

THEMATIC PROBE. Primary Education: an International Perspective

Country Description: Korea

This country description was compiled from the *INCA* Archive (www.inca.org.uk). Additional comments were received from Dr Min-Keong Kim of the Department of Elementary Education in the College of Education at Ewha Women's University in Seoul.

1. Organisation of school phases-

How are the early years and primary phases organised? (3-5yrs? 5-11yrs?)

Every Korean has a right to nine years of education, comprising six years of compulsory elementary school education (for six- to 12-year-olds) and three years of lower secondary schooling (12- to 15-year-olds) in junior high school. Prior to elementary school, there are pre-compulsory kindergartens for children from three to six years of age.

On reaching the age of six, children receive a notification of admission to a school located in their residential area. Some schools in some areas also accept children at five years of age. Increasingly, decisions as to whether to accept five-year-olds into elementary education are decided by individual local offices of education. Criteria for admission usually include that there is still space after all six-year-olds requiring a place have been allocated one, and that the oldest five-year-olds are allocated places first.

Elementary school education is the only stage of education which is free, as well as compulsory, although lower secondary education is gradually becoming free throughout the country.

What are the points of transfer between phases?

Pre-compulsory kindergarten, age range	Compulsory elementary school, age range	Lower secondary junior high school, age range
3-6 years	6-12 years	12-15 years

2. Locus of control

What degree of control over curriculum content and other aspects of primary schools exists at the national, regional, local and/or school level?

Ministry

Until the end of December 2000, the Ministry of Education (MOE) was the central government organisation responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies related to academic activities, the sciences and public education. Under the educational ideal of *Hongik Ingan*, which means the extension of human welfare, it integrated and coordinated education policies, published and approved textbooks, provided administrative and financial support for all levels of schools, supervised local education agencies and national universities, operated the teacher training system and took charge of the function of social education.

Changes in 2001

In January 2001, the MOE was restructured and its scope expanded. It remains responsible for the activities detailed above, but has also taken over responsibility for formulating and coordinating all policies on education and human resources development. It is now known as the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD), and the Minister of Education has been upgraded to the rank of Deputy Prime Minister.

Educational administration at the regional/local level

Although the current centralised education system in Korea is based on strict government regulations and control, educational administration is slowly becoming more decentralised. In accordance with the (1991) law of local autonomy, the national Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD) now delegates much of the budget planning process and major administrative decisions to municipal and provincial education authorities (MPEAs), or metropolitan and provincial offices of education (MPOEs), at the regional level. The MPEAs and MPOEs in turn delegate certain responsibilities to the local office of education (LOE).

A district office of education (MPEA or MPOE) has been established in each of the six metropolitan cities and nine provinces, as well as in counties and equivalent administrative areas, to "guarantee independence, expertise and individuality of regional education". To realise the ideal of self-government by local residents, a municipal or provincial office of education has a superintendent and a board as an executive and legislative body, which makes major decisions on education, art and science pertaining to its respective local area. The members of the board are elected by secret ballot of the local assembly, on the recommendation of the municipal county or district assembly, to serve a four-year term. The superintendent is elected by a secret ballot of board members (with the approval of the majority) to serve a similar four-year term. His or her qualifications are prescribed by law: he or she should have at least 15 years' experience in educational administration. As of 1996, there were 15 offices of education in metropolitan cities and provinces and, at the county level, there were 180 school district offices of education/local offices of education.

In summary, the MOEHRD is the central government organisation responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies related to academic activities, the curriculum and public examinations. The provinces and metropolitan cities have boards/offices of education, under which educational commissioners/superintendents for each province or metropolitan city are responsible for local educational services in elementary schools, junior high schools and high schools.

Curriculum

The national curriculum is, in principle, developed, reviewed and implemented by the (national) Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD). There is a Curriculum Policy Division within the School Policy Office.

The national curriculum is mandatory for all schools from kindergarten to upper secondary, including private schools. In addition to the curriculum regulations, the regulations that control student enrolment and staff in publicly-funded schools also apply to private schools.

