

< Republic of Korea >
National Consultation Report

(Introduction)

Having achieved uninterrupted education in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Republic of Korea (ROK) is putting forth further efforts to recover from the educational crisis caused by the pandemic. It is making proactive preparations for the educational transformation of the future by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, and providing education that supports individual growth.

With the aim of preparing for a National Consultation report while getting ready for the UN Transforming Education Summit, following the Pre-summit organized by UNESCO, the ROK conducted expert meetings (three rounds), written consultations (frequent), civil society discussions (one round), and surveys on citizens & youths (including university and college students) and teachers & faculty members (three rounds) for roughly two months. In addition, on August 26, 2022, the National Assembly Forum for Transforming Future Education was held with members of the National Assembly, the Vice Minister of Education, a member of the UNESCO International Commission on Futures of Education, and representatives of academia, teachers, and youths in attendance, and they shared the vision of the international community on future education introduced in “Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education” published in November 2021, and urged society-wide discussions for the transformation of future education in Korea. During these two months, approximately 1,000 people participated in the preparation and discussion of the National Consultation report, and the results are Korea's efforts to recover education and the direction of transforming education as follows:

(Main text)

[Efforts to recover education from the COVID-19 crisis]

In line with the prolonged distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ROK announced a 「Comprehensive Plan for Educational Recovery」 in

2021. This plan has set out major initiatives to implement customized support regarding not only learning for many children and adolescents, but also rehabilitation of losses in linguistic, emotional and physical development, as well as customized support for infants and vocational high school students. To resolve the learning losses and gaps caused by COVID-19, after-school and during vacations, curriculum supplementation and learning consulting are being implemented. To improve basic academic proficiency, two teachers and instructors are assigned to each class, and learning guidance is being reinforced through a multi-support team at school-level consisting of teachers of homerooms, special education, infirmaries, and health counselors, etc.

As the number of adolescents experiencing difficulties due to psychological/emotional and social deficits or needing to restore relationships is increasing, school-level program operation to build a psychological and emotional safety net for healthy growth of students; diagnosis of deficit areas; and a school-level educational recovery program that integrates student/parent demand surveys were needed. Accordingly, at the school/class level, professional counselors and homeroom teachers are cooperating to provide voluntary psychological support. Since 2021, mental health specialists have been visiting schools in medically vulnerable areas to provide counseling for students, faculty, and parents, as well as providing support in connection with specialized institutions (mental health hospitals/clinics, etc.). Outside of school, the Wee project, which supports comprehensive diagnosis, counseling, and a healing program for healthy student growth, continues to be in operation, and through the Wee doctor online system, psychiatrists provide remote video support for immediate recovery to students with psychological and emotional difficulties.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to provide supplementary education opportunities for students (graduates) who participated in incomplete vocational education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to strengthen job placement opportunities for the unemployed. Accordingly, the ROK has guided the operation of in-school practice classes to help normal school practice sessions take place in vocational high schools, and provided support with a focus on having unemployed graduates of vocational high schools work as assistant instructors to make up for the lack

of practice training of vocational high school students starting the second semester of 2021. In addition, it supports about 30,000 college graduates (or expected to graduate) to supplement the practice and practical experiences that were lacking due to COVID-19, and provide subsidies to help obtain nationally recognized qualifications, take language tests, and complete various educational programs.

[Direction of transforming education]

1. Education as a foundation for an inclusive future

The ROK has set as one of its utmost objectives the reinforcement of its national responsibility for education to help all children grow up happily. Early childhood education is the basis for achieving SDG4 as a cornerstone for universal, high-quality education. The public nature of early childhood education and childcare in Korea was discussed in earnest in the 2000s as social awareness of the importance of early childhood was raised, and the public nature of early childhood education and childcare for preschool children have been strengthened over the past 10 years. Since 2012, support for infant tuition and childcare expenses, which had been provided according to household income, has been extended to all 5-year-old children regardless of household income, and since 2013, support for infant tuition and childcare has been extended to all children aged 3-4 years. In addition, since 2013, a standardized common curriculum has been introduced in which the Nuri Curriculum has been implemented for each age group of between 3-5 (including the aforementioned children aged 3-4) years old. In 2019, the national level common curriculum was revised to be child-centered and play-based so as to respect the autonomy of teachers in the pursuit of healthy growth and well-being of young children, individualized education, and curriculum implementation.

