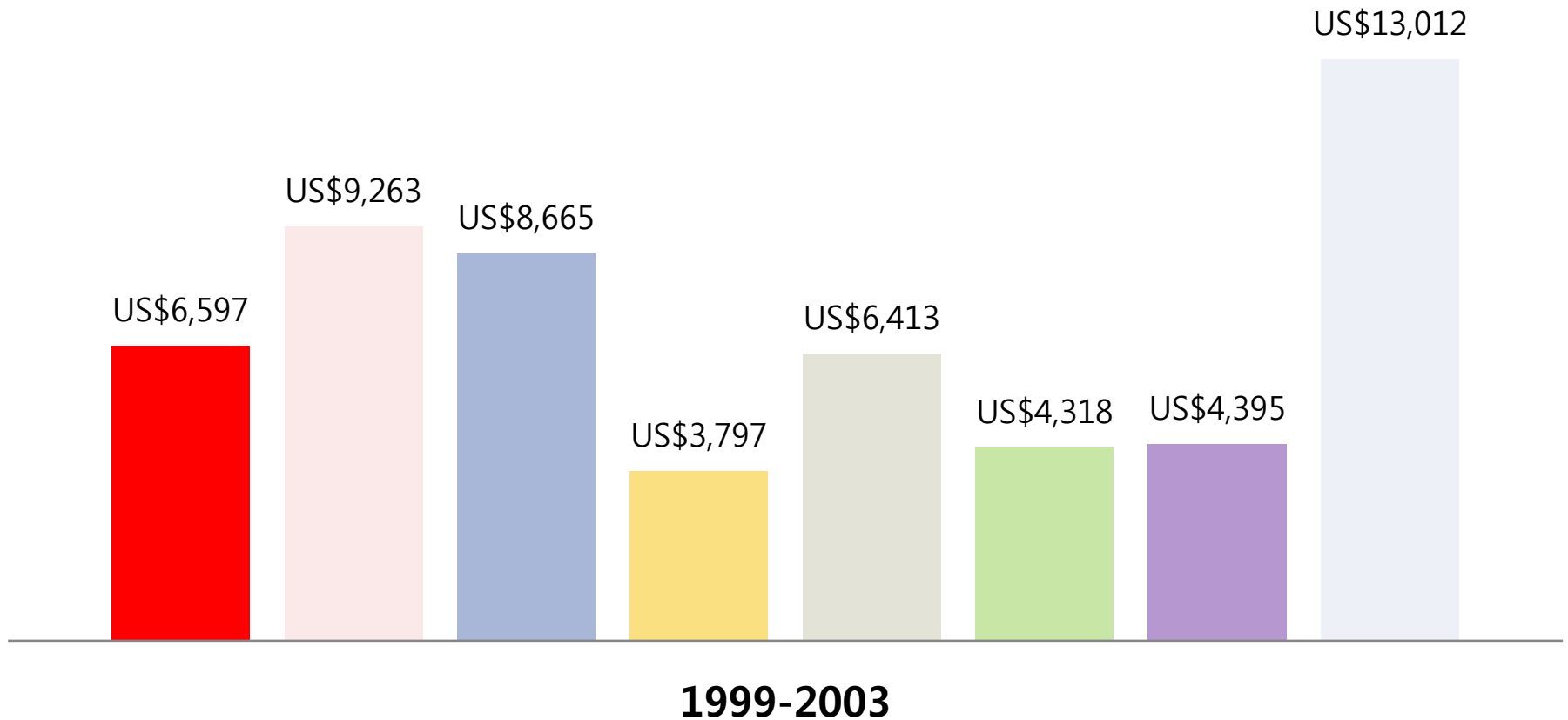
**Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries (1998-2004):  
High school teachers with 15 years of experience**

	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan		France	Finland
1998	39,921	43,307	35,455	38,010	25,773	41,225		29,615	29,127
1999	39,265	39,265	41,745	33,540	26,175	-		28,757	29,530
2000	43,800	43,881	40,181	35,487	28,329	42,845		29,331	30,124
2001	42,713	52,839	41,708	36,894	31,959	43,069		31,507	32,429
2002	46,269	50,805	42,918	39,350	31,073	44,372		33,394	40,482
2003	46,518	52,570	44,120	41,807	32,186	45,543		34,010	42,139
2003-1999	6,597	9,263	8,665	3,797	6,413	4,317		4,395	13,012
2012	46,232	66,895	48,466	44,145	36,582	44,788		35,819	42,809
2013	48,146	69,715	49,414	44,269	36,928	45,741		36,398	43,302
2014	50,040	72,633	49,822	-	37,602	47,561		37,355	45,986



