



# World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

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# Republic of Korea

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## Principles and general objectives of education

Under the ideal of *hongik-ingan* (contributing to the overall benefit of humankind — the founding spirit of the first kingdom in Korean history), the objectives of Korea's education are to: assist all people in perfecting their individual character, develop the ability to achieve an independent life and acquire the qualifications of democratic citizens, and be able to participate in the building of a democratic state and promoting the prosperity of all humankind. Based on these ideals, the curriculum aims to foster the following model of a well-educated person:

- one who seeks to develop his or her own individuality through a well-rounded and wholesome character development;
- one who demonstrates creativity with a solid foundation in basic knowledge and skills;
- one who explores his or her career paths on the basis of broad intellectual knowledge and skills in diverse academic disciplines;
- one who create new values on the basis of an understanding of the national culture;
- one who contributes to the development of the community he or she lives on the basis of democratic citizenship. (KEDI, 2007).

In terms of general direction, the curriculum is aimed at fostering independent, creative citizens who are able to lead the globalization and information age of the twenty-first century. The objective is to provide comprehensive basic education centered on students' abilities and aptitudes, fostering sound values and creativity and developing self-initiative in order to adapt to globalization and the information age. (MEST, 2008).

## Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Constitution** is the basic source of all educational laws and regulations. The articles related to education stipulate that: every citizen has a right to receive an education according to his/her level of ability; elementary education is compulsory for all children; elementary compulsory education should be free; self-determination, professionalism, political neutrality and autonomy of universities and colleges must be secured by law; matters related to school and non-formal education, education finance and teachers must be stipulated by law.

A profound change was introduced in the basic structure of education-related laws during the late twentieth century. The **Education Law** of 1949, which had been comprehensive in its nature, was divided into the Fundamental Law of Education, the Elementary and Secondary Education Law (which has undergone 38 partial revisions since 1949), and the Higher Education Law, thereby further specializing the legal structure pertaining to each school level.



This **Fundamental Law of Education** of 13 December 1997 defines the main educational goals and objectives, puts forward the basic structure for a lifelong education system, and fully guarantees the educational rights of all citizens. The **Elementary and Secondary Education Law** of 13 December 1997 concerns elementary, middle and high schools. This law contains provisions related to: the establishment and operations of a school; school regulations; school and student evaluation matters; matters dealing with tuition; compulsory education; students and teachers matters; matters dealing with the curriculum and grade system, promotion and graduation; school textbooks; etc. The regulations pertaining to the school council, which had belonged to the Law of Local Governance of Education, were transferred to this Law in further specification. The **Higher Education Law** of 23 December 1997 regulates the post-secondary and higher education sector, including junior colleges, technical colleges, and four-year colleges. Articles related to kindergarten education included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Law are now included in the **Kindergarten Education Law** of 2004.

On the basis of the **Infant Care Act** enacted in January 1991 and amended in 2004, eligible for childcare support are households with children aged between 0 and 6 and below a certain level of income, and parents or caretakers who are raising two or more children, a 5-year-old child, or a disabled child.

In order to strengthen lifelong education and to pursue the nation's human resources development in increased effectiveness, the Social Education Law was reformulated into the **Lifelong Education Law** of 31 August 1999 (thoroughly revised in November 2007), and the **Law for Promotion of Vocational Education and Training** and the **Basic Qualifications Law** were also enacted. The 2007 revised Lifelong Education Law further clarified the scope and field of lifelong education, defined as 'all types of systemic educational activities other than regular school education' which includes education for diploma achievement, basic adult literacy education, vocational capacity-building education, liberal arts education, culture and arts education, and education for civic participation. (MEST-NILE, 2008). In order to facilitate identifying gifted children who will play a vital role in national development, the **Law for Promoting Education of the Gifted** was promulgated in 2000. The **Fundamental Law of Human Resource Development** was enacted on August 2002 and is designed to elevate the quality of life and strengthen national competitiveness. It prescribes the formulation, the general management, and the regulation of human resources development policies.

With the introduction of local governance in general administration, the realm of education also showed efforts to meet the coming age of local autonomy and maximize educational development in the provinces. Core of those efforts was the historic promulgation of the **Law for Local Educational Governance**, which has opened up the era of full-scale local autonomy in educational governance. In the massive revision of the Law undertaken later, new reform measures were inserted.

Several declarations concerning education include: the Charter for National Education, the Charter for Children, the Charter for Teachers, and the Code of Ethics for Teachers. The **Charter for National Education** was announced in 1968. It focuses on the duties and responsibilities that every student receiving education must carry out for the country.



The **Children's Charter** was announced in May 1957 to recognize the importance of caring for children. The **Charter of Teachers** was prepared by the Korean Federation of Education Associations to recognize the significant mission of teachers in improving the quality of education. It urges teachers to take pride in their profession and to be conscious of their roles and responsibilities in guiding young minds. The Charter emphasizes that tender, loving care and respect for individual children is the teachers' primary role. Continuous efforts to improve teachers' professionalism and their presentation as role models in the society are also emphasized. Teachers are viewed as responsible for developing and implementing innovative educational programmes. The **Code of Ethics for Teachers** was proposed to establish an ethical code of teachers' conduct. It prescribes ethical codes concerning the relationship between teachers and students, qualifications and responsibilities of teachers, teachers and their professional organizations and the relationship between teachers and society.

Private education in Korea is supported and regulated by the **Private School Act**, which was adopted in 1963 in order to facilitate the development of private schools by means of guaranteeing their autonomy and social responsibility.

Elementary (six-year programme) and middle school education (three-year programme) are compulsory for all children aged 6-15. The process of making middle school education free and compulsory nationwide was completed in 2004.

## **Administration and management of the education system**

The organizations responsible for educational administration in Korea comprise three layers of administrative authority: the Ministry of Education at the national level, Offices of Education at the municipal and provincial level, and local Offices of Education at the county level. These offices directly supervise elementary and middle schools.

The Ministry of Education was restructured in 2001, its name was changed into the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and then in February 2008 it was renamed as **Ministry of Education, Science and Technology** (MEST) after the merging with the Ministry of Science and Technology. The MEST is the central authority supervising the education system, defining national educational policies in cooperation with other ministries, implementing policies, and guiding provincial and local educational bodies.

After the 2008 reorganization, MEST's senior management consists of the Minister, two vice-ministers and one assistant minister. There are four main Offices (Planning and Coordination, Human Resources Policies, Research and Development Policy, and University and College Affairs), and several Bureaus, each including a number of divisions. There is also the Inspector General's Office comprising five divisions. The School Policy Bureau, under Vice-Minister I, comprises four divisions: School System Planning; Early Childhood Education and Care; Faculty Policy; and the **National Curriculum Division**. The goals and contents of education are determined at the national level, while the school curriculum is organized and



implemented at the individual school level within the framework provided by the central government.

A local office of education, the core unit of the autonomous educational administration system, has been established in each municipality and province of the country. Since 1997, sixteen **Municipal or Provincial** and 182 **Local Offices of Education** have been established. To implement local educational autonomy, each municipal or provincial office of education has a **Superintendent** as an executive body and a **Board of Education** as a decision-making body on important educational matters. The Superintendent is elected to serve a four-year term by the board members. The Superintendent is in charge of issuing rules and regulations regarding education, budget planning, producing account reports, managing the school curriculum, school facilities and equipment, and financing related commissions.

