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The 3rd National Lifelong
Learning Promotion Plan



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Lifelong Learning in Korea

The 3rd National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan (2013-2017)



The National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) intends to share the vision and efforts for promotion of lifelong education by sharing the lifelong learning projects and cases in Korea with the international society. To realize a creative learning society in which all are happy and to establish the national lifelong learning system in the Centennial Era, the Ministry of Education has released the 3rd National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan. In this issue, the purpose and main contents of the 3rd National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan(2013-2017) will be introduced.

1. Background

National welfare is now a key feature when evaluating the level of national development. According to the United Nations, national welfare is an issue not only each individual needs to solve but also both governments and local communities should solve together. Lifelong learning is acknowledged as a requisite for individual happiness and prosperity in an aging society. Along with national competitiveness, the factors such as social trust, quality jobs, freedom of individual choice, and political participation can determine national welfare. Also, those are closely related with the development of lifelong learning.

Significantly, the global economic paradigm has shifted from “knowledge” to “creativity” in which local cities, business and people are to create new values and ideas. Further, as the flexibility of labor has been accelerated, the transitional perspectives on work and leisure also lead the flexibility of education system. In the system, a competence is more emphasized than just levels of education so, a strong and flexible foundation of a lifelong learning system has been underscored to consolidate a competence-based society.

Compared to South Korea’s global standing and its economic scale, the level of happiness

people are feeling is low. Koreans feel less satisfactory about their life compared to people in other countries. The gap of quality of life across a society and generations becomes huge, which less contributes to social integration in spite of the growth of the national economy.

The participation of adult learners in higher education is crucial to a creative economy, but the gap of educational attainment among generations has been consistently wide. For example, even though 65% of those aged 25 to 34 got college education, only 12.8% of those aged 55 to 64 participated in higher education, which support the need of expanding the role of colleges into comprehensive lifelong learning institutes. Moreover, as an aging society becomes a universal phenomenon, it needs to construct the educational system and infrastructure that is compatible with an aging society. According to the 2013 OECD Fact book, the average employment rate of the elderly (age 55- 64) among OECD countries is 54.4 % when compared to 62.1 % in Korea. In spite of the relative high rate of elderly employment, there is still the need to supplement the infrastructure to support an individual’s lifelong or transformative learning. This learning can help an individual set a reemployment plan or start new business for one’s second phase of life right after one’s early or regular retirement.

Therefore, the Korean Ministry of Education (MOE) has recently announced “The 3rd National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan” to construct the system of nation-wide lifelong learning in an aging society. The purpose of this promotion plan is to build a creative learning society in which people can fulfill their full potential and be happy. The 3rd Plan has been developed based on the in-depth analysis of the outcomes and limitations of the 1st and 2nd Plans. Also, it reinforces the detailed strategies in terms of policy consistency.

2. Evaluations of the Previous Plans

During the previous plans, Lifelong Learning Act has been amended which led to an overall increase of participation rate in lifelong learning. In 2008, the participation rate was around 26.4 % but 9.2 percentage point has increased to 35.6 % in 2012. However, this rate is still lower than other developed countries. The rate of South Korea is 35.6% that is about 5-percentage point lower than OECD average (40.4 %) as ranked 19th among 27 countries.

Also, the enforcement system of lifelong learning has taken an impact on generations and marginalized groups in a society with the launch of the 1st and 2nd Plans. For instance, during the last 5 years, the participation rate within the group of people with less than middle school education has increased from 14.9% in 2008 to 22% in 2012. Also, the people from lower income groups also increased from 21.9% in 2008 to 30.3% in 2012. The participation rate in lifelong learning within each group has

increased, but the general gap between the groups is still big.

Furthermore, the lifelong learning system in local communities is still underdeveloped. Due to the loose link between online and offline lifelong learning, local residents have the limited access to their local learning communities and they cannot acquire proper information they need. Besides, the number of the lifelong programs has gradually increased, but the content of the programs are often restricted to cultural art and sports that have less impact on social integration than the two previous plans intended to achieve.

3. Basic Directions of the 3rd Plan

The 3rd Plan has been established through convergence of various opinions from each level of government including the offices of education, conference for experts, and in-depth discussions from policy advisory committees.

The plan proposes four major goals to achieve: a) the realization of a college-based lifelong learning system b) the construction of online and offline total supporting system for lifelong learning and c) support for the customized lifelong learning for social integration, and d) reinforcement of the learning capacity of local communities.

