KICCE POLICY BRIEF

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ECEC Statistics of Korea: Services, Enrollment, Workforce, and Financial Resources[1]

I. Background

- The Korean government implemented effective policy interventions to find solutions for low fertility rates, children's wellbeing, and equal opportunity.
- Since the implementation of the Nuri Curriculum[2] in 2012, the Korean government has continuously supported child -rearing in various ways, such as by implementing free childcare services (0-2 years old) in 2012 and free education and care services for young children (3-5 years old) in 2013.
- The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system in South Korea is divided into two departments: the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for kindergartens, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare, which is responsible for childcare centers.

[Table 1] Comparing early childhood education and care systems in Korea

	Early Childhood Education	Early Childhood Care
Department in Charge	Ministry of Education	Ministry of Health and Welfare
Legal Basis	Early Childhood Education Act (Enacted in 2004)	Child Care Act (Enacted in 1991)
Target children's age	Age 3-5	Age 0-5
Daily School Hours	Basic curriculum (4-5 hours)+Afterschool	12 hours (7:30-19:30)+Extended hours
Teacher Qualification (Minimum criteria)	Kindergarten teacher levels 1, 2 (Associate degree)	Childcare center teacher levels 1, 2, and 3 (High school graduate + 1-year training)
Teacher to Child Ratio	Varied across provinces; the ratio is decided by the superintendent of education In the case of Seoul, the ratio is as follows: Age3 (1:17), Age 4 (1:23), Age 5 (1:27), Mixed-age class (1:22)	Based on Article 10 of the Child Care Act, the ratio is: Age 0 (1:3), Age 1 (1:5), Age 2 (1:7), Age 3 (1:15), Age 4-5 (1:20)
Financial Support for Parents with Children (2021)	Age 3-5 Nuri Curriculum: KRW 260,000 After-school program: KRW 50,000~70,000	Age 0: KRW 484,000 + KRW 528,000* Age 1: KRW 426,000 + KRW 287,000* Age 2: KRW 353,000 + KRW 194,000* Age 3-5: KRW 260,000 + KRW 70,000* *Government subsidies for childcare centers
Education and Care Curriculum		Standardized Childcare Curriculum (Age 0-2)
	Nuri Curriculum (Age 3-5)	Nuri Curriculum (Age 3-5)

Source: 1) Park, J. (2018). ECEC Statistics of Korea: Services, Enrollment, and Workforce. KICCE Policy Brief, Issue No. 10.
2) http://www.bokjiro.go.kr

1. This manuscript has been updated based on the KICCE Policy Brief Issue No. 10 (2018).
2. Nuri Curriculum is the common curriculum for 3–5 year–old children that integrates standardized child care and the education curriculum of childcare centers and kindergartens.

