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A REPORT ON THE INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

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A report on the integration and coordination of Early Childhood Care and Education in the Republic of Korea

UNESCO

Division for Basic Learning and Skills Development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

1.1. At the request of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea, UNESCO has conducted a review of the Korean policy, governance and delivery of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Currently, the country follows a parallel[1] ECCE policy, governance and delivery system but is keen to explore other options, particularly though not exclusively, a more integrated approach. This request was, at least in part, influenced by the country's exposure to UNESCO's cross-national study *Caring and Learning Together: Integration of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)* carried out in 2008-2009**.** This study examined a policy option of integrating the responsibility for ECCE within the education system, based on the experiences of five countries (Brazil, Jamaica, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden) and one municipality (Ghent in Belgium). The study looked at the rationale, process, extent and consequences of integration, and drew lessons and conclusions. It also covered perspectives from countries (Belgium Flanders, France, Finland and Hungary) that have chosen to organize the responsibility for ECCE differently.[2]

1.2. One key lesson from the *Caring and Learning Together* cross-national study (2010) is that there should be more and deeper studies of integration in a wide range of countries, including countries with parallel systems. Other than the Korean report on integrating ECCE, commissioned and published by UNESCO in 2004, no in-depth examination of the policy issue in the contexts of parallel systems is available to international audiences.[3] The present review, therefore, is a contribution to filling this knowledge gap, while providing concrete policy recommendations that respond to the specific needs and situations of the Republic of Korea.

Methodology

1.3. The review has involved three main steps: (1) the preparation of a Background Report, (2) a review visit conducted by a team of experts, and (3) the preparation of a Review Report.

1.4. The Background Report was prepared by experts of the Korean Institute of Child Care and Education according to the guidelines developed by UNESCO.

1.5. The review visit took place from 13 to 20 June 2011, and covered two main regions of the country, namely Seoul and Busan. It comprised meetings with key stakeholders (e.g. government

[1] That is, systems where there is parallel or overlapping responsibility for age groups served by the education, health and social affairs ministries or departments, mostly in the two or three years before school entry.

[2] The report on the study is available: http://www.unesco.org/en/early-childhood/publications/.

[3] OECD Early Childhood Education and Care Network, 7-8 December 2009, held a meeting focused on the issue of integration of ECCE, inviting network members. Through this meeting, the latest information about practices from 19 countries in relation to the theme was collected. This can serve as a source of background information for the review proposed hereby. See: http://www.oecd.org/document/63/0,3343,en_2649_39263231_44647807_1_1_1_1,00.html

officials of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Budget and Finance, congressmen, researchers, academic associations for ECCE, directors and teachers of kindergartens and child care centres) and visits to ECCE services and support centres in Busan (see Annex I for a complete schedule of the review visit). The review team consisted of three members with different areas of specialization: Yoshie Kaga (UNESCO), W. Steven Barnett (Director, National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers University) and John Bennett (International Consultant). The team was accompanied by Mugyeong Moon, national expert and Director, Korean Institute of Child Care and Education (see Annex II).

1.6. Upon the completion of the review visit, the Review Report – which presents observations and policy recommendations – was prepared by the review team, mainly based on the information and insights obtained through the visit as well as the Background Report.

1.7. The overall planning and coordination of the review was the responsibility of the Division for Basic Learning and Skills Development, UNESCO Headquarters. For implementation at national level, the Korean Institute for Child Care and Education played a key role, taking the responsibility for the preparation of the Background Report, planning and ensuring a successful review visit.

Terminology

1.8. *Early Childhood Care and Education*: The review covered both home-based and centre-based child care and education provision for children under the age of 6, which is the compulsory school age in the Republic of Korea (e.g. centre-based child care centres, family home day care, kindergartens, and private academies called *hakwons*). It also included parental leave and family-friendly policies, based on the recognition that these policies have an important impact on parental involvement and time for child care, the provision of ECCE services, and gender equality. Thus, ECCE policy is multi-sectoral in that it includes not only child care and early education concerns, but also child health, nutrition, social welfare and protection, women's employment, equal opportunities and poverty issues. The review adopted a holistic and broad view of ECCE whereby policies, services, families and communities can support the development and learning of young children. It also reflected the view that 'care' and 'education' are inseparable concepts and that quality services for children provide both.

1.9. *Integration*: Integration can occur in the following areas of an ECCE system: (1) policy-making and administration, (2) provision, (3) access to services, (4) funding (including what parents pay), (5) regulation (including curriculum or similar guidelines), (6) workforce (including structure, education and training, and pay). For example, Sweden is a fully integrated system under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research, having a single age-integrated form of provision (the 'pre-school'), a 0-6 graduate professional (a 'pre-school teacher'), a common funding system and access as a right for all children from 12 months – at least if their parents were employed or studying – and a common curriculum for ages 0-6. The early childhood system in New Zealand is integrated in some areas (e.g. administration, curriculum, and workforce) but not in terms of provision and entitlement to services. Therefore, integration is better understood *not* as a state – either achieved or not – but as a continuum, ranging from minimal to full integration (Kaga, Bennett & Moss, 2010).

1.10. *Coordination*: Coordination occurs at both policy and service levels. Policy coordination is understood as the 'institutional and management mechanisms by which policy coherence is exerted among the various entities involved' (OECD, 2001: 76). Service coordination occurs when services are coordinated across ministries or government departments, and are subject to common funding, regulation and staffing regimes (see OECD 2001).

1.11. *Age indication*: This report expresses children's ages in the following manner: children aged 1-5 means children from 1 year (or 12 months) until 5 years 11 months.

1.12. *Currency*: The currency of the Republic of Korea is the Won. In October 2011, 1 US Dollar (US$) equalled 1,104.90 South Korean Won (KRW). The report uses these values for currency conversion.

Acknowledgements

1.13. UNESCO would like to sincerely thank the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Korea for making this review possible; and the Korean Institute of Child Care and Education for organising a comprehensive review visit programme and for having its expert staff, Dr Mugyeong Moon and Dr Moon-hee Suh, prepare a very informative Background Report on the Korean ECCE policies and systems. Members of the review team deeply appreciate the hospitality and openness of all those who participated in the review visit and generously provided their expertise, thoughts and time. Special thanks go to Dr Moon, who kindly accompanied the UNESCO review team throughout the visit, tirelessly offered extensive background information and explanation about every detail that was asked by the review team, and made the review visit a memorable and successful experience for the team.

Structure of the present report

1.14. The current chapter provides a background to the review, referring to its aims, objectives and methodology. Chapter 2 describes the country context, summarizing demography, culture, economy, administration, the place of women in Korean society, and the status of children and education. Chapter 3 presents an overview of the Korean ECCE system, describing the main child care services for ages 0-5, kindergartens for ages 3-5, and parental leave. It also includes a brief appraisal of the quality of the Korean ECCE system by referring to selected quality, access and financing indicators. Chapter 4 takes up a range of issues that the UNESCO team encountered during the review visit, presenting both positive developments in recent years and issues and challenges that are directly or indirectly related to integration. The challenges include, among others, demographic changes and their implications for the parallel system, uneven qualification, training and working conditions of child care and kindergarten staff. Chapter 5 focuses on an analysis of integration options based on observations made by the UNESCO team, and highlights some lessons from other countries with parallel and integrated systems, such as the United States. Lastly, Chapter 6 provides policy recommendations for the government to consider and some concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: Country context[4]

At a glance

The Republic of Korea comprises almost half of the Korean peninsula having a land area of 99,373sq km, spread north to south over some 500km.
Terrain: Partially forested mountain ranges separated by deep, narrow valleys; cultivated plains along the coasts, particularly in the west and south. Given that 70 per cent of the country is mountainous, a high density population of some 48.7 million resides primarily in urban environments.
Administrative divisions: The Republic of Korea is divided into nine provinces (Do), and seven administratively separate cities (Seoul, Busan, Incheon, Daegu, Gwangju, Daejeon, Ulsan).
Cities (2009): *Capital* - Seoul (c. 10 million). *Other major cities* - Busan (3.6 million), Daegu (2.5 million), Incheon (2.7 million), Gwangju (1.4 million), Daejeon (1.4 million), Ulsan (1.1 million).
Natural resources: Coal, tungsten, graphite, molybdenum, lead, hydropower potential.
Agriculture: *Products* - rice, root crops, barley, vegetables, fruit, cattle, pigs, chickens, milk, eggs, fish. *Arable land* - 16.58 per cent of land area.
Industry: Electronics, telecommunications, automobile production, chemicals, shipbuilding, steel.

2.1. ***The economy:*** The Republic of Korea's economic achievements since the 1950s are remarkable, transforming the country in one generation from a subsistence to a powerhouse economy. Four decades ago, gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was comparable with the

[4] In addition to the references in the text, the following sources were used to compile this chapter: Korea National Statistics www.go.kr/eng/; the official Korea website www. korea.net; the CIA World Factbook, 2010; the UN Development Index, 2010 http://hdr.undp.org/en/mediacentre/; World Bank Indicators www.data.worldbank.org/; OECD, 2010 Economic Survey of Korea www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/korea.

same levels as in the poorer countries of Africa and Asia. Despite a rough passage in 1997, when the Republic of Korea came under the short-term guidance of the International Monetary Fund, in 2004 the country joined the trillion-dollar club of world economies.

