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"The Cane of Love:" Social and Cultural Reform of Corporal Punishment in South Korea

Seney Higginbotham

ABSTRACT

With the public release of a very controversial video of a middle school teacher beating a student, much attention has been put on South Korea domestically as well as internationally to establish and reform policies regarding corporal punishment in schools. Since corporal punishment has been practiced in the classroom for centuries, it has been a hard fought battle of rapid social change and conservation of culture between those who wish to protect established cultural norms that accept corporal punishment in the classroom versus progressive ideas that strive to protect the integrity and human rights of school children.

Corporal punishment has been a socially accepted and culturally ingrained disciplinary practice in South Korea for centuries. Being a symbol of Confucian educational tradition, corporal punishment is a part of a long standing tradition for teaching students to study and work hard to become successful and earn a higher position in society.¹

Using corporal punishment as a permissible form of discipline is a cultural construct from fundamental Confucian beliefs where children are considered to be the property of their parents and are at the mercy of authority figures. The uses of modern technology and social media have played a crucial role in the recent change of public opinion in South Korea on the subject of corporal punishment in schools. A video of a primary school teacher, Mr. O, beating a sixth grade student was leaked onto the Internet and shown on national TV in the summer of 2010.²

¹ Jason Strother, "Korea Bans Corporal Punishment in Schools," *AsiaCalling*, Web, 30 Sept. 2012.

² "Corporal Punishment Ban: Schools Should Better Respect Children's Rights," editorial, *The Korea Times*, 07 July 2011, Web, 11 Nov. 2012.

This event acted as a catalyst for new regulations against the practice of corporal punishment to be issued in school systems throughout South Korea.

Without the onslaught of public outrage and controversy this video manifested, new restrictions and regulations on corporal punishment from late 2010 to now would not have taken place. This video was not the first case of teachers beating their students on public record, but it was definitely a vehicle of major changes of opinion on the subject of corporal punishment because of how viral the video went online. Conflicting attitudes toward corporal punishment, before and after the publicity of the video, have been at odds with each other for decades, but the video really infiltrated the wave of media backlash that forced the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (SMOE) and, in turn, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST), to take action in regulating corporal punishment.

The history of corporal punishment is as long as the history of education itself in South Korea. The two ideas coincide with each other as the root of achieving a good education is found in the capability of the teacher, and the capability of the teacher is dictated by the amount of authority the teacher wields over his students. This authority and control comes in the form of corporal punishment. While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly when corporal punishment became the major disciplinary method to punish students, deductions based upon an understanding of Korea as a Confucian society can lead one to hypothesize that the hierarchal relationship between a superior and an inferior – or a teacher and a student, more specifically for this argument – led to the use of corporal punishment to cement the superior's role of dominance over the inferior.

Korea adopted a system of education from China's Tang Dynasty in 958. This system of education revolved around successfully passing the civil service examinations as the ultimate goal of a good education and focused solely on the learning of the Confucian classics.³ The exams were a source of Confucian learning and moral training for mainly members of the *yangban* class – a class of aristocratic elite who could afford the time and money it took to prepare for the civil exams.⁴

Basic education was offered through small village schools called *sodang*, which were outside the realm of official, systematic education.⁵ The *sodang* acted as a weeding out process to send only the best and brightest pupils to the official state schools. They predate the Joseon period and, according to Korean historian Michael Seth, "remained the most common institution of formal education" into the twentieth century.⁶

Sodang classes traditionally took place in the home of the teacher who was paid by the parents of his students for his instruction, usually in the form of food.⁷ ⁸For disciplining students, one account of a student who attended a *sodang* recalled that his teacher would always strike students on the head with his switch for even the smallest of offenses.⁹

³ Michael J. Seth, *Education Fever: Society, Politics and the Pursuit of Schooling in South Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 2002, 9.

⁴ Seth, 9, 11.

⁵ Seth, 12.

⁶ Seth, 12.

⁷ Seth, 12.

⁸ Hildi Kang, *Under the Black Umbrella: Voices from Colonial Korea, 1910 – 1945* (London: Cornell University Press), 2001, 37.

⁹ H. Kang, 39.