**Teachers' salary in Korea vs. major countries:  
High school teachers with 15 years of experience**

■ Korea ■ Germany ■ US ■ UK ■ Italy ■ Japan ■ France ■ Finland



## ❖ **Rapid expansion and development of public education**

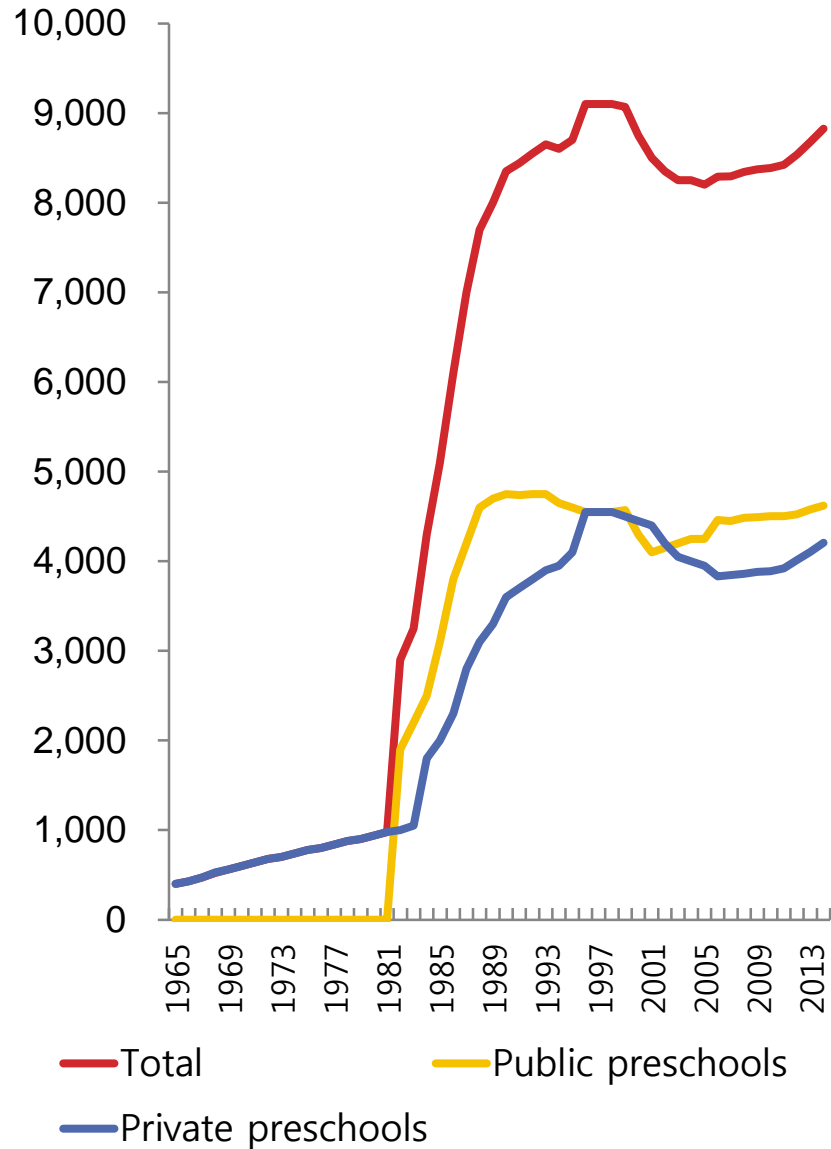
- **Quantitative expansion of public education in a short time**
- A sharp increase in enrollment rate and entrance rate of primary/middle/high school students
- Improved educational condition thanks to large investment in school education

### **\* High enrollment rate and entrance rate of preschoolers and primary/middle/high school students**

- **Enrollment rate at primary schools**: 54% in 1945, right after liberation → 82.5% in 1954, 91.1% in 1957 → **96.4% in 2014**
- **Enrollment rate at secondary schools**: Reached 90% in the 1970s → **87% in 2014**

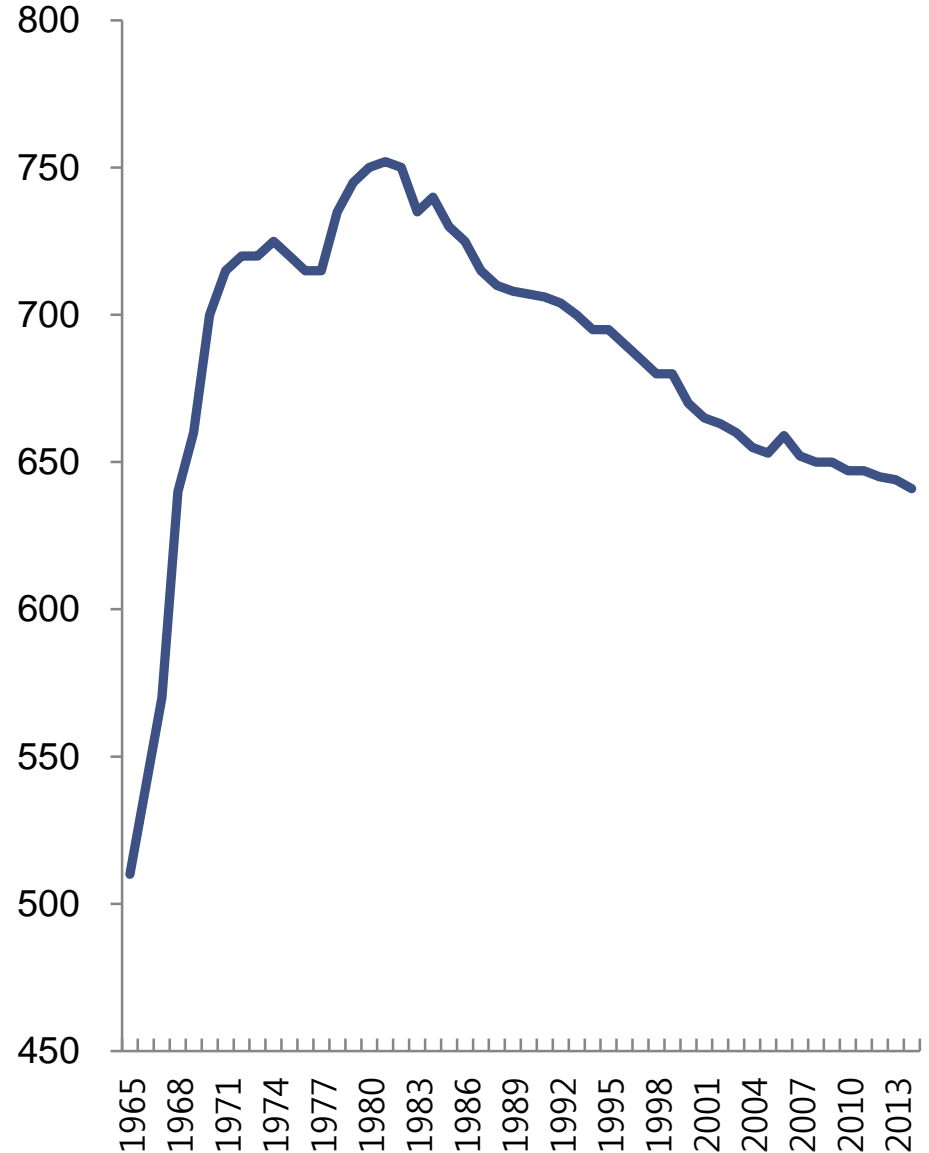
## No. of preschools (1965~2014)