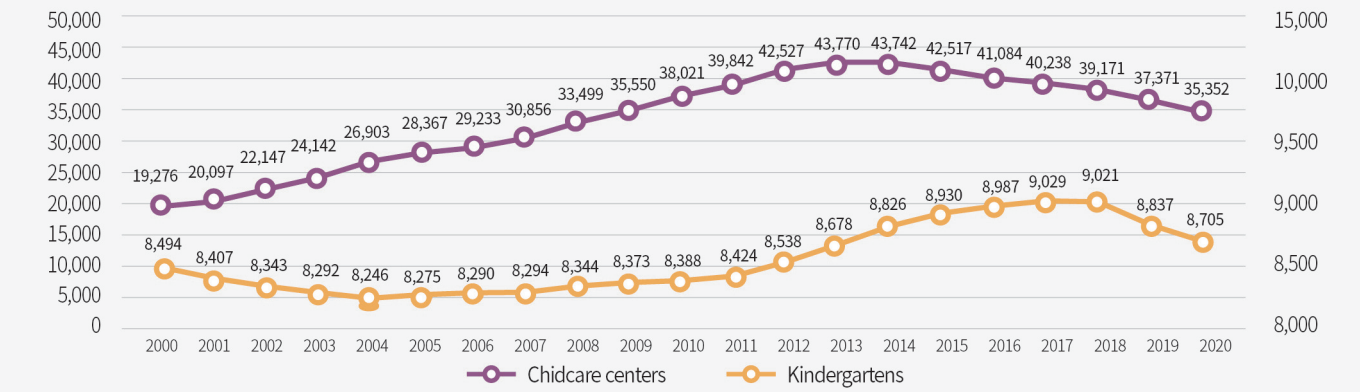
II. Current Status of ECEC Services

• Since 2000, the number of kindergartens and childcare centers has shown different trends.

- The number of kindergartens decreased from 1997 to 2004, but since 2005, it has increased. In particular, it increased rapidly after the implementation of the Nuri Curriculum policy (2012).
- In 2019 and 2020, it decreased significantly due to the policy to strengthen the publicness of private kindergartens.
- For childcare centers, the number of facilities increased from 2000 to 2013. Since then, it has decreased every year.

[Figure 1] Number of kindergartens and childcare centers: 2000-2020

Unit: No. of kindergartens and childcare centers



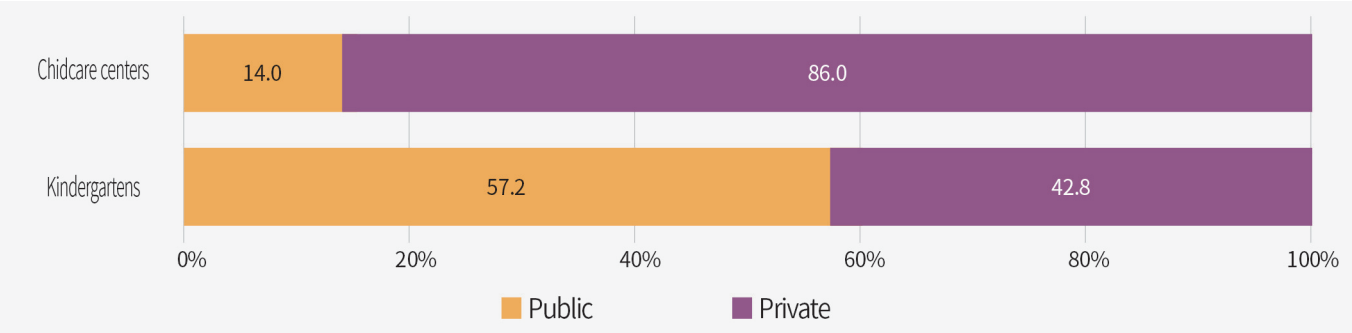
Source: 1) Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.
2) Ministry of Health and Welfare (2020). Childcare Statistics.

• The number of kindergartens and childcare centers is 8,705 and 35,352, respectively.

- Although the proportion of public kindergartens is slightly higher than that of private kindergartens, it shows a similar ratio: 57.2% public kindergartens and 42.8% private kindergartens. The proportion of public childcare centers, however, is only 14.0% of the total number of childcare centers.

[Figure 2] Proportions of ECEC service types (2020)

Unit: %



Source: 1) Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.
2) Ministry of Health and Welfare (2020). Childcare Statistics.

- Private childcare centers consist of the following service types: family daycare centers (43.9%), childcare centers of social welfare corporations, organizations, etc. (5.6%), workplace childcare centers (3.4%), cooperative childcare centers (0.4%), and private childcare centers[3] (32.6%).
- Despite the decline in the number of kindergartens and daycare centers, the number of public kindergartens and daycare centers increased by 229 and 1,801, respectively, compared to 2017. The proportion of public schools also increased by 4.6%p and 6.2%p, respectively, during the same period.