Korea's national curriculum has been revised regularly in accordance with a five- to ten-year cycle since the first revision in 1954. It sets strict regulations for the number of school days, the subjects to be taught for each school year, and the content of and time allocation for each subject in each school year, but there is some room for modification either by local education authorities or individual schools. Moreover, the national curriculum provides criteria for the development of textbooks, along with general guidelines for teaching-learning activities and methods of assessment.

Article 23 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Law states that schools should administer the curriculum; that the Minister of Education has the power to determine the standards and content of the curriculum; and that school superintendents may establish further standards and content to reflect their district's particular situation (within the limits of the curriculum set by the Minister).

Prior to the two most recent curriculum revisions - the Sixth and Seventh National Curricula - individual schools did not have a lot of autonomy to decide what to teach, or how to teach it. It is within this context that recent curriculum revisions have put more emphasis on the decentralisation of curriculum control. The Sixth National Curriculum, for example allowed local education authorities to select appropriate subjects to teach and to decide the unit number of courses required at high school level (students aged 15+). It also encouraged individual schools to modify the national curriculum or to develop new subjects, based on the needs and circumstances of the school and local communities and on the interests of students, teachers and community members. This decentralised policy is continued in the Seventh National Curriculum. It is hoped that, by giving more autonomy to schools and local authorities, curricula will become more appropriate to individual schools and children, and will contribute to increasing the diversity of educational programmes.

The basic purpose of the Seventh National Curriculum is stated as being:

to loosen the rigid and centralised curriculum framework. Specifically, teachers are encouraged to be directly and actively involved in the decision

and planning process for the curriculum. Local offices of education and schools should establish systematic and concrete guidelines for the organisation and implementation of the curriculum and develop individualised guidelines, which are customised for local needs and circumstances.

Curriculum implementation in schools is regularly supervised by the Municipal and Provincial Education Authorities (MPEAs).

Are there any shifts in the distribution of control between these different levels? (Is it possible to assign percentages to each level, to reflect circumstances in each country?)

Curriculum

Increasingly, curriculum reviews have aimed to "loosen the rigid and centralised curriculum framework" (see above) and encourage schools and individual teachers to become actively involved in the decision and planning process for the curriculum.

At what intervals is the curriculum reviewed? (eg are there established review cycles?)

Korea's national curriculum has been revised regularly in accordance with a five- to ten-year cycle since the first revision in 1954. The curriculum has recently been reviewed for the seventh time, with the Seventh National Curriculum currently being phased in on a gradual basis.

Reviews are usually undertaken to reflect changing demands on the education system. (Dr Min-Keong Kim, Department of Elementary Education, College of Education, Ewha Women's University, Seoul.)

National Curriculum Reform	Proclamation Date	Period
First National Curriculum	1 August 1955	1955-1962
Second National Curriculum	15 February 1963	1963-1972
Third National Curriculum	14 February 1973	1973-1981
Fourth National Curriculum	31 December 1981	1982-1988
Fifth National Curriculum	30 June 1987	1989-1994
Sixth National Curriculum	30 September 1992	1995-1999
Seventh National Curriculum	30 December 1997	2000-

Table source: Dr Min-Keong Kim, Department of Elementary Education, College of Education, Ewha Women's University, Seoul.

Implementation of the Seventh National Curriculum

Year	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
2000-2001	Years 1 & 2 (6-8 years)		
2001-2002	Years 3 & 4 (8-10 years)	Year 7 (12-13)	
2002-2003	Years 5 & 6 (10-12 years)	Year 8 (13-14)	Year 10 (15-16)
2003-2004		Year 9 (14-15)	Year 11 (16-17)
2004-2005			Year 12 (17-18)

3. Curriculum content

What does the statutory curriculum consist of?

The revised school curriculum (the Seventh National Curriculum) has recently been introduced to elementary schools as follows:

School year 2000-2001, Years 1 and 2, children aged six to eight years
2001-2002, Years 3 and 4, children aged eight to 10 years
2002-2003, Years 4 and 5, children aged 10 to 12 years

(The school year begins on 1 March and ends in late February.)