Each Board of Education takes decisions on important educational matters, which then must be approved by the Local Councils. The total number of members of the board of education in the metropolitan areas is decided by the number of their autonomous districts, with a minimum number of seven. In the provinces, the number of board members is the same as that of its local offices of education.

From the beginning of 1996, a **School Council** has operated in every national or public primary and secondary school to guarantee the autonomy of the school's management, and to maximize community participation in it. Each committee is composed of seven to fifteen members, of whom 40-50% are parents, 30-40% school staff including the principal, and 10-30% community members. Representatives of parents and teachers are recommended for selection by direct election in their groups. Community representatives are recommended by the principal and representatives of the parents and teachers. The School Council deliberates on school management matters such as the school budget, improvement of the curriculum, the management of extra-curricular activities, cooperative activities between school and community, student welfare, etc. The Council also advises the school principal on matters related to everyday school operation.

In order to achieve self-regulation and administration of elementary and secondary education, educational administration authority is being transferred from the central to provincial governments and a range of regulations restricting school education are being abolished. Through the School Liberalization Measures adopted on 15 April 2008, a great deal of authority previously under the central government's Minister of Education is being transferred to the provincial superintendent of education. The university admissions system has been completely revised, and admissions policy and operations has been transferred to the **Korean Council for University Education**. From December 2012, university admissions will be no longer supervised by the MEST. (MEST, 2008).

The main functions of the **Korea Education and Research Information Service** (KERIS), established in 1999, are to: provide educational services based on cutting-edge information communications technology (ICT); promote the full utilization of education and research information; and provide a high-tech system for cyber- and life-long educational service. The functions of the **Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training**, established in 1997, are to

research on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and human resources development, and support government policies to develop the vocational capacity of citizens through TVET as part of lifelong learning. The missions of the **Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI)** are to: establish a new education system in tune with Korea's tradition and reality; carry out comprehensive and scientific research on current issues of Korean education; and develop an innovative education system that rationally settles pending problems of Korean education. The main functions of KEDI include, among others: conduct research and development of comprehensive and systematic policy for the nation's educational development; provide professional research and support for innovation in school education; assess and evaluate the overall performance of schools and high school; provide general evaluation of teacher training organization; and develop and disseminate professional studies on educational research and statistics.

The mission of the **Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE)**, established in January 1998 as a government-funded educational research institution, is to contribute to the qualitative improvement of primary and secondary education and the nation's educational development through the research, development and implementation of curriculum and educational evaluations. One of primary functions of KICE is to undertake research on elementary and secondary school curricula thereby contributing to the development of the National Curriculum. KICE also conducts research on educational curriculum and evaluation. Along with this research orientation, KICE is involved in developing and implementing a variety of educational tests including: national-level achievement tests; psychological tests; and diagnostic tests for basic skills of elementary students. The Institute also plays a leading role in carrying out international comparative studies of student achievement, conducting studies on developments in educational evaluation and long-term planning, and providing training on educational evaluation. KICE supervises the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) and is responsible for the development and administration of national tests, including the primary and the secondary school teacher selection test and the high school entrance exam.

The **National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE)**, established in February 2008 on the basis of the revised Lifelong Education Law, is in charge of the promotion of lifelong education. NILE implements a range of projects such as research on lifelong education policy, support to lifelong education programme development, training and further training of staff, collaborative schemes with other lifelong education institutions, and the setting up and implementation of an integrated information system for lifelong education.

The Presidential Commission on Education Innovation was created by Presidential Order No. 18001 of June 2003 in order to advise the President on the direction for policies on education and human resource development, developing major education policies, promoting innovation within the education system, managing educational finance and welfare, and reviewing issues of educational innovation. The Advisory Council for Education and Human Resources Development Policy was inaugurated in March 2001 to examine the education and human resources development policies of the government and other important matters concerning educational development.



Besides the MEST, the **Ministry of Finance and Economy** (MOFE) and the **Ministry of Labor** (MOL) are all involved in formulating and implementing policies related to human resource development, manpower development, and vocational and technical education and training. The MOFE designs comprehensive plans for economic and social development, and carries out training programmes for manpower development. The MOL formulates and implements policies related to the demand and supply of labour. The Ministry of Health and Welfare coordinates childcare services. In March 2008, the Childcare Policy Bureau of the Ministry of Family and Gender Equality moved to the Office of Childcare Policy in the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

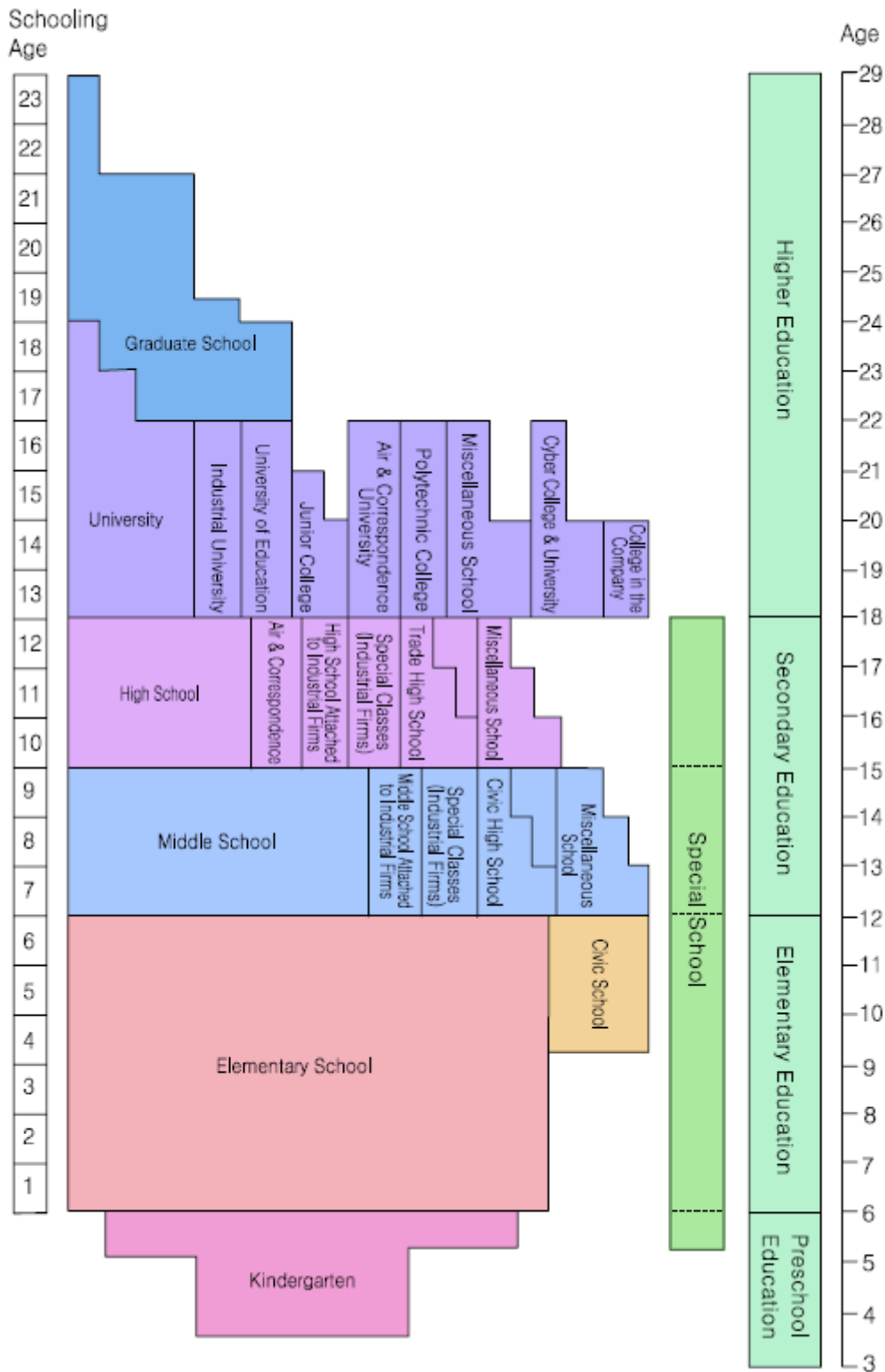
As a non-governmental organization, the **Korean Council for University Education** (KCUE), established in 1982, is an important body for enhancing autonomy and accountability in the management of higher education. The KUCE consists of members from all four-year universities nationwide, both public and private. It is concerned with issues such as professional research in the management of universities and the university admission system, formulation of policies to provide financial aid to universities, development and dissemination of curricula and teaching methods, and conducting institutional and programme evaluation. The **Korean Council for College Education** (KCCE) aims at enhancing autonomy and solidarity of colleges and promoting their sound development through inter-institutional cooperation in management and research, as well as making policy recommendations to the government.