3. Private childcare centers are centers not falling under any of the subtypes of childcare centers.

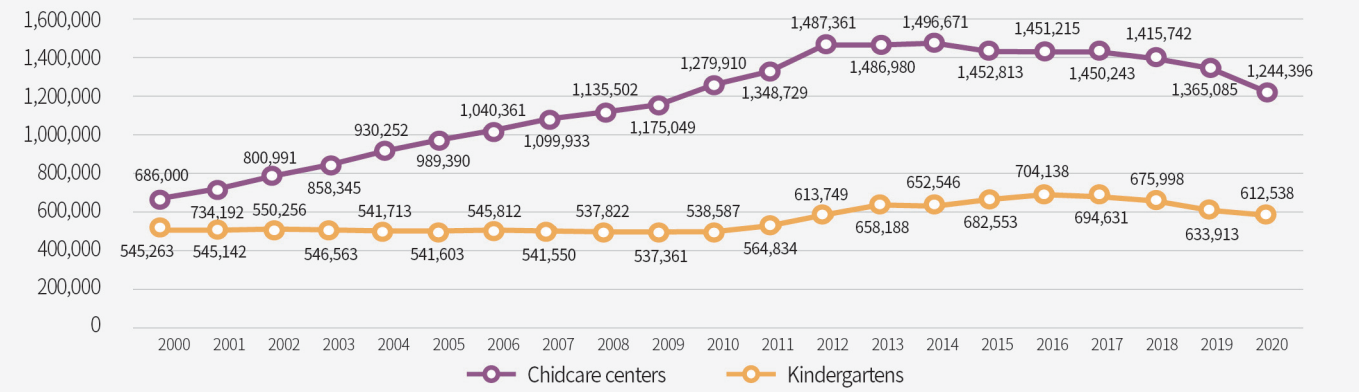
III. Enrollment rates

• Since 2000, enrollment in kindergartens and childcare centers has increased. However, it has seen a decreasing trend since the 2010s.

- For kindergartens, enrollment remained unchanged from 2000 to 2010. After the implementation of the Nuri Curriculum policy in 2012, enrollment increased by 2016.
- In 2017, enrollment in kindergartens decreased from the previous year.
- For childcare centers, enrollment increased from 2000 to 2014. Thereafter, the number decreased each year.

[Figure 3] Number of children enrolled in kindergartens and childcare centers (2000-2020)

Unit: No. of people



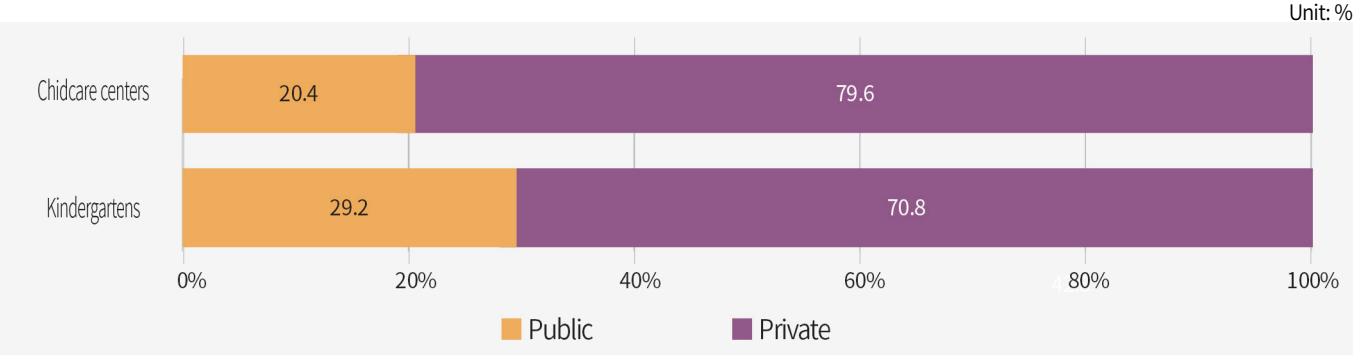
Source: 1) Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.
2) Ministry of Health and Welfare (2020). Childcare Statistics.