The social discussion regarding the inclusion of early childhood education into a public education system, like elementary and secondary education, continues. From the perspective of lifelong learning, the ROK is emphasizing a transition from ECEC to primary school, and is conducting a pilot project (2022)

linking the curriculum of daycare centers, kindergartens, and elementary schools. Due to the extended low fertility and the increase in dual-income parents, social discussions are actively taking place on caring for infants/toddlers and children in lower grades of elementary school, and recently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parental support to minimize the care gap has been emphasized. Accordingly, part-time childcare support system reform and extended childcare (2020), infant/toddler allowance for 0-1 year-olds raised at home (2022), etc. have been introduced, and the after-school programs in kindergarten have been substantialized, and full-day care in elementary school is being implemented. In this process, the re-establishment of the roles of the local community, family and parents in the education and care of infants/children, and family support in an integrated and comprehensive manner are needed.

In addition, the 「Basic Education Security Act」 was enacted in 2021 to ensure the basic level of education of all students and lay the related educational foundation, and pursuant to the Act, a “Comprehensive Plan for Guaranteeing Basic Level of Education” will be established and implemented on a 5-year basis. An AI-based academic proficiency assessment system will be built to support customized diagnosis and learning, and the improvement of basic level of education according to the characteristics of each student's cognitive and non-cognitive domains will be closely aided. In addition, a plan that was implemented as a measure to address learning losses to recover from the COVID-19 crisis will continue. As for students lacking basic academic proficiency, they will be systematically supported to improve their basic level of education by providing close guidance at the classroom-school-community level. At the classroom level, two teachers or instructors for one class will be assigned; multi-support teams will be operated at the school level; and comprehensive learning clinic centers will be operated at the local level.

The ROK provides education for the underprivileged seamlessly as well. First, successful social integration of students with disabilities is pursued through customized education for each stage of life. As the number of students with disabilities continues to increase each year, compulsory education is provided from kindergarten to high school, and free education is provided to children with

disabilities under the age of three. Special educational fields need multi-faceted support as the number of students with disabilities placed in general schools increases and interest in the human rights of students with disabilities escalates. Accordingly, by strengthening national accountability, the ROK is operating an integrated education model school, increasing teachers to support inclusive education, strengthening education to better understand disabilities, and launching a campaign to improve awareness of the disabled. In 2021, by amending the 「Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, etc.」, the number of students per class in classes with students that have severe/multiple disabilities may be adjusted downward. As the emotional and behavioral problems of students with developmental disabilities increase due to the prolonged COVID-19 situation, efforts are being put forth, including the designation and operation of behavioral intervention support centers, and fostering of special education teachers to help become behavioral intervention experts. In addition, in consideration of the educational needs and characteristics of students with hearing and visual impairments and students with disabilities who need medical support, the ROK is expanding the provision of professionally tailored educational support. As the social environment changes in broader areas than in the past, policies for students with disabilities who will live lives in the society of tomorrow are continuously required.

As the number of children from multicultural and foreign families continues to increase, the need for customized education support in consideration of their needs and the creation of a multicultural-friendly educational environment where all school members can understand diversity and harmonize with each other is being emphasized. To this end, the ROK is running a Korean language class for multicultural students in the early stages of arrival in the country, and a career education program tailored to the characteristics of adolescents with a migration background. In addition, through the operation of multicultural education policy schools, a leading model for a mature educational environment where diverse cultures coexist is being discovered and disseminated. Continued interest at the national level is needed to create a foundation for practical social integration by supporting educational needs of multicultural students and enhancing multicultural acceptance at school sites.

Meanwhile, the ROK, in relation to its special circumstances, has continued to provide systematic educational support for North Korean defector students to help stably adapt to school and society. Children of North Korean defector families often find it difficult to adapt due to cultural differences and psychological instability. Accordingly, schools and the Education Support Center for North Korean Adolescent Defectors are providing a variety of customized support programs from their growth stage, to learning, psychology, and career paths in a systematic way. Also, the ROK is proactively supporting North Korean defectors at the national level to help them quickly adapt to society and become talents tailored for the upcoming future of the unified Korea.

