

ЖУРНАЛИСТИКА



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CURRENT STATUS AND ISSUES IN SOUTH KOREAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Ушбу мақолада муаллиф бугун Жанубий Кореядаги ОАВлар аҳволига назар ташлайди ва корейс медиа маконидаги долзарб масалаларга тўхталади. Мақола дастлаб мамлакатда оммавий ахборот воситалари фаолияти ривожланишини босма ва электрон медиа кесимида ёритади, кейин эса Жанубий Кореяда ОАВ фаолиятига таъсир этувчи кучлар кўриб чиқилган.

В настоящей работе рассматривается текущее состояние СМИ в Южной Корее и указывается на некоторые актуальные вопросы в корейских СМИ. Первая часть статьи рассматривает развитие СМИ с точки зрения печатных и электронных СМИ, в то время как вторая часть посвящена влиянию на южнокорейские СМИ.

This paper looked at the current status of media in South Korea, and pointed out some current issues in Korean media landscape. First part of the article views the media development from the angle of print and electronic media, while second part is dedicated to the influences to the South Korean media.

Калит сўзлар: Жанубий Корея ОАВлари медиа ҳолати, босма ОАВ, электрон ОАВ, интернет-ОВА, консерватив ОАВ, бугунги Жанубий Корея оммавий ахборот воситалари, давлат томонидан тартибга солиш, журналистиканинг профессионал этикаси.

Ключевые слова: медиастатус южнокорейских СМИ, печатные СМИ, электронные СМИ, Интернет-СМИ, консервативные СМИ, текущие средства массовой информации в Южной Корее, государственное регулирование, профессиональная этика журналиста.

Key words: South Korean media status, print media, broadcast media, Internet media, conservative media, current media issues in South Korea, government control, professional and ethical journalists.

I. Current Media Situation in South Korea

1. A general view: Korean media expanding and enjoying relative freedom

After several decades of state control and censorship, the South Korean media (print, television/radio, Internet, social media) are experiencing a period of relative freedom and independence. The decades-old repressive Basic Press Law (언론기본법) was repealed in the wake of democratization movement of 1987, and since 1990 the television market has expanded significantly. Whereas in 1980 there were only 28 nationally-circulated newspapers (major Seoul-based Korean-language newspapers, English-language newspapers, economic newspapers, sports newspapers, etc.), today there are over 120 (as of the year of 2015. From Google's Wikipedia accessed Feb 10, 2016). In 2002, satellite broadcasting technology brought new multi-channel (domestic and foreign channels) commercial television services to homes across South Korea, in addition to the existing television channels.

South Koreans publish and circulate 11 major newspapers nationwide (See the list below), and publish 80 or so local newspapers. They run 5 nationwide television networks. Some 70 percent of South Korean households have broadband Internet access, and the online media marketplace is growing rapidly. Popular news Web sites such as OhMyNews.com (an example of citizen journalism) register as many as 15 million visits per day [[Korea.pdf South Korea country profile. Library of Congress Federal Research Division \(May 2005\) from Wikipedia](#)]. Much of the news in South Korea is delivered through electronic means and the country is at the leading edge of the digital revolution and a trailblazer for high-speed and wireless Internet services in the world (*BBC News. 2012-03-29. Retrieved 2012-08-05. From Wikipedia*).

Political discourse in South Korean media is mostly assessed to be unrestricted in South Korea; however, some persistent concerns are worthy of note. According to some liberal scholars, the National Security Law allows the government to limit the expression of ideas deemed pro-North Korean or communist; broad interpretations of this statute may place a chill on peaceful dissent on some occasions. In addition, in 2003, even “liberal” President Roh Moo-Hyun (term of office, 2003~2008) – liberal as compared with most of his conservative predecessors, meaning that he is presumed to be in favor of more independent and critical news media – brought libel suits against four major conservative newspapers, and the government has stated that editorials are subject to legal action if they are found to contain falsehoods. Roh's libel suit against these conservative newspapers seems to have been attributable to their repeated “ungrounded” and “critical” reports on Roh's government. Some observers have also criticised pressure tactics used by both the South Korean government and the business community to influence domestic media's reporting.