2.2. With the global economic downturn in late 2008, the Republic of Korea's GDP growth slowed to 0.2 per cent in 2009. In the third quarter of 2009, the economy began to recover, in large part due to export growth, low interest rates and an expansionary fiscal policy. In 2010, economic growth exceeded 6 per cent. Currently, Korea ranks thirteenth among the world's twenty largest economies and in 2010 achieved a GDP per capita of US$30,000 (2010 est.). The economy's long-term challenges include a rapidly ageing population, a relatively inflexible labour market, low employment rates among women (54 per cent), and a high degree of dependence on manufacturing exports to drive economic growth (OECD, 2010). In addition, the Republic of Korea has a relatively high poverty rate (15 per cent)[5] and inequality of income is higher than in many OECD countries (OECD, 2011). These problems are likely to be exacerbated by the growth of single-parent families (Statistics Korea, Census). Combined with a relatively strong reliance on parents to pay for private education, this may generate greater inequality in the future.

2.3. Reflecting the country's strong economic situation, industrial production grew by 12.1 per cent in 2010.[6] Unemployment is low at 3.8 per cent. Surprisingly, the total employment rate (15-64 years) is also low at 63.8 per cent, with 74.4 per cent of men employed and 53.2 per cent of women.[7] The female employment rate is particularly low compared with Norway (75.4 per cent), Sweden (73.5 per cent) and even with Japan (59.7 per cent).[8] Female employment drops even lower during the childbearing years (25-34 years) when the participation rates of women in the work force show a marked M-shaped distribution. Maternal employment rates drop to 36 per cent during the 0-6 period of their children and for the whole pre-school period (3-5 years) averages around 45 per cent. Labour imbalance along gender lines is reflected in the predominance of women in the low-paid child care sector, where it is routinely assumed that centres will employ only female staff. Low female wages contribute also to growing income inequality and poverty rates in Korea, which are among the highest in OECD countries (OECD, 2011).

2.4. ***Administration*****:** The Republic of Korea is a parliamentary democracy based on the separation of executive (presidency and government), legislative and judicial domains. The President's office, The Blue House*,* is the centre of political power and decision-making. The president is head of state and is elected for a single term of five years. The 299 members of the

[5] Poverty rates are defined as the share of individuals with equivalized disposable income less than 50 per cent of the median for the entire population.

[6] Trade with North Korea has been quite important but was seriously damaged by tensions following the torpedoing of the Republic of Korea's warship *Cheonan* in March 2010. In September 2010, the Republic of Korea suspended all inter-Korean trade with the exception of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (important for out-processing or assembly work undertaken by firms).

[7] The real employment rate may be somewhat higher as the retirement age in Korea is around 70 years.

[8] The real female employment rate may be significantly higher. It is possible that under-counting is present because of the irregular work situation of many women who are hired on a temporary basis without official employment status or social benefits, although they may work extremely long hours.

unicameral National Assembly are elected for a 4-year term, but public voting is among the lowest of OECD countries.

2.5. ***Demography*****:** The population of the Republic of Korea is 48.7 million, with a population growth of 0.23 per cent in 2010. Population density is high: 483 persons per sq km (five times that of France). At 1.15, the Korean birth rate was the lowest in 2009 among OECD countries, far below the average of 1.74.[9] The average age of Korean women at first childbirth is 29.1, the fifth oldest among the OECD member states and 1.3 years older than the average. More positively, the teenage birth rate is the lowest in the OECD at 3.5 births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 years.

2.6. The low birth rate is attributed by various authors to the high personal cost of education in the Republic of Korea, decreasing dependence by parents on their children's on-going support, the rising marriage age, increased participation by women in the labour market, and long work hours. Although the causes of low fertility are complex, there are sound reasons to contend that the provision of early childhood services, parental leave and other family supports could create an environment that encourages young couples to envisage having children. The Republic of Korea experiences a high rate of emigration, with ethnic Koreans residing primarily in China (2.4 million), the United States (2.1 million), Japan (600,000), and the countries of the former Soviet Union (532,000).

2.7. Seoul (10 million inhabitants), the capital, is the major political, economic and educational hub and concentrates much of the wealth, industry and technology of the country. In 2004, the Republic of Korea announced plans to move its capital from Seoul by 2020, to Gongju and Yeongi counties in Chungcheongnam-do province. The relative isolation of rural areas poses particular challenges for the provision of education and other services. In response, the Ministry of Education focused its efforts during the 1990s on providing public kindergartens in rural areas, often attached to elementary schools, while leaving provision in urban areas to the private sector.

2.8. ***Culture***: Koreans belong to a single ethnic group and, across the country as a whole, Korean culture and language predominate. There is little cultural variation and, with slight regional differences, Korean customs are uniform throughout the country. One small minority group of about 20,000 Chinese exists. Foreign-born residents constitute only 1.8 per cent of the population (the OECD average is 11.7 per cent). At the same time, the number of multi-cultural families is growing, particularly in rural areas, by reason of the exodus toward the cities of young Korean women and their partial replacement by immigrant women from South-East Asia.

2.9. According to a 2003 government report, Korean culture is drawn from the combined influences of Shamanism, ancestor worship, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism (Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, 2003). The Korean tradition values the extended family group; filial piety to parents, grandparents and ancestors; respect for education and teachers; loyalty to family and faithfulness to friends. Confucian decorum – structured around the values of patriarchy, social hierarchy and obedience – dominated Korean life and thinking over centuries, and still subtly influences many forms of human relations (Story and Park, 2001; Kim, 1991; Tae, 1958). A strong emphasis is placed on group responsibility and duty. Although

[9] OECD *Society at a Glance 2011*, in www.oecd-library.org

rapid modernisation has weakened many traditional forms of behaviour and individuals now pursue their lives with less focus on social hierarchy and duty, a deep sense of these traditions is embedded in Korean education and in child and family policy.

2.10. ***The place of women in Korean society***: Traditional attitudes toward women, their role in society and their expected duties within the household, e.g. with regard to child care and domestic chores, are still widespread. At 30 per cent, the employment gap between men and women is very wide in the Republic of Korea. Among the OECD countries, only Turkey (51 per cent), Mexico (46 per cent), and Greece (32 per cent) have a wider differential. Steps were taken to improve the situation of women through the creation of a Presidential Commission for Women's Affairs in 1998, which became a full-fledged Ministry for Gender Equality in 2001. The status of women in the paid workforce has improved, although there are still few women in executive positions. Women are also concentrated in casual labour, which does not enjoy the rights and benefits of official work status. According to the OECD (2010), the differential between male and female wages in 2008 in the Republic of Korea was almost 38 per cent – the highest among OECD countries and more than double the OECD average of 18.8 per cent. This gap increases to over 40 per cent in populations under the 80th percentile. The OECD average is 17.6 per cent, with the smallest gender differential in Belgium, where the gap is 9.3 per cent (OECD *Factblog*, 2010).

2.11. According to the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index (2012), the Republic of Korea ranks only 108th in the world in terms of gender equality – the lowest of all the OECD countries and well behind both Singapore and China.[10] More precisely, Korean women rank 116th in the world in terms of women's economic participation and opportunity; 99th in the world in terms of educational attainment; 78th in the world in terms of health and survival; and 86th in the world in terms of political empowerment. However, the overall score has slightly improved from 2006 to 2012, showing an increase of 3.3 per cent. Secondary and tertiary enrolment rates have greatly expanded and small increases in the proportion of women both in parliament and in ministerial-level positions have occurred. Although graduation rates from university are still significantly lower than those of men (this is exceptional among the OECD countries, along with Japan, the Netherlands and Switzerland), the situation has greatly improved compared to women in the 55-64 age group (OECD, 2010).

2.12. To enhance gender equality and encourage childbearing, the Korean authorities introduced parental leave measures in 1987. Today, women in recognized work have a right to three months' maternity leave (with a replacement wage of US$500 per month) and one year of parental leave with the same wage replacement level. However, this last measure has had a relatively weak impact on parental leave. Various reasons for the low uptake of parental leave were proposed in 2003 to the OECD review team by early childhood organizations, parent groups and NGOs; they include:

[10] *The Global Gender Gap Report 2012* examines inequality between men and women in 135 economies around the globe, in four areas: 1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment); 2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education); 3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures); 4. Health and survival (outcomes on life expectancy and sex ratio). The Report ranks countries as follows: ratings: 1. Iceland 2. Finland 3. Norway 4. Sweden 5. Ireland….108. Republic of Korea.

- The replacement salaries offered to women on leave are too low to sustain the family or to make it interesting for a parent to stay at home. There is a need, according to informants, to increase leave allowances to at least 60 per cent of average salaries.

- Return-to-work conditions are uncertain. It is reported that many employers reject not only parental leave but also maternity leave and refuse to pay the agreed full salary for the first two months. In many instances, young mothers lose their work status and previous position, even though by law their employment status should be protected.

- Again, employers are authorized to recruit women on a part-time or informal basis. Under this system, large groups of women work in the unregulated labour market and for this reason are not eligible for maternity or parental leave although they are in paid work.

- Further, parental leave from work is low paid and depicted as out of step with the culture and conditions actually operating in the workplace. Thus, many workers believe that they cannot take leave without penalty to their future working careers.

- Family responsibility has still made little impact on men in terms of employment rates, daily duration of their work, or engagement in household work and care of children. According to *Society at a Glance* (OECD, 2011), Korean men spend less than one hour per day in domestic tasks compared to almost four hours spent daily by Korean women.[11]

2.13. Because of women's need to work and the unsatisfactory nature of parental leave, infant care services are in high demand. Though supply roughly matches demand, the quality of child care services can be – according to general opinion - rather low. For some families, a vicious circle has been created in which mothers can no longer care directly for their infants (0-12 months), but must continue to work in order to pay for low quality, private care arrangements.