2. Learners and teachers as main agents of reforming future education

It is important to design the future education system with the learners' life at the center so that they can actively respond to future social changes and take initiative. In this process, proactive participation of learners and teachers must be guaranteed. To this end, the ROK has prepared a forum for communication to comprehensively listen to the opinions of the public, including teachers, students, and parents, on the 「Revised Curriculum Draft Proposal in 2022」 for two weeks starting on August 30, 2022. Through revision of the curriculum, the ROK intends to systematize the basic knowledge and competencies needed for the future society, to support the reinforcement of student-tailored education, and the introduction of autonomous school hours. This will help vitalize the teaching/learning methods that enable learners to engage in self-directed learning.

In the meantime, as emphasized in the “Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education”, faculty members are key players in education transformation. Policies related to support and training for existing and prospective teachers should be implemented to help them evolve into “talent experts” beyond “curriculum experts” and to help them develop professionalism and capabilities to engage in future education based on the comprehensive understanding of individual students. Accordingly, the ROK plans to strengthen digital competency-related contents in the curriculum to foster teachers. In addition, teachers will form a voluntary teacher-learning community and share information and experiences related to remote learning, thereby supporting the

provision of quality education. Additionally, society-wide cooperation is needed to prevent infringement and to protect educational activities. The school support function of the District Offices of Education is being reinforced, and the reduction and streamlining of school administrative work are being carried out to help faculty members focus more on educational activities, and further efforts are needed for their promotion.

3. Vocational education and lifelong learning to adapt to social changes

There are active discussions around the world on converting the existing school-centered education system to a lifelong learning system and expanding the right to education into that of lifelong learning. In 2021, the ROK amended the 「Lifelong Education Act,」 emphasizing lifelong learning as a universal social right and citizen's right, and expanding the target of lifelong learning vouchers to all citizens.

For future education to be centered on the life of learners, strengthening learning motivation and determining the path of lifelong learning is needed by developing and disseminating a system that measures each individual's competency and designs customized learning mechanisms according to individual needs. Thus, the ROK intends to nurture merit-based talents by supporting individual career history management using a lifelong learning account system so that learning outcomes can be proactively utilized according to the needs of individual learners, such as entry into the labor market.

Meanwhile, in order to alleviate the inequality that has been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, policies that ensure opportunities for the socially disadvantaged to participate in lifelong learning should be further strengthened. Expansion of the target and scope of lifelong learning vouchers is one of the measures that serves this purpose. By expanding support for lifelong learning vouchers for the socially disadvantaged, such as the disabled, low-income families, youth, and the elderly, deprivation of learning opportunities due to economic causes should not occur.

In the context of lifelong education, it is necessary to develop and disseminate various curricula for customized, learner-led education and learning in the digital age. To this end, various types of education that exist in our society need to be opened up and connected seamlessly so that they can be easily available and accessible anywhere, any time. In order to design a system that the general public can easily find and access curriculum, the ROK is introducing and expanding projects such as a micro-curriculum-based matchup project and K-MOOC. In addition, a “flexible learning path” for entry and re-entry into higher education needs to be prepared so that diverse learning needs of youth and adults will be met. Accordingly, the ROK provides aid to universities’ lifelong education support system project (LiFE program), thus those who are 30 years of age or older or have worked for 3 years or more after graduating from a specialized high school have a chance to enter a university tailored to currently-employed persons. It is also engaged in vitalizing lifelong university education to foster outstanding talents by offering convergence education.

It is important to nurture human resources (self-directed learning-driven talents) who can continuously revamp their competencies as the cycle of change in skills and job capabilities is gradually shortened compared with the past due to rapid industrial and occupational changes. In addition, various and flexible vocational education activities centered on organic cooperative relationships with school-community-industry should be vitalized and need to be carried out away from the rigid curriculum within schools. To this end, vocational education in schools needs to reinforce basic underlying education (basic academic proficiency and basic/common major-related capabilities), and job competencies specific to industries and occupations need to be achieved through cooperative mechanisms between schools and industries.