Under the Seventh National Curriculum, children at this level follow a statutory curriculum comprising:

- Moral education (taught, with social studies, as 'disciplined life' in Years 1 and 2);
- Korean language;
- Mathematics;
- social studies (combined with moral education in Years 1 and 2 to form a 'disciplined life' course);
- science (taught as 'intelligent life' in Years 1 and 2);
- physical education (PE) (combined with music and fine arts in Years 1 and 2 to form a 'pleasant life' course);
- music (combined with PE and fine arts in Years 1 and 2 to form a 'pleasant life' course);
- fine arts (combined with PE and music in Years 1 and 2 to form a 'pleasant life' course);
- practical arts (technology and home economics) (from Year 5, aged 10+);
- English (foreign language) from Year 3 (aged eight onwards);
- extra-curricular activities; and
- optional courses/school discretionary time.

In Years 1 and 2 (children aged six to eight years), all subject areas are taught, but some are taught as the integrated subject areas indicated above. In addition, children follow a programme entitled 'we are the first graders' (an orientation programme which usually takes place during the first month (March) of a child's first year).

What other aspects of the curriculum/teaching in schools are statutory? Are time allocations for subjects statutory?

English began to be introduced as a statutory subject for children in Years 3 to 6 from March 1997 (see below).

In addition to the compulsory subjects of the Seventh National Curriculum, extra-curricular activities and school discretionary time/optional subjects are also statutory. Schools may allocate more instructional hours to the study of extracurricular activities

than those specified in the time allocation standards below. These time allocation standards represent the statutory minimum.

Elementary schools also pay attention to new topics or areas of social concern, such as international understanding, education for the world of work, computer or information technology and health education. Such areas of study are generally integrated into the existing subjects, as indicated in the table below.

Themes/areas	Dealt with in:	In elementary school
Values, international understanding, moral/ethical issues	Moral education Foreign languages	Years 1-6 (aged 6-12) Years 3-6 (aged 8-12)
Education for the world of work	Practical arts Home economics, computer technology	Years 3-6 (aged 8-12)
Foreign languages	English	Years 3-6 (aged 8-12)
Computer/information technology	After-school programmes/extra-curricular activities Optional courses	Years 3-6 (aged 8-12)
Health education (diet, drugs, HIV, Aids)	Physical education (PE)	Years 1-6 (aged 6-12)

Time allocation Seventh National Curriculum

Elementary School - Minimum instructional hours (40 minutes) by subject and Year level during 34 school weeks a year (30 'academic' study weeks in Year 1, plus an additional four weeks of 'orientation' activities)

Subject		Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
Moral education	Disciplined life			34	34	34	34
Korean language		210	238	238	204	204	204
Mathematics		120	136	136	136	136	136
Social studies	Disciplined life	60	68	102	102	102	102
Science	Intelligent life	90	102	102	102	102	102
Physical education	Pleasant life	180	204	102	102	102	102
Music	Pleasant life			68	68	68	68
Fine arts	Pleasant life			68	68	68	68
Practical arts (technology and home economics)	'We are the first graders' (orientation programme)	80				68	68
English (foreign language)				34	34	68	68
Extra-curricular activities *		30	34	34	68	68	68
Optional courses/school discretionary time		60	68	68	68	68	68
TOTAL MINIMUM HOURS OF INSTRUCTION (One instructional hour = 40 minutes in elementary school)		830	850	986	986	1,088	1,088

* Such as student government activities, self-development activities, social service activities, event activities.

Although, in principle, one instructional hour covers 40 minutes in elementary school, schools are entitled to adjust the duration of each instructional hour, depending on weather and seasonal changes, individual school situations, the developmental level of children, the nature of learning etc.

Are there statutory timings for the length of the school day/week?

Children in Korean elementary education attend school for 220 days a year, over 34 school weeks. The academic year begins in March and consists of two semesters. The first one begins on 1 March and ends on 31 August. The second spans from 1 September to the end of February. There are two major vacations every year. The

summer vacation usually lasts for about 45 days during July and August, and the winter vacation extends for about 70 days, starting in the middle of December and ending at the end of February.

Currently the school week coincides with the six-day week in the business and government sectors; five full days Monday to Friday and Saturday morning. It appears, however, that the latter sectors will shortly be adopting a five-working-day policy. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD) may then consider reducing school days from six to five per week.