2.14. ***The status of children*****:** Korean parents invest in the education of their children to a far higher extent than in Western countries, and not least in ECCE. In the Korean tradition, young children are cherished and provided with much attention and care. Traditionally, the earliest years of a child's life are considered extremely important for the formation of later life habits:

> Traditionally, education in Korea was considered to start from the prenatal period. The essence of 'prenatal education' was that both mother and father should be good in their words and deeds because parental deeds, words, and diets were thought to influence their unborn child... There is a well-known Korean saying 'Habits at three continue until eighty' (OECD, 2003).[12]

[11] In the USA, male investment in household duties is in excess of 2.5 hours daily; in Denmark and Sweden about 3 hours daily.

[12] Readers should be aware that in Korean society the prenatal period is often included when calculating a child's age. Thus, a child reported as being two years old may in western terms be one. Korean official data follow the usual western data usage.

2.15. In the contemporary Republic of Korea, infant mortality rates (4.1 per thousand) and child well-being are now better than OECD averages. Health spending remains low in comparison with other OECD countries: at 6.5 per cent of GDP compared to an OECD average of 9 per cent. However, per capita health spending in Korea increased by 9.4 per cent annually between 1998 and 2008, one of the highest increases recorded among OECD countries (OECD, 2011).

2.16. In recent years, both physical violence against children (Hahm and Guterman, 2009) and child poverty have become serious concerns. Child poverty has to a great extent been taken in hand: the Korean child poverty rate at 10.1 per cent is now well below the OECD average of 12.6 per cent, although household poverty at 15 per cent is considerably higher than the OECD average of 11.1 per cent (OECD, 2011 *Society at a Glance)*.[13] The improved situation of children is significantly helped by government-subsidized child care.

2.17. Despite recent increases, social protection and family benefits remain stubbornly low, for example, social spending at 8 per cent of GDP is the lowest of all the OECD countries. Likewise, according to the OECD Family Data Base[14], family benefits in cash, services and/or tax incentives, are among the lowest of OECD countries. A challenge facing Korean governments is to improve the working conditions of women and provide stronger support to low-income families with young children.

2.18. ***Education*****:** Education in the Republic of Korea is governed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. It follows the classical lines of the American education system being divided into kindergarten (beginning at 3 years),[15] elementary school, middle school and high school. Many schools are private, but follow a similar curriculum to public schools and can offer superior facilities, a higher teacher-student ratio and extra programmes. Though highly desirable, they can be prohibitively expensive for many Korean parents. After the school day, most students engage in intensive 'self-study' sessions supported by the school or, if their parents can afford them, attend private academies called 학원 (學院), or *hakwon* to boost their academic performance. *Hakwons* are open to children from the age of 3 years. Korean parents value the academic education that they provide and their contribution to after-school care.

2.19. Public education expenditure is relatively low at 4.2 per cent of GDP, compared to an OECD average of 4.6 per cent. However, private education spending – mostly by parents – at 2.8 per cent is more than double the OECD average and the highest among OECD countries. Much parental expenditure is focused on tertiary education, where the private sector accounts for 79.3 per cent of education spending (the OECD average is only 30.9 per cent).

[13] Children in poverty are those living in households with less than 50 per cent of a country's median household income for a family of two adults and two children. Where the OECD average is concerned, it should be noted that the average OECD child poverty rate of 11.1 per cent is raised considerably by the USA and two large but relatively poor countries, Mexico and Turkey.

[14] Accessed 22 June, 2011.

[15] Kindergarten in the US begins at 5 years but increasingly pre-K services are provided from the age of 4 years and to a lesser extent for even younger children.

2.20. Compulsory education lasts for 9 years in the Republic of Korea (6 years elementary and 3 years of middle school). However, over 80 per cent of young Koreans complete 12 years of education (6-18) and around 70 per cent now enter some form of tertiary education. About 37 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women between the ages of 25-64 have a college degree. ECCE has contributed significantly to the rising education levels of women. The great majority of teachers and child care workers are female and, in the sector, qualification levels are high by international standards.

2.21. The curricula in compulsory education in the Republic of Korea are rigorous and offer a broad range of subjects. Core subjects include Korean, English, science and mathematics, with attention also paid to social science subjects. The type and level of subjects may differ from school to school, depending on the school's degree of selectivity and specialization. According to the latest PISA results (OECD, 2010), Korean students at the age of 14/15 years produce outstanding results in literacy, mathematics and scientific knowledge.

2.22. Education is highly teacher-centred, but students are also expected to take on self-reliant roles, it being understood that an active and creative child is more likely to succeed. There are concerns about schoolwork overload and excessive exam preparations that could threaten the health and well-being of children. Though the Korean tradition discourages excessive individualism, success-oriented parenting and the strongly competitive nature of Korean education can undermine solidarity among students. Schools can also neglect physical education. Some of the same tendencies can also be found in the Korean kindergarten with few outdoor activities for young children and a focus on learning through teacher-led activities.

Chapter 3: ECCE in the Republic of Korea

An overview of ECCE

3.1. ECCE in the Republic of Korea has evolved into two parallel systems of 'care' and 'education', with contrasting interpretations of the aim and purpose of these services. Child care facilities are administered by the Child Care and Education Division within the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Kindergartens are educational institutions for children aged 3 to 5 and are administered by the Early Childhood Education Division within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. In addition to (and sometimes instead of) child care and kindergarten, some 500,000 young Korean children attend *hakwon*s (private educational institutions). *Hakwon*s define themselves as academically focused institutions where children learn particular skills, often in the arts, mathematics, music and language, including English. Normally *hakwon*s have no official status in the statistics or structure of education and care provision in Korea, but they are a valuable contributor to service provision for children aged 3-5 years.

Child care for young children

3.2. Initially (1920s – 1970s), child care facilities in the Republic of Korea were established as a form of relief for poor families. Facilities were developed mainly under the auspices of the child welfare department. Since the 1980s, the movement of women into the paid labour market has greatly contributed to the rapid expansion of the child care network. Through the Equal Employment Act of 1987, the Ministry of Labour established employer child care facilities. Several urban administrative authorities also initiated child care policies but there was little coherence across developments.

3.3. In 1991, women's organizations came together to integrate child care and lobby for the passing of a Child Care Act. This act enabled 'comprehensive child care service arrangements, with a priority for children of working mothers with low income' (OECD, 1998: p.29). Firms employing large numbers of women were required to establish at least one, on-site day care centre or subsidise child care expenses. Thereafter, strong government will and financial support for the development of child care facilities contributed to rapid expansion. Private child care providers were able to receive indirect fiscal support and the government also provided direct subsidies toward the construction and operation of facilities as well as for personnel expenses, including the cost of training. Families also received subsidies to cover child care expenses.

3.4. In 2010, 35,550 child care centres were in operation. Of these, 30,000 were private or home-based, 44 per cent of which had less than 40 children. Family day care accounts for almost half (48.8 per cent) of all child care facilities. Alongside the private services, 1,917 public child care centres exist, 49 per cent of which cater for between 40 to 80 children. Some 1,175,049 children (2009) attend child care services, the great majority in private centres. Of these children, 67.7 per cent (especially from low-income families) received either free or highly subsidised (more than half the fee) child care. This high level of enrolment is the result of rapid expansion over more than a decade during which quantitative expansion took precedence over qualitative development. More recently, the Ministry of Health and Welfare has focused on moving policy toward issues of quality (see section below on the quality of Korean early childhood services).

Early education

3.5. Although the first private kindergarten was established almost a century ago in the Republic of Korea, the first public kindergarten was only established in 1976. From the early 1980s until about 2000, early childhood education developed rapidly in the country. In 2011, there were in total 8,424 kindergartens, of which 3,922 were private and 4,502 were public. Most (76 per cent) public kindergartens are small and serve less than 40 children; by contrast, 50.7 per cent of private kindergartens serve 100 children or more. For this reason, although public kindergartens account in number for almost half (53.4 per cent) of the network, nearly 80 per cent of children are enrolled in private kindergartens.

3.6. In parallel, there is a child care system serving children from 0-5 years. Together these services cover over 1.7 million children (1,175,049 children in child care and 537,362 children in kindergartens), that is, 91 per cent of 5-year-olds; 84.7 per cent of 4-year-olds and 75 per cent of 3-year-olds (see comparative enrolments in Access below).

3.7. Because of the relatively low number of public kindergarten places, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology instituted policies during the last decades to increase availability. During the 1990s, the ministry invested strongly in small rural kindergartens, often attached to elementary schools. Free early childhood education was legislated for 5-year-olds in 1997, in the year before formal schooling. A further policy sought to alleviate costs for selected families under the project *Supporting Kindergarten Tuition for Children from Low-Income Families* (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2003). The policy aimed to encourage low-income families to send their children to kindergarten and thus contribute to equality of opportunity for poorer children. An *Early Childhood Education Act* was legislated in 2004 and in December 2009, an official *Plan for the Advancement of Early Childhood Education* (PAECE) was passed. Another initiative aimed to expand half-day provision in kindergartens to full-day (>8 hours) provision in order to meet the demands of working parents. Today, almost all kindergartens (98 per cent) in the Republic of Korea offer full-day services.

The quality of the Korean ECCE system

3.8. To address quality in a global sense is often unhelpful; it is more useful to address well-defined quality indicators, such as financing, access, along with a selection of additional quality indicators.

Financing

3.9. Current figures provided by the OECD, based on 2005 data, provide an expenditure figure for all ECCE services in the Republic of Korea as being less than 0.2 per cent of GDP. However, all public spending on child care and early education in 2010 received almost 0.62 per cent of Korean GDP, child care receiving 0.465 per cent of GDP and early education 0.144 per cent. The average expenditure per child is US$2,552 (2,820,000 KRW) in early education and US$3,807 (4,207,000 KRW) in child care (KICCE, 2011).