4. Global citizenship education and Education for Sustainable Development for a sustainable future

In a situation where the globalization of education has progressed considerably, the ROK intends to contribute to solving the problems facing mankind. Global citizenship education and education for sustainable development are important for

learners to create the future together as active and responsible members of society. Global citizenship education is not only a global education agenda proclaimed by the world, but also an essential future education to overcome hate, discrimination, extremism, and polarization that have been clearly come to light following the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, as indicated by “Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education”, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) should be emphasized particularly so that actions can be taken against global crises such as the climate crisis.

The ROK has continued its commitment to the Global Citizenship Education Leading Teacher Program since 2015 to promote global citizenship education in Korea. This project is contributing to not only improving teachers' global citizenship education competency, but also expanding and reinforcing the central role of teachers in education such as autonomous teacher research group activities and educational material development. It also supports UNESCO member states to integrate and mainstream Global Citizenship Education (GCED) into curricula through the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Educational Institute (APCEIU). Furthermore, the ROK is offering a variety of international training programs to empower different educational entities such as teachers and teacher educators, youth, and public officials to strengthen their global citizenship education capabilities. The ROK will continue to support GCED so that it can be positioned at the center of future education.

In addition, Korea has been operating the Permanent Delegation of the ROK to UNESCO ESD since 2009 to raise awareness and vitalize the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Korea. In addition, in order to proactively realize carbon neutrality as a global agenda, the ROK aims to enable students to naturally learn, practice and achieve carbon neutrality and green growth in their educational activities through collaboration between ministries such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the Korea Forest Service, the Korea Meteorological Administration, and the city/provincial offices of education. Furthermore, key carbon-neutral schools are selected and supported as well. In addition, the Ministry of Education

supports the operation of the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) practice teacher research meeting for primary and secondary teachers, improving and developing the community-school-linked sustainable development education class model, and reinforcing teacher competency; thereby laying the foundation for the implementation of education for sustainable development at the school level. The role of education needs to be further expanded to promote proactive responses to and action on global challenges such as climate change.

5. Human-centered digital education transformation

The ROK is proactively promoting a transition to digital education, by harnessing the efforts to overcome COVID-19 as an opportunity. In March 2020, the first online school opening plan was announced to protect student health and safety, and minimize learning gaps in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this plan, online school started in stages with support for building a stable infrastructure and providing high-quality remote education. Two public LMS platforms that can be used by up to 3 million people per day were built, and the stability of the platform was continuously enhanced; smart devices were loaned free of charge to students who requested, and a wireless Internet network was established for all school classrooms. In addition, the Green Smart School policy, which refurbishes and remodels old schools into futuristic ones, is being implemented.

For inclusive digital transformation, it is essential to strengthen the support system to make certain the benefits of digital technology are enjoyed by all learners. In order to bridge the learning gap that is widening due to digital transformation, underprivileged students should be a priority by providing expanded support (infrastructure, educational materials, communities and networks, etc.). We are considering building a national road map to improve access to digital resources such as digital tutor operations, networks, infrastructure, and devices. In addition, it is necessary to build a future-oriented digital teaching and learning system that can provide an online/offline educational environment that anyone can easily access through e-learning websites and online class operation practices, and that can support student-tailored, self-directed learning.

Additionally, the need to transform into a digital-based education system for future education that responds to changes in the times such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution and nurtures creative talents is being emphasized. The importance of fostering individuals to play an active role in the era of digital transformation is being highlighted, and systematic fostering of talents across the entire range of education is required to equip everyone with digital and AI capabilities required both in the new digital industry and daily life. Accordingly, pursuant to the “Roadmap for fostering 1 million digital talents,” the ROK is promoting the establishment of a digital talent ecosystem at various levels from cultivating digital literacy, to nurturing high-tech core digital talents.