• The enrollment in kindergartens and childcare centers was 1,856,934 in 2017. Among them, 612,538 were enrolled in kindergartens and 1,244,396 in childcare centers.

- For kindergartens, 29.2% of children were enrolled in public kindergartens, whereas 70.8% were enrolled in private kindergartens.
- For childcare centers, 20.4% of children were enrolled in public childcare centers.

[Figure 4] Proportion of children enrolled in kindergartens and childcare centers by service type (2017-2020)

Unit: %



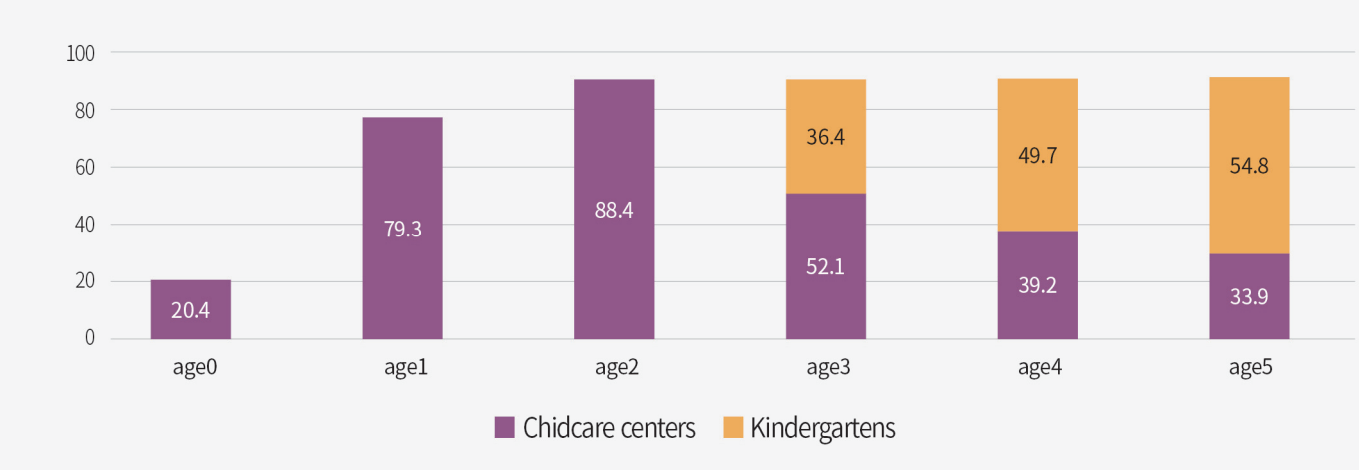
Source: 1) Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.
2) Ministry of Health and Welfare (2020). Childcare Statistics.

• The enrollment rate of children younger than six years in kindergartens and childcare centers was 72.3% in 2020.

- By age, 20.4% of 0-year-olds, 79.3% of 1-year-olds, and 88.4% of 2-year-olds were enrolled in childcare centers, while 88.5% of 3-year-olds, 88.9% of 4-year-olds, and 88.6% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in kindergartens or childcare centers.

[Figure 5] Percentage of children's participation in ECEC services (2020)

Unit: %



Source: 1) Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.
2) Ministry of Health and Welfare (2020). Childcare Statistics.
3) Ministry of the Interior and Safety (2020). Population Statistics Based on Resident Registration.

