The role of a well-educated populace continues to be a common research subject within the social sciences. In terms of economics, political science, and sociology, increases in education have been shown to bolster economic development and politically mobilize the public. The South Korean case, with its rapid economic growth since the 1960s and the shift to democratization in the 1980s, is a strong example supporting this claim. What has been lacking among such studies thus far, however, is a detailed and comprehensive examination of the causal mechanisms that led to the rapid expansion of education in South Korea. Michael J. Seth takes up this task in his comprehensive study of the South Korean education system, claiming that it was South Korea's "education fever" - or preoccupation with formal schooling - which propelled Korea's educational development.

The central claim of the book is that South Korea's education fever resulted from the complex interaction of traditional Confucian attitudes and new egalitarian ideas introduced from the West. Combining both historical and thematic content, Seth effectively addresses the dynamics of such interaction, utilizing government reports, secondary literature, periodicals, and, with great effectiveness, the discourse of National Assembly debates on South Korean educational policy. Since "opinions on education are easy to obtain" from a populace greatly concerned with education (7), more than sixty interviews with teachers and education officials were conducted. Given that first-hand accounts of colonial and mid-twentieth century education policy are becoming increasingly scarce, Seth's interviews may be the only such accounts to ever be published in English.

From the sŏdang of the early Chosŏn period to the current education system, the Korean mindset has been imbued with the belief that education and examination preparation represent the potential for social access and status selection. This standard, however, has changed over time with increases in, first, the influences of the Japanese colonial occupation and, later, the U.S. Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK). The limited access to education during Japanese colonial rule impeded education development and growth in general, but led to the adoption of particular practices such as teacher authority and class bonding. Following liberation, there was widespread interest in new educational opportunities under the authority of the USAMGIK, partially due to the fact that "the power of educationŠ corresponded [with Koreans'] traditional beliefs in the transformational value of formal learning" (49).

Focusing only upon South Korea in the post-independence period, Seth meticulously outlines the tumultuous debate concerning the educational system. Two issues - whether to maintain the multi-track, elitist system and whether or not to decentralize educational authority - were
discussed among pro-American and/or nationalist education organizations. The divisions between liberal and conservative pedagogues were not always distinct, given that all educators emphasized the moral component of education and viewed education as a means to produce a prosperous and strong nation. Nevertheless, the formal debate between members of the National Assembly and the Ministry of Education (MOE) resulted in a multi-track, single secondary school system. Decentralization of educational authority, the second issue of the debate, had never been a part of Korean political policy and challenged the nation's traditions. The MOE claimed that local autonomy would produce more appropriate community-based education and develop a sense of national consciousness through popular participation.

Seth then analyses the particulars of each government's policy. He notes that the Rhee administration initially focused on primary education as a means to satisfy the basic requests of the populace. Primary education also afforded Rhee the means to "instill loyalty to the new state" and socialize the nation's youth "into good citizens of the Republic of Korea" (81). At the same time, because only two out of five college graduates found jobs requiring university degrees, the MOE's efforts to promote vocational and technical education conflicted with public perceptions about the purpose of schooling. Essentially, this marked the beginning of a tug-of-war between the MOE and the public over education policy that would continue up to the present.

The promotion of secondary education during the Park regime expanded the size of the student populace. Coupled with Park's attempts to coordinate education policy with economic strategy in the form of mandated vocational and technical education, competition increased among students and fueled the intensity of South Korea's education fever. Continued opposition from the populace enabled "educational expansionŠ to be propelled by public demand" (118). That is, resistance from parents, teachers, and school administrators prevented major changes in Korean education until the Yushin phase of the Park regime. Even then, reforms such as sequential development and a uniform national curriculum were implemented with seeming intent, but "the details of educational policy tended to be made ad hoc and were subsequently often modified or abandoned" (130).

