

What a Big Difference Jobs Can Make in Your Lifestyle!

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In the past, most people in Korea were secured for a place of life. However, after the serious economic crisis in the late 1990s, things have been changed. Nowadays, it is quite common that many Koreans have to move from one job to another job. When we consider this change in the Korean society, jobs in Korea can generally be divided into two categories according to whether or not a worker is guaranteed for a place of life: jobs which tend to provide lifetime employment and jobs which tend to provide shorter than lifetime employment.

Some Koreans whose jobs tend to provide lifetime employment can work until they reach retirement age. People in Korea can usually get this kind of job after passing highly competitive tests that generally require more than a year to prepare. However, once they pass the tests, they are rarely fired. That is, this kind of job is harder to get, but easier to keep. Public school teachers (elementary, middle, and high school), public servants and employees working at a state enterprise such as the Korean Central Bank can belong to this category. Last year, one of my friends passed the national teachers' examination and she is now teaching biology at a public middle school. In Korea, the competition ratio of the teachers' examination is over 10:1. It was not that competitive 10 years ago but, with the increasing number of people who want to take up a stable career, public school teachers have become one of the most difficult jobs to get. The other day, my friend told me that she prepared for the test for about two years and she studied more than 10 hours a day. Now, as a teacher, she begins her work at 8:30 A.M. and ends at 4:30 P.M. After work, she goes to see the movies or develops her hobbies such as gardening. Also, she receives 3-months of paid vacation each year and she went abroad for a month this summer. She studied really hard to become a teacher for two years and now she fully enjoys her life and never worries about being fired.

In addition to jobs that can be ensured for lifetime employment, there are many jobs that tend to provide shorter than lifetime employment in Korea. Not many people can work at the same company until their retirement age and most people have to find another job or lose their jobs. Getting this kind of job does not generally require people a long period of time to prepare but they have to work really hard and improve their skills if they want to stay at a company. That is, compared to the first category, jobs that tend to provide less than lifetime employment are easier to get but harder to keep. People working at private companies can be included in this category. One of my friends is working at an insurance company. While at university, she made an effort to get the job but she also had enough time to do what she would like to do such as meeting friends or going to see the movies. However, after she took up the job, she has had no time for herself. She works from 7:30 A.M till 8:00 P.M. for 5 days a week and, sometime, she has to work on Saturday. Since her salary is determined by her sales, she spends a lot of time meeting her customers and calling them. Also, she has to improve her skills. She studies to get insurance-related certificates and she is planning to go to a business graduate school to learn more about insurance. If she does not make an effort to im-

prove her sales and herself, she cannot be promoted, which means in Korea that she is expected to resign in the near future. For her, getting the job was not as difficult as maintaining it and now she has no time to relax and do other things.

In conclusion, we can see that there are two kinds of jobs in Korea: jobs that can be ensured for lifetime employment and jobs that can provide less than lifetime employment. People's decision on which category of jobs they will take makes a significant difference in their lives.