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Case study: Lifelong learning in Korea

Lifelong learning becomes ever more important in a fast-changing world. This chapter analyses the lifelong learning system in Korea along three governance dimensions: the promotion of co-ordination across levels of government (“whole-of-government” approach), engaging stakeholders throughout the policy cycle and the alignment of financial incentives. The chapter explains the multi-level governance approach of lifelong learning in Korea and introduces key players and their roles on the different governance levels. The chapter then focuses on the lifelong learning system in Suwon City. The lifelong learning system in Suwon City is characterised by a high density of learning facilities and the participation of a great variety of stakeholders. Based on the analysis, the final part of the chapter develops policy recommendations that address co-operation and co-ordination in the governance of lifelong learning.

Introduction

One of the roles of educational and training systems is to equip learners with the skills required by employers to maintain the competitiveness of the economy. At the same time, educational systems aim to enable citizens to participate in society and social life. In a world characterised by rapid change due to digitisation and the transition towards a global knowledge-based service economy, a key challenge for educational and training systems is to ensure that people can access opportunities to upskill and reskill.

Lifelong learning, which includes informal learning as well as formal and non-formal education over the lifespan, is an important way of meeting this challenge. The governance of lifelong learning is very complex because it requires the engagement of learners, employers and a broad range of stakeholders such as course providers and learning facilities. It also requires the voluntary engagement of participants, meaning that the governance of this sector has to take into account the needs and demands of citizens. At the same time, employment relevant (vocational) lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important as the requirements of the labour market are constantly changing. In order to design employment relevant lifelong learning that successfully increases the employability of participants, it is important to consider business and employee interests in the governance of lifelong learning. Governance also has to ensure that training facilities are provided, that experts develop and update the training content, and that sufficient training spaces are created. This requires the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders.

This case study looks at the lifelong learning system in Suwon City in Korea, a city of 1.2 million inhabitants. Suwon City has managed to successfully establish a dense network of more than 600 lifelong learning facilities that enable citizens to reach a lifelong learning centre within a ten-minute walk. Suwon City received the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Learning City award in 2017. The city runs its own lifelong learning centre, and certified lifelong learning educators work in the city's administration to create and strengthen collaboration across the whole government.

With reference to the overall framework of this report, this case study focuses on three of the four dimensions:

- Promoting co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration across the whole of government.
- Engaging stakeholders throughout the policy cycle.
- Aligning and co-ordinating financing arrangements.

The first section introduces Korea's lifelong learning system more generally before the second section describes the lifelong learning system in Suwon City in particular. The third section gives a more detailed analysis of the lifelong learning policies. The analysis is based on document research and 11 semi-structured expert interviews with 18 lifelong learning experts conducted in Seoul, Suwon City and Sejong in April 2019. The fourth section develops policy recommendations and highlights the lessons learned from this case study.

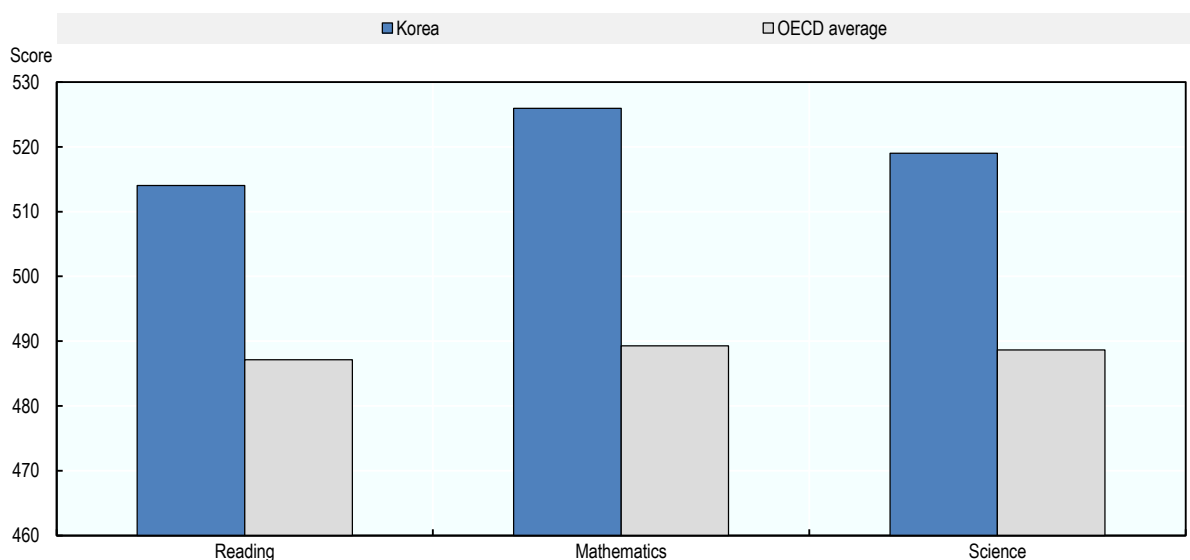
Korea's lifelong learning system

Background

Although education is of very high value in Korea, the focus has traditionally been on university-based higher education (UIL, 2015^[1]). After the Korean War in the early 1950s, education policies targeted and expanded primarily basic and higher education (Han, 2008^[2]). Today, younger generations in particular have very high educational attainment levels in international comparison: 98% of 25-34 year-olds complete upper secondary education and 70% of 25-34 year-olds complete tertiary education (OECD, 2018^[3]). This represents the highest share of young people holding a tertiary degree among all OECD countries.

As well as formal educational attainment, the skill levels of students is above average from an international perspective. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that Korean students (participants are 15 years old) score is well above the OECD average regarding skills in the field of science, reading and mathematics (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. PISA 2018 scores