At the secondary level, the **Korean Association of Private Secondary School Principals** has represented private school education. The function of the Association is to muster the resources of individual members, recommend policy measures to the Ministry of Education and to the Board of Education, and conduct research on the development of private school education, etc.

Many NGOs, such as parental associations and voluntary citizen groups, have emerged to monitor the educational policy implementation process. Some members of these NGOs also participate in the process of educational policy making.

## Structure and organization of the education system

### Republic of Korea: structure of the education system



Source: MEST & KEDI, 2008.





## Pre-school education

Kindergartens are for children aged 3 to 5, and offer educational services promoting the well-rounded development of children, mostly through experience and activity-based integrated education. Kindergarten education is not compulsory; the government aims to expand free kindergarten education for 5-year-olds nationwide. Daycare centers or play centers are educational facilities for children aged up to 5, and offer educational services to ensure infants' health, safety, and adequate quality of life and their well-rounded development including physical, language, cognitive, and emotional development. Daycare centers are under the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

## Primary education

Elementary education is free and compulsory. At the age of 6, children are informed by the residence authority that they should apply for schooling. Once children enter elementary school, they automatically advance to the next grade each year. Elementary education lasts six years.

## Secondary education

Middle school education is compulsory and partially free. Here “partially” means that only those students in rural areas and students specified under the Special Education Promotion Act can receive the full benefit of a free education. Middle school (or lower secondary) education lasts three years, and is intended for students aged 12 to 15 years. Elementary school graduates are assigned to schools in their residential area through a random method. This random assignment system is applied to both public and private schools. Upon successful completion of the programme, students receive the junior high school diploma. Access to upper secondary education (high school) depends on the results of a high competitive entrance examination. There are general academic and vocation high schools. Vocational high schools offer specializations in agriculture, technology, commerce, fishery, industry and home economics. There are also vocational schools called comprehensive schools, which offer both general and vocational programmes. Furthermore, special high schools have been established for science, arts, foreign languages and physical education. These schools select their students through different appraisal procedures. Special high schools are responsible for the selection of students, developing curricula, employing teachers, and the management of financial resources according to their own regulations. Civic schools and miscellaneous schools cater to students who, for various reasons, are unable to have access to mainstream schools. At the end of upper secondary education, successful students are awarded the high school or the vocational high school certificate. Graduates must sit the entrance examination (College Scholastic Aptitude Test, introduced in 2004) for entering higher education.

## Higher education

Higher education is offered at: universities (industrial, teacher-training, broadcast and correspondence, and cyber universities); colleges (junior, cyber, technical and graduate school colleges); and research and other higher education institutions. Junior colleges offer professional programmes normally lasting two years (three years in the



case of nursing) leading to the award of an associate degree; advanced courses for associate degree holders leading to a bachelor's are also offered. Universities offer four-year programmes leading to the award of a bachelor's degree (six years in the case of medicine, oriental medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine). If successful in the entrance examination, bachelor's degree holders can enrol in programmes leading to a master's degree, which normally take two years to complete. Doctoral degree programmes require at least three years of study and research; access is subject to the passing of an oral examination. Combined master's and doctoral degree programmes are also offered; the nominal duration of these programmes is normally four years.

The school year consists of at least thirty-four working weeks, divided into two semesters. The transition to a five-day school week started in 2007 and was expected to be completed in 2010. The academic year consists of two semesters, each comprising sixteen weeks of courses.

## **The educational process**

The Education Law articulates the goals and objectives of education at each school level. To ensure a standard quality, Article 155 prescribes the curriculum for each school level and the criteria for the development of textbooks and instructional materials.

Curricula are revised on a periodical basis to reflect the emerging needs of a changing society and the new frontiers of disciplines. Since the Republic of Korea was established, there have been seven main curriculum revisions (1954-1995, 1963, 1973-1974, 1981, 1987-1988, 1992-1995, and 1997-1998) and three partial revisions in 2006, 2007 and 2009 (partial revisions were introduced from October 2003 in order to respond to rapid social changes). The main principles set at the sixth revision were: decentralization in curriculum decisions; diversification of structure; appropriate content; and efficiency in the operation of curricula.

The Seventh Curricular Revision was called for by the Educational Reform Committee, which was an advisory body directly answerable to the President. In its proposal for a basic scheme of curricular reform, the Special Committee on Curriculum under the Educational Reform Committee recommended to develop a new curriculum. The Ministry of Education, then, commissioned the Korea Educational Development Institute (KEDI) to undertake basic and general research for curricular reform at the elementary and secondary school levels in March 1996.

Curriculum-related policies were mainly decided by relevant departments at the Ministry of Education, while curricular design was undertaken primarily by the Curricular Revision Research and Development (R&D) Group, mainly staffed by KEDI personnel. The Group consisted of four teams: the first team for developing overall curricula for elementary, middle, and general high schools; the second for improving the curricula for vocational high schools; the third for improving the curricula for special purpose high schools; and the fourth for conducting research on the proposal of a differentiated curriculum. Among them, the first R&D team played the role of the overseeing team in charge of improving the systemic and structural



dimensions of elementary and secondary school curricula. The Research Committee for Curricular Revision was formed for the purpose of reviewing and consulting the process and outcome of researching and developing the curriculum together with the Curricular Revision Research and Development Group.

With the two organizations as the main basis, Ministry personnel, KEDI researchers, basic research team leader, other curriculum experts, school teachers, and subject specialists gathered together and made decisions on the general scheme and researching and developing of the curriculum for each school subjects. During the entire process of the revision, conferences, seminars, and hearings for formulating and reviewing the overall scheme took place over eighty times. The entire number of the people who participated in revising the overall scheme turned out to be 4,598. Particularly in the public hearing for reviewing the overall scheme of the new curriculum, held in August, 1996, approximately 800 stakeholders participated and presented their opinions on controversial issues.