(No. of preschools)

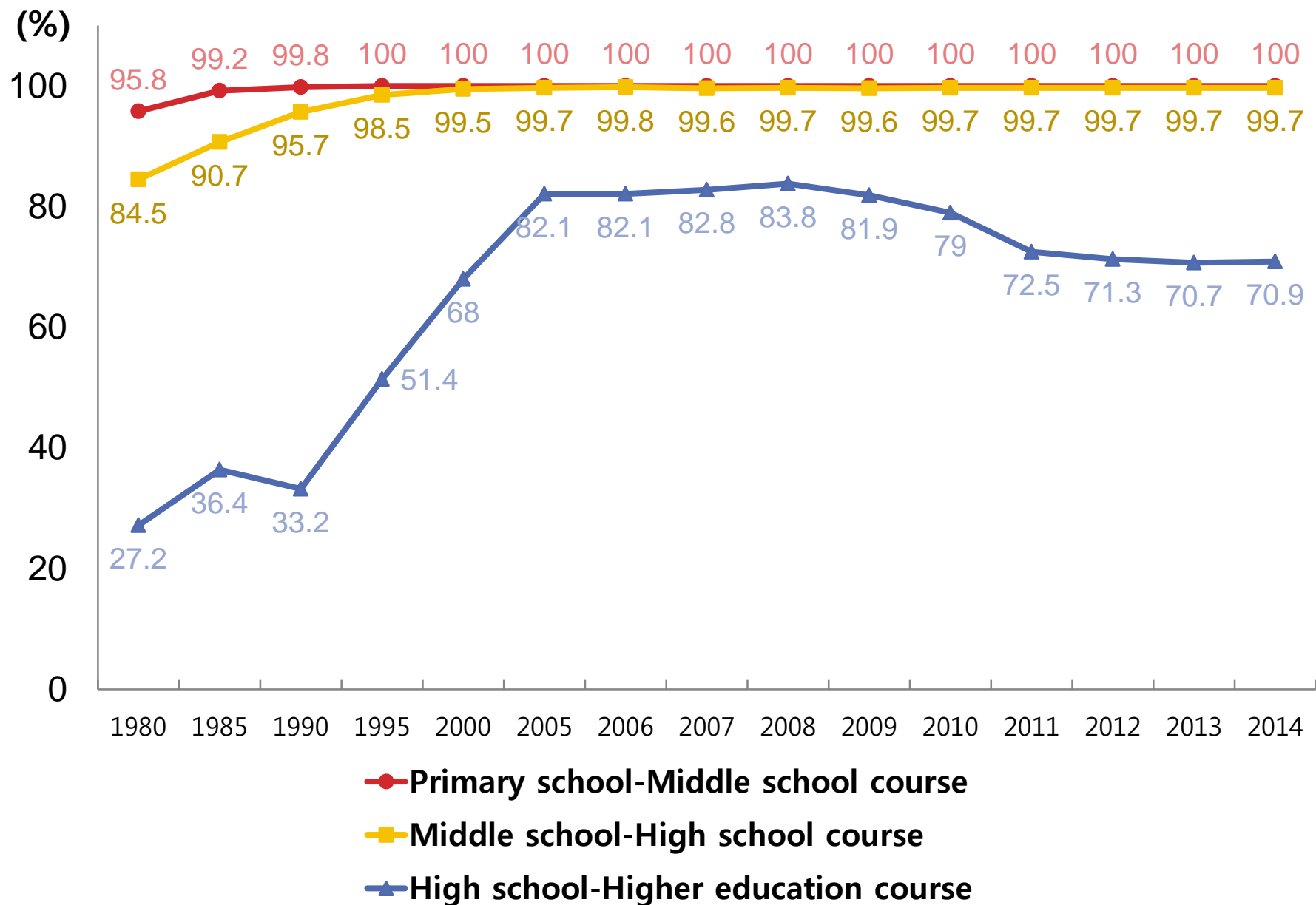


## No. of private middle