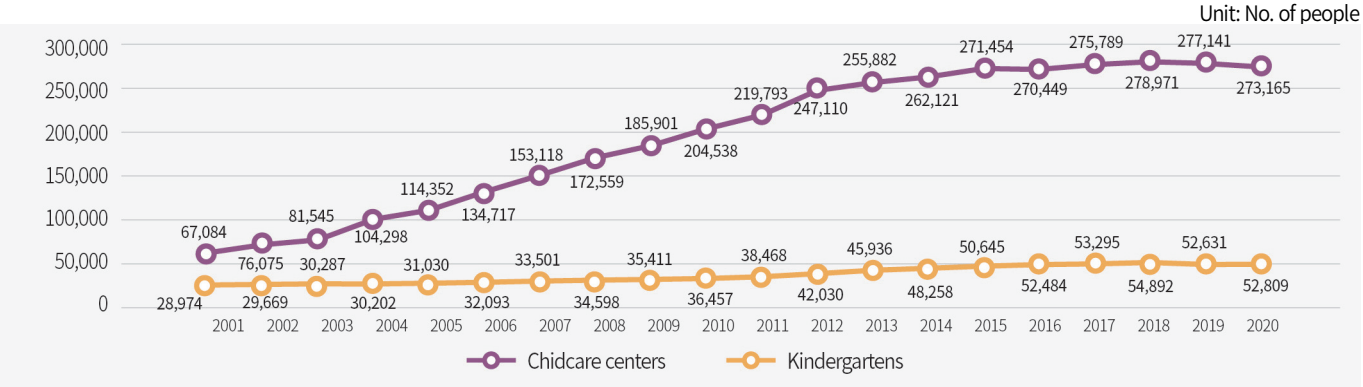
IV. ECEC Workforce

• The number of kindergarten and childcare center staff has been increasing steadily since 2001; its growth has slowed since the mid-2010s, and in 2019, its growth declined.

- Since 2001, the number of childcare center staff has increased more rapidly than kindergarten staff. However, as the children's participation rate in kindergartens and childcare centers decreased, the number of staff also saw a decreasing trend.
- In 2020, the total number of kindergarten staff (principals, vice-principals, advanced skills teachers, full-time and part-time teachers) was 52,809, while the total number of childcare center staff (principals, childcare teachers, substitute teachers, after school teachers, and teaching assistants) was 273,165.

[Figure 6] Number of ECEC staff

Unit: No. of people



Source: 1) Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.
2) Ministry of Health and Welfare (2020). Childcare Statistics.

• The total number of kindergarten staff in 2020 was 53,651; the number of private kindergarten staff was about twice that of public kindergarten staff.

[Table 2] Number of kindergarten staff by position (2020)

Unit: No. of people

	Total	Principals	Vice Principals	Advanced Skills Teachers	Master Teachers	Teachers	Special Teachers	Health Teachers	Nutrition Teachers	Temporary Instructors
Total	53,651	3,960	2,000	22	2,017	40,353	841	1	-	4,457
Public	19,109	460	878	22	1,877	10,708	839	-	-	4,325
Private	34,542	3,500	1,122	-	140	29,645	2	1	-	132

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.

• The total number of childcare center staff in 2020 was 325,669, which is 6.1 times higher than that of kindergarten staff.

[Table 3] Number of childcare center staff by position (2020)

Unit: No. of people

		Total	Principals	Childcare teachers	Special education teachers	Therapists	Nutritionists	Nurses	Cooks	Etc.
Total		325,669	35,199	237,966	1,908	650	902	1,055	30,182	17,807
Public		59,974	4,898	45,176	951	203	145	206	5,968	2,427
Private	Social welfare corporations, organizations, etc.	26,008	1,983	17,622	762	381	107	132	2,462	2,559
	Private	129,306	11,454	96,846	190	63	438	507	11,408	8,400
	Family daycare	89,552	15,497	62,580	1	1	-	1	8,071	3,401
	Cooperative	1,030	149	702	1	-	1	-	132	45
	Workplace	19,799	1,218	15,040	3	2	211	209	2,141	975

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute (2020). Education Statistics.

• The ECEC teacher certifications are composed of three levels for childcare center teachers (teacher levels 1, 2, and 3) and two levels for kindergarten teachers (teacher levels 1 and 2).

- The minimum education level for kindergarten teachers is the 2-3 year associate degree (teacher level2), while childcare center teachers are required to have at least a high school diploma and 1-year vocational training (teacher level 3).

V. Financing ECEC Services

• Public spending on ECEC per child aged 0-5 in South Korea was 6,900 USD in 2017 when adjusted by purchasing power parity (PPP). This was higher than the OECD average (5,200 USD) and EU average (5,500 USD).