In this vein, Seol thinks that politicians in the East and the West always try to influence and control news media to secure favorable coverage of them and suppress unfavorable coverage. Seol thinks that news reports are outcomes of negotiations between journalists and news sources, based on some observations on media and politics by US political scientists [*Michael C. Nelson & Sidney M. Wilkis (2003, etc). The American Presidency: Origins and Development, 1776-2002* 5th ed. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press]. However, on the whole, media in South Korea have gained more leverage against the government and more independence than before the “1987 democratic system” was launched. However, it is noteworthy that some critics even voice worries that the South Korean news media have unprecedentedly more power vis-à-vis the government.

2. Print media

1) Newspapers: Conservative papers overwhelm the market

After the “1987 democratization processes” started, Korean newspapers have obtained greater freedom, especially after The Forceful Press Merge became invalid. Nowadays, *Chosun Ilbo*(조선일보), *JungAng Ilbo*(중앙일보), and *DongA Ilbo*(동아일보) are the three “major” newspapers, which have conservative lines and mostly occupying newspaper market; *Hankook Ilbo*(한국일보) is moderate to liberal; *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*(경향신문) and *The Hankyoreh Shinmun*(한겨레신문) are “minor” newspapers which hold liberal lines. In South Korea, conservative general newspapers are more widely read. *Maeil Business Newspaper*(매일경제신문) and *Korea Economic Daily*(한국경제신문) are the major business newspapers, which tend to be conservative. In South Korea, like many other countries, the number of newspaper subscribers continues to decrease.

a) Nationwide Korean-language newspapers and their line:

Chosun Ilbo (*Seoul, national*): Conservative

Dong-a Ilbo (*Seoul, national*): Conservative

Hankook Ilbo (*Seoul, national*): Neutral

Hankyore (*Seoul, national*): Progressive

JoongAng Ilbo (*Seoul, national*): Conservative, considered arm of Samsung Group

Kookmin Ilbo (*Seoul, national*): Conservative, arm of a big church

Kyunghyang Shinmun (*Seoul, national*): Progressive, Shareholder cum employees

Munhwa Ilbo (*Seoul, national*): the only afternoon newspaper

Naeil Shinmun (*Seoul, national*): Neutral(?)

Seoul Shinmun (Seoul, national): Pro-government

Segye Ilbo (Seoul, national): Conservative

b) English language newspapers

Korea JoongAng Daily (Seoul, national)

The Korea Herald (Seoul, national)

The Korea Times (Seoul, national)

Indigo (Busan, international)

c) Others (local newspapers, economic, sports newspapers)

Busan Ilbo (Busan, regional)

Chungcheong Daily (Cheongju, regional)

Daejeon Ilbo (Daejeon, regional)

Dongyang Ilbo (Cheongju, regional)

Electronics Daily (Seoul, national)

Financial News (Seoul, national)

Gangwon Ilbo (Chuncheon, regional)

Gangwon Shinmun (Wonju, regional)

Good Day (Seoul, national)

Gyeongnam Domin Ilbo (Gyeongnam, regional)

Halla Ilbo (Jeju, regional)

Hankook Gyeongje (Seoul, national)

Herald Economy (Seoul, national)

Ilgan Sports (Seoul, national)

Jeju Ilbo (Jeju, regional)

Kookje Shinmun (Busan, regional)

Maeil Gyeongje (Seoul, national)

Money Today (Seoul, national)

Seoul Gyeongje (Seoul, national)

Sports Chosun (Seoul, national)

Sports Seoul (Seoul, national)

Sports Today (Seoul, national)

Stock Daily (Seoul, national)