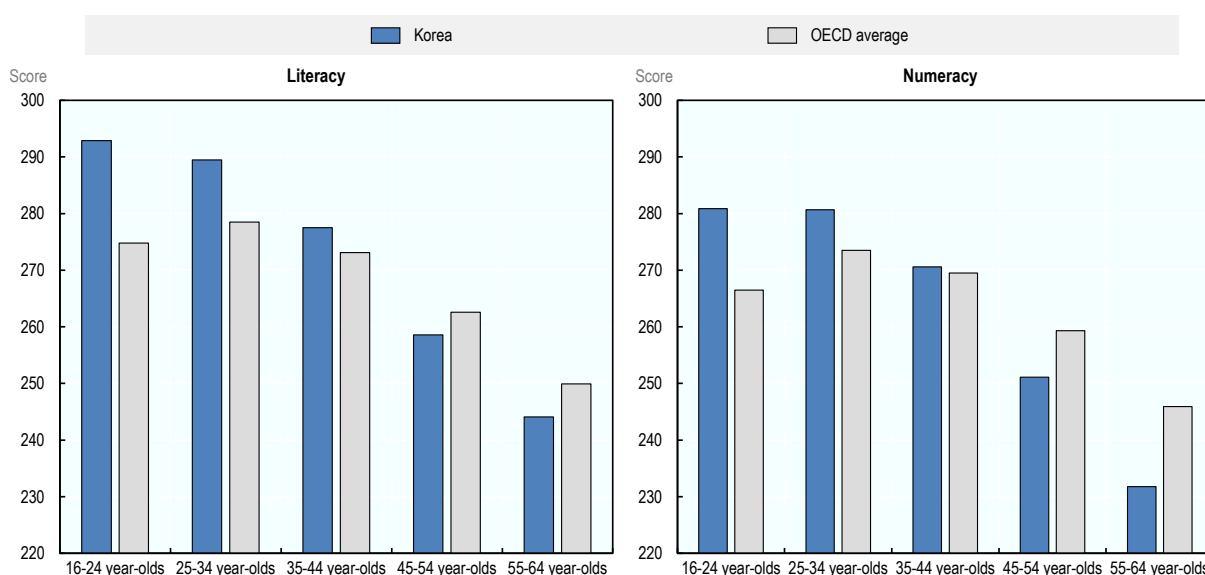


Source: OECD (2019^[4]), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>.

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However, the Survey of Adult Skills, a product of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), revealed a clear gap between the skills performance of younger and older generations in Korea. Figure 4.2 shows that this gap is also high in comparison with the OECD average.

Figure 4.2. Mean literacy and numeracy skills of adults by age group, Korea and OECD average



Source: OECD (2016^[5]), *Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills*, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en>.

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These findings from the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) show that the skills level of young adults is well above that of older generation in Korea (OECD, 2015^[6]). When comparing the skills proficiency of 55-65 year-olds, Korea is among the three lowest-performing countries (OECD, 2013^[7]). In contrast, 16-24 year-olds in Korea score second after Japan when compared across OECD countries (OECD, 2015^[6]). The low levels of basic skills, such as literacy, among the older generations is a serious challenge. Studies have shown that literacy is not only related to employment and income, but also to health and civic engagement (OECD, 2013^[7]). In addition, in Korea the relationship between an individual's socio-economic background and skills proficiency is much stronger in the older generation than in younger generations. In other words, lower skill levels among the older generation are more strongly related to lower socio-economic status than in the younger generations.

There are challenges in reaching those with low literacy and numeracy skills, as even though they are most in need, they tend to participate less in educational programmes (OECD, 2015^[6]). In order to break this vicious circle, educational programmes should target and activate low-skilled and older adults, as identified in the OECD's 2015 diagnostic report on Korea, which said that there was a "need for greater attention to the older cohorts" (OECD, 2015^[6]). Differences between age groups are also visible when looking at the employment rate. In 2018, the average employment rate for 15-64 year-olds was roughly 67%, but when broken down by age the rate was 73% for 25-34 year-olds in contrast to 67% for 55-64 year-olds (OECD, 2018^[3]). Lifelong learning, upskilling and easy access to education for older generations are important ways of closing the educational gap between generations.

Actors and legal foundations

Korea's lifelong learning system is divided into two pillars, and interviewees highlighted that it is essential to know this fact to understand the system as a whole. The first pillar is governed by the Ministry of Education and focuses on recreational (in the interviews also referred to as "civic" or "life enrichment" education) lifelong learning. Courses do not (necessarily) provide skills that are immediately relevant for employment; instead, the enjoyment and personal development of citizens are the priority. Examples of courses include calligraphy, languages, baking or handicraft. Interviewees explained that many people seek these programmes because they have been deprived of such learning opportunities when they were younger due to earlier economic difficulties in Korea. The national Lifelong Education Act is the legal basis of this pillar.

The second pillar is based on the labour law and is governed by the Ministry of Employment and Labour. This pillar focuses on employment relevant skills. Courses are provided by, for example, polytechnic universities. This case study will focus on the governance of the first pillar but will touch upon the second pillar in order to paint a full picture of the system.

Lifelong learning was not always at the top of the policy agenda in Korea; however, in 1980 Article 31 was added to the constitution which stipulated that "the state is responsible for promoting lifelong education" (UIL, 2015^[1]). Interrupted by the Asian currency crisis, it took until the 1990s for the topic of lifelong learning to gain in importance again (Han, 2008^[2]).

In 1999, the Lifelong Education Act was enacted, which is the central legal reference for (recreational) lifelong learning at the national level. The act defines lifelong learning as "all types of systematic educational activities other than regular school curriculums, including supplementary education for educational attainment, basic literacy education for adults, occupational ability enhancement education, humanities and liberal education, culture and art education, and citizen's participation education" (UIL, 2013^[8]).

The Lifelong Education Act establishes two important lifelong learning instruments at the national level. First, it requires the Ministry of Education to develop a National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan (NILE, 2018^[9]), which sets mid- and long-term goals and identifies challenges. The first plan was launched in 2003

and the ministry has to update the plan every five years. The fourth plan covers the years 2018-2022 and highlights, for example, the equal right to lifelong education of every citizen. It also proposes the creation of an online learning system to make access to lifelong learning easier for employees (NILE, 2018^[9]). The National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan has no binding character but it functions as a guideline for other actors in lifelong learning, such as local and regional governments.

The second instrument established by the Lifelong Education Act is the Lifelong Education Promotion Committee. This committee is chaired by the minister of education who invites a range of vice ministers from different ministries such as the vice minister of culture, sports and tourism, the vice minister for health, welfare and family affairs, the vice minister of environment, and the vice minister of labour. Experts on lifelong learning from academia and the head of the National Institute for Lifelong Education are also members of the committee. The act limits the number of committee members to 20.

The tasks of the committee are only vaguely described in the Lifelong Education Act. Topics to be discussed include the National Lifelong Learning Plan, the evaluation and reformation of the policy system promoting lifelong learning, and co-operation in lifelong learning policies. The committee develops ideas on these issues and its advice should be taken into account by the Ministry of Education when drafting the five-year plan for lifelong learning. However, recommendations are not binding and the act leaves open how detailed and in what way suggestions should be made by the committee. The act also does not specify how often the committee should meet, and currently it does not meet very often. The task of convening the committee is delegated to its chair (the minister of education). As of May 2019 there had not yet been a meeting in 2019.

The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) plays an important role in education research in Korea as the national centre for educational statistics and a think tank involved in educational policy development and implementation (KEDI, 2019^[10]). The institute covers all levels and areas in education such as primary education, university-based education and teacher education. However, interviewees expressed concerns that lifelong learning is not of high importance to the institute, and that its research efforts are limited in this regard.