Based upon the confirmed scheme and the criteria for distributing yearly teaching hours, basic research for curricular revision of subjects and the development of an implementation plan for the revised curriculum were commissioned to KEDI, Korea National University of Education, Taegu University, Seoul National University, Sungkyunkwan University, and Incheon National University of Education. After a review of subject curricula carried out in August 1997, the Seventh Elementary and Secondary School Curriculum was announced on 30 December 1997, after additional reviews.

Since the newly proposed curriculum was a product of great change in perspective which went beyond the traditional framework of the existent curriculum, the Educational Reform Committee undertook an assessment of the basic framework for the national curriculum through broad-ranged public hearings in order to test practical applicability of the ideas of the new curriculum. Overall, 14,322 experts, teachers, teaching staff, and the parents of students participated yearly. A total of 284 meetings, seminars, and public hearings were convened, and a total of 127 meetings were held by the 1,794 members appointed to discuss and develop the curriculum.

The Seventh Curriculum was developed in the framework developed and established by the Presidential Commission of the Educational Reform. The basic direction of the Education Reform was to shift from the 'closed education system' to the 'open system' and from the 'producer-centered education system' to the 'consumer-centered system.' Under these two principles the Commission proposed a wide range of educational reform items, some of which were concerned with the school curriculum. The Seventh Curriculum has been partially changed and its revised version was announced in February 2007. (KEDI, 2007). The last revised version of the Seventh Curriculum was announced in December 2009.

There are three different levels curriculum development and implementation activities: national curriculum; metropolitan/provincial guidelines for school curriculum making; and handbook of school curriculum. The Ministry of Education has overall responsibility over the curriculum. The national curriculum establishes different goals and objectives for each subject and at the different levels (elementary middle and high school). The national curriculum is the general framework for



educational programmes, textbook development and student assessment. Superintendents at both metropolitan and provincial levels are advised to make use of the basic guidelines of the national curriculum framework in the implementation of the curriculum, in order to meet the needs of students in the local area. Schools then prepare their own curriculum implementation plan in accordance with the national curriculum and the Metropolitan and Provincial Educational Authorities (MPEA) guidelines. Curriculum implementation is usually monitored at regional and local level. Inspectors from the regional and local educational authorities regularly visit individual schools and check whether the legal requirements of the national curriculum frameworks, e.g. minimum number of school days, provision of the subjects to be offered at each grade, time allocation for each subject, etc., are being met. (KEDI, 2007).

The basic structure of the Seventh Curriculum comprises two parts: the National Common Courses Curriculum, applied in grades 1 to 10 (grades 1 to 9 after the 2009 revision), and the Elective-Courses Curriculum, for grades 11 and 12 (grades 10 to 12 after the 2009 revision). It also includes a section devoted to ‘cross-curricular learning’, e.g. themes that cover multiple subjects and should be considered across all educational activities, including related subjects and ‘creative experiential learning activities’ (introduced by the 2009 revision). There is a wide range of learning themes, including: democratic citizenship education, character education, environment education, health education, safety education, sex education, consumer education, career education, education for Korean cultural identity, education for international understanding, fisheries and marine sciences education, education for information literacy and ethics, anti-corruption education, water conservation education, education for sustainable development, gender equality education, human rights education, safety and disaster prevention education, leisure education, defense education, etc.

As a part of the follow-up measures for implementation of the new curriculum, reference materials for curricular subjects at each school level were developed and distributed to schools. Over 1,000 textbooks addressing changes in curricular subjects were developed primarily by the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE), colleges of education, and teachers’ colleges, and a variety of instructional and learning materials were distributed. Also, standard for criterion-referenced assessment for each revised curricular subject has been consecutively developed, as a quality-control mechanism for the curricular subjects. Timely dissemination of data and enhanced communication among relevant parties were sought by building a database for the Curriculum and constructing an online network connecting the Ministry of Education, Municipal and Provincial Offices of Education and their affiliated research institutes, national-level research institutes such as the KICE, and schools. As regards the implementation of the Seventh Curriculum, some problems were identified in relation to the introduction of the differentiated curriculum, the school discretionary activities (that were intended to provide schools with the opportunity to make decisions on curriculum related affairs), the elective-courses programme (first introduced in 2002, as formerly all students followed the same curriculum in grades 1-12), and the reduction of teaching contents by 30% (introduced in order to extend school discretionary time and encourage schools to adapt the curriculum to local needs and support students’ self-directed learning and independent studies). (*Ibid.*).



As regards the seven main curriculum revisions that took place during 1954-1998, these were carried out mainly on the basis of a narrow concept of curriculum, viewed as 'content' only. Within this conceptual framework, the revisions focused on developing content standards, disregarding other important aspects of curriculum, such as teaching, assessment and professional development standards. Most curriculum developers concentrated their work on the process of adding new subjects or dropping old ones, and on increasing or decreasing the number of periods allocated to the different subjects. The general impression has been that curriculum changed often, but schools remain unchanged. (KEDI, 2007).

## Pre-primary education

Kindergarten education aims at providing an appropriate environment for the nurturing of children and promoting the wholesome development of the child throughout varied activities with diversified content and methods of instruction. The kindergarten curriculum was set at the national level by the Education Law 146 and 147 in 1992, and the last revision was announced in 2007. The goals of pre-primary education are to: instill habits for a healthy and safe life and a balanced physical development; develop an ability to understand others and to express ideas using appropriate language; have pride in what one does and to develop an ability to express creatively one's feelings and ideas in music, dance, and painting; and develop the basic habits necessary for daily life and to foster a love of family, peers, and neighbours.

The turning point of systemic development of childcare facilities was 1991 when the Infant Care Act was adopted. After proclamation of this law, childcare facilities have attempted to perform quality care and educational functions as well as simple babysitting service. While kindergarten education is under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), childcare services have developed with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family as a part of welfare system initially targeted for young children of disadvantaged groups, and then moved to the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Although each of the two systems has followed its own path and development, the goals of the two systems are now merging into one, that is, both education and care.

As of 2005, there were 28,040 childcare centers providing service to 972,391 children aged 0 to 5; over 95% of the centers including home-based play rooms (41.9%) were private, serving 89.1% of the children; 83.3% of the centers were located in cities and towns and 16.6% were in rural and fishery communities. The size of childcare facilities was rather small as 39.8% of them had less than 20 children. National or public facilities tended to be larger than private ones as 35.4% of them had 66-91 children. In terms of staff qualifications, staff in childcare centers was composed of four-year college graduates (16.6%), two-year college graduates (59.2%), and high school graduates (24.2%).

The kindergarten curriculum consists of five life areas: physical, social, expressive, language, and inquiry. The government has developed and disseminated kindergarten curriculum guidelines and teaching-learning materials, while the municipal and provincial educational authorities determine the structure and operation of individual kindergarten curricula in detail. Standard instructional time is three

hours per day, but usually kindergartens tend to offer classes for four or more hours per day, 180 days per year. The government has concentrated on building public kindergartens in rural areas while encouraging the private sector to establish kindergartens in big cities where a large number of kindergarten-aged children are concentrated.