3.10. In addition to central government financing, local governments also invest in local child care projects. Of the total child care budget, 58.2 per cent is contributed by local government,

and central government contributes 41.8 per cent. Early childhood expenditure by the local education offices is less impressive and amounts on average to only 2.7 per cent of the local education budget.

The financing of the child care sector (Ministry of Health and Welfare)

3.11. The Child Care Expense Support programme of the Ministry of Health and Welfare provides:

- *Subsidies to public and private child care providers:* These include funds for labour costs, facility construction and programme supports. In general, the Ministry of Health and Welfare subsidises the labour costs for child care teachers to 30 per cent and that of teachers responsible for infants to 80 per cent. In particular, the salaries of substitute teachers are fully paid, and special-needs teachers receive a special duty allowance. Likewise, child care teachers, special-needs teachers and therapists working in rural areas receive a special duty allowance. The ministry also provides child care service providers with expenses for supplementary in-service training. The total subsidy to providers is 18.6 per cent of the total costs of child care.

- *Subsidies to parents:* 'Subsidies for parents consist mainly of income differentiated support, free education support and support for households with more than one child' (KICCE, ibid). The majority of places are subsidized, both for mainstream and lower-income families, and the government pays 100 per cent of the fees for children of families living under the poverty line. Free places are also provided to children with disabilities and 5-year-olds. 'The number of child beneficiaries, which stood at 92,000 in 1992, drastically rose to 795,000 as of December 2009, which amounts to 67.7 per cent (of all children)' (KICCE, ibid). The cost-income ratio has been reduced for parents by almost one percentage point: from 8.3 per cent in 2004 to 7.4 per cent in 2010. However, fees (and especially additional costs in some provinces) also keep rising. The average monthly cost to parents, regardless of the age of the child, is 177,000 KRW (approximately US$161). This would amount to 6 per cent of the average monthly wage, which is $PPP 2,768, and 18 per cent of the minimum monthly wage, which is US$929. Fees are highest in workplace and private facilities. Total child care fee support accounts for 77.6 per cent of the total costs of child care.

3.12. *Child-rearing home allowance:* An allowance for parents rearing their child up to the age of 2 years was brought in by legislation in 2009, but the amount is significantly smaller than the Child Care Expense Support. Initiated in 2010, fewer than 9 per cent of eligible parents have yet received the allowance.

Kindergarten (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) subsidies

3.13. The kindergarten sector has a similar support programme called the *Kindergarten Tuition Support.* This project underwrites free education for 5-year-olds (in the lower 70 percentile), income-based subsidies for children aged 3-4 years and subsidies for the full-day programme (more than 8 hours) in kindergarten. Today, 53.5 per cent of all children enrolled in kindergartens receive tuition subsidies that cover over half the costs of tuition fees.

3.14. Kindergarten subsidies are provided to parents through a voucher scheme, the money being deposited with the kindergarten. Priority is given to low-income and working-class families, and extended to all families in the lower 70 percentile. Special measures have been regulated for families with a second child. In fact, the second and third children in families in the lower 70 percentile are exempt from all fees.

3.15. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology also provides assistance for the expenses of teachers in rural areas and, in recent years, subsidies to improve the wages and working conditions of private kindergarten teachers. As some providers consider the supplement part of the teacher's normal pay, supervision of the practice is deemed necessary.

3.16. Another area for support is the educational capacity of kindergartens. Subsidies include support for the learning environment and teaching materials for all kindergartens (both public and private), support for evaluations, substitute teachers and other assistants in full-day programmes, for dispatched teachers who provide home visitation when a child's development is slow (called Hope Educators), and the involvement of middle-aged and elderly people in kindergarten activities and pedagogy to assist head teachers (harmony teachers).

Access levels in child care and kindergarten services

3.17. Several European countries still have the highest rates of early childhood enrolment in the world, but at the present rate of progress, Korea may soon surpass them. This trend would appear more clearly if enrolments in *hakwons* were counted:

Table 1: Percentage access to early childhood services in selected OECD countries

Age in years	Germany	Finland[1]	France	Korea	Sweden[2]
0-1	2.6%	c.1%[2]	M	24.3%	c. 1%[2]
1-2	13.6%	27.5%	M	44 8%	48.9%
2-3	29.7%	43.9%	46.4%	60.3%	91.2%
3-4	80.4%	62.3%	98.9%	75.0%	94.8%
4-5	93.1%	68.5%	100.0%	84.7%	97.3%
5-6	95.3%	73.0%	98.7%	90.6%	98.2%

Source: Eurostat, 2010.

Notes:

1. In both Finland and Sweden, compulsory school begins at 7 years. Almost 100 per cent of Finnish children attend pre-school from age 6.

2. Parents in Finland and Sweden enjoy over one year of parental leave, a replacement subsidy of about 70 per cent of salary (with a ceiling on high salaries) and very family-friendly work environments. The employment rate of mothers in Sweden is 72 per cent with children 0-2 years, and 81 per cent with children 3-5 years – compared to 29.9 per cent and 44.9 per cent respectively in the Republic of Korea (Suh and Kim, 2010). Fertility rates, though not at replacement level, remain high and stable at 1.67 in Sweden since 2004.

3.18. Some features of access and enrolments in the Korean ECCE system (see KICCE, 2010):

- As can be seen from the access figures above, the Republic of Korea has high rates of enrolment for children under 3 years compared to similar European economies. There is a strong and careful investment in child care services and financial supports to parents; but fewer incentives for parental leave and its take-up are available. The under-3 enrolment rate is greater than the employment rate of mothers, regardless of the age of the child. This could reflect employment of mothers that is not accounted for in official labour market statistics.

- Child care centres provide places for children 3 months to 5 years inclusive, kindergartens for children from 3 to 5 years inclusive. When age and type of service are taken into account, children up to the age of 4 years attend child care facilities more often, while 5-year-olds tend to enrol in kindergartens. The highest enrolment in child care is of 2-year-olds, enrolled at 60 per cent in child care facilities. Afterwards, the percentage enrolment drops in child care centres as children from the age of 3 years shift gradually toward kindergartens and *hakwons*. As in other countries, regional disparities in access exist.

- Far more children are enrolled in private services than in public services. In the kindergarten sector, 77.9 per cent of children are in private kindergartens (the share of kindergartens is about even) and in the child care sector, 73.2 per cent are in private provision and 25.1 per cent in public or authorized centres. Family day care accounts for 48.8 per cent of the children in out-of-home centres. This high share of family day care for children from 3 to 5 years is high compared to other developed economies. In turn, the small proportion of public child care services for children, including for the age group 3-5 years, may reduce the capacity of the Ministry of Health and Welfare to orient the system.

- A downward drift in enrolments has occurred in line with population decline, but the trend has slowed and even reversed in kindergartens since 2007. In particular, kindergarten enrolments of 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds continue to rise. Many of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology rural kindergartens are attached to schools.

- The enrolment rate for 5-year-olds in kindergartens now exceeds (for the first time) 50 per cent of the children in this age group. This is attributed to causes such as the expansion of the full-day system, improvement of educational capacity and promotional activities, and increased tuition support.

- An increasing proportion of kindergarten enrolment is oriented toward the national/public kindergartens (23.4 per cent of all children in the age group).

Selected quality indicators

3.19. *Legislation, regulations, supervision and data collection*: These matters are well taken in hand in both sectors.

3.20. *The quality of governance sub-systems*: governance sub-systems include policy units, the training and curriculum authorities, monitoring and evaluation agencies, quality assurance

systems, inspection and support systems, data collection, monitoring and research. No doubt, criticisms of the functioning of any of the above sub-systems could be made, but they all exist in the Republic of Korea (often in duplicated form) and the contribution of each can be clearly seen. The UNESCO team was impressed, in particular, by the depth of reflection and wealth of data on early childhood matters that KICCE was able to make available.

3.21. *Attention to learning environments*: This seems to be well addressed in the Republic of Korea as both child care and kindergarten services receive generous grants for building and/or refurbishing centres. In addition, there are subsidies for the purchase of books and pedagogical materials. As in most countries, the provision of appropriate outdoor areas for young children is a challenge in the cities.

3.22. *Group sizes and child-adult group ratios*: There are no central government regulations on group sizes and teacher-child ratio in kindergartens. Provincial offices of education set the guidelines by accommodating local needs and circumstances. The average teacher-child ratio in kindergartens is 14.8 (2011). On the other hand, teacher-child ratios in child care centres are set by age of the child (1:3 for under 1-year-olds, 1:5 for 1-year-olds, 1:7 for 2-year-olds, 1:15 for 3-year-olds, 1:20 for 4 and 5-year-olds).

3.23. *Curriculum as a pedagogical tool*: Both child care and early education have excellent national curricula, appropriate to young children's needs and learning.[16] As part of the implementation of the policy to provide free quality education for all 5-year-olds, a common curriculum called the 'Nuri Curriculum for Age 5' was recently developed ('Nuri' means 'the world' in Korean). Its release was announced jointly by the Ministries of Health and Welfare and Education in September 2011; and its implementation was foreseen for March 2012. In January 2012, the Korean government announced it would implement the Nuri Curriculum for Age 3 and 4 starting from March 2013.

3.24. *Teacher education*: Presently, there are two training and qualification systems in the Republic of Korea, with the Ministry of Health and Welfare operating one for child care centres and child care preschools; and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology operating the other for the kindergarten sector. Child care teachers are trained through various routes: training programmes for high school graduates (13.5 per cent); 2/3 year junior college certificates (67.6 per cent), college graduation (17.6 per cent) and 4-year university graduate degree holders (1.3 per cent). At college level, a child care teacher certificate can be gained from 13 different departments, e.g. social welfare (41 per cent), early childhood education (37 per cent), home economics (12 per cent), social work, nursing, psychology, etc. High school graduates receive a Grade 3 certificate and those with a degree in child care or a related field (accounting for 72.8 per cent of the child care work force) receive a Grade 2 certificate.

