

## **Seongho Choi**

### Curriculum and Instruction

IRIS funds allowed me to study in South Korea for a month in 2022 for the preliminary research of my Ph.D. dissertation. My research mainly examines The College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), the only South Korean national standardized test to select new college students. As the CSAT has hugely affected Korean society and culture beyond only the exam, it is necessary to delve into its effects and implications extensively, along with the phenomenon that education significantly impacts the Korean community historically and culturally. My dissertation specifically will examine how the CSAT has been designed historically and how students' subjectivities and habitus are created through the CSAT.

I set up two goals for my preliminary research this summer in Korea. First, I collected materials, such as academic articles, books, and other archives regarding CSAT's history, culture, and phenomenon. I visited several public libraries in Seoul and Busan to search for related articles, books, and reports, as well as bookstores to look for books that are helpful for my research. I could get several excellent references that show the development process of Korean college entrance exams and how it has changed depending on the regimes and reforms of educational policies. It helps me understand why Korea was internationally known for the phenomenon of education fever based on the CSAT and why Korean has focused on the CSAT along with the school and other kinds of national exams.

Second, I was able to meet tentative participants to prepare for conducting qualitative research next year. Given that having consent for participating in my research and building rapport is essential in qualitative research, I needed to meet three high school students in advance for field research in Korea next year. Although I did not conduct the formal in-depth interviews or participant observations, it was a great chance to meet them and have conversations to form relationships and check whether they are available to participate in my research as participants next year. With the conversations, I realized how they have seriously focused on studying for the CSAT because they believed a high score on the CSAT guarantees their success in their lives with high-paying jobs and even happiness. It reveals why examining the CSAT's effects on Korean society historically and culturally is significant in the Korean context and its educational culture.

Overall, the IRIS support helped me better understand the CSAT through articles, books, reports, and conversations with high school students. This will undoubtedly be an excellent resource for conducting my research, and further, it will serve as a foundation for research that will help Western scholars understand the educational phenomenon and culture of South Korea.