The National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE), founded in 2008 as part of the Lifelong Education Act, is also an important player in the governance of lifelong learning in Korea. Its role includes the development and implementation of national lifelong education policies (NILE, 2019^[11]). NILE supports the Ministry of Education in the drafting of lifelong learning strategies and programmes. Furthermore, NILE developed and manages the Lifelong Learning Educators programme, which is a training programme that provides knowledge on the governance of lifelong learning and deepens the managerial skills of lifelong learning strategies, policies and programmes (NILE, 2017). For example, civil servants can undertake this training in order to become a lifelong learning expert in their department. The certificate, issued by NILE, is nationally standardised, and NILE sets the requirements for attaining the certificate. The training to become a lifelong learning educators is equivalent to at least 50 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits (equivalent to about 1 500 hours of studying) from a university and an internship in the field of lifelong learning. Once training is complete, lifelong learning educators can work in public institutions and design lifelong learning policies, programmes and budgets, as well as manage lifelong learning centres. They can also work for local governments and cities. Their task is to foster and help develop lifelong learning strategies.

NILE also organises one of the central national lifelong learning promotion events: the Lifelong Learning EXPO. Every two years, cities compete to be the host of the Expo, with NILE selecting the successful city. Educational institutions, regions and cities use the Expo to show what they have achieved regarding lifelong learning. It is a very important event not only to present different regional and local approaches to lifelong learning, but also as a place where different stakeholders exchange information, compare their achievements and take new ideas back to their city or region.

Lifelong learning at the local and regional levels

The governance of lifelong learning in Korea is characterised by the idea that planning and implementation is best conducted at the local level (UIL, 2015^[1]). Against this backdrop, the Lifelong Education Act requires each of the 17 provinces in Korea to establish a lifelong learning promotion centre. As of 2019, each province had successfully established one of these centres. The centres are financed by the governments of each province and are independent from the Ministry of Education. They conduct research on lifelong learning in their province, develop lifelong learning programmes and offer courses. Interviewees explained that these local lifelong learning centres have a lot of freedom to design their own programmes. The heads of the centres meet three times a year and exchange ideas and discuss challenges with each other. They also travel to other countries to learn about other regional approaches to lifelong learning.

The local/city level also plays an important role in the governance, and especially the implementation, of lifelong learning in Korea. The Lifelong Education Act highlights the importance of the city level by requiring the establishment of city (and district) lifelong education councils. For instance, the head of the city (district) should also be the chairperson of the city's lifelong education council. The chairperson decides on council members, but they should be public officials such as representatives from the city's department of education, specialists in lifelong learning or representatives from lifelong learning institutions. The size of each council is limited to 12 members. These councils, according to the Lifelong Education Act, deal with the implementation of lifelong education projects for local residents and facilitate co-operation between relevant agencies. Thus, the Lifelong Education Act has established a multilevel governance structure for the recreational pillar of lifelong learning, in which province and city level lifelong learning committees play a central role. Figure 4.3 gives an overview over the multilevel governance structure of recreational lifelong learning in Korea.

Figure 4.3. The multilevel governance structure of recreational lifelong learning in Korea

Governance Level	Institution	Role
International Level	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning	Exchange of information
National Level	Ministry of Education	Develops LLL agenda
Regional (Province) Level	Province Lifelong Learning Institute	Research and provision of LLL
City Level	Lifelong Learning Centre	Provide LLL
Citizens Level	Citizens councils	Develop ideas

Lifelong learning for the labour market

The description of actors and governance structures in the previous sections mostly referred to the recreational pillar of lifelong learning; however, the second pillar of lifelong learning in Korea is more relevant to employment. This system is governed by the Ministry of Employment and Labour, and

at the centre of this pillar is employment insurance, which is part of Korea's compulsory social insurance system.

The employment insurance scheme was established in 1995, and both employers and employees pay into the insurance fund: employers contribute 0.9-1.5% (depending on the size of the company) and employees contribute 0.65% of their wages. The purpose of the employment insurance is, among others, to improve workers' vocational skills (Article 1 of the Employment Insurance Act). The insurance fund finances vocational training programmes for employees who are currently covered by the insurance or those who are unemployed but were previously covered. Furthermore, it contributes to employers' costs of substituting a worker away for training purposes (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2018^[12]). Interview partners mentioned that even though by law employers are supposed to encourage their employees to take part in training (as stated in the Enforcement Decree of the Employment Insurance Act), in practice employees very rarely make use of this right due to Korean work culture, where employees take as little time off from their work as possible. This means that employees often do not take holidays, and even fewer make use of their right to take paid leave to participate in vocational training programmes during working hours.

The insurance only finances courses offered by training institutions registered with the Human Resource Development Service of Korea (HRD), which is a public institution founded in the 1980s. The Korean Chamber of Commerce (KORCHAM) is a private provider that runs nine centres and offers very similar courses in all its centres. Interviewees explained that the training centres are in contact with local companies to provide more specific skills needed by employers. The courses aim to upskill employees, but are also open to unemployed persons to prepare them for the labour market. An example of a public provider are the 34 (as of 2019) polytechnical colleges. These colleges provide programmes at the post-secondary non-tertiary level and are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Employment and Labour. However, interviewees explained that most providers of employment relevant lifelong learning are small, local private providers.

The employment relevant lifelong learning system is supported through the Tomorrow Learning Card, which represents an individual lifelong learning voucher worth up to KRW 2 million (Korean won) (about EUR 1 500¹) per year, and up to KRW 3 million (about EUR 2 200) for three years. Every employee covered by employment insurance, as well as unemployed persons, employees whose contract will end soon, or temporary workers can apply for the Tomorrow Learning Card. Applications are made through local employment centres, which check eligibility. When the card is granted by the regional employment centre, the card holder can search a database (HRD-net) run by the HRD to select a training programme. The Tomorrow Learning Card scheme covers up to 100% of the training costs, for example for online courses, or 50% for foreign language courses. Some 469 727 cards were issued in 2016, 518 088 were issued in 2017, and 552 397 were issued in 2018 (these numbers include cards for those who are unemployed and employed) (EIS, 2019^[13]).

The Korean Skills Quality Authority (KSQA), founded in 2015 by the minister of employment and labour, is a key mechanism for ensuring training quality. It is responsible for supervising institutions providing vocational training, with a special focus on institutions registered with the HRD database (HRD-net). One of its aims is to identify institutions offering low quality courses, i.e. those that do not increase the employability of participants. For this purpose, the KSQA tries to track the effect of vocational training on employment outcomes. However, this institution appears to play no major role yet in the governance of lifelong learning, as it is rarely mentioned and no further information is available.

Similar to the recreational pillar of lifelong learning, the employment relevant lifelong learning system is characterised by a multilevel governance structure. At the national level, in addition to the Ministry of Employment and Labour, the Korean Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET), established in 1997, and the Korean Labour Institute (KLI), established in 1988, are responsible for conducting VET-related research. Employment centres at the province and city levels are the operating bodies that provide consulting services to citizens with regard to training opportunities.