3.25. Kindergarten teachers are educated at 2/3-year junior colleges and 4-year higher education institutions, including universities. About 50 per cent graduate from junior colleges but almost all candidates (84.3 per cent) are trained in early childhood education departments. On graduation, they receive the rank of Grade 2 teacher. They can be promoted to Grade 1 after three years' experience and a further 180 hours of training (22 credits) in a local teacher-training

[16] The appropriate implementation of such curricula is the issue, the evaluation of which requires careful and prolonged observation – which, given the brevity of the visit, was not available to the UNESCO team.

centre. Grade 1 teachers make up 27.5 per cent of the kindergarten teaching corps and Grade 2, 59.1 per cent. Most are employed in private kindergartens. The remaining 13 per cent are directors (10 per cent) and assistant directors (3 per cent) (2011). To be appointed to a public kindergarten requires passing an open review process and a competitive public examination. A position in public kindergartens is highly coveted as pay is equal to primary and middle school teachers and one becomes a civil servant with all the attendant advantages. By international standards, teacher certification in the Republic of Korea – including in the child care sector – compares well with most OECD countries. Most teachers – including in family day care – are college graduates (average 67.2 per cent), that is, they have a child care degree or diploma from a 2/3-year college. In addition, 17.6 per cent are university graduates. Only 13.5 per cent are no more than high school graduates. Workplace and public centres have the highest proportion (over 80 per cent) of Grade 1 teachers.

3.26. Most teachers in both sectors are therefore certified in early childhood studies, although differences arise in regard to the credits earned. Candidates studying to become public early childhood teachers take 50 credits in education plus 22 teacher training credits, while child care teachers take in general 35 credits spread across disciplines. The proportion of Grade 1 teachers is also significantly higher in public kindergartens than elsewhere.

3.27. The creation of a two-tiered system of teacher education is exacerbated by salary differences and the problem of low teacher compensation in the child care and private sectors. The entry salary levels are as follows: US$2,367 monthly in public kindergarten; US$1,451 in private kindergarten; US$1,529 in public child care; US$1,104 in private child care. Staff in private child care centres and family home day care are paid considerably less than teachers in private kindergarten, who, in turn, are paid less than public child care centre teachers.

3.28. *Quality assurance systems*: Again, the Republic of Korea is in advance of many countries in this respect. Both sectors have evaluation systems, introduced in recent years, to ensure that the country's early childhood care and education system is providing quality services to children and families. Few countries, to our knowledge, finance and engage in such evaluations to the extent practised in the Republic of Korea.

3.29. Since 2006, the child care sector has a Child Care Facility Accreditation Office and a Child Care Centre Accreditation System (CCCAS). In order to be authorised and accredited, all facilities are obliged to undergo accreditation and evaluation. Evaluation consists of a self-report, a basic items check-list, an inspection report and a committee opinion. The inspection includes a comprehensive review of business registration, standards for providing educational materials and facilities, child care staff qualifications and employment, curriculum implementation, facility status, accounting reports, etc. A self-evaluation report must be sent annually to the website of the Evaluation Office at the Korean Childcare Promotion Institute. Out of a total of 41,349 facilities, 78.4 per cent have passed the accreditation (2012). It is useful to note that 93.1 per cent of public facilities have succeeded; followed by 74.5-80.6 per cent of family day care and private facilities; and by 36.5 per cent of parent co-ops. In general, child care centres are eager to obtain accreditation through CCCAS, since an accredited status – which is made visible for visitors of successful centres through the accreditation board – fosters parents' trust and influences their decision to send their children to these centres.

3.30. The *Kindergarten Evaluation System (KES)* was introduced in 2007. Evaluation areas include curriculum, educational environment, health and safety, operations management and parent satisfaction. The KES evaluators include college professors, directors, and deputy directors of public and private kindergartens. Each kindergarten must submit an internal evaluation report, which is then verified by site inspection and a written evaluation by the evaluation team. An independent panel combines the results of the two evaluations and delivers a comprehensive evaluation report to the kindergarten. Evaluation results are released to the public; and the authorities promote the identification and dissemination of successful kindergarten operations found through the KES. A later revision of the KES evaluation allows the substitution of the written evaluation by the kindergarten´s own education plan and internal evaluation report. The UNESCO team considered this a real improvement as it allows room for internal evaluation and documentation. Objections by private kindergartens[17] delayed the evaluation of all kindergartens until 2010. A lesson to be learned is that private for-profit services will not necessarily agree to the raising of quality standards.

[17] Private kindergarten operators stated that, unlike the child care sector, kindergartens were opened under rigorous approval system and received routine guidance, supervision and inspection by the education office; and that current government subsidies were insufficient to properly run quality programmes. Therefore, these operators strongly increased governmental subsidies, especially for teacher salaries (Moon and Suh, 2011).

Chapter 4: Issues encountered

Positive developments in recent years

4.1. The UNESCO team was impressed by a number of positive developments which have taken place in the area of ECCE in the Republic of Korea in recent years. For example, there is almost full coverage of 5-year-olds, and the participation of young children of all ages is increasing. This trend has been due mainly to the adoption for the first time in 1999 of the government policy to provide free early education for 5-year-olds as well as to the more recent expansion of child care and private provision.

4.2. Ongoing efforts for improving the quality and coherence of ECCE services are visible and encouraging. For example, subsidies for private child care and kindergarten teachers, which began in 1990, are said to have lifted teachers' morale and encouraged enhanced practices. The introduction of a national early childhood care curriculum in the child care sector in 2007 and establishment of an accreditation system of child care centres in 2004 are concrete signs of the Ministry of Health and Welfare's commitment to improving the quality of child care services.

4.3. The development of a common curriculum for 5-year-olds which was mandated by the government under the leadership of President Lee Myung-bak in 2011 is meant to provide all children with the same quality of early education across various child care and kindergarten providers. Not only will there be coherence across services for children aged 5, but the initiative is also bringing the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Education together around the same table to discuss and cooperate for a shared goal. The Nuri Curriculum was developed and finalized in August 2011, and was to be implemented in March 2012. The two ministries still have to work out how to provide training to existing and new child care and kindergarten teachers on the common curriculum and how curriculum implementation is to be supported and monitored in both sectors.

4.4. Increasingly, parental needs for extended hours of child care are being met. This has been made possible largely by the rise in the number of full-day kindergartens, which started in the mid-1990s. As kindergartens began to provide child care services in the afternoon, working parents have been freed from the necessity to look for and secure a convenient and suitable child care arrangement after kindergarten hours.

4.5. Positive results have been evident in the Yeong Cha Project,[18] initiated in 2009 and implemented by the Korean Institute of Child Care and Education (Moon, et. al., 2009). The

[18] 'Yeong Cha' has two meanings. One is the sound people make in the Republic of Korea when they join forces to achieve a shared goal. It is meant, therefore, to symbolize the concerted efforts made by participating stakeholders of the project such as those working in child care services and kindergarten, government offices and local communities. Secondly, 'Yeong' means 'zero' in English which can be interpreted to mean that the project is reducing to zero or eliminating the gap between kindergartens and child care services so that all Korean children are provided with the same quality service (Pilot Research Project for Kindergarten-Child care Centre Cooperation (Yeong Cha Project): Achievements and Future Tasks, p. 2).

project aims to (1) identify types and characteristics of cooperation between child care services and kindergartens, and (2) specify the methods, scope, level and procedures of the cooperation between these institutions. It has convincingly shown the value of cooperation between child care services and kindergartens. The project brings child care centres and kindergartens together, giving them opportunities to learn about what their counterparts do, to cooperate in designing and implementing joint activities, and to share resources. The UNESCO team was informed of the following positive outcomes:

- Child care and kindergarten teachers and directors reaching greater understanding of each other;
- Child care and kindergarten teachers and directors learning from each other's approaches and practices;
- Child care and kindergarten carrying out joint planning for common areas and themes of interest;
- Child care and kindergarten children interacting together by participating in common activities (e.g. field trips), benefiting from opportunities to acquire caring attitudes and behaviours vis-à-vis younger children and honing their social skills;
- Child care services and kindergartens being able to save costs by pooling their material and financial resources, e.g. to hire specialist speakers for parenting education sessions; to share a garden or outdoor play area, etc; and
- Local officials in charge of child care and kindergarten sectors talking to each other and working together.

4.6. However, it was made clear that the workload of teachers and directors has increased due to their involvement in the Yeong Cha Project, since it requires time to communicate and co-ordinate actions between the two establishments. It was suggested that in order to continue the project, incentives for participating in the project should be considered.

Ongoing reflection on possible integration options by different stakeholders

4.7. From discussions with various stakeholders, it was clear that they entertained different integration options. This can be understood as a sign that there is a certain level of interest in moving away from the status quo, which many stakeholders believe could be improved, particularly in terms of service coherence, administrative and resource efficiency as well as clarity for parents. A valuable research-based proposal can be found in *Developing models to integrate early childhood education and care in Korea* (2008) written by Ock Rhee and her colleagues, putting forward five prospective models and a roadmap for integration that might involve minimal conflicts among concerned stakeholders.[19] Options that were shared with the UNESCO team during its review visit were:

[19] In International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy, 2008, Vol. 2. No .1, 53-66.

- *Split by age (1):* the Ministry of Health and Welfare for children ages 0-2, and the Ministry of Education for children ages 3-5. An elaboration of this option was proposed by one group, suggesting that access to early education for disadvantaged children could be provided from the age 2 or 2.5 in order to compensate for the disadvantages in their home environment and to give them an earlier start in quality centre-based provision than children from better-off families. There is also a view that this option may be able to better accommodate the developmental features of young children through making available protection and 'nurturing-oriented' services to younger children while offering education-focused services to older children (Rhee et al, 2008).