schools(1965~2014)

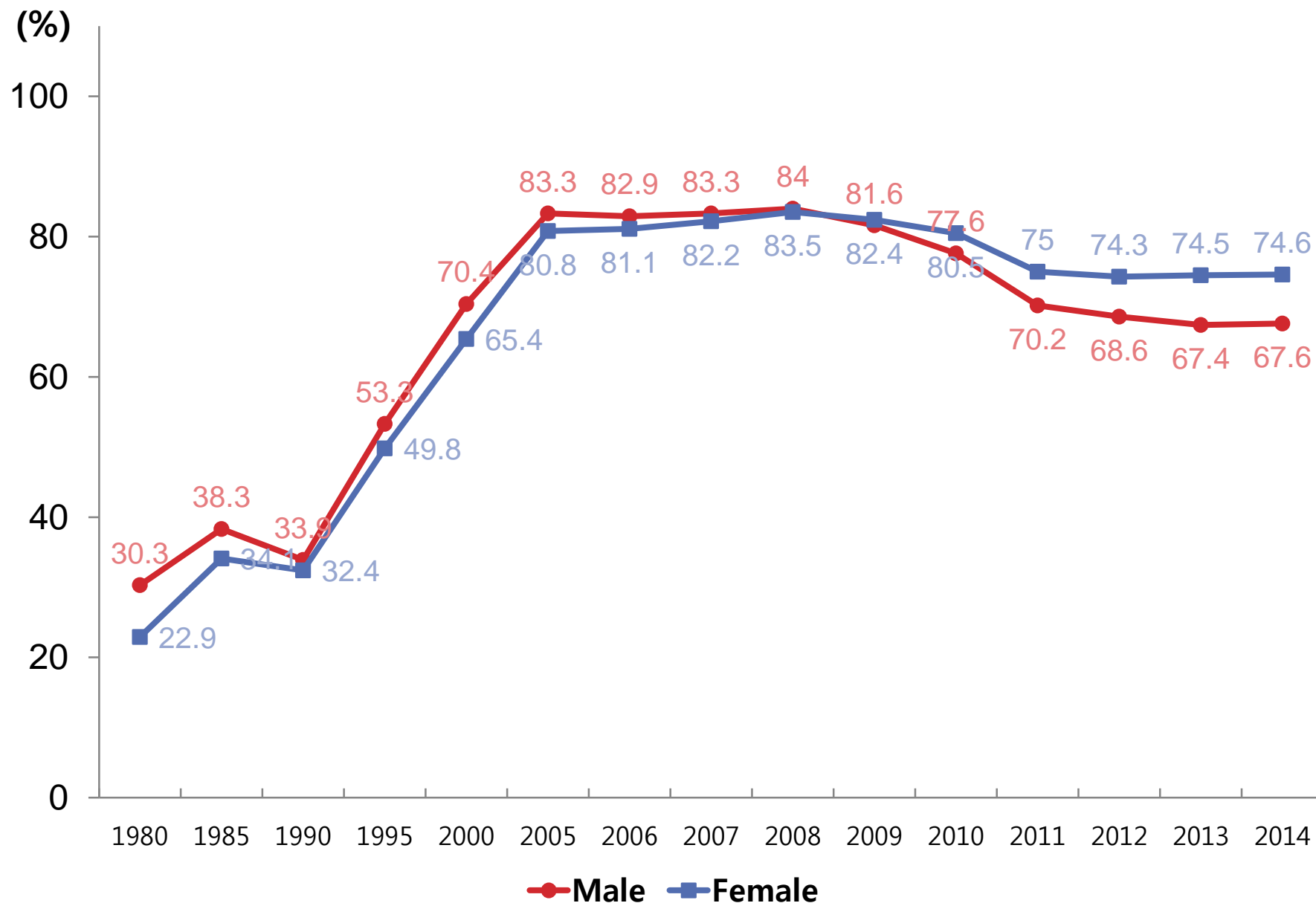
(No. of private middle schools)