The lifelong learning system in Suwon City

This case study focuses on a successful example within the recreational pillar of lifelong learning, and sheds light on the governance of the recreational lifelong learning system in Suwon City. The case of Suwon City was chosen because the city has managed to establish and maintain a learning city ecology that includes voluntary participation from citizens, institutes and centres, thus potentially serving as a role model for other attempts to promote lifelong learning. Suwon City governs a very dense network of lifelong learning facilities that allows all citizens to reach a lifelong learning space within five to ten-minute walk from their home (UIL, 2017^[14]). Furthermore, Suwon City's government spends more than other cities on lifelong learning, which keeps tuition fees low for participants. This governance strategy leads to a high participation rate, with 39.2% of the population taking part in lifelong learning. Suwon City engages with its citizens in the governance of lifelong learning and thereby tailors the system more to the needs of citizens. In 2017, Suwon City won the UNESCO Learning City Award due to its "outstanding commitment and practice in building a learning city" (UIL, 2019^[15]).

Suwon City is located about 40 km south of Seoul in the Gyeonggi Province. It has a population of more than 1.2 million people who live in about 480 000 households (Suwon City, 2017^[16]). The average household income per month stood at KRW 3 414 000 (about EUR 2 500) in 2019. Suwon City holds the largest local government in Korea (employing about 3 000 public servants) and is divided into 4 districts and 42 administrative areas, also referred to as neighbourhoods (Suwon City, 2017^[16]).

In 2005, the Korean Ministry of Education officially awarded Suwon City the title of Lifelong Learning City. The Korean Ministry of Education has run the Lifelong Learning City project since 2000. In 2019, 160 Korean cities successfully filed their application and became official lifelong learning cities. This makes up about 70% of all Korean cities. The aim of this project is to reward and support cities that are interested in and show motivation to promote and implement lifelong learning. It is a competitive programme, and in order to qualify cities have to go through an evaluation process managed by NILE on behalf of the Ministry of Education. The evaluation looks at different criteria, for instance the existence of a concrete ordinance or law to support the learning city, a designated organisation, and a lifelong learning educator, as well as governance structures that involve residents, experts and local social partners in the decision making and that develop mid- and long-term goals. NILE analyses to what extent the lifelong learning strategy is tailored towards the specific needs of citizens and special local features. In the case of Suwon City, lifelong learning specifically targets elderly and children, which goes along with particular efforts in guaranteeing easy access to lifelong learning.

Once a city is selected as a lifelong learning city, NILE provides information on how to improve and promote lifelong learning, with best-practice examples and specific training about lifelong learning for the city's civil servants offered. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education provides financial support, although this varies greatly depending on the size of the city and its project plan, as described by interviewees. One of the requirements to become a lifelong learning city is that it must have an official lifelong learning educator, who are specifically trained and certified experts in lifelong learning governance. Interviewees explained that two certified lifelong learning educators work in the city government and another seven work in the city for other lifelong learning institutions.

In 2006, Suwon City created a new lifelong learning taskforce and developed a mid- and long-term plan for lifelong learning (Suwon City, 2017^[16]). Information on citizen's needs and lifelong learning facilities were collected through a survey in 2007 (Suwon City, 2017^[16]). Furthermore, the city organised roundtables for its citizens, which were attended by 100 people, to discuss and collect ideas on lifelong learning in the city. In 2019, there were 11 people working on the governance of lifelong learning in the city of Suwon (which includes the two specifically trained lifelong learning educators).

In 2009, the city created the Suwon Lifelong Learning Council. According to the Lifelong Education Act, these councils at the city level consist of up to 12 members. In Suwon City, city council members,

non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private course providers, academics and the heads of welfare centres are part of the Suwon Lifelong Learning Council. The council meets once or twice a year, and the mayor of Suwon City hosts the meetings. The council discusses the overall development of lifelong learning, as well as the challenges it faces. Furthermore, the council can decide top-down on the establishment of new programmes. In early 2019 for example, the council decided to establish an exact vision and define goals for a global learning city, and to invest in artificial intelligence programmes and liberal arts. The council also decides on the distribution of the city's lifelong learning budget. Once the council has taken its decision, it hands over the responsibility of implementation to the working council. The working council consists of managerial level representatives of the different members of the city's lifelong learning council. These include the civil servants of the city and the administrative staff of NGOs and other providers.

One of the key institutions in the development and implementation of lifelong learning in Suwon City is the Suwon Lifelong Learning Centre. The establishment of the centre was initiated in early 2007, and it opened in October 2011 (Suwon City, 2017^[16]). It is financed by the city. The centre is responsible for planning and conducting lifelong learning programmes and runs many different courses, including urban gardening (where participants manage their own beehive on the roof), handy craft and literature courses. It also supports clubs and volunteering activities by providing facilities where they can meet. Additionally, the Suwon Lifelong Learning Centre collects and provides comprehensive information on lifelong learning. It advertises its programmes and other lifelong learning opportunities on its website and on printed posters in the centre. The centre's website is visited by an average of more than 1 000 visitors per day (Suwon City, 2017^[16]).

Suwon City had established a network of more than 600 learning facilities as of 2019, which are spaces where formal and informal lifelong learning take place. These facilities include community centres (42), libraries (118), child and youth centres (73), cultural and arts centres (20) and a broad range of other lifelong learning facilities (Suwon City, 2017^[16]). A variety of private providers are also active in the local lifelong learning market. Learning facilities host all types of lifelong learning activities, and local facilities (such as cafes or welfare centres) can contact the city to become an official lifelong learning space. Civil servants working on lifelong learning in the city government review applications and decide whether to grant the official label to a learning place. The city's label does not come with financial benefits, but allows the learning spaces to officially advertise their membership in the city's lifelong learning network. Interviewees explained that having the label increases the attractiveness of facilities as it has a good reputation among citizens. The extension of this network is important to the city government as it is a key factor in the creation of easily accessible and broad reaching lifelong learning, it also keeps the costs of running facilities low. The city government monitors the density of the network and actively contacts potential providers if an area is missing such facilities.

Some 59 722 lifelong learning programmes were offered from 2011 to mid-2017 (Suwon City, 2017^[16]). During this time, almost 4.5 million people participated in these programmes (ibid.). Suwon increased the number of learners from 376 000 in 2011 to more than 790 000 in 2015 (UIL, 2015^[11]). Each learner can participate in several programmes, which is why the number of participants is higher than the number of learners.

One of the main priorities of lifelong learning in Suwon City is to increase literacy. Korea faces a considerable generational gap regarding skills levels, with basic literacy competences often lacking among older generations due to the economic difficulties of Korea after the Korean War in the 1950s. Suwon City's lifelong learning strategy specifically addresses this challenge. The city has developed courses designed for older generations, with 17.8% of lifelong learning courses targeting this group (GILL, 2018^[17]). Compared to the other 30 cities within Gyeonggi Province, Suwon City offers the third highest number of courses for the age group 65+ (GILL, 2018^[17]). However, interviewees also noted that the "new old" generations, now in their 50s and 60s, will have different needs and interests than the current senior generation in their 70s and 80s. For example, illiteracy is less of a problem among younger

generations, which means that Suwon City's lifelong learning system will have to prove its flexibility and ability to adjust to new interests and needs in the future (e.g. fewer basic literacy programmes).