3. Electronic media

1) Television

a) Central television stations: Majority are public broadcasters

The first TV station in South Korea was launched in 1956, with the name of KORCAD-TV (대한방송). In South Korea, terrestrial television broadcasting is common and popular. As terrestrial broadcasters, there are 5 channels with 4 television stations in 2016:

KBS 1TV: public broadcaster

KBS 2TV: public broadcaster

MBC: public broadcaster

EBS: public broadcaster

SBS: private broadcaster

Among the above, KBS, MBC, EBS are public broadcasters, while SBS is a commercial broadcaster; South Korea has a so-called “many public broadcasters” broadcasting system, which is unique. Many countries have one public broadcaster and many commercial broadcasters. KBS is funded by the public money accrued from a television license fee gathered from all South Korean households with a television set. As of 2010, the fee has remained 2,500 won (about 2 USD) per month for over two decades, and KBS has been demanding hike of the low fee. Due to “low” public funds, KBS2 also runs commercials. 70 percent of MBC’s ownership belongs to a government-owned not-for-profit organization (The Foundation of Broadcast Culture), and 30% of it belongs to 'Jeong-su Scholarship Foundation'. Because KBS2 and MBC run commercials, there are a lot of controversies on the definition of public broadcasting in South Korea.

In terms of technology, digitalization of television is proceeding. Cable Television Broadcasting Association announced that transformation of television from analogue to digital type will be complete in major cities in 2015, and televisions in middle and small cities and rural areas will be digitalized in 2017 (Accessed search engine Naver on Feb 21, 2016. News Tomato, August 30, 2013. 뉴스토마토)

b) Local televisions

Major local cities have one or more private local broadcaster(s) and networked local television stations such as local broadcasting stations of central KBS and MBC.

c) Foreign television channels

Koreans in the capital and local areas can enjoy more than 100 domestic and foreign television channels by subscribing to cable services or installing satellite antennas. However, it appears that Koreans do not enjoy as varied foreign channels as people in Tashkent do. For example, according to Seoul, Koreans cannot watch various Russian TV channels, Euronews, Vietnam TV news, Mongolian TV channels and so forth as Tashkent Uzbeks do. This comment is based on Seoul personal experience as a media researcher. Seoul watched cable-service TV channels for many years but did not monitor satellite TV channels linked by satellite dishes in Korea. Seoul enjoys multilingual TV channels at an apartment house (Kvartira) in Tashkent, more varied channels than in Korea.

2) Radio

The first radio broadcasting was JODK by 'Kyung-sung Broadcasting(경성방송)' in 1927, under the Japanese colonial rule. Therefore, some portions of Koreans regard HLKA by 'Korean Broadcasting system' in 1947 as the "true" first radio broadcasting in Korea. Since 2003, DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) or DAR (Digital Audio Radio) services have been used. There are many Seoul-based central and province-based local radio stations in Korea, but channels are not uniquely distinctive. KBS1 FM, KBS1 AM, TBS (Traffic Broadcasting System) are somewhat distinctive. Other channels are usually broadcast according to people's lifestyle. As standard radio stations, there are channels such as KBS, MBC, SBS, EBS.

KBS: This public broadcasting group operates 7 channels. KBS Radio 1, KBS Radio 2, KBS Radio 3, KBS 1FM, KBS 2FM, KBS Hanminjok Radio and KBS World Radio.

MBC: MBC Radio is the most popular because there are several long-running programs. MBC operates 2 channels: FM 4U and Standard FM. 'Cho Yeong-Nam & Choi Yu-ra's Radio Golden Age' is the most famous program which provides funny stories and K-pop music.

SBS: Operates two channels in radio: Power FM and Love AM.

EBS (Educational Broadcasting System): various programs for students and adults

CBS: This is the first commercial radio broadcaster by a Christian church. It contains programs about Christianity.