During the beginning of the twentieth century, the incorporation of new western-style schools built by Koreans, missionaries, and later the Japanese began to draw away students of *sodang*.¹⁰ Discontent between the Korean and Japanese colonizers kept some Korean children from attending these new schools; Korean parents feared what would happen to their children if they were subjected to Japanese influence in an educational setting. Japanese colonial oppression dehumanized everything that was distinctively Korean and deemed it unsophisticated, forcing Japanese culture and values onto Koreans. Everything from the Korean language to the clothes Koreans wore to the way they styled their hair was subjected to change under Japanese tyranny. Traditional Korean boys kept their hair long and pulled back in a braid. In the years leading up to colonization, there was a distinction between city boys and country boys – the former usually never having hair long enough to braid to begin with. The Japanese school officials demanded that the boys attending the Japanese schools cut off their braids.¹¹ Arguably, in light of today's progressive view of indirect forms of punishment humiliating students, Japanese schools making young Korean boys cut off their braids was not only a discriminatory act towards Korean youth and culture, but also humiliating to these young boys to have a piece of their traditional Korean culture literally cut from their life.

During Japanese colonization, Korean education became a fusion of militarized Confucian formal education.¹² Being under the command of the Japanese military, the education of Koreans was a tool of control for the Japanese, stripping away Korean national pride and identity and replacing it with enforced Japanese loyalty. In schools, students were to show no opposition

¹⁰ H. Kang, 37, 39.

¹¹ H. Kang, 39, 40.

¹² Soon-Won Kang, "Democracy and Human Rights Education in South Korea," *Comparative Education*: (2002) vol. 38, no. 3, Web, 30 Sept. 2012, 316.

to the teachers, and new educational policies forbade the teaching of anything Korean. Students who did not comply were whipped or imprisoned by teachers.¹³

After Korea gained independence from Japanese colonization, the Korean government stressed the importance of becoming pro-American with the influx of Americanization through the occupation by American troops. Education was then changed to resemble the American system to take the place of the formally instituted Japanese model; the American model of education mirrored the cutthroat capitalist system of the economy with schools becoming more competitive with each other on the road to achieving academic excellence than ever before.¹⁴

In the wake of American occupation, a slew of military dictatorships, and the gradual shift to democracy under a civilian government, corporal punishment remained a key tool in facilitating academic excellence in the class room. Even with the changes in the structure of schools throughout Korea's history – feudal China, the Japanese Empire, capitalist America, and the period of rapid economic growth through the 1980s – corporal punishment as a means of acceptable discipline has been ever present in Korean classrooms.¹⁵ The violation of a student's human rights has only become an issue worth debating and defending within the last thirty years.¹⁶

This brief history of corporal punishment in South Korea helps to set the stage for the events leading up to the video of Mr. O from 2010 and the controversy left in the wake of the

¹³ S. Kang, 317.

¹⁴ S. Kang, 318.

¹⁵ S. Kang, 317.

¹⁶ S. Kang, 315.

consequences of public and media outrage to the video. Understanding how invested Korean educators are with corporal punishment is integral to understanding the severity of the issue in that corporal punishment is so interwoven into Korean culture that it will arguably take thirty more years of debate and policy changes for corporal punishment to be weeded out of the system completely.

The use of corporal punishment is so culturally ingrained that teachers and parents are less likely to view corporal punishment as a form of child abuse or maltreatment.¹⁷ Parents and teachers consider corporal punishment, even in its extreme and excessive forms, to be an effective disciplinary method when punishing a child for his or her transgression.¹⁸ The belief is that eliminating corporal punishment from the arsenal of disciplinary tactics used to correct misbehaving children will foster an increase in child misconduct as well as diminishing a lack of respect for authority figures.¹⁹

For a Korean child to be considered “good” and “well behaved” they must “listen to their parents, study hard, and not offend others.”²⁰ This idea arguably is not any different from the expectations that Western parents have for their children, but the extent to which Korean parents, teachers, and other authority figures hold children to this ideal is deeply rooted in Confucianism. It is a child’s filial duty to work hard and bring honor to their family; failure to do so results in the dishonoring the child’s parents. Children shoulder the responsibility of having to prove their

¹⁷ Hong Jun Sung, Na Youn Lee, Hye Joon Park, and Kathleen Coulborn Faller, “Child Maltreatment in South Korea: An Ecological System Analysis,” *Children and Youth Services Review*: vol. 33 (2011), Web, 30 Sept. 2012, 1062.

¹⁸ Hong et al, 1062.