At the same time, the ROK is trying to respond to new ethical issues that the development of artificial intelligence technology will bring as the heart of digital transformation. In December 2021, the ROK endorsed the 「Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence」 proposed by UNESCO at the 「International Forum on AI and Education」. In August 2022, the 「Ethical Principles for AI in Education」 was prepared and announced after collecting a wide range of opinions from public hearings, expert meetings, and international opinion inquiry, etc. with reference to the contents suggested in this recommendation. Based on the grand principle of “artificial intelligence that supports human growth”, it sets the sub-principles of ensuring the initiative and diversity of learners, respecting the professionalism of instructors, and ensuring the safety of the educated parties, with practical initiatives such as strengthening AI ethics education and supporting field application of AI ethics. In addition, the feasibility study of these principles will be periodically conducted in consideration of the development of AI technology and its current use in education.

6. Strengthening public finances related to education

The international community has emphasized education as the backbone for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals that mankind has pledged to achieve by 2030. As a host country of the 2015 World Education Forum, the ROK strongly sympathizes with the importance of financial and investment

expansion in education, thus, has given high priority to education and reinforced its education finances. Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP in Korea was 4.46% as of 2018, which was higher than the international community's target of 4%. In addition, the proportion of total government spending on essential services (education) in Korea was 14.3% as of 2018. The international community's target for this is 15%, and the ROK aims to achieve it by 2030.

The number of scholarship recipients receiving more than half of their tuition (based on the average tuition at a four-year private university) from the state to ensure that university and college students with the capability and commitment are not hindered from higher education opportunities for economic reasons increased from 535,000 in 2017 to 675,000 in 2021. In addition, in order to enhance the competitiveness of higher education and ensure its quality, it is necessary to increase the proportion of the government's burden on public education expenses for higher education, and expand the financial support scale of overall higher education. From 2008 to 2018, the ratio of support for higher education as a percentage of GDP was 0.7%, which is lower than the OECD average of 1.05%. As for public education expenditure per student, primary and secondary education was 131.9% of the OECD average, while that of higher education was 66.2%. Thus, striking a balance of financial support between primary, secondary and higher education is needed.

7. Contributions to the international community

By joining the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2010, Korea became the first country in the world to transition from a recipient of official development assistance to a donor. In particular, the experiences of economic growth and democratic society development through education in Korea is a field of interest in many developing countries, and the demand for educational development cooperation continues to increase. Accordingly, the ROK has expanded the scale of education ODA to contribute to the common development of the international community, while planning and operating unique programs to meet the needs of recipient countries, such as the development of

higher education competency through inter-university cooperation, and vocational education and training, thereby sharing its experience and know-how with the international community.

With the introduction of the Global Korea Scholarship (GKS), the ROK is supporting the development of excellent overseas talent, And through human exchanges, it is contributing to strengthening the educational capabilities of the international community. In particular, it will support fostering talents in developing countries by providing substantial support for higher and vocational education and training, scholarships and learning programs to help each nation achieve a self-sustaining recovery post COVID-19. By reflecting local demand, the ROK will develop higher and vocational education programs, foster teaching personnel, and lay the foundation to strengthen the continual human talent training system. Furthermore, it will support strengthening of the capabilities of teachers and education administrators. In addition, in order to contribute to bridging the educational gap between countries by sharing accumulated e-learning experience and know-how with countries around the world, it has been providing educational informatization support for partner countries in connection with city and provincial offices of education since 2005. With such global solidarity and cooperation efforts, the ROK will seek sustainable educational development.

(Conclusion)

The ROK is reflecting the voices of the younger generation in preparation for future education transformation, and is striving to heed a wide range of opinions. After roughly two months of regional discussions, starting June 2019, about 100 children and adolescents prepared the “Declaration of Rights in Children's and Youth Education and Culture.” This declaration, announced at the 「Korea-OECD International Education Conference」, contains free expression of oneself, the right to self-determination of one's life, enjoyment of diverse and individual cultures, and participation in public decision-making as a democratic citizen, etc. Relevant laws and regulations were promulgated in 2021 for the establishment and operation of the National Committee of Education to be in charge of establishment of a national education development plan that includes an educational vision based on social consensus, mid- to long-term policy directions,

and improvement of the education system; as well as collecting and adjusting public opinions on education policies, and the inauguration of the Committee is currently being prepared.

To realize “ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all,” social consensus for educational transformation needs to be upheld in advance. The ROK, based on its experiences of actively conducting social discussions on education, will continue to prepare for future education, reaffirming that education is a common good shared by members of society through continued efforts put forth by its members.