What changes have there been to the statutory/non-statutory elements of the curriculum?

In developing the Seventh National Curriculum, the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER) advised that, in preparation for the 21st Century, the development of creativity in children should be given high priority. To do this, the Commission proposed decreasing the number of compulsory subjects in the curriculum; increasing the importance of optional subjects; and diversifying the curriculum according to different achievement levels.

As a result, the revised curriculum consists of two parts: the national compulsory curriculum (known as 'National Common Courses') for children in Years 1 to 10 (aged six to 16), and optional courses for students in Years 11 and 12 (ages 16-18), and has introduced:

More discretionary time for schools

The Seventh National Curriculum reduced the amount of subject content children had to cover each year by around 30 per cent. This was in order to extend school discretionary time/optional courses, thereby encouraging schools to adapt the curriculum to local needs and to encourage children's self-directed learning, independent studies and creative activities within school. Optional activities are divided into subject optional activities and creative optional activities.

Differentiation of the curriculum

For children in Years 1 to 10 (aged six to 16 years), the curriculum for Korean, English, mathematics, science and social studies is now differentiated on the basis of a child's academic ability. That is, the Seventh National Curriculum for these subjects is organised according to different levels of difficulty rather than by year. At the elementary school level, this differentiation applies specifically to the subjects of mathematics, Korean and English, as detailed below.

There is 'level differentiation' in mathematics. Ten levels of mathematics courses are offered from Year 1 through to Year 10. Each level is further sub-divided into two sub-levels, operated on a semester basis. That is, there is one level for each of the two semesters each year.

There is, in addition, 'in-depth and supplementary differentiation' for Korean language courses from Year 1 to Year 10 and for English courses from Years 3 to 6.

ICT

The Seventh National Curriculum also increased the use and application of information and communication technology (ICT) in elementary classrooms. In a knowledge-based society, the use and integration of ICT has continued to increase. Anyone unable to use ICT is increasingly disadvantaged in everyday life. For this reason, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD) in Korea has encouraged teachers and children to use and integrate ICT into the classroom, and recommends that, for every subject, more than 10 per cent of classroom activity should use computers.

Additionally, in 2001, computer education became compulsory from the first year of elementary school. (Dr Min-Keong Kim, Department of Elementary Education, College of Education, Ewha Women's University, Seoul.)

English as a new core subject

There was a partial review of the Sixth National Curriculum - introduced in 1995 - in March 1997. This introduced the teaching of English as a compulsory core subject at elementary school level for children in Years/Grades 3 to 6, aged eight to 12 years. Introduction was gradual, one Grade each year, from March 1997.

English continues to be a 'National Common Course' subject in the Seventh National Curriculum for children from Year 3 (aged eight) onwards. Children in Years 3 and 4 (aged eight to 10) study English for 34 instructional hours (40 minutes) each year (one instructional hour per week), and those in Years 5 and 6 for 68 instructional hours each year (two per week).

This move towards English language teaching at elementary school level reflects a concern to encourage Korean children to learn more about the West in a greater globalisation programme. It is intended that the introduction of the study of the English language at any early age should help young South Koreans become more internationally-minded. The change is a response to the Government's desire for the Republic of Korea to become a prominent member of the international community. Children in elementary schools are also encouraged to study the culture of the West, including its food, sports and ways of life.

What government/other initiatives have been introduced? What has been their impact?

General reform programme

The *Education Reform Proposals for the Establishment of a New Education System (1995)*, produced by the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER) of former President Kim, emphasised three key areas for development: information technology, globalisation and localisation. The proposals determined that:

- The society of the 21st century is characterised as an information or knowledge society, where information and knowledge are the motivating force behind society.
- Science and technology and their ability to create a new culture will become the most critical factors in the immediate future.
- The power and wealth of a nation and the living standards of its people are determined by the level and scope of a nation's intellectual property, such as its level of skills, information, knowledge and culture.
- Intellectual property essentially depends on learning ability and creativity and the development of these depends on education.

The restructuring and expansion of the Ministry of Education - to the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD) - in January 2001, continued to emphasise these aims; the main aims of the restructured Ministry were identified as being:

- to foster citizens able to meet the challenges of an information and knowledge based society; and
- to be constructive members of the global community.