¹⁹ Hong et al, 1062.

²⁰ Sonam Yang, “Cane of Love: Parental Attitudes towards Corporal Punishment in Korea,” *British Journal of Social Work* (2009), Web, 30 Sept. 2012, 1545.

parents' performance legitimacy as parents. Any negativity the child brings onto himself or herself causes a critical judgment from others on their parents' capability to properly raise their children.²¹ If the children succeed in being model representations of their parents' childrearing skills, then physical punishment as a form of discipline is unnecessary; this idea is also carried over into the classrooms, with a student's behavior reflecting the teaching ability of his or her instructor. Children are expected to conform to the rules set by their parents and teachers.²² The culturally constructed standard that all children are expected to live up to is forced on the child regardless of, or in spite of, the individual child's needs. A naturally rambunctious child would be caned into submission and made to conform to the needs and expectations of the group.

Confucianism stresses a hierarchal social structure which, when used in the classroom, works to form classroom cohesiveness and social harmony among the students in regards to the teacher.²³ Students must know their place – which is being inferior in status to that of the teacher – and their compliance to the teacher's authority is fundamental to maintaining that social harmony. One act of disorderliness from a student undermines the authority of the teacher and disrupts the harmony amongst the other students. This disruption of social hierarchy demands that the teacher act in such a way as to regain order and authority in the classroom by punishing the misbehaving student in front of the other students, and using the misbehaving student as a cautionary example to the other students upholds the role of the superior who wields the power over the inferior.

²¹ Yang, 1545.

²² Yang, 1545.

²³ Hong et al, 1063.

School is central to a young South Korean's life with the main goal of intensive hours of studying and attending school being to pass entrance examinations – mainly college, but entrance exams exist for middle and high schools as well.²⁴ With pressure of passing these pivotal exams looming over the heads of students, added pressures like corporal punishment do not motivate students to work harder as the tradition of corporal punishment dictates; it merely adds to the long list of pressures to which students are subjected

Students are being repressed by an educational system that “kill[s] creativity” and emphasizes rote memorization for exam preparations, falling short on nurturing creativity and innovative thinking.^{25,26} Adding corporal punishment on top of a system that tries to stamp out the progress of the individual for the sake of the group severely limits students' motivation to be actively involved in the learning process minus what is needed to be learned for college entrance examinations.²⁷

As seen in the video, the student who is recording Mr. O's actions is doing so discreetly. A couple of times throughout the video a piece of paper obstructs the entirety of the screen, obstructing the audience's view of the altercation between Mr. O and the abused student, but acts as layer of protection allowing for the videotaping student's actions to not be known by Mr. O.²⁸ The student sitting directly in front of the videotaping student is also seen looking over his

²⁴ Eric Dwyer, “South Korea,” *Teen Life in Asia*, ed. Judith J. Slater (London: Greenwood Press) 2004, 207.

²⁵ Ian Neary, *Human Rights in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan* (London: Routledge), 2002, 240.

²⁶ Christine Blazer, “Is South Korea a Case of High-Stakes Testing Gone Too Far?” *Miami-Dade County Public Schools*, Office of Assessment, Research and Data Analysis: vol. 1107, Feb. 2012, Web, 30 Sept. 2012, 5.

²⁷ Neary, 240.

²⁸ Nomoreviolentteacher, “**폭력교사혈우병 초등학생 폭행**,” YouTube, 18 July 2010, Web, 28 Nov. 2012, video.

shoulder to gauge how he should sit to aid in disguising what the videotaping student is doing.²⁹ While the act of recording Mr. O abusing a fellow student at the risk of getting caught and punished himself or herself was very brave on the part of the student recording and those students who helped conceal the action, the fact that the recording was done in secret shows the students' unwillingness to further disrupt the social harmony of the classroom while Mr. O was attempting to restore order by beating the student in the video.

Before the 2010 video, the MEST issued edicts restricting corporal punishment in answer to different cases where corporal punishment was being taken too far. In October 1999, the MEST banned the use of broom sticks, ice hockey sticks, slippers, belts and attendance books to beat students.³⁰ Other reported physical punishments teachers have used on students include, but have not been limited to, slapping, whipping, punching, kicking, pinching, and ear pulling.³¹ Students have experienced injuries such as bruises, welts, split lips, broken ribs, burst eardrums, and more at the hands of their teachers.³²

Extreme cases of teachers using corporal punishment has led to the hospitalization and death of students. In 1999, a 12-year-old girl nearly went blind in her right eye because her science teacher threw book at her to get her to stop talking with her classmates.³³ In 1996, a 17-year-old girl killed herself by ingesting pesticide after her teacher struck her on the head with a rolled up

²⁹ Nomoreviolentteacher, video.