In Suwon City, the engagement of and with citizens is a key policy, as underlined by interviewees. For example, the city offers subsidies for lifelong learning projects developed by citizens. Citizens who have an idea for a new lifelong learning programme can develop their own project plan and submit it to the city. The city's civil servants who work on lifelong learning review the project plans and grant funding to those with promise. The city also engages with its citizens through the Urban Policy Citizens' Planning Team, the first of its kind in Korea. Representatives from the 44 neighbourhoods in Suwon City are involved with the aim of integrating citizens into the planning and implementation of city policies. Up to 500 citizens meet in roundtables to present their ideas and opinions on lifelong learning and discuss ways to implement new policies. The results of these roundtable meetings are communicated to the 44 neighbourhoods and taken up by the city government. For the city, these roundtables are an important way of tailoring its lifelong learning programmes to the needs of citizens. NGOs can apply for public subsidies to run lifelong learning programmes. When granted, NGOs are obliged to report on their performance, the outcome of their activities and the use of the budget to the city.

Another important feature of Suwon City's lifelong learning approach is the engagement of its citizens as teachers as well as participants. To become a teacher in Suwon City's lifelong learning system, the applicant has to undertake one year of theoretical and practical training. After this, citizens can become certified "civic lifelong learning teachers". More than 1 000 of these teachers work in Suwon City. Interviewees explained that it is a great opportunity for older generations to actively engage in and contribute to society. Women who have left the labour market often use this opportunity to fill career gaps and start working part time again. Interviewees often described Suwon City's lifelong learning approach as an "ecosystem" of lifelong learning. This term captures the combination of top-down (initiatives by the city) and bottom-up (initiatives by the citizens) policy development.

Although Suwon City applies low-cost solutions in its lifelong learning strategy, such as engaging citizens as teachers and using local facilities as learning spaces, the governance of lifelong learning requires sufficient funding. Interviewees argued that Suwon City spends more on lifelong learning than other cities, and that the budget has increased in recent years. In 2014, the city invested about KRW 2 508 million (EUR 1.9 million) in lifelong learning. In 2016, the budget was about KRW 2 565 (about EUR 1.98 million) and in 2018 it was about KRW 2 772 (about EUR 2.1 million) (Suwon City, 2019^[18]).

One interviewee pointed out that the decision to dedicate an increasing amount of resources to lifelong learning is a very conscious decision by the city government, with the dedication of the mayor mentioned as one of the most important factors in developing and supporting lifelong learning investments. Interviewees also highlighted the flexibility of the city budget, which is managed by the city independently to other governance levels.

The vision of Suwon City that drives lifelong learning includes the "pleasure of learning and joy of sharing" (Suwon City, 2017^[16]), as well as the "'triple A' approach: learning for Anyone, Anywhere, in an eAsy way" (UIL, 2017^[14]). The vision underlines that lifelong learning is a means to strengthen the social cohesion, self-fulfilment and happiness of citizens. Employability and participation in the labour market do not play a large role in Suwon's lifelong learning strategy, but as mentioned, promoting literacy, particularly among older generations, is a central priority. Besides literacy programmes, the School for Anything was founded in 2014 and is specifically designed for older generations. It allows experienced older citizens to share their knowledge with others, especially younger generations. Interviewees explained that courses such as barista courses (the art of making coffee), calligraphy or courses that explain how to use computers, the Internet and smartphones are very popular. Interviewees explained that there is also great interest in programmes on history and cultural heritage because Suwon City is home to Suwon Hwaseong Fortress, a UNESCO world cultural heritage site. Another programme highlighted in one interview, the Every Other

Generation Programme, specifically focuses on closing the intergenerational gap by connecting older and younger generations. It thereby skips one generation to bring the grandparents' and children's generations together. In this programme, senior citizens are paired with students. They meet in parks, cafes or classrooms. In the interviews it became clear that this programme was considered very successful, as young people bonded with older people and formed emotional and social cohesion.

Regarding programmes for children, language courses are popular. For example, The Global Village is a language school with a focus on English, where children learn the language in summer camps. About 32 000 learners participate in 19 different programmes a year. Also popular among families, children and school classes is the city's unique museum, Mr Toilet House, which addresses the human digestive system and the development of toilets in an educational way.

The advertisement and accessibility of information on lifelong learning offers are important to the city government. Interviewees noted that the city and other providers use a variety of channels to reach citizens and inform them of available local lifelong learning opportunities. These channels include websites (for example the Suwon Lifelong Learning Centre website), email newsletters or radio advertisements. Printed programmes and advertisements are posted in public libraries, local community centres, the Suwon Lifelong Learning Centre and in neighbourhoods. Courses are made public so that participants can learn about other programmes and upcoming events.

An important event for the promotion of lifelong learning is Suwon City's annual Lifelong Learning Festival, which brings together citizens and lifelong learning providers. In 2018, 25 000 people attended the public festival. Suwon City engages with many different stakeholders beyond citizens through this festival, such as learning facilities and programme providers. All lifelong learning providers can participate and use the festival to promote their lifelong learning programmes. This motivates stakeholders to take part and helps the city to maintain and even extend its network. Interviewees explained that the two lifelong learning educators organise the festival, which implies that their role in the governance of lifelong learning in Suwon City is important.

Suwon City has been a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GLNC) since 2016, and in 2017 won the Learning City award. One of the aims of the GLNC is to improve lifelong learning by "promoting policy dialogue and peer learning among member cities" (UIL, 2019^[19]). The GLNC consists of 251 cities. Among the 62 members in the Asian Pacific region, 35 are Korean cities, out of which 12 are located in Gyeonggi Province. As one interviewee explained, the mayors of Korean lifelong learning cities regularly participate in international conferences organised by the GLNC. For example, every 12 years the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning holds a conference in collaboration with a lifelong learning city member. The conference focuses on adult learning and brings together representatives from local governments and experts in the field of lifelong learning. It also where the ceremony of awarding the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning Award takes place. Criteria for the award include the creation of co-ordinated structures (e.g. committees), making lifelong learning accessible for all citizens, the organisation of "celebratory events to promote and maintain the process of building the learning city", the establishment of monitoring mechanisms, and documented progress of the city's learning plan (UIL, 2019^[20]). Suwon City was one of 16 cities awarded this status in 2017, and interviews showed that the city is very proud of its status. The award (a golden plate) is publicly exhibited in Suwon's Lifelong Learning Centre.

Although Suwon City runs its lifelong learning system independently, the city is embedded in a multilevel lifelong learning governance structure that includes the international level (Suwon City as member of the GLNC), the national level (the Ministry of Education awards Suwon City a lifelong learning city), the regional (province) level (Suwon City's lifelong learning experts participate in the province's lifelong learning council meetings), and the city and citizen level. The Gyeonggi Province, to which Suwon City belongs. It is the most populous province in Korea with about 13 million inhabitants, consisting of 31 cities and counties. Among these, 29 are recognised as official lifelong learning cities, which shows the relevance

of lifelong learning throughout the province. The Gyeonggi Province Institute for Lifelong Learning is one of the biggest in Korea regarding budget and personnel. Established in 2011, it employs 200 employees in 6 divisions in 13 different offices and campuses. Interviewees explained that the Gyeonggi Provincial Institute for Lifelong Learning (GILL) develops its own lifelong learning plan, which is inspired by, but not necessarily aligned with, the national Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan. This allows the institute to take regional characteristics into account and tailor the plan to its own goals.