Other religious programming broadcasters: PBC (Pyeonghwa Broadcasting Corporation, 평화방송), BBS (Buddhism Broadcasting System, 불교방송), FEBC (Far East Broadcasting Co., Korea, 극동방송), WBS (원음방송)

Traffic broadcasters: TBS (Traffic Broadcasting System, 교통방송). This specializes in traffic information. Many other radio stations also provide hourly traffic condition reports, typically for 3 minutes every 57 minutes.

3) Internet media: South Korea is world's leader in this area

When it comes to Internet use, South Korea ranked third in the world in 2003 (*the New York Times*, PERSONAL BUSINESS: DIARY; Around the World, Gains in Internet Use, Feb 16th, 2003). According to statistics of the Korean Ministry of Information and Communication, 78.5% of families own a computer, of which 93.6% use the Internet (2005). Many businesses utilize the Internet for

services such as news, social media, shopping, banking, games, and educational content.

a)Internet journalism

Joongang Ilbo developed the first Internet news website in Asia in 1995. After the start, almost every daily newspaper and broadcasting station made their websites linked with their paper version. Various Internet news networks have emerged. Sometimes, news media starts with online version only, and then after seeing its success, moves onto the paper version.

Sometimes, online-only news sites were launched. One of such news websites is "OhmyNews (오마이뉴스)," which features contents of small number of regular staff reporters as well as so-called 'citizen reporters (news guerrillas)' who provide news content for very little or no money. Although there are some problems about citizen reporters' abilities to write articles, unique opinions are shown and this new kind of progressive journalism continues to exist. And other unique internet news services like 'Pressian (프레시안)' or 'Ddanzi Ilbo (딴지일보)' also exist.

The number of Internet news sites has reached more than 6,000 and more than 30,000 online news articles are posted daily on portal sites such as Naver and Daum in Korea in 2016. Although the quantitative expansion of online news sites is alarming, its influence is on the decrease recently, and many media scholars diagnose that Korean journalism has reached a point of crisis (Accessed on Feb 16, 2016.

Media

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[http://www.mediatoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=127216.](http://www.mediatoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=127216))

b) Social media

As in other countries, social media has come into the spotlight in South Korea as seen in the following.

Blogs: Almost every big portal site provides a blogging service. Nate, Naver, and Daum's blog are the most popular.

Social Networks (SNS, Social Networking Service): An early social networking platform Cyworld was launched in South Korea in 2000. But, it shut down in 2014. Users could upload their information, mood, pictures, etc.. It featured "following" of other people in a similar vein as Facebook.

Micro Blogging: The most famous Micro Blog is Twitter, with its prevalence growing in conjunction with the growing popularity of Smartphones in South Korea. 'me2day' and 'yozm' are some of widespread micro blogs in South Korean media.

Facebook: The number of facebookers is rising rapidly. In 2011, more than 1.6 million Koreans joined this SNS and enjoying communicating with facebook friends all over the world (Accessed on Feb 16, 2016: Naver, facebookers.com, 네이버 접속).

Mobile phones: Korean users of mobile phones will reach more than 46,000,000 (90% of the whole Korean population) in 2020, according to Cisco Korea's projection of "Global Mobile Data Traffic of Visual Networking Index 2015-2020." (Accessed Naver, ITToday on Feb 15, 2016. <http://www.ittoday.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=68083>).

II. Current media issues in South Korea: Seol's observations

1. Are media still controlled by the government and business?

The answer to this question may be "No." South Korea has a long history of its media being controlled by the political power, that is, the government. And recently, scholars began to point out that media are controlled (or influenced) by the economic power, that is, businesses. Are independent news media an unachievable ideal? Or, are these two sides (media vs government and media vs business) simply being "cooperative"? Is it truly hard for media to be independent from these two powerful players?

In the recent decades, Koreans have seen the so-called conservative media shifting its positions from pro-government to opposition, and again to pro-government, according to the shifts in the political environment from conservative to liberal, and again to conservative. And in the case of liberal media, there were shifts in the opposite direction. Despite some criticism of the government trying to control or influence the media and journalists trying to be independent, there also existed some aspects of media voluntarily cooperating with the government.