Information technology

A six-year 'information age' project ran from 1997 to 2002 with the aim of equipping elementary and secondary schools with computers. Its aims are summarised in the table:

Project	Content	Objective of investment
Support for the improvement of classrooms	Supply classrooms with multimedia tools such as personal computers, televisions and video recorders and players	For all classrooms by 2002
Supply of personal computers for teachers	Personal computers for school business, processing of test scores, and production of teaching materials	One personal computer for each teacher by 2002

Funding is provided by both government and private sector sources. In addition, all elementary and secondary schools were expected to have Internet access by 2002.

Globalisation

In terms of globalisation, it has been recommended that:

- The quality of Korean education should be raised to a world level. Elementary school (and secondary level) education should be transformed from rote learning and the cramming of fragmentary knowledge to fostering creativity, developing higher order thinking skills and problem-solving.
- Efforts should be strengthened to preserve Korean culture, whilst living harmoniously with other nations and striving not to lose a Korean identity.
- Education should build leadership qualities in Korean children, so that they can participate as world citizens. Koreans need to open their minds to the world and

to think and behave from the perspective of world citizens. Peace education, education for international understanding and training in international communication skills should be promoted at every level of schooling.

Localisation

With regard to localisation, the PCER recommended that, to improve the quality of school education, the process of increasing local self-government in education should continue, regional distinctiveness should be respected, and the autonomy of individual schools expanded. This initiative was introduced as a result of the fact that, although the local education governance system had originally been implemented in 1991, schools had gained little autonomy in the intervening period. As a result of the PCER's recommendations in this regard, since the second semester of the 1995 academic year, certain schools have been required to set up experimental School Management Committees comprising parents, teachers, headteachers, community leaders and education specialists. The original aim was for such bodies to be deliberative, consultative and, ultimately, decision-making. However, as a result largely of headteachers' concerns regarding the possible excessive interference of parents in schools' internal affairs, School Management Committees' powers are limited to deliberations and consultations on:

- the budget and the settlement of accounts;
- the selection of elective courses and extra-curricular programmes;
- the formulation of a school charter or school regulations;
- the constitution and management of committees to recommend nominations for principal/headteacher and of committees to recommend nominations for teachers;
- the raising and using of funds for school development;
- the collection and management of community contributions; and
- the operation of after-school activities and their costs.

Science and technical education

In addition, science and technical education is regarded as particularly important in Korea "to cope with an information-oriented society, based on advanced technology and to secure the scientific and technological independence of the nation". To this end, 15 science high schools have been founded to provide specialised educational programmes for scientifically gifted high school students (aged 15 to 18), and at the elementary school level, each district office of education operates a science education centre.

Teacher education/the teaching profession

Various initiatives have recently been introduced in Korea with a view to improving standards in, and the quality of life in, the teaching profession. See section 6. for further information.

What other trends are emerging in curriculum development? (eg new subjects/areas of learning being introduced)

See previous sections for information regarding increased local curricular autonomy through the extension of school discretionary time; differentiation by levels of ability

in the Seventh National Curriculum; the increasing importance of information and communication technology (ICT); and the introduction of English as a compulsory subject.

What other levers may be having an impact on curriculum content? (eg international studies: PIRLS, IEA, PISA, TIMSS)

Whilst the results from the *Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)* (1994-1995) placed Korea as one of the top three performing countries (out of 45) in this study of mathematics achievement of children in Years 4 and 8, and were generally regarded as excellent, the study also showed that mathematics education in Korea needed to improve in the areas of:

- incorporation of technology; and
- student attitude.

These areas were taken into consideration during the review which resulted in the introduction of the Seventh National Curriculum. (Dr Min-Keong Kim, Department of Elementary Education, College of Education, Ewha Women's University, Seoul.)

4. Organisation of the curriculum

What are the common features of curriculum organisation in the primary phase? (single subjects? planning subjects as 'topics'?)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

How are subjects labelled?