Kindergartens used to provide a half-day programme (from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm), but now many offer full-day programmes (from 7:00 am to 8:00 p.m.). The former is called 'extended programme' and the latter is called 'full-day programme'. Full-day programmes are used mostly by urban families, whereas extended programmes are preferred by families in rural and fishery communities. According to MEST, in 2008 more than 91% of kindergartens (or 7,485 kindergartens) offered full-day programmes and about 30% of children (or 162,993 children) were enrolled in these programmes. (MEST, 2008).

Kindergarten teachers are normally graduates of four-year colleges, two- to three- year junior vocational colleges, or correspondence colleges, with a major in preschool education. Almost all kindergarten teachers (94.7%) are college graduates: 26.1% of them from four-year colleges and universities and 70% from two- to three-year colleges. In the case of national or public kindergartens, 56.3% of the teachers are graduates of four-year colleges and universities while 80% of the private kindergarten teachers are graduates of two- to three-year colleges. This difference in educational levels of these two groups of teachers is due to different recruitment methods; national or public kindergarten teachers are selected through rigorous national examination, whereas private kindergarten teachers are not required to pass the examination or to be holders of four-year college degrees.

The government is expanding free education for 5-year-olds nationwide. There has been a slight delay to the implementation of the policy due to financial circumstances, but the government intended to achieve complete free education for all 5-year-old children by 2010. A fee support policy started initially for 5-year-olds of low income families in rural and fishery areas in 1999, and it has been expanded as free education for all 5-year-olds since September 2001. Educational fee support for 3- and 4-year-olds was initiated in 2004, and also for low-income families' children whose siblings attend kindergartens at the same time. In 2007, the fee support policy was expanded to kindergarteners of families of average income levels of urban working families.

A national project, as part of Policy Initiative for the Support of Learning Competency in the Early Years reviewed by Council of Human Resources Development in July 2007, was undertaken to develop and disseminate programmes for supporting the development of young children's basic learning competency as well as to promote parental understandings of their children's learning. (MEST, 2008).

According to national statistics, in 2008 there were 8,344 kindergartens with 537,822 children (of whom 48% were girls) enrolled and 34,601 teachers (of whom 98.3% were females). The enrolment ratio of 3- to 5-year-olds was estimated at 38%. The average number of children per class was 21.9 and the average children/teacher ratio was 15.5:1. (MEST & KEDI, 2008).

## Primary education

Primary education is compulsory, lasts six years (grades 1-6) and is provided in elementary schools. The entry age is 6. The general objective of elementary education is to cultivate healthy, self-reliant, creative and morally sound Korean individuals who will be leaders in the twenty-first century. The main objectives of elementary education are to:

- provide pupils with a variety of experiences for a balanced development of both mind and body;
- help pupils develop the basic ability to recognize and solve problems in their daily lives and to express their own feelings and ideas in diverse ways;
- provide pupils with a wide range of learning experiences conducive to the understanding of the diverse world of work;
- develop attitudes for understanding and appreciating Korea's unique tradition and culture;
- develop the basic life habits necessary for everyday living and foster the love for neighbors and country.

The table below shows the yearly lesson timetable for elementary education in accordance with the 2001 Curriculum:

**Elementary education: yearly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Korean language	210	238	238	204	204	204
Moral education	–	–	34	34	34	34
Mathematics	120	136	136	136	136	136
Social studies	–	–	102	102	102	102
'Right life'	60	68	–	–	–	–
Science	–	–	102	102	102	102
'Wise life'	90	68	–	–	–	–
Practical studies	–	–	–	–	68	68
'Happy life'	180	238	–	–	–	–
Physical education	–	–	102	102	102	102
'We the first graders'	80	–	–	–	–	–
Music	–	–	68	68	68	68
Art	–	–	68	68	68	68
Foreign language (English)	–	–	34	34	68	68
Autonomous activities	60	68	68	68	68	68
Extracurricular activities	30	34	34	68	68	68
<b>Total periods per year (min.)</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>1,088</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. In Grade I periods allocated to subjects, autonomous and extracurricular activities are based on a school year consisting of thirty weeks; in Grades II–VI periods allocated to subjects are based on a school year consisting of thirty-four weeks.

The yearly lesson timetable implemented after the 2009 revision is presented below:

### Republic of Korea. Elementary education: yearly lesson timetable

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each grade					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Korean language	224	224	204	204	204	204
Mathematics	224	224	136	136	136	136
Social studies/Moral education	–	–	136	136	136	136
‘Disciplined life’	64	64	–	–	–	–
Science/Home economics	–	–	102	102	170	170
‘Intelligent life’	96	96	–	–	–	–
Physical education	–	–	102	102	102	102
‘Pleasant life’	96	96	–	–	–	–
Arts (Music/Visual arts)	–	–	136	136	136	136
Foreign language (English)	–	–	68	68	102	102
Creative experiential learning activities	136	136	102	102	102	102
<b>Total periods per year (min.)</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>986</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>1,088</b>

*Source:* MEST, 2009. Each teaching period lasts 40 minutes. Periods allocated to subjects are based on a school year consisting of 34 weeks. In grades 1 and 2, most subject matters are integrated into Korean language, mathematics, disciplined life, intelligent life, and pleasant life. ‘Pleasant life’ includes physical education and arts; ‘intelligent life’ integrates contents of science and social studies; ‘disciplined life’ integrates contents of moral education/ethics and social studies. Home economics is taught in grades 5 and 6. Creative experiential learning activities comprise autonomous activities, club activities, social services and career activities. ICT education, health education, and Chinese characters and classics education are conducted through systematic guidance by using the related subject (cluster) and the time allocated for creative experimental learning.

In the elementary school pupils automatically advance to the next grade each year. Almost all pupils enter middle school after having completed elementary education. The dropout rate at the elementary level is almost non-existent and thus it is not even reported. All schools are expected to establish attainment targets by grade level for individual subjects and extracurricular activities and assess the progress of pupils by using various evaluation tools and methods. Teachers continuously monitor and assess pupils. Schools must report the assessment/evaluation record of individual pupils in grades 1 and 2 in the form of a written document referring to the pupil’s activities, personal traits and progress in individual subjects. From grade 3 onwards, reporting of the progress in individual subject areas receives more emphasis.

Beginning in 1996, an early attendance system which allows admission of 5% to 20% of the 5-year-olds, provided that they prove the acquisition of basic learning abilities was implemented. Each region has a different rate of extra admission according to the capacity of its elementary schools. In addition to the early attendance system, an accelerated grade advancement system was introduced which allows a gifted child to skip a grade and advance to the next grade level. This accelerated advancement is allowed twice during an individual’s elementary (and middle school) years.





According to MEST, in 2008 there were 5,814 elementary schools with 3,672,267 pupils enrolled (of whom 47.7% were girls) and 172,193 teachers (of whom 74% were females). The average number of pupils per class was 29.2 and the average pupils/teacher ratio was 21.3:1. The enrolment ratio at the elementary level was estimated at 99% and the transition rate to middle school was almost universal.

In the same year, there were 149 special schools with 23,149 students enrolled and 6,637 teachers. (MEST & KEDI, 2008). Special education can take various forms according to an individual programme's process and format. There are special kindergartens, special schools, and special classes. Special classes are designed to provide integrated education for disabled pupils below the high school level and are run on either a full-time or a part-time basis, with case-by-case instruction and teaching tours. For special class students, teachers follow the general school curriculum with individual educational plans.

