



Republic of Korea

Byong Man Ahn
Minister of Education, Science and Technology



Mr. Ahn, Byong Man was appointed as Minister of the Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on August 6, 2008. Under a clear vision to enhance the autonomy and creativity of schools, Mr. Ahn is making various policy endeavors to strengthen educational excellence, while also ensuring sufficient educational access for underprivileged students. Before joining the Ministry, Mr. Ahn served as President and professor of the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies from 1975 to 2006. He received a Blue Stripes Order of Service Merit from the President of the Republic of Korea in 2006. Mr. Ahn earned a doctoral degree in political science at the University of Florida in 1974, and has authored numerous influential papers on politics and public administration.

The Korean Government's Educational Policies for Underprivileged Students

Over the past half century, Korea has achieved outstanding economic and educational growth, backed by the strong support of the government and citizens. As shown in its high enrolment rates of primary and tertiary education which record 99.0% and 70.5% respectively, Korea has substantially expanded educational opportunities for all students regardless of their socioeconomic status. The government has also focused on enhancing the equity and quality of education by strengthening the autonomy, creativity and accountability of school education. Alongside, there have been continuous efforts to implement educational policies that support students from low income families and rural areas, female students and disabled students. However, along with rapid economic development, Korea has recently been witnessing widening social and educational disparity between different social classes, regions and groups.

The education gap seriously hampers individual growth and happiness, and also serves as one of the major obstacles to social development. With this in mind, the government is currently working to expand educational welfare infrastructure, so that all students may pursue their dreams regardless of household income levels. Various policies have been formulated and are being carried out to develop after-school programs and curricula tuned to each stage of the human life cycle. Representative strategies are the Customized National Scholarship Program, the Education Investment Priority Zone Project which supports schools in low income urban neighbourhoods, and the ICT Support Project targeting students from low income households. Schemes are also in place to support students in fishery and agricultural areas, develop basic learning skills in young children, and educate students who lack basic learning skills, offer learning opportunities to adults with low educational attainment levels, and support North Korean defector students, multi-cultural students and disabled students.

In this sense, today's conference under the theme of "Inclusive Education: The Way of The Future" is highly significant, in that it will provide new implications for the educational development of all member countries.

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“Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future”**



I hope this conference will serve as a venue for global participants to share their valuable opinions for better education. We believe that the human rights of the growing generation should be respected irrespective of their status, region and mental or physical condition. We must make full endeavors to create an environment in which our youths can work towards self-realization and enrich their lives.

I do wish the 48th UNESCO ICE every success, and also applaud all the staff of the International Bureau of Education for their commitment to the educational betterment of the whole world.