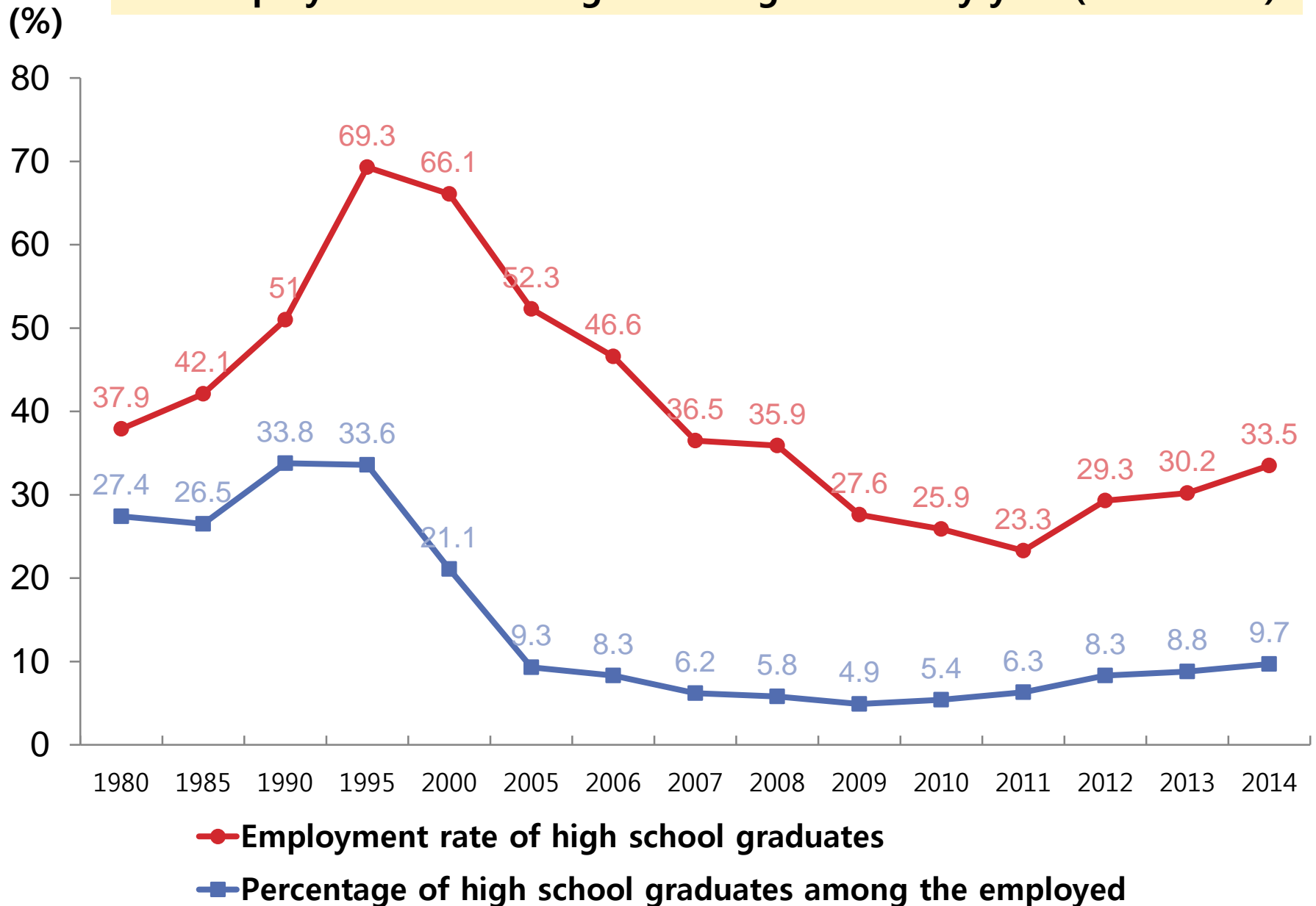
Entrance rate by school level, by year(1980~2014)



High school entrance rate by gender, by year (1980~2014)



## Percentage of high school graduates among the employed and Employment rate of high school graduates by year (1980-2014)



\* Primary school (Enrollment rate at primary education) – Comparison with major countries

**Full-time and part-time registered students at public/private institutions**  
(Percentage of those enrolled out of the total population aged 5-14)

	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	92.1	97.5	99.8	98.9	99.1	101	97	99.9	90.6
1999	91.8	100.1	100.7	99	99.2	101.2	96.6	99.9	91.2
2000	92.3	99.4	99.3	98.9	99.7	101.2	97.1	99.8	91.6
2001	92.6	100.1	102.1	98.7	99.4	101	97.2	101	93.5
2002	92.7	97.5	96.9	98.9	101.7	100.8	m	101.1	94.4
2003	93.2	97.6	97.1	100.5	101.9	100.7	m	101.4	94.6
2012	100	99	97	100	100	100	99	100	96
2013	99	99	96	100	99	100	99	99	96
2014	99	99	97	98	99	100	99	99	96

\* Secondary education (Enrollment rate at middle/high schools) – Comparison with major countries

**Full-time and part-time registered students at public/private institutions**  
(Percentage of those enrolled out of the total population aged 15-19)

