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Policy Proposal for Supporting Employment of High School Graduates

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This article, titled ‘Enhancing Support for Employment of High School Graduates,’ aimed to investigate whether the high school graduate employment policy since the Lee Myung-bak Administration has shown effects and propose improvement of the policy by analyzing the progress and status of employment of high school graduates, in the midst of continuing low economic growth and oversupply of university graduates, which resulted in a high unemployment rate among people in their 20s and 30s. To do so, this study analyzed high school graduate employment policies enacted by the South Korean government since 2008, in which the government began to promote the policy, by year. Second, it analyzed the employment status of high school graduates by school type, job type, and public and private sectors. Third, considering the high percentage of male students in vocational high schools, this study investigated the number of industrial agents needed by different industries according to education level in order to seek ways to link employment with military service. Lastly, exemplary policies related to employment of high school graduates in other countries were analyzed. The research and analysis showed that the policies had positive results, i.e., decrease in the number of vocational school graduates going to college and increased employment rate among vocational school graduates.

However, it was also found that vocational graduates rarely find jobs in major corporations or public institutions as desired and the number of high-quality jobs open to high school graduates is decreasing. To resolve such discrepancies, mid-to-long-term policy for fostering and hiring workforce with high school diploma needs to be developed. In that regard, this study made the following suggestions:

First, to expand employment of high school graduates in the public sector, the government needs to lead gradual increase direct employment of high school graduates in the Grade 9 positions in central local governments as proposed in this study.

Second, to expand employment of high school graduates in the private sector, the government needs to offer financial (tax) benefits to private businesses employing high school graduates, subsidize employment of young people, encourage employment

cooperation between companies and schools, and offer advanced vocational education for high school graduates to improve their long-term employability skills as proposed in this study.

Third, to resolve issues of career interruption due to military service, this study proposed ways to support career continuation through, for instance, selection of specialist soldiers among vocational school graduates, continuous career development training during military service, and employment support after military service.

Fourth, this study proposed a way to build an employment support cooperation system to provide and manage sufficient job information according to the skills and aptitude of job seekers and a total support system according to the career development stage (Stage 1: early employment, Step 2: study after employment, Step 3: advancement and specialization) of job seekers with high school diploma.

I hope the policy analysis and proposal in this study can lead to successful employment of high school graduates and meritocratic society.

Keywords: high school graduate employment, vocational high school, public sector, private sector, military service, high school graduate employment policy