◆ *College-Based Lifelong Learning System*

The goal is to expand the existing higher education system into an ‘adult learner friendly and open system.’ The system can open the

doors of the colleges including community colleges and promote a flexible learning environment, so the learners are able to develop their career and skills in practice. In order to realize this goal, college administration works such as selecting students, launching programs and managing academic affairs will be much diversified with flexible link between degree and non-degree programs. These programs are to provide more opportunities for those who are already in the work fields. Also, it will foster both extension colleges and technical colleges. The local colleges are going to function as creative learning centers and they will provide the specialized programs of lifelong learning to invigorate the local economy and cultivate creative and competent local workforce.

Further, the extension schools in colleges will be designated as the center for refresher and extension courses. The programs for the workers with a high school diploma will be also offered by collaborating with local business. Besides, their learning experiences will be authorized as credits based on National Competency Standards (NCS). Various field experiences, educational trainings, and qualification will be provided and comprehensively associated with each other for the flexibility of labor market.

◆ *On/Offline Total Supporting System for Lifelong Learning*

To operationalize this system, first of all, the online network for comprehensive lifelong learning information will be constructed. Hence, this goal intends that anyone can easily

participate in lifelong learning regardless of time and space. The network will integrate all learning information and contents each institute separately has and will strengthen the link between the local centers for lifelong learning and colleges. Anyone can share and contribute their knowledge and strengths with open communication with other participants through the online network.

In the offline system, in order to provide the resident-centered programs, Happy Learning center will be established in small towns in which there are fewer facilities the residents can easily access and get information they need. Moreover, 150 learning cities are going to be built by 2017 and will function as creative learning cities that can lead to the growth of the local-based creative economy.

This system can improve the quality of lifelong learning by accrediting institutes and their information disclosure system. Also, it will contribute to the training programs for lifelong educators and their qualification management.

◆ *Customized Lifelong Learning for Social Cohesion*

This goal is about providing various programs of lifelong learning that can meet the needs of each generation, for example, continuous skill development, reemployment, or flexible life design. 'Customized' means that the system is targeting each specific age group. For the population aged between 20s and 30s, job creation, employment and continuing education will be provided. The younger generation with

a high school diploma only will participate in the program to improve the field skills with the customized curricula, and development of teaching and learning materials. In addition, they can get certificates related to their areas during the program. For those aged between 40s and 50s, diverse non-degree program will be offered from the local colleges such as multidisciplinary programs or the programs for starting business. For the older citizens in their 60s and 70s, various programs will be developed to enhance the quality of their life style and to contribute to the productivity of their local communities. These programs intend to create the job environment within which the older people can both work and learn and to foster the local industries that provide the services combined with leisure, welfare and education for the elderly.

In addition, diverse lifelong learning programs are going to be developed for the marginalized people who are illiterates and the disabled. Also, the people from multicultural families and information illiterates can be intensively supported. Further, the adult learning center for the disabled will be established where the disabled also could access the existing contents of lifelong learning with institutional support and care. Also, the disabled can get the opportunity to go to the broadcasting and correspondence middle/high schools.

Furthermore, young men who left schools to perform military duties and women who need to continue their career will benefit from the systems such as academic credit back system and bachelor's degree examination for the self-

educated. Also, in order to help the dropout students overcome their career discontinuity, the consistent academic supports and various career programs will be provided.

◆ *Reinforcement of Learning Capacity of Local Communities*

By renovating the facilities of closed schools in rural areas, the lifelong learning will be expanded to connect the schools and local communities. The programs for local residents who have diverse educational needs are going to be developed and provided. However, in order to increase the participation rate in lifelong learning, the role of local communities in building voluntary and active participation culture is significant.

Hence, the MOE presents the plan to reinforce the learning communities and to launch the programs to increase citizens' participation and the programs of liberal arts as well. The government will support the formation 10,000 learning groups to lead to the growth of both individual and local economies through educational outcomes.

4. Conclusion

The vision of the 3rd Promotion Plan for Lifelong Learning is to realize a creative learning society in Korea. Prior to set the detail strategies for this new project, the previous two Plans implemented from 2008 to 2012 were thoroughly analyzed and evaluated. The new Plan has the four main goals. First, by a

college-based lifelong learning system, the local colleges as the colleges for lifelong learning will provide an adult learner friendly-environment where they can develop their career. Second, an on/ offline total supporting system for lifelong learning will be established and anyone could continue one's learning. Also, a lifelong learning will contribute to an integrated society. It will focus more marginalized groups so everyone is able to get learning opportunity based on one's own needs. Finally, the learning capacity of local communities will be strengthened by collaboration between local schools and by the supports of learning communities.

The Korean Ministry of Education will arrive at the specific action plans to achieve the four goals by expanding in-depth policy research with expert groups and by developing mutual agreements with related institutes. The action plan will be pushed forward by setting the control tower for on/ offline lifelong learning system, consolidating collaborative networks with other organizations, and by modifying relevant legislations. Also, the budget for a lifelong learning is expected to be increased along with this plan.

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