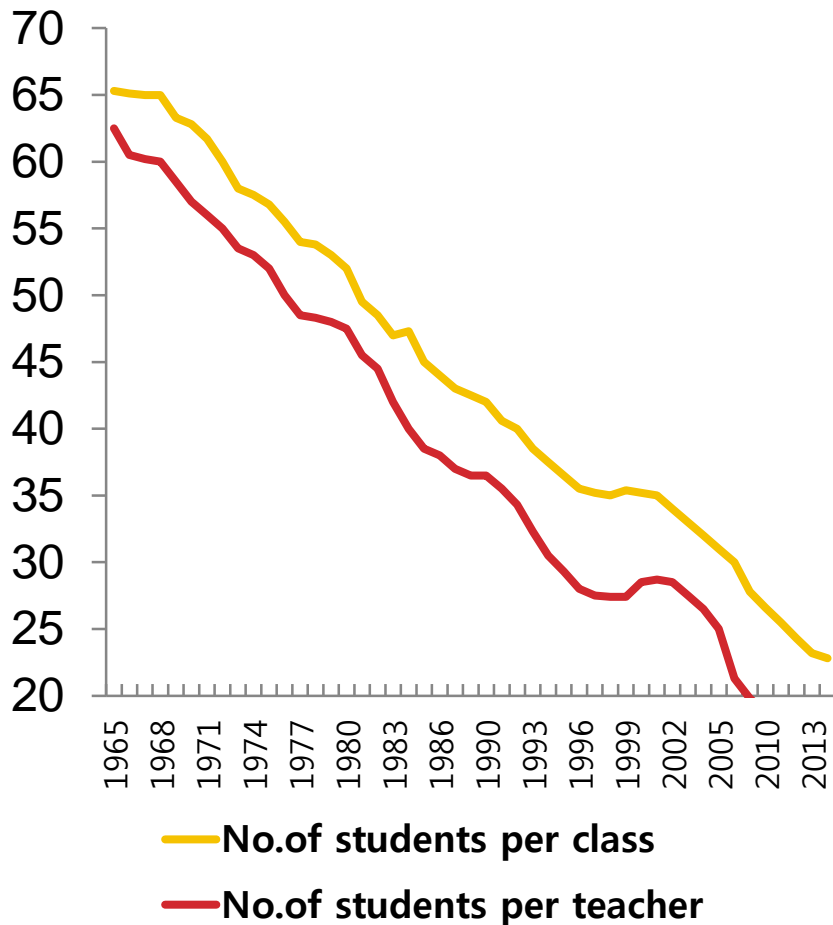
	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	78.6	88.3	74.2	69.5	69.8	m	78	87.8	82.1
1999	81.2	88.3	78.1	2.5	70.7	m	75.3	87.2	84.5
2000	78.6	88.3	73.9	73.3	65.5	m	74.2	68.4	84.8
2001	79.3	89.4	77.6	74.7	72.2	m	75	86.6	85.3
2002	79.9	89.2	74.8	76.8	75.8	m	m	86.7	85
2003	81.7	89	75.4	75.9	77.8	m	m	87.2	86
2012	86	90	82	77	83	m	81	84	87
2013	86	92	80	78	81	m	81	84	87
2014	87	90	81	78	81	m	82	84	86



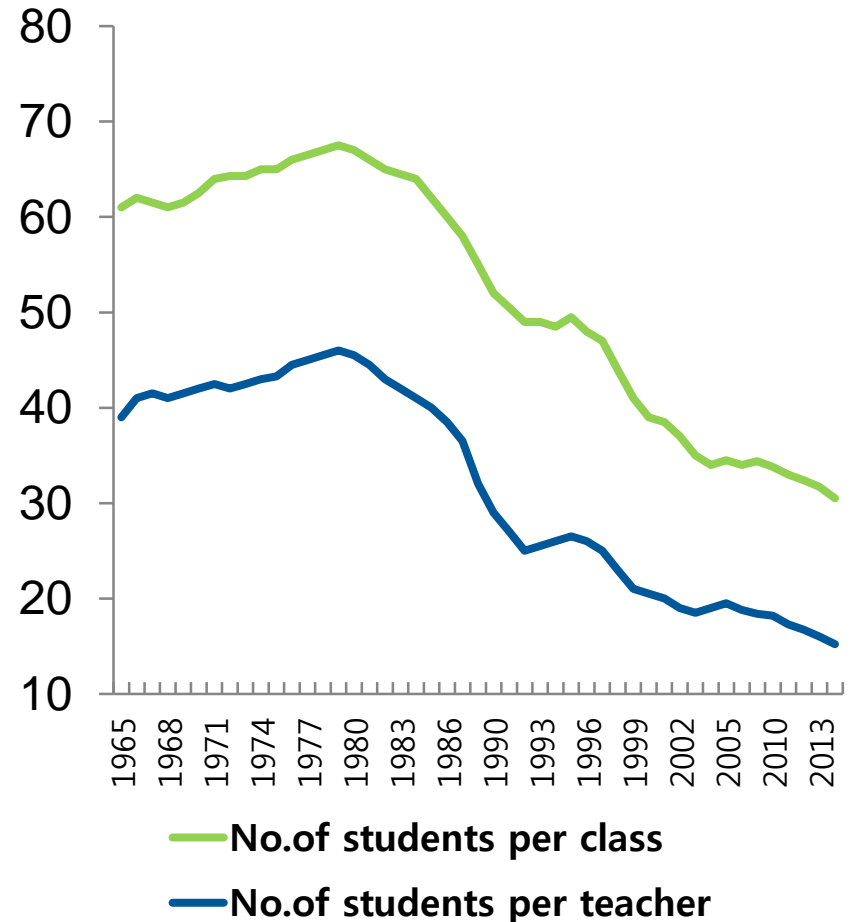
## \* Improvement in educational conditions

- Decrease in the number of students per class and per teacher

**No. of primary school students per class / per teacher(1965~2014)**



**No. of middle school students per class / per teacher**



## Enrollment rate at higher education (university): Higher education has become a common education in the 1990s, highest level among the OECD countries