Under the Seventh National Curriculum, the compulsory subjects of the curriculum at the elementary school level are provided as 'National Common Courses'. Subjects are labelled 'subjects' or 'subject areas'. All schools are expected to establish 'attainment targets' by year level for these individual subjects or subject areas. In addition, there are 'extracurricular activities' and 'optional activities' (or 'optional subjects', also known as 'school discretionary activities').

What examples are there of 'areas' rather than subjects?

What examples are there of clusters of subjects (eg Humanities, made up of geography and history) being brought together?

In the first two years of elementary school education in Korea (children aged six to eight years), some of the specified individual subjects/subject areas of the Seventh National Curriculum are taught to children as integrated clusters of subjects, as follows:

- moral education is taught as 'disciplined life';
- social studies is combined with science and taught as an 'intelligent life' course; and

- physical education (PE) is combined with music and fine arts and taught as ‘pleasant life’.

(Children in Years 1 and 2 study Korean language and mathematics in addition to the above. Children in the first few weeks of Year 1 also follow an orientation programme entitled ‘we are the first graders’.)

In addition, when practical arts is introduced in Year 5 (children aged 10+), this includes the subject areas of technology and home economics.

Science and social studies are taught as integrated subjects until upper secondary education (students aged 15 to 18), when science is separated into physics, chemistry, biology and earth science, and social studies into geography, history, politics, economics and cultural studies.

What are the common features of timetabling? (eg weekly lessons in each subject, English and mathematics taught daily)

English is taught as a weekly (40-minute) lesson in Years 3 and 4, and in twice weekly lessons in Years 5 and 6. Moral education is taught once weekly.

5. Assessment

What is the purpose, nature and scale of assessment? (eg end of phase assessment, statutory, published test results, optional, national, local, timed tests, teacher-assessment)

National assessment of educational achievement

In Korea, there is a nationwide assessment system - the national assessment of educational achievement - based on scholastic achievement tests (SATs). A revised system of periodic national assessments of student achievement began to be implemented in September 2000, the principal aim of which is to monitor the curriculum. Under the new system, Korean language, mathematics, science and social studies are assessed every two years (two subjects each year, mathematics and social studies in 2000, for example), while English communication skills and the use of information technology skills are assessed once every three years. Small samples of students - between 0.5 per cent and one per cent of the whole student population in the final year of elementary education (Year 6) (and in secondary Years 9 and 10) - are involved in the tests.

Prior to this recent change, until 1999, nationwide scholastic achievement testing had been compulsory for children in Years 4 to 6 of elementary school education (aged nine to 12). Results were reported nationally for a one per cent sample of children. Year groups and subjects tested varied annually.

National scholastic achievement testing takes place once a year. The formal written tests are norm-referenced and results are recorded by numerical scores.

Each municipal or provincial office of education (MPEA) or regional education authority has traditionally used the results of national scholastic achievement tests to monitor school accountability and sometimes teacher or headteacher accountability.

Official objectives for the nationwide scholastic achievement tests are:

- to identify - nationally - the scholastic achievement level of elementary school children;
- to improve the various methods of teaching and learning and to guide the direction of education;
- to explain the inter-relation between scholastic development and other influential factors; and
- to collect data for curriculum improvement and effective supervision.

Most schools assess their curriculum implementation every year and utilise the results in curriculum organisation and implementation for the coming years. Results in the national assessment of educational achievement for a particular school are not intended to have any particular influence on that school. However, most principals and teachers want to increase their competitive power by achieving higher scores in the tests, because of the strong parental concerns in this respect.

Continuous assessment

In addition, all schools are expected to establish attainment targets by year level for the statutory subject areas of the Seventh National Curriculum, as well as for extracurricular activities and school discretionary activities/optional subjects. Schools are also expected to assess the progress of each child towards these targets by using various evaluation tools and methods. The results of such evaluations are generally used to improve the quality of teaching.

Classroom evaluation/continuous assessment can be conducted at any time by the class teacher and is generally informal. It can take the form of written tests, oral tests, practical tests or portfolio presentation. Paper and pencil tests are, however, most often used for school-based assessment. Teachers are sometimes reluctant to make use of performance based evaluation such as laboratory experiments in science or practical tests in music, art and physical education, particularly in view of the large class sizes.