## Secondary education

Secondary education is provided in middle schools (lower secondary education, grades 7-9) and high schools (upper secondary, grades 10-12). Middle school (or junior high) education should help students acquire basic abilities essential for learning and everyday living, and become democratic citizens. The main objectives of middle school education are to:

- promote the well-balanced development of the mind and body and provide students with the opportunity to discover their own potentials;
- help students cultivate basic and problem-solving abilities necessary for learning and daily life and equip them with the ability to creatively express their thoughts and feelings;
- enable students to attain knowledge and skills in diverse fields so that they will be able to actively explore their own career paths;
- develop and foster an attitude of pride for Korea's unique tradition and culture;
- cultivate an understanding of basic values, the principles of democracy and the democratic way of life.

The middle school curriculum is composed of several compulsory subjects, elective subjects, and extracurricular activities. Typically there are 34 periods of instruction per week, each lasting 45 minutes. The table below shows the yearly lesson timetable for middle school education in accordance with the 2001 curriculum:

**Lower secondary education (middle school): yearly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of yearly periods in each form		
	I	II	III
Korean language	170	136	136
Moral education	68	68	34
Social studies	102	102	136
Mathematics	136	136	102
Science	102	136	136
Practical studies	68	–	–
Technical studies/home economics	–	102	102
Physical education	102	102	68
Music	68	34	34
Art	34	34	68
Foreign language (English)	102	102	136
Autonomous activities	136	136	136
Extracurricular activities	68	68	68
<b>Total periods per year (min.)</b>	<b>1,156</b>	<b>1,156</b>	<b>1,156</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Education, 2001. (Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. Periods allocated to subjects, autonomous and extracurricular activities are based on a school year consisting of thirty-four weeks).

The lesson timetable implemented in 2009 is presented below:

**Republic of Korea. Lower secondary education (middle school): lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of periods over grades 7-9
Korean language	442
Moral education	
Social studies/Moral Education	510
Mathematics	374
Science/Technology, Home economics	646
Practical studies	
Technical studies/home economics	
Physical education	272
Music	
Arts (Music/Fine arts)	272
Foreign language (English)	340
Elective subject	204
Creative experiential learning activities	306
<b>Total periods over grades 7-9 (min.)</b>	<b>3,366</b>

*Source:* MEST, 2009. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. The number of periods allocated to subjects is based on a school year consisting of 34 weeks. Social studies include history. Schools can organize and implement periods in a flexible way.

Middle school graduates or those with an equivalent academic background can enter high school. There are several kinds of high schools, each offering a different curriculum. To enter some high schools students must pass an entrance examination. The municipal and provincial offices of education are responsible for determining the programme for the high school admissions test.



According to MEST, in 2008 there were 3,077 middle schools with 2,038,611 students (of whom 46.7% were girls) enrolled and 108,700 teachers (of whom 64.5% were females). The average number of students per class was 34.7 and the average students/teacher ratio was 18.8:1. The enrolment ratio was estimated at 93.2% and the transition rate to high school was almost universal (99.7%). (MEST & KEDI, 2008).

High school education should help students acquire the abilities essential for their chosen career paths and develop the qualifications of world-class citizens. The main objectives of high school education are to:

- help students develop a well-harmonized character along with a sound body and mind and a mature sense of self-identity;
- help students develop the logical, critical, and creative thinking abilities required for academic pursuits and daily life;
- enable students to attain knowledge and skills in diverse fields so that they will be able to build a career well-suited to their aptitudes and interests;
- encourage students to develop Korean traditions and culture in a way appropriate for the global setting;
- help students s in endeavoring to build and develop the national community and to develop the awareness and attitude of global citizens.

The high school curriculum is mainly based on elective courses and consists of subject matters and creative experiential learning activities. The subject matters are divided into general subjects and specialized subjects. General subjects include: Korean language; moral education; social studies; mathematics; science; technology and home economics; physical education; music; fine arts; foreign languages; Chinese characters and classics; military training; and free electives. Specialized subjects include courses of study in the areas of agriculture, industry, commerce, fishery and marine transportation, home economics and vocational education, science, physical education, the arts, foreign languages, and international affairs. Creative experiential learning activities include autonomous activities, club activities, volunteer activities, and career activities. Typically there are 36 periods of instruction per week, each lasting 50 minutes.

On the basis of the Seventh Curriculum, elective courses for general subjects are divided into general elective courses and in-depth elective courses. General elective courses include subjects such as the liberal arts, daily life etc. and in-depth courses are designed to help students progress along career paths. To ensure balanced course distribution, general elective courses are divided into five groups: humanities and social sciences; science and technology; arts and physical education; foreign languages; and general studies. Normally students take at least two courses from the general studies group and at least one from each of the other four groups.

The table below shows the yearly lesson timetable for grade 10 and the number of units over grades 11 and 12 on the basis of the 2001 curriculum:


**Upper secondary education (high school): yearly lesson timetable**

Subject	Number of yearly periods/units		
	X	XI	XII
Korean	136		
Morals	34		
Social studies (Korean history = 68)	170		
Mathematics	136		
Science	102		<i>Electives</i>
Practical studies	102		
Physical education	68		
Music	34		
Art	24		
Foreign language (English)	136		
Autonomous activities	204		
Extra-curricular activities	68		8 units
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,224</b>		<b>144 units</b>

*Source:* Ministry of Education, 2001. Each teaching period lasts 50 minutes.



The tables below show lesson timetable framework implemented in 2009 as well as the list of subjects included under core subject clusters:

### Republic of Korea. Upper secondary education (high school): lesson framework

Subject	Minimum number of units over grades 10-12		
	Subject cluster	Subject field	School course
<i>Subject field: basic</i>		45 (30)	
Korean language	15 (10)		
English	15 (10)		
Mathematics	15 (10)		
<i>Subject field: research</i>		35 (20)	
Social studies (including history/moral education)	15 (10)		
Science	15 (10)		
<i>Subject field: physical education, arts</i>		20 (10)	
Physical education	10 (5)		
Arts	10 (5)		
<i>Subject field: liberal arts</i>		16 (12)	
Technology, home economics; second foreign language; Chinese characters and classics; liberal arts	16 (12)		
Total units		116 (72)	64
Creative experiential learning activities			24
<b>Grand-total over grades 10-12</b>		<b>204</b>	

*Source:* MEST, 2009. Each unit (or lesson period) lasts 50 minutes. Typically, five units are allocated per subject that should be completed within one semester (17 weeks). Schools can organize and implement units in a flexible way. Figures under subject cluster and subject field indicate the minimum number of units required to complete the related subject cluster/field. Figures within parentheses for the core subjects indicate the expected number of units to be completed in schools that autonomously organize their curriculum, such as arts and physical education schools or special high schools. The grand-total indicate the total number of units to be completed for high school graduation, consisting of 180 units for subject clusters and 24 for creative experiential learning activities.