Year	Total			Public			Private		
	Total	Female	% of female	Total	% of public	Female	Total	% of private	Female
1955	78,679	-							
1960	92,930	-		31,718			61,212		
1965	105,643	23,761	22.5%	25,964	24.6%	2,218	79,679	75.4%	21,543
1970	146,414	32,641	22.3%	36,038	24.6%	4,132	110,376	75.4%	28,509
1975	208,986	55,439	26.5%	56,830	27.2%	8,660	152,156	72.8%	46,779
1980	402,979	90,634	22.5%	114,686	28.5%	19,588	288,293	71.5%	71,046
1985	931,884	250,088	26.8%	243,378	26.1%	64,286	688,506	73.9%	185,802
1990	1,040,166	296,129	28.5%	254,748	24.5%	69,902	785,418	75.5%	226,227
1995	1,187,735	378,418	31.9%	295,941	24.9%	87,852	891,794	75.1%	290,566
2000	1,665,398	596,389	35.8%	372,078	22.3%	124,608	1,293,320	77.7%	471,781
2001	1,729,668	626,982	36.2%	381,793	22.1%	129,969	1,347,875	77.9%	497,013
2002	1,751,339	641,993	36.7%	366,900	20.9%	126,955	1,384,439	79.1%	515,038
2003	1,808,539	665,259	36.8%	393,170	21.7%	134,823	1,415,369	78.3%	530,436
2004	1,836,649	675,493	36.8%	397,352	21.6%	134,733	1,439,297	78.4%	540,760
2005	1,886,639	684,238	36.3%	400,668	21.2%	134,351	1,485,971	78.8%	549,887

•\* **University (Enrollment rate at higher education) – Comparison with major countries**

**Full-time and part-time registered students at public/private institutions**  
(Percentage of those enrolled out of the total population aged 20-29)

	Korea	Germany	US	UK	Italy	Japan	Canada	France	Finland
1998	20.9	21.7	21.4	18.1	16.8	m	19.8	19.1	33.1
1999	21.9	22.6	20.4	23.6	16.9	m	20.3	18.9	36.1
2000	23.9	23.6	21.2	23.8	18.7	m	21.7	19.1	37.9
2001	25	24.2	22.6	23.3	17.1	m	21.2	19.6	39.2
2002	26.5	25.5	25.2	26.8	18.4	m	m	19.6	39.5
2003	27.3	26.70	22.2	26.3	19.3	m	m	20.4	40.4
2012	30	31	26	18	22	m	25	20	42
2013	30	32	27	19	21	m	25	20	42
2014	31	33	27	19	21	m	26	21	42

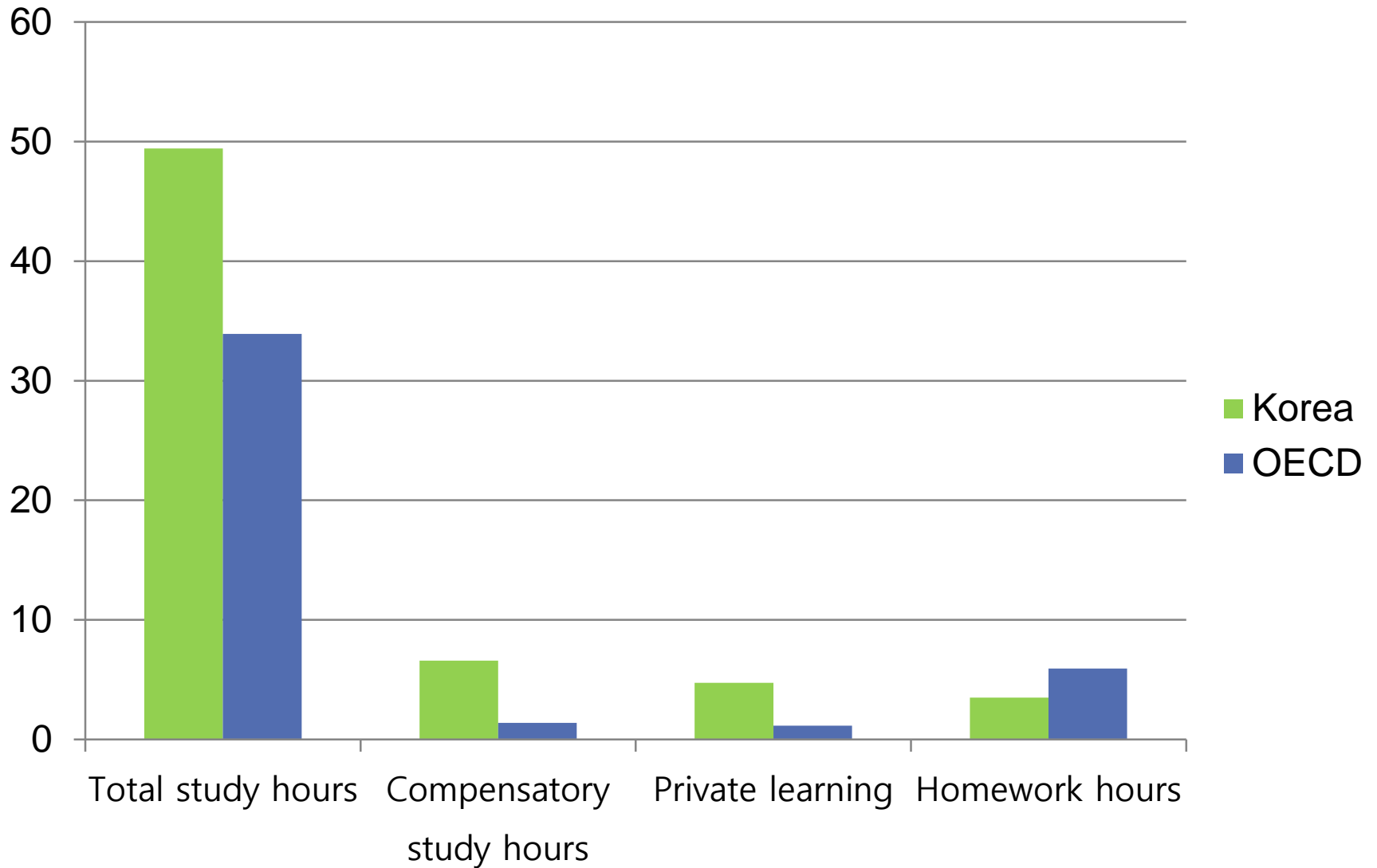
# ■ POLICY FOR EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN KOREA ■

