

KICCE Policy *Brief*

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Issue 2

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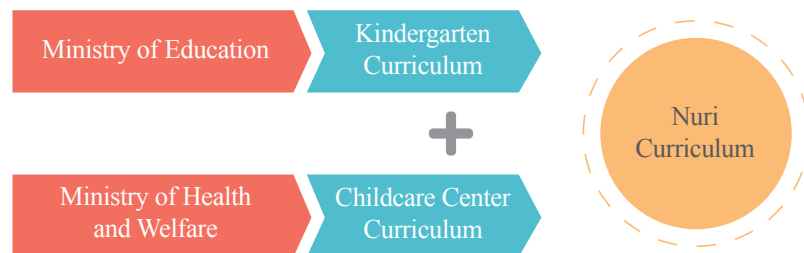
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Nuri Curriculum: The First Step toward the Integration of the Split Systems of Early Childhood Education and Care in Korea

I . Key Issues in Nuri Curriculum

- Korean government introduced the Nuri curriculum as a national curriculum in 2012 for all children aged 5 in both kindergartens and childcare centers. The Nuri curriculum was later expanded to cover children aged 3-4 as well in 2013.
- What distinguishes the Nuri curriculum is that it allows for the provision of a high-quality curriculum to all preschoolers regardless of the type of ECEC service they are attending given that Korea education and care authorities maintain separation: The Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for the regulation of kindergartens and the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) administers childcare centers.



[Figure 1] The Formation Scheme of the Nuri Curriculum

- The introduction was carried out with the expansion of the coverage and the amount of financial support for tuition in comparison with the previous nationally-funded ECEC curriculums.
 - ▶ Previous financial support was given only to children below the 70% income level. However, all children under the Nuri curriculum can now be subsidized regardless of their household income level.
 - ▶ The amount of financial support for tuition was 200,000 won per month in 2012. The increase to 300,000 won monthly will have been phased in by 2016.
- As a nationally-funded curriculum, children under the Nuri curriculum in both kindergartens and childcare centers are all funded from Local Office of Education (LOE), from grants provided by the MOE.
 - ▶ Prior to the introduction of the Nuri curriculum, children attending kindergartens received funds from local educational grant and funding for the ones in childcare centers was secured from a national and local governmental funding.

- Under the lead of the KICCE, two ministries have together participated in developing one common national curriculum, which universally applies to all children of aged between 3-5 in both kindergartens and childcare centers through integrating two separate curriculums into one, the Nuri curriculum.

[Table 1] Comparison between the Previous and Current Policy Details

Category	Previous Policy	→	Current Policy with Nuri Curriculum (As from March 2012)
Curriculum	-National kindergarten curriculum -National childcare center curriculum		Nuri curriculum (one common national curriculum)
Recipients	Households below the 70% of all income levels		All households regardless of their income (100%)
Amount of financial support	-Public kindergartens (59,000 won per month) -Private kindergartens/Childcare centers (177,000 won per month in 2011)		-Public kindergartens (60,000 won per month) -Private kindergartens/Childcare centers (gradual increase: 200,000 won per month in 2012 to 300,000 won per month by 2016)
Financial source	Kindergarten and childcare center fees are funded separately		Kindergarten and childcare center fees are subsidized with financial grants for LOE equally
Supervising authorities	-Kindergarten (MOE) -Childcare center (MOHW)		Same as the previous

II . Nuri Curriculum is about Quality Programs

- Goal
 - ▶ Nuri curriculum aims to promote holistic development of children aged 3-5 and establish overarching principles for becoming responsible citizens of the society.

- Objectives

To develop physical skills and form lifelong healthy habits

To communicate well with others

To build up self-esteem and be collaborative with others

To stimulate children’s interest in aesthetics and creativity and encourage them to have experience in art

To have curiosity about the world and understand their surroundings in scientific ways

- ‘Nuri’ means ‘world’ in Korean language, signifying a wish for all children to lead their happy lives and fulfill all of their hopes and dreams.
- The Nuri curriculum consists of the basic qualities essential for children aged 3-5; it is on the basis of child-centered curriculums and play-based curriculums, containing carefully selected and organized contents of the ‘National kindergarten curriculum’ and the ‘National childcare center curriculum’.

- The daily teaching hours for the Nuri curriculum can be flexibly applied in each institute within a range of 3 to 5 hours based on a consideration of its given circumstance such as the age and developmental level of the children, weather, season and parental request.
- The contents of the Nuri curriculum are composed of five areas: Physical Activity & Health, Communication, Experience in Art, Social Relationships, and Nature & Discovery. These five areas consist of 20 categories with 56 contents for children aged 3 and 59 contents for children aged 4-5.