**Republic of Korea. Upper secondary education (high school): subjects included under subject clusters (regular curriculum)**

Subject clusters	Subjects
Korean language	Korean language, Speech communication and writing I-II, Reading and grammar I-II, Literature I-II
English	English, English I-II, Listening and speaking(English) I-II, Reading and writing(English) I-II
Mathematics	Mathematics, Applied mathematics, Mathematics I-II, Pre-calculus and pre-statistics, Calculus and statistics, Integration and statistics, Geometry and vector
Social studies (including history/moral education)	Social studies, Korean geography, World geography, East Asian history, World history, Law and politics, Economics, Society and culture, Korean history Moral education, Life and ethics, Ethics and thought
Science	Science, Physics I-II, Chemistry I-II, Biology I-II, Earth science I-II
Physical education	Physical education, Exercises and healthy life, Sports culture, Sports science
Arts	Music, Music performance, Music and society, Understanding music Fine arts, Art in life, Art appreciation, Art production
Technology, home economics	Technology, Home economics, Agricultural biology, Engineering technology, Home science, Enterprise management, Ocean science, information
Second foreign language	German I-II, French I-II, Spanish I-II, Chinese I-II, Japanese I-II, Russian I-II, Arabic I-II
Chinese characters and classics	Chinese characters and classics I-II
Liberal arts	Life and philosophy, Life and psychology, Life and education, Life and religion, Life economics, Safety and health, Career and occupation, Health, environment and green growth

*Source:* MEST, 2009. Typically five units are allocated to each subject. Specialized subjects (not included in the table above) can also be offered within the school curriculum.

In general high schools, a total of 116 curriculum (subject cluster) units or more must be completed out of the total of 180 units. General high schools offering physical education, music and fine arts classes and autonomous schools can implement the minimum completion number of units (72) of the curriculum (subject cluster). In high schools for specialized education a total of 72 curriculum (subject cluster) units or more must be completed out of the total of 180 units; a total of 80



units or more should be allocated to specialized subjects. (MEST, 2009). In 2008, there were 92 high schools for specialized education (30 specializing in foreign languages, 26 in arts, 21 in science and 15 in physical education), with a total enrolment of about 50,000 students. (MEST & KEDI, 2008).

According to MEST, in 2008 there were 2,250 high schools with 1,925,986 students (of whom 47.2% were girls) enrolled and 123,252 teachers (of whom 42.1% were females). The breakdown of schools was as follows: 1,493 general high schools, 697 vocational high schools, 40 correspondence high schools, 12 trade high schools, and eight miscellaneous schools. In general high schools there were 1,419,486 students enrolled and 86,500 teachers; in vocational high schools the total enrolment was 487,492 students and the number of teachers was 36,406. The average number of students per class was 35.1 in general high schools and 30 in vocational high schools. The students/teacher ratio was 16.4:1 in general and 13.4:1 in vocational high schools. The enrolment ratio at the upper secondary level was estimated at 90% and the transition rate to higher education was estimated at 83.8%. (MEST & KEDI, 2008). Access to higher education is subject to the results obtained in the College Scholastic Ability Tests (CSAT), which since 2005 involves a written test in five main subject areas. The CSAT is under the responsibility of the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation.

### **Assessing learning achievement nationwide**

In 1996, the Presidential Commission on Education Reform introduced a new evaluation system (Student School Record/School Activities Record) in order to provide not only summative information but also diagnostic and formative information of students' academic achievement and social development. The National Board of Educational Evaluation administered national assessments during 1987-1997. During 1994-1997 the Board was also in charge of nationwide assessment for grades 4 to 6. In 1997, the responsibility for assessment was transferred to the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE). The National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) started to be implemented in 2000. Students' performance is assessed in Korean language, mathematics, science, social studies, English communication skills, and information technology skills.

Since 2002, the Basic Academic Skills Diagnostic Assessment (for grade 3 pupils) and the NAEA (for grade 6 pupils and for students in the third year of middle school and first year of high school) have been administered annually in order to identify students' performance below the required basic competence level and those students showing poor progress in academic achievement. The results of the 2006 National Assessment showed that the percentage of students in the first year of high school who performed below the basic competency level was 4.3% for Korean, 12.6% for social studies, 10.4% for mathematics, 13.0% for science, and 4.9% for English. Starting from 2008, the NAEA is carried out nationwide. (MEST, 2008).

As regard the NAEA 2003, regardless of the subject grade 6 students in the urban areas attained the highest achievement scores followed by those in the suburb and rural areas. The difference of the achievement scores of the students in the urban and suburb areas was statistically significant for Korean, mathematics and English. On the other hand, the difference of the achievement scores of the students in the



urban and suburb areas was not statistically significant for social studies and science. The difference between the rural and urban areas and the suburb areas was relatively large and statistically significant. In grade 9, the achievement levels of the students in the suburb areas for social studies and science was the highest, followed by that of the urban and rural areas. On the other hand, the achievement level of English in the urban areas was the highest followed by the suburb and rural areas. Regarding Korean and mathematics, achievement scores in the urban and suburb areas were similar. In all subjects, students in the rural areas were found with the lowest achievement score. In grade 10, the achievement levels in the suburb areas were the highest in all five subjects, followed by that of the urban areas and rural areas. The difference with a statistical significance was found between the urban and suburb areas, between the suburb and rural areas, and between the urban and rural areas in all five subjects. The difference between the urban and suburb areas was not significant, however, the achievement score difference between the urban and rural areas, and the difference between the suburb and rural areas were relatively significant.

Concerning the NAEA 2004, the final test results were reported to the students with four levels, e.g. Advanced, Proficient, Basic and Below-Basic. For grade 6, the percentages of the Advanced level were 19.5% for Korean, 20.2% for social studies, 25% for mathematics, 21.9% for science, and 46.6% for English. The percentages of the Below-Basic level were 4% for Korean, 1.5% for social studies, 2.1% for mathematics, 6.4% for science, and 2.3% for English. For grade 9, the percentages of the Advanced level were 14.1% for Korean, 15.8% for social studies, 16.9% for mathematics, 13.1% for science, and 18.6% for English. The percentages of the Below-Basic level were 6.1% for Korean, 4.8% for social studies, 8.7% for mathematics, 8.5% for science, and 3.5% for English. For grade 10, the percentages of the Advanced level were 14% for Korean, 4.7% for social studies, 12.6% for mathematics, 6.5% for science, and 10.7% for English. The percentages of the Below-Basic level were 6.4% for Korean, 11.6% for social studies, 9.3% for mathematics, 19.8% for science, and 5% for English.

As regards students' performance in the 2003 OECD's Programme for International School Assessment (PISA), Korea ranked third, second, fourth, and first, in mathematics, reading, science, and problem solving, respectively. Overall, Korean students' performance was outstanding among OECD member countries. In addition, differences between the upper 5% and the lower 5% of Korean students were smaller than the OECD average. The average score of the lower 5% of Korean students is at about the lower middle level of the OECD average. This indicates that not only did Korean students test well on average, but also the lowest achieving students did not test poorly viewed from international standards. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2009). In the case of the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Korea ranked third in mathematics and fourth in science in 1995, second and fifth respectively in 1999, second and third in 2003, and second and fourth in 2007. (MEST & KEDI, 2008).

## Teaching staff

Teacher education is offered by universities of education, colleges of education, departments of education or teacher's certificate programmes in colleges and universities, junior colleges, the Korea National Open University (broadcast and



correspondence university), and graduate schools of education. Kindergarten teachers are usually trained at junior colleges.