❖ **Korean's zeal for education, high enrollment and entrance rate, and private education**

- High enrollment rate, competition for school entrance and high private education expenses due to fierce academic competition

## \* Longer study hours

(Hours)



- **Expenses excessively spent on private education to enter elite schools**

- Total spending on private education (e.g. private tutoring, cram schools) by year

Year	Total	Primary school	Middle school	High school
2008	209,095	104,307	58,135	46,652
2009	216,259	102,309	62,656	51,294
2010	208,718	97,080	60,396	51,242
2011	201,266	90,461	60,006	50,799
2012	190,395	77,554	61,162	51,679
2013	185,960	77,375	57,831	50,754

Source: Ministry of Education, KOSTAT  
Survey on private education expenses

## ❖ Policy for educational reform to lessen competition for exams and normalize school education

### • Reformation of college admission system to lessen competition for college entrance

#### - Frequent reformation of college admission system

- ➡ Aiming at reducing competition in the preparation for the college entrance exam (national exam),
- ➡ Reformation has been sought to give more weight to academic records and activities while reducing the importance of the college entrance exam score.
- ➡ Especially, 'Admission officer system' has been introduced which lends weight on students' extracurricular activities & records.

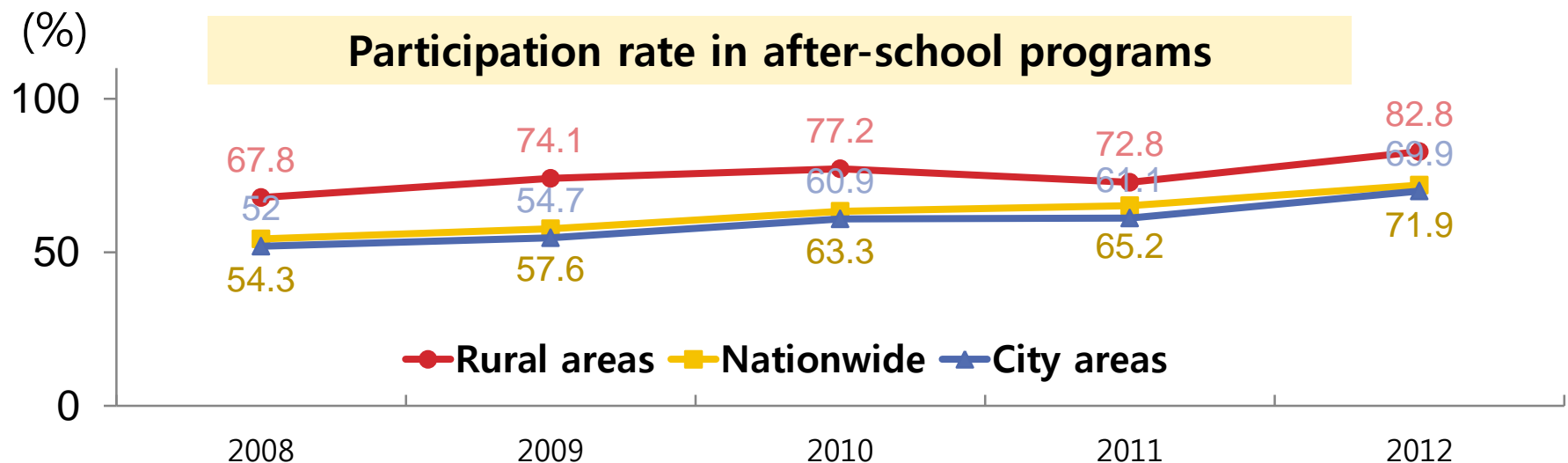
\* Measures taken to reduce spending on private education and address educational gap

- Extended provision of 'After-school programs' and 'EBS (public education service broadcasting)

➡ In particular, strengthening financial support for low income families

**Subsidy for after-school programs for students in rural areas**

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Amount (million won)	657	515	421	382	528
No. of courses	46,948	17,162	16,210	14,605	14,645





# ❖ Key policy directions in the recent curriculum revision

## \* 「5.31 Educational Reform Plan (1995)」 ~ 「'09 Curriculum Revision」

- Sought diversity, autonomy and specialization in school education
- Introduced the principles of 'selection' and 'competition'
- Reformed curriculum and improved college entrance system to further develop students' aptitude, talent and creativity (the goal is to move away from an education that focuses on 'preparing for exams' or 'rote learning')

## \* Major focus of 「'09 Curriculum Revision」

- Adopted 'Creative hands-on experience' in the curriculum
- Focused on reducing the burden of study for students (moving away from the traditional curriculum which revolves around studying Korean/English/Mathematics in preparation for the college entrance exam)
- Focused on nurturing creativity, enquiring mindset, autonomy, good personality and global citizenship

## \* Seeking a new paradigm of teaching and learning

- Teaching and learning led by the learners
- Provide SMART education : Develop and utilize e-texts, digital textbooks, and provide a customized/specialized education