In the past, multiple-choice assessment has been particularly favoured in Korea. Schools are, however, now expected to try to measure student achievement in individual subjects in a balanced way, putting more emphasis on such methods as essay-type tests or observation tests to assess expression and attitude instead of the conventional multiple-choice test. Where applicable, schools are also expected to utilise practical assessment procedures to, for example, evaluate science experiments and workshop activities.

To assist continuous classroom assessment, the board of education in each city and/or province produces assessment instruments through various workshops.

Continuous classroom assessment is criterion-referenced and the results are generally recorded by descriptive statement.

The main purpose of assessment is to identify the rate of progress of students. At the elementary school level, results in the national assessment of educational achievement or in continuous assessment do not generally influence whether a child moves up to the next stage of his/her education. Generally, most children move up to the next year/class, regardless of their results in the national tests. Children's results can, however, be used as a reference for gifted children who merit being transferred to a special programme. (There are several special secondary level programmes for gifted children in specialist high schools.) Since the introduction of the Seventh National Curriculum, children's assessment results have, however, begun to be influence their placement on this, the first, differentiated curriculum.

In addition, an accelerated advancement system has recently been introduced. This allows 'bright' children to skip a year/class and advance to the next. Accelerated advancement is allowed only twice during an individual's nine years of elementary and junior high school education.

The School Activities Record

A written 'Student School Record'/'School Activities Record' system was introduced in Korea in the 1996 academic year. Its aim was not only to provide summative, but also diagnostic and informative information on each student's academic achievement and social development. The School Activities Record includes the following information:

- academic achievement level by subject;
- details of performance and anecdotal material indicating especially noteworthy performance in each subject;
- attendance and absenteeism;
- involvement in extra-curricular activities and in voluntary service activities;
- special accomplishments in various contests, and prizes won;
- notes on personality and conduct, and social and moral development;
- information on a child's physical development;
- details of any awards, the level of the award and the date of receipt; and
- details of any certificates achieved and date of receipt.

At the elementary school level, it is recommended that performance in some of the above items should be recorded in a descriptive, anecdotal manner, rather than by grade. The contents and hours of an individual's involvement in activities related to developing self-discipline and voluntary services are also reported as indicators of character and personality.

How far is the curriculum driven by assessments? (eg evidence of teacher preparation for testing, 'booster' or 'catch-up' classes in schools)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

6. Teaching profession/training

What changes can be identified in initial teacher training programmes?

Various initiatives have recently been introduced in Korea with a view to improving standards in, and the quality of life in, the teaching profession. These include:

- A lowering of the retirement age from 65 years to 62. This measure, introduced in autumn 1998, resulted in around 16,000 teachers leaving the profession. The vacancies are gradually being filled by newly appointed teachers. Competent teachers amongst those retiring are invited to return to teaching, with fixed teaching terms.
- A new, comprehensive development plan for the teaching profession. This covers the whole area of teacher-related policies, such as teacher training and preparation, appointment, remuneration, promotion, and in-service training.
- The implementation of policies to promote the quality of in-service and pre-service training, with a view to attracting and retaining well-qualified teachers in the profession. This process has included a review of the quality of in-service training, and an evaluation of teachers' colleges, colleges of education and graduate schools of education.
- The introduction of a merit-based promotion and reward system. A new promotion scheme, which attaches great importance to the merit principle, is being developed. In accordance with such a scheme, competent teachers will be given preferential treatment with regard to promotion. As part of the scheme, the optimum number of class hours of teaching per week will be stipulated so that teachers can be protected from teaching overload. Those teachers whose number of teaching hours exceed the stipulated class hours will be compensated in the form of a special allowance.

Prior to 1981 elementary school teachers followed a two-year course in teacher college. In 1981, these colleges began to be upgraded to four-year universities. As a result, since 1984 all colleges have been upgraded and all newly qualified elementary school teachers have had a four-year degree. Additional courses are offered (evening and holiday courses) to permit serving teachers who had followed a two-year course to complete a university degree.

What kinds of continuing professional development/on-going training are provided?

Each municipal or provincial office of education (MPEA), or regional education authority, is expected to develop and operate in-service teacher training programmes relating to the curriculum. This is with a view to improving teaching in individual subjects and extracurricular activities in all schools.