GILL conducts research and surveys, for example on participation in lifelong learning (every two years), on the number and type of lifelong learning institutions, and on barriers to participation in lifelong learning. The centre published 8 reports in 2016, 12 in 2017 and 13 in 2018. The institute also monitors the quality of lifelong learning, which is mainly undertaken through applying a “happiness index” that focuses on participants’ subjective perception of lifelong learning. Interviewees explained that the establishment of systematic assessment mechanisms using objective factors is still underway. At the national level, KEDI is in principle responsible for conducting research on lifelong learning. Interviewees explained that GILL and KEDI collaborate to complement each other’s data and create a bigger sample that allows for more fine-grained analyses and the development of more specific policy recommendations.

GILL is financed by the Gyeonggi Province government. The institute works closely with the province government, especially with the Gyeonggi Office of Education. For example, it is involved in the establishment and drafting of policies and runs its own policy research department. Furthermore, the institute functions as a hub for exchange of information and best-practice examples among the cities and counties that belong to Gyeonggi Province. The province institute is in daily contact with representatives of the local level, either through formal meetings or informal exchanges via email or telephone. The institute offers counselling and consulting to cities and counties, as well as other organisations.

The heads of the province’s lifelong learning centres meet three times a year to exchange ideas, talk about recent developments and, importantly, discuss challenges and problems. The heads of the province centres also meet with NILE at least three times a year, which facilitates the co-ordination of activities across different levels of government. Suwon City’s lifelong learning experts participate in the Gyeonggi Lifelong Learning Council, where 65 hands-on officials from the 31 cities and counties meet to discuss pending issues. An important goal of this council is to create a “co-operative system among lifelong learning cities and counties” (UIL, 2017^[14]).

Analysis

The following section discusses the strengths and challenges of Suwon’s lifelong learning system.

Strengths

High participation and a culture of lifelong learning is fostered by broad access

One of the most important strengths of Suwon City’s lifelong learning system is the well-established lifelong learning culture among Suwon’s citizens, which goes along with a high participation rate in lifelong learning programmes, a strong willingness of citizens to contribute to their further development, for instance by participating in roundtables, and a strong commitment of citizens to work as lifelong learning teachers. The city managed to increase the number of learners from 376 000 in 2011 to more than 790 000 in 2015 (UIL, 2017^[14]), and the literacy rate in the city is moving towards 100% (UIL, 2017^[14]). The key factor to achieving this was accessibility.

The city keeps the financial hurdle (i.e. fees) low and guarantees easy physical access to lifelong learning classes. High registration fees might stop interested candidates from signing up for a course. Research by

the Gyeonggi Lifelong Learning Institute shows that almost 45% of courses in Suwon City cost less than KRW 40 000 (EUR 30), and fewer than 20% charge more than KRW 50 000 (EUR 38). Furthermore, the dense network of more than 600 learning facilities enables all citizens to reach a learning facility within a ten-minute walk. This is particularly important to enable older citizens to participate. The city government monitors the network of learning facilities to maintain and even extend the network.

The city finances the lifelong learning centre as an infrastructure hub and provides essential personnel, in particular the expertise of the two lifelong learning educators, who are specifically trained to design budgets for lifelong learning and have an overview of the relevant bodies within the government. Korea's approach of offering a specific lifelong learning training programme is an important factor in increasing the capacity of cities, provinces and companies to engage with lifelong learning.

The autonomy of province and city governments helps to design lifelong learning programmes

Although the Korean lifelong learning system is characterised by a multilevel governance structure, it grants considerable autonomy to the different governance levels, such as the province and city level governments. The national lifelong learning plan only offers rough guidelines and does not oblige province and city governments to implement specific lifelong learning programmes. This combination of co-ordination across levels of government with a significant degree of autonomy for lower levels is particularly helpful in ensuring that lifelong learning offers match regionally specific needs.

In the case of Suwon City, the Gyeonggi Province Lifelong Learning Centre conducts province-specific research and develops province-specific recommendations and programmes. Suwon City is free to design its lifelong learning strategy, including how much to invest and which programmes to support, or which new fields of interest, such as artificial intelligence, to explore. This flexibility allows the city to tailor its strategy and programmes to the specific interests of local citizens. At the same time, the city's efforts are embedded in and supported by a comprehensive regional and national framework that promotes lifelong learning.

However, the downside of this autonomy is that local political conditions and the degree of support from a particular government are important background factors. For example, the current mayor of Suwon City is a great supporter of lifelong learning, but there is no guarantee that the successor will put the same emphasis on lifelong learning. Future mayors might have other preferences, and will have the power to change the city's lifelong learning system.

Lifelong learning councils within Suwon City and Gyeonggi Province foster the involvement of stakeholders in policy making

Suwon City's Lifelong Learning Council brings together representatives from the city government, NGOs, heads of local welfare centres and representatives from academia. A similar body exists at the province level, namely the Gyeonggi Province Lifelong Learning Council, which consists of representatives from the province government, training providers and academic experts. These councils represent important bodies that institutionalise the engagement of stakeholders in the governance of lifelong learning, both in terms of monitoring and steering, as well as in the further development of training content. The councils bring together policy makers with institutions in charge of implementing the programmes (such as NGOs and lifelong learning centres). This mutual feedback mechanism ensures that training offers match training needs. Furthermore, the councils foster a culture of collective policy making. However, as remarked by interview partners, the range of institutions represented in the councils could be diversified further in the future. Most importantly, interviewees criticised the fact that employers and employees, as well as citizens, are not represented in the councils (this is further explored below).

The Gyeonggi Provincial Institute for Lifelong Learning (GILL) enables horizontal communication and exchange of data

GILL is a central institution that stimulates the exchange and distribution of information within the province, and connects the province to discourses at the national level. The institute functions like an information hub and is accessible to all cities within the province. GILL is available for cities when they have questions and require information on lifelong learning. Furthermore, it fosters vertical co-operation and networking by bringing together representatives from all 31 cities and counties to discuss current challenges and policy solutions. The process of exchanging ideas is supported with research activities by GILL.

The availability of detailed and high-quality data is a precondition for evidence-based policy making. In Korea, different institutions at the national level conduct research and collect data on lifelong learning. However, the resources of these national research institutions are limited and the data often do not capture regional differences. Institutes at the province level, such as GILL, are crucial to fill the knowledge gap of missing regional data. In this regard, GILL co-operates with KEDI which complements national data sets with local data generated through research projects it has conducted. According to interviewees, 6 out of the 17 Korean provinces have so far followed this example and established vertical co-operation between the provincial institutes and KEDI. This expands the availability of data at the national level. The extent to which these data are used by policy makers, however, could still be improved (see challenges section below).