- *Split by age (2)*: Ministry of Health and Welfare for children ages 0-4, Ministry of Education for children age 5. The rationale for such a split was that the Ministry of Health and Welfare has traditionally taken in charge children across the whole early childhood age range and thus has the experience to ensure the quality care and development of children at any age. The taking in charge of 5-year-olds by the Ministry of Education seems to be justified by the proximity of this age group to primary education and the opportunity to facilitate a smooth transition to primary school. A further argument was that the initiative of developing and implementing the common curriculum for 5-year-olds is now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education.

- *Split by 'function':* Ministry of Education in charge of the morning session which emphasises the education function of the service; and Ministry of Health and Welfare in charge of the afternoon session which stresses the child care function.

- *Integration* of the responsibility for all ECCE services for children ages 0-5 under Ministry of Health and Welfare or Ministry of Education or another ministry or government agency.

- *Service integration or cooperation* without change in administrative auspices: This would mean encouraging service collaboration at the local level (e.g. the Yeong Cha Project) or reinstating the 1997 measure[20] that allowed the conversion of child care services to kindergarten status if they met the standards set for kindergartens. This option appears to be amenable to many groups of stakeholders as it leads gradually to creating conditions that favour eventual structural change.

An analysis of the main issues encountered

The concepts of 'care' and 'education' in the parallel system

4.9. The discourses on 'care' and 'education' by different stakeholders were at times confusing to the UNESCO team. The phrase: '*care is for the younger children and education can begin from 3'* was repeatedly heard. Meanwhile, there seems to be some agreement, at least among some stakeholders in both sectors, that they provide both 'care' and 'education' (or 'educare').

[20] According to those interviewed, this measure did not prove popular and was not taken up by many people.

4.10. This confusion seems partly caused by the ambiguous nature of the term 'care'. It can mean both 'providing alert supervision of the child that is nurturing, safe and healthy so that the parents can work', and 'expressing a personal interest in and fostering a warm relationship and emotional bond with the child'. Korean stakeholders may be using the term 'care' to mean the former in some cases and the latter in others. There is also the difficulty – encountered in most countries – of theorizing and practising an educational relationship with young children that does not subjugate the child but supports child agency and genuine meaning making while taking into account the curricular requirements.

4.11. Looking at the national curricula for early childhood education (used by kindergartens) and for early childhood care (used by child care services), the conceptual disagreement that surfaces at the discourse level seems to disappear. These curricula have identical areas with one exception, basic living skills[21], which is found only in the National Childcare Curriculum. The UNESCO team was told that the reason for this difference was for the child care sector to emphasise basic skills and habit development as an important goal for infants and toddlers.

4.12. At the same time, 'care' and 'education' appear to symbolize the territories occupied by the child care and kindergarten sectors. The UNESCO team heard repeatedly that the question of which term to use for official documents on ECCE can be debated for many hours and may obstruct and bring the processes to a stalemate.

4.13. From an economic point of view, there is recognition that ECCE delivers two different products: child care and education. In other words, ECCE is a policy field in which care and education are necessarily produced together – educating a child requires providing care and caring for a child requires providing education. Nevertheless, to limit costs, trade-offs may be made by governments either limiting the hours to pay for higher educational quality or increasing hours at the expense of lower educational quality. If parents vary in their relative desire for long hours or greater educational quality, then they may wish to be offered choices of ECCE with different emphases. However, as parents differ in their ability to pay for ECCE, this choice can exacerbate inequality in educational opportunities and later economic success.

4.14. What the UNESCO team can emphasize on this highly sensitive issue is that all stakeholders – be they parents, teachers, providers or policy makers – should firmly share the understanding that education begins at birth and that children develop and learn enormously in their very first years, which are critical for socio-emotional development, self-regulation, language development and initial socialization. Education should not be a narrow concept (like academic training) to be monopolized by the education sector, but is to be understood in a broad sense, necessitating good physical and mental health care and involving learning to be, learning to do, learning to learn, learning to live together, which comprise the four pillars of learning as put forward by *Learning: The Treasure Within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* (1996). At the same time, care – understood as nurture and protection for wellbeing and a warm and responsive relationship – exists to foster motivation to learn and achieving meaningful learning and later academic

[21] The objective of this curricular area is to 'learn about health and safety; acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes for wholesome living; develop health-promoting habits; learn how to take care of oneself (health and safety); and learn to respect and have fun with peers' (Moon and Suh, 2011, p. 35, unpublished paper).

success. This suggests the importance of investing in the upgrading of quality – particularly educational quality – of numerous family day care units and small child care services.

Demographic trends and their impact on the parallel system

4.15. As noted in the earlier chapter, the Republic of Korea has the lowest total fertility rate among OECD countries, which has alarmed Korean policy–makers. With a total fertility rate of 1.15 in 2009[22], which is well below the replacement level of 2.1 births per female, there is growing concern about how to support the country's elderly in an ageing society. In the meeting with the government officials of the Ministry of Budget and Finance, it was made clear that government priorities included redressing the declining birth rate and promoting women's labour market participation. Meanwhile, the number of school-age children is also decreasing, which frees up some of the resources that the Ministry of Education currently allocates to primary and secondary education. A research paper recently prepared for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology reports that the number of elementary school students, which is now 3,122,000, is projected to drop to 2,931,000 next year, falling below three million for the first time since the government began reporting this figure in 1965.

4.16. The declining population of young people has several consequences:

- With rising tax revenues from relatively rapid economic growth, the country can substantially increase investment in ECCE while still ensuring spending increases for other sectors of government and the reduction of the deficit without increasing tax rates.

- The amount of funding and ministry oversight needed to maintain the primary and secondary system at current levels of quality is actually declining.

- The number of children under 5 is similarly declining. Now that the ECCE system has reached relatively high levels of participation (essentially full participation at age 5 to 6, and 85 per cent at age 4 to 5) while at the same time offering long hours of care, the cost of maintaining the system is declining and resources can be applied to improve the quality of ECCE. It may also be possible to reduce the burden of fees on parents.

- The declining population of children will tend to intensify competition between the ministries and institutions (kindergarten and child care centres) providing ECCE. Regional variation may be expected based on local population trends, but overall, with fewer and fewer children to serve, pressure to compete will mount.

- There is likely to be an increasing number of places where the lowest cost solution is to have just one kindergarten/centre for children 3-5 in a locality because of the small number of children within easy commuting distance to any kindergarten or centre

- The priority for ECCE to contribute to increased fertility as a goal of national policy may be higher than in the past as a result of the desire to reverse the decline in the birth rate.

[22] OECD *Society at a Glance 2011*, in www.oecd-library.org

4.17. It would seem that the implications of the population shift in the Republic of Korea are different for the education and health/welfare sectors. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has declining pressures on its budget (from this source) and a declining population to serve. This provides this ministry with a strong incentive to find ways to offset the decline in order to maintain the extent of its responsibilities and make efficient use of its infrastructure. One way to do this is to increase the age range of children included. The most logical expansion is downward. This also is consistent with the law for one year of free kindergarten education. The same holds true for private kindergartens as they face a declining population and must compete harder to increase their market share if they want to maintain or increase their size. Many young children are already served by child care centres, which also experience a need to compete to increase their market share. Even kindergarten enrolment has declined slightly since 2000 despite an increase in the percentage of that age group enrolled in kindergarten.

4.18. The pressures and likely responses from the Ministry for Health and Welfare are similar to those for education. What is different is that child care enrolment of children under 5 has increased massively from 2000 to the present: from 686,000 children in 2000, 989,390 in 2005, to 1,348,729 children in 2011. The mission of this ministry is focused on disadvantaged children, but the reality seems to have become that child care services are offered to children from all backgrounds. One might suppose that this could be a problem for the ministry as a whole, because it seems likely that the growing elderly population will also create financial pressures on the ministry, and may increase the scale of its responsibility).[23] Although the total Korean health care expenditure at 6.9 per cent of GDP is still well below the OECD average of 9.5 per cent, health care expenditures in the Republic of Korea have been rising as a share of government expenditure in recent years at nearly twice the rate of the average rise across OECD countries (OECD Health Stats, 2011). In a parallel system like that of the Republic of Korea, competition for children between child care services and kindergartens could lead to fee competition, which is addressed below.

Competition and its impact on equity and quality in the parallel system

4.19. The UNESCO team encountered a view that competition between kindergarten and child care had positive consequences. The notion of competition is associated with choice for parents, meaning that child care services and kindergartens compete to attract parents by meeting their wishes, needs and interests, such as the best education for their child and most convenient hours for each family. As children and families vary in their needs, this should result in somewhat diverse services. Most parents do appear to have choices between providers that would allow them to take into account the needs and temperament of a particular child. Also, the hours of most providers meet the desires of parents for longer periods of care and more days per year whether the programme is child care or a kindergarten.

4.20. However, some aspects of care are easier for parents to see than others. Location, facilities, hours, and specific activities offered are highly visible and easily compared so that they may tend

[23] The Republic of Korea is rapidly ageing, having an increasing number of elderly, which accounts for a rising share of national income. By 2050, its elderly dependency ratio is projected to be the second highest in the OECD area (*A framework for growth and social cohesion in Korea*, OECD, June 2011).

to be emphasized by providers over other more hidden aspects such as the effectiveness and frequency of teacher-child interactions. The long hours that teachers work raise concerns about their effectiveness both because they may become fatigued and lack adequate planning and reflection time. If fees are lowered by reducing quality (as opposed to innovation and increased efficiency, for example), this is likely to occur in ways where parents are least able to see the consequences, making it very difficult for them to judge differences in the quality of education provided. As a result, parents may make less than optimal choices and competition may push programmes toward services that are less beneficial for child development. A number of those we met expressed the view that parents were sometimes confused about the educational quality of ECCE.