- Public spending on childcare per child aged 0-2 was 8,000 USD and that per child aged 3-5 was 5,900.
- In particular, public spending on childcare per child aged 0-2 has increased by 1,500 USD compared to that of 2015.

[Table 4] Public spending on ECEC per child

Unit: USD PPP

	Korea			OECD average (Total)	EU average (Total)
	Total (per child aged 0-5)	Childcare, per child aged 0-2	Pre-primary, per child aged 3-5		
Public spending on ECEC per child	6,900	8,000	5,900	5,200	5,500

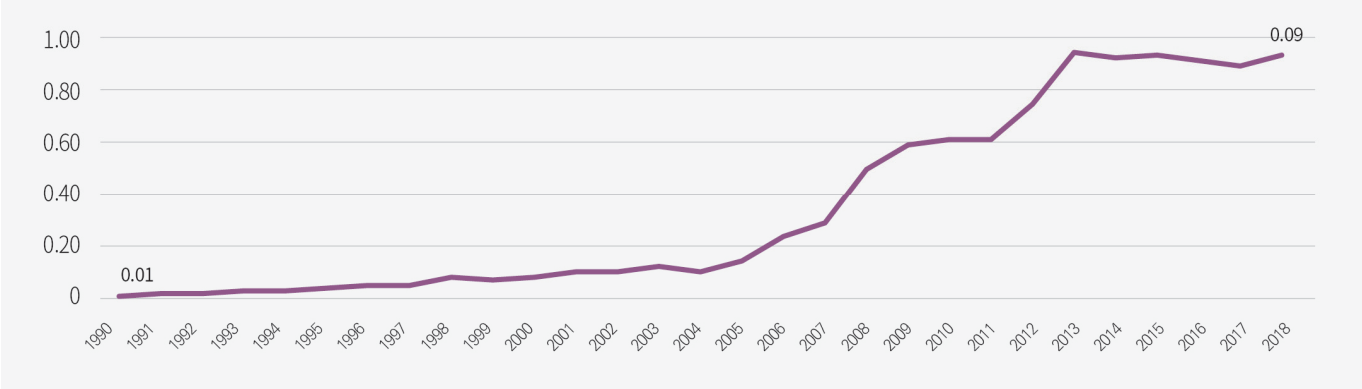
Source: OECD Family Database, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

• The proportion of ECEC expenditures in terms of GDP percentage has increased remarkably from 0.01% in 1990 to 0.90% in 2018.

- The Korean government has made dramatic increases in ECEC investments over the past 10 years, including financial support for child-rearing and tuition fees, as well as quality enhancement of ECEC services such as the dissemination of the Nuri Curriculum.
- However, since the decrease in the number of infants and the cost of support for the Nuri Curriculum remained the same until 2020, the scale decreased or stagnated.

[Figure 7] Total public expenditure on early childhood education and care, in terms of GDP percentage, 1990-2018

Unit: %. of GDP



Source: OECD Family Database, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

• In 2017, the 「Act on the Early Childhood Education Support Special Account」 was enacted to establish special accounts for early childhood education support and prescribe matters concerning the operation thereof to stably promote policies for the Nuri Curriculum.

- The budget for the Nuri Curriculum increased from 3,877,950 million KRW in 2016 to 3,961,764 million KRW in 2020.
- As the unit price of parental financial support for the Nuri Curriculum increased in 2020, the Nuri Curriculum budget also increased significantly. However, the 2020 Nuri Curriculum budget was similar to the 2018 budget due to the decrease in the number of children aged 3-5.

[Table 5] Budget for Nuri Curriculum, 2016-2020

Unit: One hundred million KRW, %

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total	3,877,950	3,899,268	3,942,052	3,791,918	3,961,764
	-	0.5	1.1	△3.8	4.5

Source: Local Educational Financial Statistics Information System, (https://eduinfo.go.kr/)

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