Park was successful, however, in limiting enrollment in higher education, effectively preventing an oversupply of higher degree holders. Such efforts fostered a preoccupation with university entrance examinations. Seth states: "If the main purpose of South Korean education has been status, then it has been the entrance examinations that have been the key mechanism in that process" (140). Much like the state's previous attempts to dictate educational policy, societal pressures and the weight of tradition have prevented the establishment of a consistent examination policy. Seth also considers the inherent contradiction of assigning rank (via examination result) in a society where egalitarian ideals were strong. To maintain a semblance of balance and equality among students, specific policies were developed, such as teacher rotation and a lottery system to assign students to public and private schools.

By the time Chun took power in 1980, the aggregate costs of college examination preparation were astronomical, particularly in the form of private tutoring. To counteract the overarching impacts of the examination, the state began to control the college entrance system by instituting a new College Entrance Achievement Test and requiring that a student's high school grade point average represent thirty percent of the basis for college entrance. The subsequent Roh regime also attempted to make changes to alleviate the distortions in education created by the examination system, as did the Kim Dae Jung government. All of these efforts, however, were to no avail, as "the public was committed to [examination hell], and until the state lifted all the quotas on college freshmen, the feverish competitionŠ would continue" (171).
The final two chapters of *Education Fever* address themes relevant for Korea and other nations that have shifted from authoritarian to democratic systems. First, Seth considers the function of education as a means of state control. During the Rhee regime, the compulsory membership of all secondary and higher education students in the Student Defense Corps helped legitimize the fledgling South Korean state. Yet, the long periods of time spent consolidating "anti-Communist thought" left students ill prepared for examinations. Moreover, the military and ideological training of students did not conform to goals of acquiring social status via educational achievement. Only after Park's assassination were students and teachers able to initiate change, eventually manifesting itself in the largest demonstrations in South Korea's history in 1987 and successfully thwarting Chun from transferring power to Roh without formal elections. But it was the Declaration of Educational Democratization in May 1986 that detailed the goals of the "democratic education movement." Specifically, the education administration was decentralized, greater autonomy was awarded to individual schools in decision-making, and a curriculum closer to the tenets of democratic society was instituted.

For all of *Education Fever*'s robust historical presentation, the book is lacking in three respects. First of all, Seth should have employed the comparative method of analysis more often to highlight the distinctiveness of the Korean case. When he does, such as in his comparison of the Korean Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and its American counterpart (175), deep insight into the nature of the transfer of Western ideals is offered. Secondly, Seth's statements regarding the plausibility of correlating institutional factors and development are too open-ended. In one case, he concludes that "[i]t is probably impossible to measure the impact of military drills, political indoctrination, and mass student rallies on the nation's development, but certainly the militancy of student radicals and radical teachers may in part be attributed to their training and experience in school" (223). The lack of substantiation or elaboration detracts from the conclusiveness of Seth's other points.

A final issue, and the greatest shortcoming of *Education Fever*, is the absence of a methodological discussion of the terms "democratic education" and "American educational theory." The two are used in conjunction and, at times, interchangeably. An explanation of what Seth means by "democracy" at the outset of the book would have yielded greater clarity for his argument. Without such an explicit definition, readers must make their own determination about the meaning of "democratic education" in Seth's usage at least until the end of the book, when the term is expressed as "a decentralization of educational administration, the granting of greater autonomy to individual schools in decision making, and a modification of the curriculum so that it conformed to the norms of a democratic society" (230). At the same time, the only sustained explanation of "American educational theory" is a light treatment of Deweyism (68). What we are ultimately left to assume is that American educational theory is less about the desire to give a child more freedom and responsibility, thus promoting individualism, and more about the decentralization of controls upon the education bureaucracy.

Irrespective of these points, *Education Fever* presents a critical and complex set of issues in South Korea's history with real verve. The book is particularly useful for its integrated presentation of Korea's development, and, in this respect, has the potential to attract not only historians, but also audiences from education, economics, political science, and sociology. For those entering one of these related areas of study, numerous prospects for future research exist. Scholars of education, for example, may focus upon the function of foreign universities in the South Korean education system, sociologists and political scientists can consider the cyclic nature of student movements and the function of education in the political transition, and economists may dwell on South Korea's attempts to bolster its research and development sectors. Whatever the case, Seth's findings are genuinely captivating and prompt careful reflection for Korean Studies specialists as well as the casual observer.