[Table 2] The Areas and Content Categories of the Nuri Curriculum

Areas	Physical Activity & Health	Communication	Experience in Art	Social Relationships	Nature & Discovery
Content Categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical self-awareness - Motor control & basic exercise - Participation in physical activities - Healthy living habits - Safety habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening - Speaking - Reading - Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discovering beauty - Expressing self through art - Appreciating arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building self-esteem - Understanding others and self-awareness - Cherishing family - Living in harmony with neighbors - Stimulating interest in society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting inquisitive attitudes - Mathematical exploration and inquiry - Scientific exploration and inquiry

※ Table constructed by using data from Chang, (2012). *Development and implementation of the Nuri curriculum in Korea.*

III. 'Nuri Policy' is for Ensuring Equity in Opportunity

- As a large body of studies has proved that early childhood period is critical for an individual's cognitive, emotional, and social development that the benefits of intervening early in life clearly outweigh the costs with the highest rate of return to investment in comparison to other periods of one's life (Cunha et al., 2005).
 - ▶ The early development is known to have greater impact on an individual's lifelong ability and attitude toward learning, and the initial gap induced from family backgrounds and income level has shown to bring continuous and accumulative divergence in the level of education later in their lives.
- Faced with the significance of early childhood, Korea government began to notice the importance of offering quality ECEC programs for this critical period and tried to enhance the support for households with young children.
- Although provisions for education and care are made differently at kindergartens and childcare centers respectively, the Nuri curriculum makes possible to provide educational contents to preschoolers ensuring equal educational opportunities.
 - ▶ By successfully integrating the pre-school curriculums into one curriculum and subsuming them under the Nuri curriculum, it can provide all children with equal starting point regardless of their backgrounds.
- Funding for ECEC was split before the introduction of the Nuri curriculum: Fees for taking the kindergarten curriculum were subsidized from the MOE and the childcare curriculum was funded from the MOHW and the government. Tuition fees for children covered by the Nuri curriculum in both kindergartens and childcare centers are now all funded from LOE, granted by the MOE.

- ▶ Unifying funding sources into one grant solely from the MOE can be interpreted to mean that the government is now taking more accountability for early childhood education in response to the growing public demands (Chang et al., 2012).
- Furthermore, by easing parent's financial burden of tuition and child care costs, the Korean government now expects that this new curriculum will solve the problem of low childbirth rate in Korea.
- The number of children under the policy's coverage is now 1,288,684 from both kindergarten and childcare center as of 2013, and this is over 91.49% of all children aged 3-5.

[Table 3] Number and Percentage of Children Attending Kindergartens and Childcare Centers in 2013

Unit: number of children, %

		Kindergartens ²⁾		Childcare Centers ³⁾		Kindergartens + Childcare Centers	
		Number of children	Enrollment rate	Number of children	Enrollment rate	Number of children	Enrollment rate
3 year olds	446,256	145,778	32.67	264,628	59.30	410,406	91.97
4 year olds	467,432	233,926	50.04	189,817	40.61	423,743	90.65
5 year olds	494,810	278,484	56.28	176,051	35.58	454,535	91.86
Total	1,408,498	658,188	46.73	630,496	44.76	1,288,684	91.49

1) The Population of the Republic of Korea based on the resident registration (Dec. 31, 2012),

2) Data from Educational Statistics (Apr. 1, 2013)

3) Data from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (Mar. 31, 2013)


IV. For Successful Implementation: We Have Been Collaborating, Communicating, and Doing Teacher Training

- In planning and carrying out the enactment of the Nuri policy, the KICCE organized the Task Force Team (TFT) in such a way of cooperating the MOE and the MOHW closely.
 - ▶ The TFT served not only as an interface between the two ministries to develop the Nuri curriculum but also as a platform to share ideas of more than 200 professionals and teachers in fields of ECEC to support the successful policy implementation.
 - ▶ The TFT members were collaborated to produce relevant teaching materials such as the guidebook and the manual (including a DVD) for Nuri curriculum teaching teachers, and to conduct teacher training sessions including group and remote training.
- The Nuri Curriculum Development Forum series were formed to promote wide collaborative network to secure the settlement and sustainable development of the Nuri curriculum.
 - ▶ In order to promote integration effectively and efficiently in a long term; KICCE launched the forums in which ECEC related scholars, representatives from organizations and institutes, and opinion leaders in various areas participated. The forums are held in cooperation with the MOE and MOHW from July 2012.
 - ▶ The forums are expected to reflect the on-site experience and voices from the field, monitor the real cases of the Nuri curriculum, and build professional and systematic support system for the Nuri curriculum; thereby ultimately serving as a resolution channel for the development of the Nuri curriculum and also for the gradual integration of ECEC.

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- As the expertise level of teachers is the most important factor to guarantee high quality of education, teacher training sessions were provided to 120,000 teachers from 30,000 ECEC service institutions nationwide from the end of 2011 to the beginning of 2013. Relevant materials and programs were provided to these teachers as well.
 - Although the integration of the curriculum was successfully implemented; the other parts of ECEC system still remain split especially in terms of qualification and wages of teachers, the amount of additional fee paid to institutions, quality control and so forth. The Korea government is in search of methods for building comprehensive approaches to resolve such disparities between kindergartens and childcare centers and for integrating ECEC system in a way that ensures a higher level of quality than ever before.

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- 1) Chang, M. L. (2012). *Development and implementation of the Nuri curriculum in Korea*. Korea Institute of Child Care and Education.
 - 2) Cunha, F., J. Heckman, L. Lochner, & D.V. Masterov. (2005). *Interpreting the evidence of life-cycle skill formation*. IZA Discussion Paper Series, No 1575, Institute for the Study of Labour, Bonn, Germany.
 - 3) Chang, M. L., Lee, M. H., Choi, Y. K., & Lee, H. M. (2012). *Study on development of manuals of the Nuri curriculum for aged 3 to 5*. Korea Institute of Child Care and Education.

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