

# Human Resource Development & Lifelong Education in Korea

## National HRD

From 2001 to 2005, The First Master Plan of Human Resources Development aimed to develop Korea into one of the world's ten most powerful nations by cultivating high-quality human resources and creating a society based on mutual trust. The government established four major areas, 16 fields, and 119 specific tasks. Under the first Master Plan, human resources development programs for each ministry were established and implemented annually from 2002 to 2005. In 2005, the second Master Plan of Human Resources Development was established. It had run from 2006 and ended in 2010.

The second Master Plan set four major policy goals: Generate internationally competitive manpower. Extend lifelong learning opportunities to all people. Improve social integration, education, culture and welfare, and lastly, expand the infrastructure for human resources development. The plan also includes 20 policy areas and 67 specific tasks. Since 2006, the ministries have participated in making annual plans to improve the practicability of the second Master Plan.

In March 2000, the Council for Human Resources Development was established to coordinate human resources development policies implemented by each ministry. The Basic Human Resources Development Act and its enforcement decrees were established in February 24, 2003, and it provided a legal basis for instituting human resources development policies.

In April 2007, the Human Resources Development Council was reorganized into the Human Resources Committee founded by the Basic Human Resources Development Act. It was developed for the purpose of

coordinating and discussing the direction of policies. The committee is supervised by the president and includes ministers and experts from related fields. It was designed to coordinate policies and increase the efficiency of financial investments by discussing specific items related to the budget.

The Basic Human Resources Development Act, revised on April 27, 2007, defines "human resources" and "human resources development," specifies the responsibilities of the state and local governments regarding human resources development, and outlines the master plan for human resources development. Furthermore, it expanded the Council for Human Resources Development into the National Council for Human Resources Development. This council, chaired by the president, supports regional human resources development, investigates and evaluates the Council's projects, and promotes institutions recognized as superior human resources development organizations.

In addition, the government has established a human resources policy cooperation network that links government-funded research institutes to private research institutes and related academic associations to promote discussion on the latest information and knowledge about education, training, employment, and industrial policies. It also ensures that new information and ideas gathered at research institutes are a part of ongoing human resources policy development.

The effectiveness of the government's human resources development policies depends on their systematic implementation in coordination with regional projects. At a development meeting held on May 29, 2002, the government decided to designate "test areas for developing human resources" and formed a foundation for revitalizing human resources development.

As part of this project, Busan, Gwangju, and North Chungcheong Province were designated as model areas from October 2002 to September 2003. As of 2006, 13 cities and provinces, not including the capital, created and operated respective human resources development

consultative committees based on the results of the three test areas.

The supply and demand of future manpower should be estimated in advance in order to establish an infrastructure for human resources development policies. During the Human Resources Development Meeting in 2002, the Human Resources Committee discussed "mid- and long-term prospects for supply and demand of national manpower and the tasks associated with regulating the process," and in the 2005 meeting, they discussed "the prospects and analysis of mid- and long-term supply and demand of manpower." In addition, the "Best HRD" system was introduced as a pilot project in 2005 and was implemented in 2006. The system has strived to help companies and public organizations recruit employees based on talent. It has also offered in-service training to improve the capabilities of the workforce. The government will also introduce the Korean Skill Standards (KSS), which will optimize knowledge, technology, and ability necessary for the best possible job performance in the appropriate industrial sector and skill level.

## **Lifelong Education**

### **Institutionalization of Lifelong Education**

The new postindustrial, knowledge-based society, the aging population and deepening socioeconomic gaps in knowledge and educational opportunities are increasing the need for lifelong education. As a result, the MEST is working to expand education in Korea from the limited classroom setting to an open learning environment for everyone.

In order to increase adult participation in lifelong education programs, the government is seeking to improve the credit accumulation system and other institutional supports. They are also pursuing an innovative, vocational education and training system for adults. This lifelong education system facilitates the links between the workplace and the school, and therefore allows working adults to develop vocational

capabilities.

Revisions to the Social Education Act in 1982 marked the beginning of the Lifelong Education Program in Korea. In 1999, the government revised the act as the Lifelong Education Act, which provided substantial support for lifelong education programs. The recent 2008 Lifelong Education Act has institutionalized lifelong education into a national-funded plan.

The "Lifelong Education Act" established the Council for Lifelong Education as the central body for lifelong education. According to the local autonomy ordinance, the city and provincial committee for lifelong education operates below the council, and the committee of lifelong education at the city, district, and ward level operates underneath it.

The Council for Lifelong Education develops measures for lifelong education and the National Institute for Lifelong Education acts as an operating system that institutes them. Similarly, the provincial committee for lifelong education and the committee of lifelong education at the city, district, and ward level develop plans and the Provincial Institute for Lifelong Education and lifelong learning centers at the city, district, and ward level carry them out, respectively.

## **Lifelong Education Policies**

Lifelong education is defined as all forms of education: supplementary education, basic literacy education for adults, vocational training, liberal arts education, and participatory education for citizens. The policies of MEST serve to expand opportunities for lifelong education and promote adult education.

### **Learner-Oriented Lifelong Education**

Learner-oriented lifelong education is aimed at erasing gaps in educational opportunities by supporting adult literacy education programs

and (vocational) programs for the underprivileged. Policy projects under this category are Supporting Lifelong Education for the Underprivileged, Supporting for Adult Literacy Education, and Lifelong Learning Oriented University Project.

### **Building Infrastructure for Lifelong Education**

The Lifelong Education Act was completely revised to establish a system that better advances lifelong education. The revisions strengthen the role of the local organizations and increase the importance of human resources development. Policy projects under this category are Lifelong Learning City Project, Managing Lifelong Educator Certificates, Supporting Provincial Institutes for Lifelong Education, and Supporting local Lifelong Learning Centers.

### **Accreditation and Management of the Lifelong Education Program**

The Academic Credit Accumulation System allows people, who have not been educated at the college level, to obtain academic credits and degrees through academically approved programs and course work. The government administers a standard examination that allows young people and adults, who have a high school diploma, to obtain a bachelor's degree through independent study. Independent study offers those, who missed the opportunity for a higher education because of financial difficulties or a lack of time, a new avenue to a bachelor's degree. Since 2009 the government launched the Accounts for Lifelong Learning to facilitate continuing education by recording and recognizing an individual's various learning experiences acquired in formal and non-formal education setting.

### **References**

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2009). *Education in Korea*

National Institute for Lifelong Education website: <http://www.nile.or.kr>

NHRD website: <http://www.nhrd.net>