³⁰ The Associated Press, "South Korea Doesn't Spare the Rod, editorial, *New York Times*, 4 Feb. 1999, Web, 28 Nov. 2012.

³¹ Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, "The Nature and Extent of Corporal Punishment – Prevalence and Attitudinal Research in East Asia and the Pacific," July 2012, Web, 30 Sept. 2012, 14.

³² Editorial, *New York Times*.

³³ Editorial, *New York Times*.

newspaper because her skirt was supposedly too short.³⁴ In May of 1998, a teacher on the island province of Jeju forced an 18-year-old student to a graveyard, beat him with the handle of an ax, and then dug a hole to bury the student up to his chin.³⁵ In 2006, a Daegu high school student was hospitalized after being beaten over a 100 times by a teacher for being tardy.³⁶ In 1993, a 12-year-old boy died after being beaten by his teacher.³⁷

All of these examples are extreme cases of corporal punishment being taken too far and teachers being too willing to cause their students harm under the pretense of “the cane of love” – an expression referring to the idea that because a parent or teacher loves a child, they must beat the child when he or she misbehaves.³⁸ In the case of the video of Mr. O, that was not the first time a teacher’s abusive actions towards a student had been documented; this video is just one example out of thousands of instances where a student was caused severe bodily harm by teacher. The difference between the video of Mr. O as opposed to these other instances are that the video was broadcasted and slandered throughout the media. The hype surrounding the video was serious enough that school officials from the SMOE and government officials from the MEST were forced to rapidly enact new policies in regards to corporal punishment and its usage.

Teachers are limited to what and how they teach.³⁹ Under strict governmental control, teachers are not able to get to know their students on a one-on-one basis due to the large number of students per class, and they are not free to interpret lessons and textbooks as they like because of

³⁴ Editorial, *New York Times*.

³⁵ Editorial, *New York Times*.

³⁶ “A Reevaluation of Corporal Punishment,” ed., *The Hankyoreh*, 21 Aug. 2006, Web, 28 Nov. 2012.

³⁷ S. Kang, 322.

³⁸ Hong et al, 1063.

³⁹ S. Kang, 322.

the emphasis on standardized examinations for which they must prepare their students for.⁴⁰ Due to the frustrations surrounding a teacher's limitation on what he or she can and cannot do for their students, teachers punish their students through acts of physical and verbal abuse while being harassed by school administrators, parents, and educational officials themselves.⁴¹

In accordance with banning corporal punishment, teachers are now evaluated by students, parents, and fellow teachers through a series of meticulous surveys assessing a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom.⁴² Without being allowed to use more severe forms of corporal punishment, or in some cases without being able to use corporal punishment at all, teachers are now being held accountable for their actions. Low-rated teachers are required to participate in additional training.⁴³

After the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (SMOE) initially banned "all forms of physical punishment, direct or indirect," the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) revised this law to allow indirect punishment – like push-ups, laps, and squats – in elementary, middle, and high schools as an acceptable form of punishment.⁴⁴ The revision was a supposed compromise between "traditionalists" and "progressives;" or rather, the groups that were opposed to the original ban by SMOE, and the groups that supported it.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ S. Kang, 323.

⁴¹ S. Kang, 323.

⁴² Blazer, 4.

⁴³ Blazer, 4.

⁴⁴ Sang-hie Han and Un-soon Jung, "Is Indirect Corporal Punishment Right?" *The Korea Herald*, N.P., 22 June 2011, Web, 11 Nov. 2012.

⁴⁵ *The Korea Herald*.

Along with the SMOE, education offices in Gyeonggi, Gangwon, and North Jeolla Provinces that did not accept MEST's revision to SMOE'S original ban continued attempting to adopt the policy of no corporal punishment whatsoever in schools. In June 2011, a teacher in Gyeonggi Province was sanctioned for punishing two disruptive students by forcing them to do push-ups.⁴⁶ The Korean Federation of Teachers' Association (KFTA) threatened to file a law suit if the sanctions on the teacher were not dropped. Under the revised law issued by MEST, what the teacher did was not illegal, but he or she was still being punished. The inconsistencies between educational offices at a national level and offices at a regional level are crippling to the educational system in general, and these policy inconsistencies are unacceptable when the integrity of a child's education is at stake.