Most elementary school teachers are trained by universities of education, primary education departments of teachers' colleges, graduate schools of education, graduate school education departments that offer a primary education major, and the Korea National Open University (broadcast and correspondence university). Currently, they are trained mainly at universities of education, and the departments of primary education at the Korea National University of Education and Ewha Women University (private). There are at 11 universities of education located in metropolitan cities and provinces. All two-year colleges of education were upgraded to four-year universities in 1984, and bachelor's degrees are awarded to graduates. A special in-service training programme was made available at universities of education since 1985 to improve the qualifications of teachers already employed. Teachers who do not have a bachelor's degree may be admitted to evening degree courses during summer/winter school.

Secondary school teachers are mainly trained at teachers' colleges, although they are also trained at departments of education or through teacher training courses at ordinary universities and graduate schools of education. In 2005 there were 13 national and 27 private colleges of education. The curriculum of colleges of education requires a total of 130-150 credits for graduation, of which 20% must be in liberal arts, 60% in the major subject, and the remaining 20% for electives. The curriculum for major courses consists of subject study, subject teaching, general education, and a teaching practicum. Teacher's certificates are awarded to those graduates of the colleges upon completion of certain courses, and they do not have to take an examination to obtain a teacher's certificate.

Teachers' certificates, granted to those who complete teacher training courses, act as an institutional mechanism to guarantee teachers' professionalism and secure public trust in teachers. According to the provisions, teachers are classified as (regular) teachers (Grade I and Grade II), assistant teachers, professional counselors, librarians, training teachers and nursing teachers. They are required to meet the specific qualification criteria for each category and be licensed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST).

Public school teachers are selected and appointed based on a teachers' qualification examination conducted by metropolitan/provincial offices of education. In the case of private schools, teachers are selected by individual schools. The examination for public school teachers is two-tiered: the primary examination is a written test on pedagogy (20%) and the special areas (80%), and the secondary examination consists of a practical test, essay writing and interview.

In-service training is offered to teachers to improve their quality and professionalism and inspire them with a strong sense of mission, so that they can faithfully carry out educational activities in the classrooms and prepare themselves for the rapidly changing era of information, industrialization and diversification. In-service training programmes are for certificates, professional job training, and special training. The certificate training programme is for teachers who want to obtain new or higher grade certificates. Certificate training programmes are available for Grade I



and Grade II teachers, vice-principals and principals, professional counselors, librarians, and nursing teachers. The training period is 30 days (180 hours) or longer. Specific training methods are determined by metropolitan/provincial offices of education. The in-service training for certificates is usually offered by metropolitan/provincial education training institutes, the Center for In-Service Education at the Korea National University of Education, training centers associated with universities, the National Academy for Educational Administrators associated with Seoul National University college of education, the Seoul National University of Education, etc. Professional job training aims at improving teachers' effectiveness and their ability to teach subjects and help guide students. Diverse programmes are available, and curricula are determined by the president of each training center. The training period and hours differ according to students and courses, and the programmes are offered by metropolitan/provincial education training institutes, training centers attached to universities, the Center for In-Service Education at the Korea National University of Education, etc.

Overseas in-service training is divided into training through experience and field training (English and vocational school teachers). Under the training-through-experience programmes, teachers visit educational institutes, schools and cultural facilities in Asian countries, the United States, Europe, and Oceanic countries for about two weeks. Field training, introduced in 1978, is offered by foreign universities and training institutes for 4-8 weeks to help teachers acquire advanced knowledge, teaching methods and science & technology. Special training is long-term (up to two years) training offered by domestic or foreign training centers, designated by the MEST, to improve teacher professionalism. The M.A. courses (including seasonal M.A. courses) and training in minor subjects offered by the Korea National University of Education are an example. (MOEHRD, 2008).

There are teachers' associations at each metropolitan city and province, and the Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations (KFTA) is the central organization of the associations. Established in 1947, the active membership includes about 200,000 teachers in kindergartens, elementary, middle and high schools and universities. Students of universities of education and colleges of education (e.g. prospective teachers) are associate members, and retired teachers, members of school councils, and parents of students are honorary members of the Federation. The KFTA is engaged in the extension of teachers' professionalism and ethics, improvement of teachers' welfare and benefits, research on subjects and education policies, and exchanges with international teachers' organizations. It also publishes the Korea Education Newspaper (weekly) and various education-related books. The Korean Teachers' Mutual Fund (KTMF) is a teachers' welfare organization, established in 1971, pursuant to a related special act. Its purpose is to promote teachers' welfare and ensure their financial security. The KTMF provides a variety of benefit programmes so that all teachers can take pride in their profession and enjoy financial stability while employed and even after retirement. The government extends financial supports and guarantees its operation through various policies. (*Ibid.*).

The salary structure for teachers is composed of basic salaries and assorted allowances. The salary scale for teachers, vice-principals, and principals of elementary and secondary schools is based on a single salary schedule. Hence, irrespective of the level of school, teachers with the same academic credential and



seniority belong to the same salary step. So there is no difference in their basic salary. In addition to the basic salary, there are various types of allowances and pensions. As teachers are national public employees, the same compensation system is used throughout the country. Teachers may teach for up to 37 years before reaching the maximum age of 62. Teachers are paid by public employee compensation provisions and public employee allowance provisions, which are the same as those of general public employees. Benefits to enhance the financial status of teachers include support for the tuition of their children in secondary schools, non-interest loans for the tuition of their children in universities, and loans for living expenses. Teachers are paid additional allowances when they are appointed to posts requiring special responsibilities such as the department head, or homeroom teacher. When compared to the average salary of those working in the manufacturing sector, the teacher salaries had become somewhat higher during the 1970s and 1980s, and became about the same during the 1990s. Such a trend implies that teacher salaries have responded flexibly to the labour market conditions during the 1970s and 1990, when economic growth and quantitative educational expansion took place. (UNESCO Bangkok, 2009).

Every five years, the Korean Educational Development Institute evaluates teacher education institutes. The evaluation covers such areas as curriculum, teaching and learning, and finance and administration. The results of the evaluation are sent to the individual institutes and are open to the public, with the intention of improving quality. While the current evaluation scheme has contributed to maintaining the standards of teacher education institutes, it places no legal binding restrictions on the institutes being assessed, hence limiting its ability to bring about real change. The government was planning to introduce a new evaluation system requiring accreditation of all teacher education institutes in 2010, which will have legal authority and provide an organizational infrastructure for accreditation. (*Ibid.*).

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## Web resources

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Ministry of Health and Welfare: <http://www.mw.go.kr/> [In Korean and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

National Curriculum Information Center: <http://www.ncic.re.kr/> [In Korean and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

National Institute for Lifelong Education: <http://www.nile.or.kr/> [In Korean and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

Korea Education and Research Information Service: <http://www.keris.or.kr/> [In Korean and English. Some information in Spanish. Last checked: June 2011.]

Korea Educational Development Institute: <http://www.kedi.re.kr/> [In Korean and English. Last checked: June 2011.]



Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation: <http://www.kice.re.kr/> [In Korean and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training:  
<http://www.krivet.re.kr/> [In Korean and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

Korean Council for College Education: <http://www.kcce.or.kr/> [In Korean. Some information in English, Chinese and Japanese. Last checked: June 2011.]

Korean Council for University Education: <http://www.kcue.or.kr/> [In Korean and English. Last checked: June 2011.]

*For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>*