4.21. Furthermore, through the limited contacts made by the UNESCO team with Korean parents, there seems to be some agreement that public kindergarten is their first choice for older children, now that they offer full-day services that perfectly accommodate the needs of working parents for longer hours of child care. Also, preference seems to have been pronounced in favour of public services – for child care and kindergarten alike – because of the lower parental fee and general perception that public services have better trained, more experienced teachers and offer more stable and quality services.

4.22. Some economic theorists argue that price competition encourages programmes to find efficiencies so that government and parents get the most for their money. However, within an ECCE system that permits different standards of quality, there is an unintended disadvantage. Low-income families and families who work longer hours (or have longer commutes to work) will tend to choose lower-quality ECCE. Yet, their children are the ones likely to benefit most from higher-quality ECCE and are more likely to be low achievers or have social problems without it. As will be discussed later, this disadvantage can be addressed by increasing parental ability to pay, decreasing the price parents pay, or raising all ECCE choices to a single minimum level of higher quality. Furthermore, research studies show that, in some countries, free or fixed-price services supervised by government have higher quality and are more innovative in both pedagogy and environment design (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 2009; Karoly et al., 2008; Cleveland et al, 2007; Sosinsky et al, 2007; Rush, 2006; Mitchell, 2002).

4.23. In addition, experts shared concerns with the UNESCO team that competition throughout the ECCE sector has lowered or placed at risk quality as providers try to offer too many different educational services. *Hakwons*, the unregulated private educational institutions providing programmes for children aged 3 and over, offer various lessons such as art, music, gymnastics, languages and mathematics, though they define themselves as academic-focused institutions (OECD, 2004). Authorities are concerned that they do not have the capacity to ensure the quality of these services, that they detract from the national curriculum and important activities that should occupy more of the young child's time including play, both individual and with friends, socio-emotional development, the learning of life skills, physical development, and artistic activities.

Low–income families and the parallel system

4.24. Many of the experts that the UNESCO team met expressed the view that there was no shortage of child care and kindergarten. It was mentioned that lotteries might be held for kindergarten places where demand exceeds supply. It is unclear whether this demand is because of the high reputation of specific kindergartens, the limited supply of public kindergartens that cost parents less and have higher standards for teachers, a preference for kindergartens over child care, or regional shortages. Undoubtedly, access to ECCE has been facilitated by the declining population, economic growth, and increases in government support. Nevertheless, there may be some families who are not obtaining the quality of ECCE that they would like because it is not affordable for them. There may also be families who do not participate at all because they have very low incomes and cannot access free services in their location.

4.25. However, the statistics show that 8 to 9 per cent of children at the age of 5 do not access any early childhood service. Different explanations were given concerning who these children were (research seems to be limited on the issue). Some interviewees suggested that many are children who are too poor to participate in services: their parents cannot afford to enrol children in ECCE services because of supplementary costs, such as clothes, meals and field trips. This is an issue that requires more research and, if true, upstream government action.

4.26. The concerns for differential quality between kindergarten and child care are deepened when parents choose based on price (net of subsidy) and hours of care. Even though the government addresses this issue by providing higher subsidies for tuition to low–income families, this may not completely equalize opportunities by income, and there are other fees and costs to participating in kindergarten and child care. The percentage receiving subsidies for low-income in kindergarten and child care suggests that low-income children are more likely to be in child care, which may be the lower quality sector (judging from teacher salaries and cost per child). In addition, research indicates that low-income children learn more when they attend programmes with higher-income peers, but if low-income children are largely in separate programmes, such mixing will occur infrequently. As the social benefits are likely to be greater for lower income children, these factors that lead to lower quality for children from lower income families not only tend to increase inequality, but are costly to the nation's long-term economic well-being and quality of life.

Workforce and quality assurance in the parallel system

4.27. There are important differences in teacher education standards between the government agencies responsible for child care and kindergarten. Kindergarten teaching in the Republic of Korea requires higher levels of educational preparation and public kindergarten teachers are chosen through a preliminary competitive examination. In addition, kindergarten teachers, particularly public kindergarten teachers, are paid considerably more (and receive more benefits) than other ECCE teachers. Thus, there is an overall problem with teacher compensation across the ECCE sector, unlike remuneration in primary and secondary education. Since relatively few children are served in public kindergarten, this raises a concern for system-wide quality. Private child care and family home day care providers are less qualified and are paid considerably less than private kindergarten and public child care teachers. Although the empirical literature is mixed regarding the effects of teacher compensation and pay on quality, suggesting that it

matters significantly only under certain circumstances, it is also true that large educational gains for children have been found only in ECCE systems staffed with relatively well-paid professionals. Economic theory strongly suggests that whenever programmes compete for teachers in largely private systems, better teachers will be drawn to sectors with better compensation and working conditions.

4.28. The UNESCO team also found that kindergarten teachers are reported to have more time for planning and reflective practice. These are key elements for effective teaching that would favour quality in kindergarten over child care. Overall fatigue and morale are considerations that raise concerns for quality in all programmes, especially for child care given the long hours of work with low pay. Regarding family home day care, though it can be of high quality, the research literature finds that, particularly for pre-schoolers, it can be less educationally effective for cognitive and socio-emotional development than either centre care or parental care – perhaps because of (generally) lower qualifications and pay as well as less effective supervision and fewer opportunities for joint planning and reflection with other teachers.

4.29. The level of teacher compensation and working conditions is also related to teacher turnover, which affects the quality of relationships, care and education. High turnover does not allow bonding and trustful relationships between children and teachers to be nurtured. Especially in the child care sector, teacher retention levels and turnover are becoming critical problems (OECD, 2004). According to the national survey on child care (2009), an average of two teachers per child care centre a year were found to leave their work.

4.30. One difference between kindergarten and child care that favours child care in terms of effects on quality is teacher-child ratio, particularly for three-year-olds (though perhaps more widely, especially if there are mixed age groups and the better ratio applies to the whole group). There are more children per teacher at each age in kindergarten than in child care. There is strong evidence from many countries that the smaller the number of children per teacher the more effective the education. Although it is always possible that this does not hold for the Republic of Korea, it is risky to assume that this is true in the absence of evidence. No research evidence was found in the Republic of Korea that would support the view that ratio is unimportant in ECCE.

4.31. Concerning the quality assurance mechanism, both education and child care government agencies have systems to ensure quality both in new provision and ongoing operations. The Child Care Centre Accreditation System (CCCAS) and Kindergarten Education System (KES) are similar in that they both follow widely recommended practices within the international field of using both internal evaluations and expert external reviewers. These systems share some common evaluation indicators such as educational contents, environment, children's health and safety, facility management and operation. However, only the CCCAS includes 'nutrition' and 'interaction' indicators (Moon and Suh, 2011), which could be considered for inclusion in the KES, particularly in view of the fact that kindergartens increasingly extend their operating hours, and that interaction is at the heart of quality provision. Also, in view of the rapid expansion of child care, increasing the number and capacity of local child care information centres – which encourage child care services to apply for accreditation and provide them with expert support – is vital for real quality assurance and improvement.

Supporting the family through benefits and education

4.32. Parents, in particular mothers, need support to care for their children during the first critical years of life. The UNESCO team learned about many valuable initiatives to provide information and support for childrearing and education, and was exposed to several examples at the Busan Child Care Support Centre, Busan Educational Development and Support Centre, and some kindergartens offering parental education sessions. Support services for parents deserve strong backing as research suggests that co-operation between teachers and parents bring several benefits to young children.

4.33. Another relevant aspect of ECCE policy that should be taken into account in developing a more integrated approach is support for parental leave. Policies that reduce the cost of parental care and increase the ability to return to the labour force with minimal loss of current and future income have the potential to improve fertility. Policies that pay parents more or offer other rewards (a preference system) for children beyond the first-born also have the potential to raise birth rates. Family-friendly workplaces also facilitate parents to have and rear children. Such policies must be carefully designed based on the circumstances of each country if they are to produce maximum benefits at minimum cost.

4.34. Parents value time spent with children as both consumption (they enjoy it) and investment (in the child's future), and both types of activities should be recognized in policy-making. While policy acknowledges the value of both, it should recognize that it is possible to increase parental time with children while having only a small effect on parental investment in the child. The veritable expansion of longer-hour child care services in an attempt to better respond to the needs of working parents is praiseworthy. For example, the government started a new policy in 2010 to provide child care teachers working extended hours (i.e. working hours after 7.30pm) with a monthly allowance of 300,000 KRW (or approximately US$272) for overtime, given that the demand for extended-hour programmes exceeds the supply (Suh and Kim, 2010: 34). However, supporting working parents to spend more time with children deserves more attention than it receives at present.

4.35. To sum up this section, while remarkable progress has been made, there remain important reasons for concern about the overall level of quality and the distribution of access to quality in children's services. The research literature indicates that large educational and economic gains may be limited to cases in which children participate in high quality ECCE services. This may hold more strongly in circumstances where the level of care and education provided by parents and society generally (through its culture) is relatively high as is true of Korea. Differential effects are due to differences in quality. It seems likely that lower-income children are concentrated in lower-quality programmes within a multi-tiered system of ECCE. This is doubly unfortunate for it would tend to impose larger costs (lost benefits) on society and increase inequality in educational and occupational outcomes. Policy changes that lead to improvements in educational quality for children from low-income families could yield economic gains far exceeding the costs as well as decreasing future inequality.