Challenges

Lack of vertical co-operation

One of the key challenges in Korea's lifelong learning system is the lack of co-operation, both vertical and horizontal. As explained above, Korea's system of lifelong learning has established a range of mechanisms, institutions and bodies to facilitate and ensure co-ordination across different levels of government. However, interviews revealed that when it comes to implementation in practice, the effective degree of co-ordination could be significantly improved.

Regarding vertical co-operation, interview partners stated that the national, province and city level act somewhat independently from each other, rather than tightly co-ordinating their activities. On the one hand, this can be an advantage as it allows the province and city governments to tailor their lifelong education policies to the specific needs of local citizens. On the other hand, however, a lack of co-ordination results in wasted resources when efforts are duplicated, or contradicting strategies when the different levels focus on different priorities. For instance, the provinces do not seem to perceive the five-year lifelong learning plan developed by the Ministry of Education as relevant to them, with GILL and Suwon City both developing their own lifelong learning plans independent from the national plan. This means that the national plan is disconnected from the lower governance levels, which reduces its effectiveness. If no institutions implement the national plan, then it becomes meaningless. More efforts should be undertaken to ensure that regional strategies, while being responsive to local needs, are integrated and embedded in a comprehensive national strategy.

Lack of horizontal co-ordination

Regarding horizontal co-ordination, interviewees underlined the lack of communication and collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment and Labour. There are no institutionalised regular meetings between the two ministries, and they only meet "when needed". This gap reflects the detachment of the two lifelong learning pillars as discussed above. Even though the division between recreational lifelong learning and employment relevant lifelong learning might make sense, the disconnection between the two pillars and the ministries is a great challenge. For example, the Ministry

of Education develops the overarching lifelong learning plan, but 80% of the budget goes to the Ministry of Employment and Labour.

Greater co-operation and co-ordination between the two ministries and systems would help to overcome system-specific challenges. For example, the employment relevant system suffers from narrow accessibility as access depends on the individual's status regarding the employment insurance. In contrast, ensuring broad access is a strength of the recreational pillar. The recreational system could benefit from opening up towards more employment relevant programmes, thus moving away from its mostly recreational function. Interviewees explained that many citizens are interested in more employment relevant education as part of the easy-to-access recreational system, such as mothers who wish to re-enter the labour market but are not covered by employment insurance. The dense lifelong learning network in Suwon City has the potential to contribute to closing this gap. However, this would require communication and co-operation between provincial employment centres and lifelong learning institutions, as well as city-level employment agencies and lifelong learning centres, which does not take place so far.

Lack of quality control and systematic data collection

Neither national, provincial nor municipal governments have managed to establish an encompassing quality control system. Gyeonggi Province has applied the happiness index, as mentioned above, in an attempt to capture the quality of lifelong learning in the province. However, this index only measures the subjective perception of participants. Objective quality measures such as drop-out or participation rates are not systematically evaluated. In Suwon City, local lifelong learning classes are not systematically monitored. The city focuses on the maintenance and expansion of the network of learning facilities, while potentially losing track of the quality of programmes.

This challenge is closely related to the lack of systematic data on lifelong learning, such as participation rates or number of lifelong learning facilities, which are essential for enabling evidence-based policy making. Although KEDI is responsible for collecting data on lifelong learning at the national level, its capacities are limited and it tends to give priority to other fields in education such as primary or university-based education. Thus, detailed data at the national level for lifelong learning are lacking. Other institutions, such as the Korean Research Institute on Vocational Education and Training, conduct research and collect data, but different data collection efforts are not comprehensively integrated and brought together. GILL collects data on lifelong learning at the regional level, which is an important contribution to developing a more fine-grained understanding of local lifelong learning; however, other provinces do not equip their lifelong learning centres with the resources to conduct research. As a consequence, data availability on lifelong learning resembles a patchwork rather than systematic and all-encompassing approach to data collection.

Narrow target group

Suwon City's system of lifelong learning focuses on children and older generations. One of the reasons why older generations are so relevant for the city, as explained by interviewees, is that they are a big part of the electorate. The city does not systematically take into account the needs of younger citizens interested in developing their career further, those who want to change jobs or those who want to re-enter the labour market but are excluded from the employment insurance. However, interviewees underlined that young people in particular would benefit from lifelong learning programmes that help them find well-paid jobs and enter the labour market. The unemployment rate for those aged under 30 is significantly higher than the average unemployment rate in Gyeonggi Province, but Suwon City's lifelong learning system does not provide (at least not systematically) employment relevant lifelong learning opportunities, with not even 1% of programmes explicitly covering job competences or the topic of employment (GILL, 2018^[17]).

Lack of employer and employee involvement

Related to the last point, employers, employer associations and unions are not systematically involved in the governance of lifelong learning in Suwon City, such as the city's lifelong learning council. Interviewees explained that Suwon City maintains close relationships with Samsung because its headquarters are located in Suwon City and it employs about 38 000 employees (Samsung, 2019^[21]). However, rather than being involved in the city's lifelong learning programmes, interviewees explained that big companies such as Samsung run their own internal training systems. The lack of employer and union involvement is not unique to lifelong learning governance in Suwon City. Interviewees underlined that employer associations and unions also have little influence on lifelong learning policies at the national level. For example, the national Lifelong Education Promotion Committee only consists of national vice ministers. Even though the horizontal engagement of government stakeholders is encouraged by the committee, there is not a great variety of private actors involved, which means that there is little input from business actors or unions to the development of the national five-year lifelong learning plan.

In order to support the development of a meaningful and relevant national skills strategy, existing governance bodies could facilitate the engagement of private actors and employee representatives in the development of the national learning plan. As some interviewees argued, there is little knowledge about employment relevant training demands (from both employers and employees) among state actors. Giving employers and employees a voice in governance bodies would mediate this lack of knowledge, particularly as high-quality data on training needs are lacking. Involving employers and employees in the design and implementation of the national learning plan also raises the commitment of big business players and multinational corporations to align and co-ordinate their skills strategies with other bodies and institutions.

Summary

The governance of lifelong learning in Suwon City relates to the three dimensions of governance described in the introduction in the following ways. First, in terms of promoting co-ordination across levels of government (the “whole-of-government” approach), GILL acts as a hub for information exchange and brings together representatives from the 31 cities and counties. At the same time, interviewees described governance at the different levels as somewhat independent. For example, the National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan functions as a guideline, but the provinces and cities also develop their own plans. Taking local requirements into account is an important aspect, but the analysis in this case study revealed room for more intensified co-operation that builds on existing practices and institutions.

Second, regarding engaging stakeholders throughout the policy cycle, the analysis revealed that Suwon City uses its lifelong learning council to engage with lifelong learning providers such as welfare centres and NGOs. Furthermore, it organises roundtables for citizens and takes the results into consideration when designing lifelong learning policies. However, the analysis also revealed a lack of systematic engagement with employers and unions in the governance of lifelong learning. This applies to all governance levels and is related to the institutional separation of the Korean lifelong learning system into two distinct pillars. In the future, this strict separation should be overcome, as the strengths of the different pillars can effectively compensate for the weaknesses.