Economic power is a newly emerging player which tries to influence the media by way of using the money. With more news outlets and limited advertisement sources, businesses have more power over the media. In this regard, the view as to how the media had tried to protect itself from outside control has to be shifted to one pertaining how the media should be independent from these powerholders. Measures to protect media from outside influence and keep themselves independent should be the first priority for Koreans to have better media service. A shift in viewing media is required.

2. Are Koreans wary of media becoming another powerholder?

This issue of Korean media getting more powerful is related to the first issue above, but it takes a different view. Despite a history of Korean media being controlled by the government, these days some scholars indicate that Korean media are becoming another powerful player in society. These scholars are worried that Korean media have grown too powerful and argue that Koreans should set up a mechanism that can check media from becoming power-holders themselves. While Korean media were controlled by the government in part or in full in the past decades, it is undeniable that in some cases media have become power centers themselves by actively cooperating and colluding with politicians, who lacked popular support.

Some Korean researchers have coined expressions to demonstrate serious bad outcomes emanating from this kind of distorted relations between the media and politics: “election complex” or “discourse complex,” the former indicating that when election seasons draw near, media and politicians collude, and the latter indicating that the two actors collusively generate and spread particular social discourse, i.e., agenda or talk of the society. A mechanism that can check this twisted cooperation should be established.

Seol thinks that media’s relations with the political circle and business sectors have multifarious aspects. This has the control aspect and cooperative aspect. The concern that the media grow too powerful may mean that the media take advantage of the political power for their interests. At any rate, media controlled by political and economic power and media stronger than the other two should not be tolerated. Kim Sunghai, journalism professor at Daegu University, Korea, argued for the same point in a special issue of “Media Today” marking its 20th anniversary of foundation (May of 2015 special issue of Media Today, 미디어오늘). Media Today is a weekly media monitor which deals with Korean media in a critical manner.

3. Is it alright if the media market is almost monopolized by conservative media?

Media in a democratic country should reflect diverse voices of the people to maintain a healthy democracy. However, current mediascape in Korea is overly leaning towards conservative opinions, not sufficiently conveying liberal or minority voices. Currently, three major conservative newspapers occupy more than 70% of the newspaper market, and they have additionally obtained cable televisions, as compared with relatively minor two (or three) liberal newspapers several years ago.

As of in 2014, Koreans have more news outlets than ever: three over-the-air channels, four newspaper-affiliated television channels, two news only television channels, more than 10 business television channels, more than a dozen public interest television channels like Arirang TV and National Assembly broadcaster, more than 5,000 Internet news-sites, and newly launched liberal Internet news-sites like Newstapa (뉴스타파) and Pressian (프레시안). However, while the number of conservative media outlets goes up remarkably, that of liberal media increases at a slower pace, thus showing an absolute asymmetry of the opinion market. As a result, the process of ideological polarization of news outlets has continued to deepen. In recent years, the overall mediascape in Korea grew more and more conservative.

This kind of imbalance in conservative-liberal continuum may be a serious cause for the people's distrust of media. According to Korea Press Promotion Foundation's survey in 2013, one of the biggest reasons for Korean news media not gaining trust from the Korean audiences is that media's stances are too partisan (too conservative or too liberal). In this regard, diversity of news outlets and diversity of journalists should be pursued to maintain a healthy society. A "news ecosystem" to safeguard diversity of public opinion should be sought.

4. Where can we find specialized professional and ethical journalists?

At the beginning of Korean journalism, journalists were leading intellectuals, modernizers, and reformists. They were also independence fighters during the Japanese colonial rule and freedom fighters under authoritarian rulers in Korea. Newspapers were something more like enlightening materials during these periods. However, with the passage of time news media obtained additional functions: entertainment. And with the news media becoming a mass media, and management of media companies becoming more like running businesses, the features of journalists also have changed.