To what degree are teachers'/schools' planning subject to scrutiny?

Curriculum implementation in schools is regularly supervised by the Municipal and Provincial Education Authorities (MPEAs).

To what degree are teachers using electronic formats to plan?

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

7. Pedagogy

Which teaching approaches are dominant or developing a higher profile, and which are receding? (eg collaborative work, whole-class instruction)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

What is the impact of ICT in teaching practice? (eg use of electronic whiteboards, intranets, managed learning environments/local grids)

No information is available via the *INCA* Archive.

To what degree are teaching approaches focusing on developing thinking skills, creativity and building on children's learning styles?

During the development of the Seventh National Curriculum, the Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER) advised that, in preparation for the 21st Century, the development of creativity in schoolchildren at all levels of the education system should be given high priority. In a move aimed specifically at encouraging schools to do this, the Seventh National Curriculum increased school discretionary time/time for optional subjects. This is to be used mainly to encourage children's self-directed learning in schools, and to afford extra time for independent study and creative activities within school. Optional activities are divided into subject optional activities and creative optional activities. Extracurricular activities comprise student government activities, self-development activities, social service activities, event activities etc.

While elementary schools are afforded some flexibility in allocating optional activities according to the individual school situation, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD) recommends that elementary schools place an emphasis on creative optional activities, rather than on in-depth and supplementary study of school subjects.

8. Resourcing

How far are resources to support teaching made available via government/central/local agencies?

How far, and in which subjects, are resources statutory/ recommended/ subsidised? (eg text books, courses, lesson plans for teachers, web-based materials)

Textbooks

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOEHRD) compiles and authorises textbooks. Textbooks and teachers' guides are the main materials available to children and teachers and, when using textbooks, elementary schools may only use those designated or approved by the Government.

Previously, at the elementary school level, only one textbook was authorised for each subject of the statutory curriculum. Current practice permits multiple (government-copyrighted and approved) textbooks for individual subjects. As a result, a variety of government-copyrighted elementary school textbooks is being developed from which teachers/schools are increasingly able to select.

Textbooks for children in elementary schools are provided free of charge by the MOEHRD and children may keep them.

Additional learning materials

In addition, the MOEHRD expects the Municipal and Provincial Education Authorities (MPEAs) to make every effort to develop and disseminate various teaching-learning materials other than textbooks. All schools, for example, are encouraged to utilise multimedia programmes and materials, such as radio/television programmes, audio-visual materials, computers etc in combination with textbooks. In addition to school textbooks, teacher handbooks, audio tapes, video tapes, computer software, CD-ROMs etc are all available for schools.

Educational Broadcasting System, EBS

The Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) was opened in 1990 in order to "support school education and expand the opportunity for education". The overall policies, programme organisation, and administrative and financial support for the EBS, which comprises television and radio channels, come from the MOEHRD. The EBS is responsible for actual education broadcasting (planning, organisation, production and delivery) and the Korean Broadcasting System for transmission. The MOEHRD subsidises the Educational Broadcasting System to around 40 per cent of its budget and suggests the basic format of all programmes.

Educational broadcasting programmes are on television for significant parts of the day from Monday to Friday (over 13 hours) and 24 hours on Saturday and Sunday. Educational broadcasting radio programmes are also provided for 20 hours every day. In addition to school education programmes (which follow the prescribed curricula and also include programmes on foreign language conversation, vocational education,

environmental education, culture, music, art and Korean unification) there are also correspondence/open university programmes and social education programmes for children, youth, parents and the public.

KERIS

The Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS) was established in April 1999 (from an amalgamation of the Korea Multimedia Education Centre and the Korea Research Information Centre), with the purpose of developing high quality educational software for use in schools. The KERIS website is accessible at <http://www.keris.or.kr/english/index.jsp>

EDUNET

In addition, the EDUNET service is also available. This is a free educational information system for teachers, children and parents. It provides access to information on learning materials by theme, teacher guides, educational software, research reports and theses, bulletin boards, education counselling facilities, open discussion forums, information about educational organisations, and statistical data on education. KERIS operates and maintains EDUNET. The EDUNET website is available at <http://www.edunet.net>

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