Third, the analysis revealed two interesting findings in the context of aligning financial incentives. The city government of Suwon City increases its public spending on lifelong learning every year and keeps fees for citizens low to allow easy access to lifelong learning. The city engages with existing facilities such as libraries or welfare centres and helps to host lifelong learning activities, which reduces the costs for the city. However, overall public investments in lifelong learning are somewhat low, which was criticised by interviewees. Although the city is very committed to lifelong learning at the local level, the overall lack of resources is mostly related to the low priority given to lifelong learning at the national level. Hence, more effort can be undertaken to boost the relevance and financial commitment to the development of skills across the life course.

Policy recommendations

Based on the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Suwon City's lifelong learning system, the following section presents a number of policy recommendations specific to Korea. More general policy recommendations are developed and presented in the final chapter of this report.

Institutionalise co-operation between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment and Labour

The unambiguous division of the Korean lifelong learning system into two distinct pillars is rooted in a lack of co-operation and co-ordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment and Labour. As the interviews suggested, contact between the two ministries is irregular and weakly institutionalised. For instance, each ministry develops its own lifelong learning agenda. Establishing more regular and institutionalised means of communication between the two ministries could help to reduce the communication and knowledge gaps between the two pillars. Inter-ministerial conferences aimed at developing a comprehensive national skills strategy should be established to guarantee the exchange of information and allow for the active co-ordination of policy making.

The process to develop the national learning plan is an established mechanism that can form a basis for increased communication and co-operation. For instance, as mentioned the national Lifelong Education Promotion Committee consists of the minister of education and a number of vice ministers. This committee could be a good opportunity to strengthen the whole-of-government approach by facilitating co-operation and communication among different ministries at the national level that have a link to lifelong learning. However, as the activity report of the Ministry of Education shows, this committee rarely meets. The minister of education is responsible for initiating committee meetings, but there are no binding regulations regarding the frequency. Establishing regular meetings and opening them up to other stakeholders, both ministries and non-governmental actors, would increase the relevance of the committee. The committee would also be a contact point for representatives from the provinces to align their lifelong learning plans more with the national strategy, as explained further in the following recommendation.

Strengthen vertical co-ordination

As argued above, the system of lifelong learning is a multilevel governance structure that involves four levels of governance (national, province, city, citizens). The analysis revealed that these different levels are often not well connected, and instead work somewhat independently from each other. In order to strengthen vertical co-ordination across the whole of government, lifelong learning plans at the national, province and city levels should be more synchronised to increase their effectiveness. This requires communication and co-operation along the vertical governance level. One way of increasing co-operation would be to engage with representatives from the provinces when drafting the five-year lifelong learning plan. The relationship between GILL and the cities seems to be well developed, but weakly institutionalised. One way to better connect the province and city level would be to invite province representatives to the city's lifelong learning council meetings as this is the key decision-making body for lifelong learning at the city level.

Establish a comprehensive database on lifelong learning

Many different institutions conduct research on lifelong learning and collect relevant data on, for example, participation, skill levels and employer demands. These institutions include KRIVET, the HRD, NILE, the provinces' lifelong learning promotion centres and the cities. However, data collection efforts appear to be very decentralised and uncoordinated, which means that it is difficult for institutions to access data

from each other. The establishment of a comprehensive database that includes all relevant data on skills would be a way to integrate all of the data collected. The case of Estonia's Education Information System (EHIS, Chapter 2) is an example of how data from different sources could be collected in one large comprehensive database accessible not only by the national government, but also by regional governments and even schools. In the case of Korea, such a comprehensive database would increase the transparency and further the development of evidence-based policy making at all governance levels.

Introduce quality control mechanisms

As discussed above, one particular challenge in Korea's otherwise well-developed system of lifelong learning is the lack of systematic quality control. Existing efforts to monitor the quality of courses, such as the GILL happiness index, are focused on subjective assessments of course quality by participants themselves. In addition to measures such as these, objective variables such as drop-out and participation rates, as well as ideally the effect of training on employment outcomes and social cohesion, should be taken into account. This necessitates the collection of data in a comprehensive database (see previous recommendation), as well as political discourse on the criteria for evaluating the quality of lifelong learning offers.

Engage with employers and employees to develop employment relevant lifelong learning

One of the main criticisms raised in the interviews was the lack of employer and employee engagement in the governance structures of lifelong learning. Responding to this criticism, employer and employee representatives should be systematically engaged at all governance levels. The different lifelong learning institutions such as the National Lifelong Learning Promotion Committee and Suwon City's Lifelong Learning Council risk losing track of the needs of employees and the labour market if these important stakeholders are not heard. Systematic research such as surveys among employers might help to understand the skills needed on the labour market, but cannot compensate for the direct involvement of employers in the governance of skills policies. Against the backdrop that unemployment among younger people and those 50+ is higher than average, lifelong learning could be used as a tool to improve employability. Engaging employer and employee representatives in the development of the national five-year lifelong learning plan would be a strong statement. Although the Korean system offers employment relevant training through the employment insurance scheme, this system is not easily accessible for those not covered by the scheme.

Educate employers and employees about the importance of lifelong learning

Enhancing the involvement of employers and employees in lifelong learning should be accompanied with efforts to change the dominant working culture, which, as became clear in interviews, often prevents employees from making full use of existing training opportunities. Although different lifelong learning offers exist, interviewees explained that participation among those working full time is low in Suwon City, as well as in Korea in general. Pressure to perform well at work and to work long hours reduces the time available for lifelong learning. Employers should allow and encourage their employees to participate in lifelong learning activities. For example, if management staff regularly engage in lifelong learning themselves, this might serve a role model for other employees. In the long term, promoting lifelong learning among employees will likely increase their productivity and the overall competitiveness of the company, as well-trained employees can more easily adjust to changing economic circumstances. Small and medium-sized companies may be particularly reluctant to promote lifelong learning among their employees and should therefore be even more encouraged. Employees should be better informed of learning opportunities and encouraged to make use of their existing rights to lifelong learning. A culture of lifelong learning needs to be fostered and strengthened among employees.

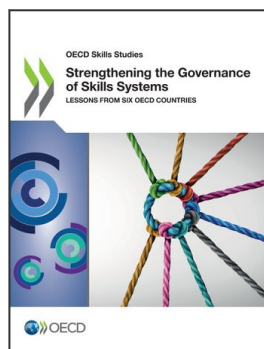
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Note

¹ All currency conversions are based on the exchange rate of 29 August, 2019: KRW 1 = EUR 0.000744.



From:

Strengthening the Governance of Skills Systems Lessons from Six OECD Countries

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/3a4bb6ea-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2020), “Case study: Lifelong learning in Korea”, in *Strengthening the Governance of Skills Systems: Lessons from Six OECD Countries*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/cd2b486a-en>

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