In support of allowing indirect punishment in schools, the KFTA believe that moving to ban the use of indirect punishment will hamper a teacher's guidance in the classroom. By limiting a teacher's power, students' rights to education are being violated because the teacher will not have the ability to limit the actions of the minority of students who disturb class.⁴⁷ The KFTA is also concerned with the student to teacher ratio; there can be upwards of 30 students in a classroom under the guidance of one teacher. Teachers are losing authority in the classroom by discipline techniques being banned, and they have the potential to virtually become helpless at the mercy of a 30:1 ratio of students. Teachers need some form of clout in their classroom to be able to effectively keep a controlled environment conducive to learning.

⁴⁶ *The Korea Herald.*

⁴⁷ Jung, *The Korea Herald.*

School autonomy is another reason the KFTA does not support the banning of indirect punishment.⁴⁸ The KFTA argue that schools should be able to incorporate new policies within individual schools to be able to make the most out of the policies so that their school benefits from them rather than being constrained. Policy acceptance and execution between national and regional educational offices are not making it any easier for teachers to uphold law and order in their classrooms if they cannot uphold the law outside of their classrooms.⁴⁹

“Traditionalists” – conservatives or members of the KFTA who advocate keeping corporal punishment in schools – want to protect the integrity of the role of the teacher and do not want the diminishing of a teacher’s power to affect a student’s right to education. The fact that the majority of teachers are being punished for the actions of the minority teacher group who abuse their power in the classroom and harm students is intolerable. It is not the teachers who need to reform, but the policymakers who need to revise policy to protect both a teacher’s as well as a student’s rights. By protecting teachers, the students will also be protected, and their lives will not be affected or put at risk.

On the other side of this debate, “Progressives” believe that all corporal punishment is a huge violation of students’ human rights. Students should not be at the mercy of anyone in a position of authority, especially when the aforementioned authority figures are charged with the task of educating the next generation. Indirect punishment is an elusive term that condones the causing of physical pain to a student without touching or striking that student in any way. This form of punishment is just as violating as “traditional” corporal punishment.

⁴⁸ Jung, *The Korea Herald*.

⁴⁹ Jung, *The Korea Herald*.

According to progressives, corporal punishment in itself is a violation of human rights, not just the methodology that brings about the punishment. Direct punishment, such as paddling or caning, and indirect punishment, such as laps or push-ups, is a disciplinary practice that is based on dehumanizing and objectifying students.⁵⁰ There is nothing reasonable about physically harming a child and defending that act of harm as punishment when the primary concern of those in charge of the well being of a child is to protect them from all forms of violence and humiliation.⁵¹ Officials who advocate the continuation of corporal punishment ignore the age-old testament of “violence begets more violence,” and when using indirect punishment to simultaneously discipline and humiliate a student, “two wrongs do not make a right” is not a concept that is taught.

Corporal punishment, in stark contrast to a traditionalist’s opinion, does not educate a student as to what it means to be right or wrong. A misbehaving student who is physically reprimanded just after his or her punishable offense only knows the immediate consequences of his or her actions; the student did something wrong, so he or she gets caned on the back of his or her legs. There is no accountability for the student to recognize and understand why whatever he or she did was wrong and deserving of punishment. Obviously some misconduct should be addressed with immediate action, but the punishment should not be painful or humiliating. Physical punishment of a student’s transgression is only a short term solution to what could be a long term problem.⁵²

⁵⁰ Han, *The Korea Herald*.

⁵¹ Han, *The Korea Herald*.

⁵² Da-som An and Ji-hyun Park, “A Total Ban of Corporal Punishment,” *The Keimyung Gazette*, N.P., 09 Dec. 2012, Web, 11 Nov. 2012.

The dissatisfaction with using corporal punishment as a means of educational discipline is not a new argument, and, in fact, corporal punishment has been formally prohibited since the 1990s. But the education community has done nothing during the subsequent decades to develop any type of alternate form of discipline to penalize disorderly students and improve the quality of the classroom.⁵³ Traditionalists, the KFTA for example, use the large classroom sizes as a reason teachers need some type of power in the form of corporal punishment to keep order in the classroom, but, as stated above, no new forms of discipline were developed prior to recent outrage and controversy.