Whereas the pages of newspapers rapidly increased and the amount of airtime for broadcasters has increased rapidly and manifold, the number of journalists did not multiply correspondingly. These days, Korean journalists should work more hours to fill the pages and airtime than 10 or 20 years ago. The number of journalists regarding themselves as just "mediocre salaried employees or small citizens (Kleinbuerger) has increased than before, although the competition to become a journalist has gotten harder, because of continued worsening of the economy and limited job openings.

While outside the newsroom, there are many experts in many areas, many of journalists are simply “generalists.” There have been media companies’ efforts to cultivate professionals and specialized journalists, but those have failed in part because of the newsroom culture, which still do not put much emphasis on specialized journalists. Some specialized journalists with doctoral degrees moved to universities after quitting newsrooms. Although some media scholars emphasize the importance of specialization (or, professionalization) of journalists, it is still not easy to find many professionalized journalists. And to some extent, it is understandable. In this situation, some news organizations utilize citizen journalists or guerrilla journalists. These “untrained journalists” encroach upon the proper sphere of “trained” journalists, and oftentimes, they break some good stories. Some bloggers increasingly have more influence on their followers.

With the environment of the society turning more and more materialistic, the ethics of journalism has been crumbling down. Oftentimes, specialized Korean media inspecting other mainstream media report cases of journalist corruptions and briberies. When the election season draws near, some journalists become “polinalist (political + journalist),” who have cozy relations with politicians and actively assist politicians. Oftentimes, university professors also become active collaborators to politicians and then get the dishonorable epithet “polifessor (political + professor).” In recent years, many of “unaffiliated” Korean journalists witnessed their colleague mid-career or high-ranking working journalists abruptly entering into politics “after assisting them for a long time as journalists.” Some of these journalists attended editorial meetings in the morning and attend election strategy meeting in the afternoon on the same day.

These may be examples of total lack of professionalism and ethics. These former journalists could not reject the temptations from the political power or probably they actively took advantage of their journalists’ positions being able to contact politicians under the pretext of Journalistic contacts. Many of Korean journalists are wary of current journalism turning into “Churnalism (“churn+journalism”: Massive churning out of cheap journalism)” or “Neojourlism (너절리즘. 너절+리즘. Reversed shape of Journalism, meaning journalism made cheaper, meaner and debased)”. These all may represent lack of true professionalism and journalism ethics. Korean journalism urgently needs to revive its professionalism and ethics.

Professional and ethical journalists should be educated, cultivated and protected. Although all new kinds of news media and new kinds of journalists appeared with the advance of technologies, it is still the well-trained and intellectually fierce journalists who should deal with the news, that is, public knowledge. Journalists equipped with expertise could sift through news and rumor and could not be swayed by spin doctors. It is still undeniable that most of the public knowledge is being processed and conveyed by trained professional journalists to the masses. A social system should be installed to keep the autonomy and independence of these professional journalists. Seol thinks that Korean journalism needs high-quality and high-capacity journalists. However, some of high-capacity and experienced journalists quit journalism to work for academia or for the government. It is a thorny issue.

In this regard, some scholars argue that current incentive system in Korean journalism should be reformed to upgrade journalism. Good incentive system could be instrumental in encouraging and maintaining quality journalism. Honor and reputation and other incentives need to be offered to excellent journalists. A kind of “Korean version of Pulitzer Prizes” needs to be considered and instituted. (Professor Kim Sunghai’s suggestion).

5. Disappearing readers and the need to educate critical readers

A new communication situation is evolving with the advancement information technology. As a result, a new period of non-readers is opening wide. With the supply of communication tools, overflow of news and information, news is consumed in various ways. However, the headache for news companies is that newspapers are not sold even though news is sold and read.