Progressives promote finding new ways to teach and discipline children without using any sort of physical punishment, direct or indirect. Another way to give students more freedom in the classroom, which would in turn decrease a teacher's workload and their responsibility to discipline students, would be to de-regulate schools by revising the strict dress code, allowing students to have use of their cell phones, and encouraging club activities.⁵⁴ Freeing students from the rigorous boundaries of their school life will create a less stressful environment that would foster the learning process rather than create tension and animosity from these restrictions. Also by creating a due process system of disciplinary action will minimize the absolute power a teacher has in an individual classroom by dividing the power equally among all the teachers and figures of authority in a school; these entities working together will find the best and most educationally enriching way to discipline a student.⁵⁵

⁵³ Han, *The Korea Herald*.

⁵⁴ Han, *The Korea Herald*.

⁵⁵ Han, *The Korea Herald*.

Banning the use of corporal punishment has left a vacuum of power inside the classroom where teachers have no way to exert authority over their students to maintain structure. At the commencement of the ban, no new forms of discipline were introduced to teachers to fill the void that eliminating corporal punishment created. Particularly in schools where indirect corporal punishment was abolished along with direct corporal punishment, the roles of teachers and students have been switched in some instances, where students are acting aggressively towards their teachers, hitting and ridiculing them because the students know they can get away with it.⁵⁶

Some teachers have taken initiative in creating alternative methods of discipline like making students take special education classes, do in-school and community service, or being involved in school campaigns – for example, standing in the hallways encouraging other students not to be late to class.^{57 58} While these methods may be a suitable replacement for corporal punishment, some educators are hesitant to use them until the Ministry of Education issues a new set of rules and regulations in conducting these new methods.

Though even when the Ministry of Education lists what forms of punishment can and cannot be used on misbehaving students, some schools and teachers will still disregard these new regulations because their opinions on indirect punishment are just as strongly negative as their opinions on direct punishment. The Ministry of Education is working within the mindset that all schools abandoned direct corporal punishment while still allowing the use of indirect corporal punishment, and that is definitely not the case. Many educators believe that the Ministry of

⁵⁶ Strother.

⁵⁷ Blazer, 4.

⁵⁸ Strother.

Education should have discussed the repercussions of banning corporal punishment and considered new and better ways of disciplining their students before the ban began.⁵⁹

Just from the few examples cited here that are arguably more extreme than the content of the video of Mr. O illustrate that without this video the rapid policy changes that have taken place in answer to public condemnation of Mr. O's actions would not have happened. No major movements towards abolishing the use of corporal punishment in schools happened prior to the revealing of this video, even in severe cases where students were hospitalized, committed suicide, and killed. The role social media played in publicizing this video was crucial to the events that took place after the video was released. It is difficult to say what would have happened if this video had never been uploaded to the Internet, but it would not be so far off to assume that if the student who recorded the video merely took it home and showed it to his or her parents, nothing like the major policy changes that did take place would have occurred.

In speculation of the future of corporal punishment, with the inconsistencies in the execution of new policies, the practice of corporal punishment in general will not change much from what it was before. Although both SMOE's and MEST's policies and regulations were groundbreaking in the history of education and students' human rights movements, the discrepancies over how teachers are and are not allowed to punish their students will obstruct more effective policies for corporal punishment in the future. Schools need to pick one policy to uphold – either practice indirect corporal punishment or practice no corporal punishment at all and use new, alternative methods of discipline. The fight between national and provincial government guidelines make it

⁵⁹ Strother.

impossible for teachers and school officials to be able to accurately sustain these guidelines and perform them effectively.

The impact the video of Mr. O had on Korean society coupled with the policy changes to abolish corporal punishment to protect the rights of students has left the country divided on their opinions and views as to whether or not the policy changes were for the good of the future of education or if it will do more harm than good. Advocating for the end of using corporal punishment and “the cane of love” as a means of defending child abuse supports human rights movements for students, but it then in turn puts teachers at risk. The tradition of corporal punishment has left its mark on Korean society and culture, but the mark is not so deep that it cannot be erased completely in the future.

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