This may be an era of not reading newspapers, but consuming news in other means. We are not readers, but consumers of news. Just about ten years ago, it was possible to see passengers on the subway train cars reading newspapers or books in Korea. However, when you get into the subway trains in the Seoul areas, you see just one or two persons reading newspaper and the absolute majority of the passengers reading something on their smartphones or playing games with those gadgets. Where have gone all those ardent readers of purchased or “free” newspapers? Even those Korean university students who major in journalism do not like to read real “paper” newspapers, instead, they consume news on their smartphones. It seems that youngsters do not like to read medium-length or lengthy articles, because they are so accustomed to reading short articles like those on Twitter or facebook messages.

Broadcast channels have multiplied. Koreans can choose from a multiplicity of channels over a hundred, including over-the-air Korean-language television channels, cable channels including 24 hour news channels in Korean-language and other foreign languages, and new media channels such as podcast attached to homepages of newspapers. Recently, several newspapers began to run their own news and entertainment broadcasting after getting new television channels allocated to them. It also seems that Internet journalism has expanded almost to an explosive point. It has become easy to set up news companies operated by only one person. How should these one-person or two-person news sites be defined? Should they also be counted in as news organizations?

In fact, Koreans are experiencing floods of news around them every day. News and information is produced by anyone and anywhere and transmitted with ease. News is consumed anywhere, anytime, by anybody, through all kinds of gadgets including smartphones. We have citizen journalists or guerrilla journalists. Koreans are living in an era of information and news overload. However, the newspaper industry is withering because readers of newspapers exited, and consumers of news entered.

While patterns of news consumption are changing, the need to educate critical and informed news consumers has emerged. News literacy education should be systematized for people to understand, evaluate and create news, which in turn will help maintain solid and healthy news media. Education of audiences to become skilled and critical readers and viewers of media content and leading them to be active participants in the production processes of news content are required. Media literacy education should be implemented as a lifelong project for individuals. Seol contributed a short paper on media education in South Korea for *Axborotlashgan Jamniyatda Yolar Media Savodxonligini Oshirning Doljar Muamolari (Actual Problems of Media Education of Young Generation in the Information Society*, pp. 26-31. The journal had a total of 108 pages. Published on December 18, 2015). The title of Seol's paper was "Media Education in South Korea and its Implications for Uzbekistan."

III. Conclusion and Discussion

This paper looked at current status and issue in South Korean media. In recent years, Koreans have more media outlets than before in both print and broadcast media. And the Internet media have appeared and are changing the media landscape. Korea is far ahead of other many countries in areas of the Internet.

However, the multiplication of media outlets does not necessarily mean that Korean media landscape has been evolving. Although, in the past decades, Koreans were concerned that media were under government control, these days media should also deal with the government and businesses as well. These two players try to influence media and media are struggling not to be controlled by them. On the contrary, there exist some concerned voices that Korean media grew to be one more power center in society. If the media wield power based on their corporate interests, it could be a serious problem.

The fact that Koreans have an overwhelming majority of conservative media could also be a problem, which could hurt diversity of voices and be an obstacle to true democracy. Shortage of specialized and ethical journalists may also be a problem for Korean media to be a solid entity in society. Disappearing readers pose a serious challenge to newspaper industry and educating readers to become critical and informed readers may also be an indispensable ingredient to keep media from deteriorating.

The word “media (its singular form is medium)” comes from Latin word “medius,” which means “middle” (Webster’s II; New College Dictionary. 1995). In this regard, media can have dual faces: In the middle from left to right and from right to left, and in the middle from top to bottom and from bottom to top. Media is a social institution that has to play an important role in society and is also simultaneously a reflection of the society it finds itself in. Therefore, media can play both an active and passive role. This means that even under decades-old government control, media workers could have cooperated actively or passively, or journalists might have resisted undue intervention by the government to maintain editorial independence.

Democracy might mean that ordinary people can express their thoughts and can demand conditions for a happy life for themselves. In fact, many media books deal with media affairs in terms of “democracy and media” together. Here, media should be placed in the middle to convey grassroots voices, i.e., vox populi, upwards, and voices from above downwards. However, because the Korean media have been so accustomed to conveying the message from above downwards, now is the time for them to act in a reverse direction.

To be continued.