Chapter 5: Integration options

Summary of research on coordination and integration of ECCE

5.1. Before discussing various integration options for ECCE policy, governance and service delivery, it may be useful to recall the available research related to cooperation and integration (e.g. OECD, 2001 and 2006; Choi, 2003; UNESCO, 2006; Kaga, Bennett & Moss, 2010).

5.1.1. At the national level, most countries[24] offer pre-primary education for one to three years within the education system to help prepare children for the transition to primary education; and provide other forms of ECCE – especially for children under the age of 3 – under the auspices of ministries of health, social welfare or children and women's affairs (UNESCO, 2006). The division generally follows the age of the child, with pre-primary education for 3-year-olds and above based in education departments, and care services for children under this age based in social welfare or health departments. In some cases, such as Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (China), Japan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Taiwan (China)[25], the United States, there is some overlap or parallel responsibility for the age groups served by the education, social welfare and health ministries, mostly in the two or three years prior to school entry.

5.1.2. These divided approaches have been the subject of critical discussion since the 1970s. Analyses have suggested the following as common challenges found in these approaches:

- Education is seen to begin from the age of 3 or 4 years, with younger children defined as needing only minding or protective care while their parents work. At the same time, 'schoolification' of services in the education system may occur, leading generally to junior primary schools for children 3 to 6 years and the educational neglect of children under 3 years.

- Government assumes greater responsibility for education services for children over 3 years than for welfare services for children under 3 years, with correspondingly weaker funding and less service availability for the younger children. The policy does not provide sufficient support to young children from more disadvantaged families.

- Differences between services in welfare and education in key areas such as access, regulation, funding and workforce leads to inequalities, discontinuities and problems for children, parents and workers. For example, levels of training and pay for workers in services in the welfare system are usually lower than those for workers in the education system; services in the education system are free of charge, while parents must pay at least part of the cost of services in welfare; services in the education system are available for shorter hours than those in the welfare system, requiring many parents to make additional care arrangements.

[24] Especially in Europe and Latin America.

[25] In June 2011, a new law regarding ECCE was passed in Taiwan, China. Taking effect in January 2012, it will change the ECCE system from parallel to split, assigning the responsibility for children aged 0-1 to the social welfare sector and that for children aged 2-5 to the education sector. Primary education starts at the age of 6 (personal communication with Professor Marn-Ling Shing).

5.1.3. Coordination is one main strategy for reducing the negative effects of the above approaches. It involves creating interministerial mechanisms to promote coordinated approaches to ECCE. These have yielded positive results, such as improved public awareness of ECCE, increased use of comprehensive services, and a greater number of cross-sectoral initiatives. For example, in Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare jointly set up the Office for Advancing Kindergarten and Daycare Centre for information exchange and coordination. In 2006, the country introduced a system to authorize *Kodomo-en*, or 'Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care' whereby care and education functions of child care and kindergarten are integrated and developed.[26] Coordination mechanisms have been found to work well when they are set up for a specific purpose or to focus on a target population; however, they have proven less successful in promoting a coherent overall policy and administrative framework across sectors.

5.1.4. Some countries have responded by giving national responsibility for all ECCE services to a single ministry, for example, the five Nordic countries, Brazil, England, New Zealand, Slovenia, Spain and Viet Nam. Actual and potential advantages of this strategy include: promotion of more coherent policy and greater quality and consistency across sectors in terms of social objectives, regulation, funding and staffing regimes, curriculum and assessment, costs to parents, and opening hours; potentially greater and more effective investment in the youngest children; enhanced continuity of children's experiences; and improved public management of services. Its actual and potential disadvantages include 'schoolification' of ECCE services, and poorer relations with health and other services that are of importance to young children and their families. It matters little which ministry ECCE is integrated in so long as the ministry in question has a strong focus on young children's development and education.

An analysis of integration options for the Republic of Korea

5.2. Further improvements in the integration of care and education could be pursued through (a) coordination of the current parallel systems, (b) a split system by age groups, (c) integration of all services under a single ministry, (d) integration of all services under a new central agency, and (e) integration through devolution to local authorities.

5.3. Coordination of the current parallel systems is one path to improving quality. Coordination of parallel systems operated by the Ministries of Education and Health and Welfare would require cooperation between the two agencies. A set of policies and programmes that together meet the needs of young children and families of the Republic of Korea could be jointly developed. An example of such coordination is the development of the *Nuri Curriculum for Age 5* together with policies for implementation, training of existing teachers, preparation of new teachers, and evaluation. This example is an important test case. Coordination is more difficult and time-consuming than when one agency is in charge. The cost is modest relative to the overall budget and potential benefits as it consists of time given by agency staff for coordination at the national and local levels. If agencies are not provided with resources for this activity then time will be taken from other responsibilities. To facilitate coordination, a council or committee could

[26] In OECD, 2009. Network on Early Childhood Education and Care: Responses on integration of education and care in ECEC: Japan. EDU/EDPC/ECEC/RD(2009)30.

be formed with representatives of each agency (at local as well as national levels). The United States is an example of a country that has developed such organizations at the state level to facilitate coordination.

5.4. The most important challenge with respect to coordination is to raise both systems to the highest standard of either when a common policy is desirable and to allow differentiation when the parallel systems usefully meet different needs. Agencies may disagree about which is the case. The question then becomes whether a good solution is found or coordination breaks down and no progress is made. Decision–making in this context is made easier by the extent of sound evidence and data available. For example, in the United States it is sometimes said that kindergartens are better at enhancing cognitive development and child care programmes better at enhancing social-emotional development, or that kindergartens provide services that are more attractive to higher-income families while child care centres provide services that better meet the needs of low-income children. The only way to resolve such claims is to obtain relevant data and conduct studies that would determine whether such statements are true. To obtain such data, it may be necessary at the very least to create a unified or joint agency with funding and authority to collect data across agencies. In the United States, state-level councils with broad representation from both education and child care sectors and other agencies have been formed with just such a purpose. In other countries, national studies have been commissioned to obtain data across all sectors, but their scope has not necessarily been broad enough in terms of the data collected.

5.5. Splitting the ECCE system by age is debatable and could have negative consequences. This was suggested by some people with whom the UNESCO team discussed the potential integration of care and education in the Republic of Korea. There is a lack of consensus about what the age split should be, with some indicating birth to 2 and 3 to 5, and others birth to 4 with 5-year-olds treated separately. An age-split system has some advantages if there are gains to specializing in care for younger children and education for older children. This is likely to be true when education for 3- to 5-year-olds is defined narrowly as including only methods and content that are similar to those of the primary school. It is true that children at these ages benefit from instruction as part of their activities and from coordination of the curriculum with that of the primary school. Yet, for the first three years of life, just as for the next three, children benefit from education which is broadly defined rather than narrowly academic.

5.6. In addition, the team encountered the opinion that competition between the two systems had increased the integration of care and education within each part of the system and allowed parents more choices. Changes in recent years would seem to bear that out. Breaking the system apart by age might remove the competitive pressure to integrate care and education. It might also reduce the choices available to parents. While this may be beneficial where the quality of education is too low, additional choice is generally a benefit. Of course, choice can have a cost if it results in more small operators who have higher costs than larger operators. It seems likely that expanded choice incurs some additional costs and that these would be reduced by co-ordination across an age-split system compared to the current parallel system. Nevertheless, the vast majority of costs are accounted for by the teachers and assistants and the space for each child, so it is unlikely that cost savings from splitting the system would be large. It could be much smaller than lost benefits if the effectiveness of ECCE declined and parent choice was reduced.

5.7. Integration of all services under a single ministry: A brief examination of the experiences of countries such as England, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, or Sweden suggests that greater progress is made when a central vision is at the centre of ECCE policy, and a dedicated ministry is nominated to translate this vision into reality. Even if the final result is not fully satisfactory, as in the case of England (where a largely unrestricted for-profit private sector still exists), there is little doubt that the achievements of the last 15 years would not have taken place had not one ministry been firmly in control. A lead ministry at national level can also address the care and education of young children from birth to 6 years more holistically and coherently, with an integrated approach to staffing, financing, regulation and monitoring. Various analyses, including the OECD reviews, show the advantages that flow from bringing policy-making under one agency:

- More coherent policy and greater consistency across sectors in terms of regulation, funding and staffing regimes, curriculum and assessment, costs and opening hours, in contrast to fragmentation of policy and services;

- More effective investment in young children, with higher quality services. In a split system, the younger children are often defined primarily as dependent on parents or simply in need of child-minding services. As a result, these services have often to make do with insufficient investment, non-accredited child-minding and unqualified staff;

- Enhanced continuity of children's early childhood experiences as variations in access and quality are lessened under one ministry, and links at the services level across age groups and settings are more easily created;

- Integration within education generally brings added advantages, such as better training, work conditions and remuneration for the workforce. It also changes perceptions of ECCE among the workforce, parents and the wider public, including greater recognition of its pedagogical value.

5.8. One conclusion of *Caring and Learning Together* (Kaga, Bennett & Moss, 2010) was that *integration means re-thinking and re-forming*:

> Deep integration, bringing about a major change in ECCE services, requires re-thinking as well as re-forming structures. A range of major structural changes are needed, involving areas such as funding, regulation and workforce. But these need to be accompanied and supported by new thinking, which give the structural changes a clear rationale, a clear direction, and a clear momentum. One part of that thinking – the concept of education – has already been mentioned and will be returned to. But it needs to be accompanied by new thinking about other key concepts and subjects, e.g. understanding of care, learning, children, workers and services. The world-famous early childhood services in Reggio Emilia, a city in Northern Italy (another example of a municipality taking the initiative to integrate ECCE in education) provides a good example of re-thinking preceding and underpinning re-structuring, having based its pedagogical policy and practice on its answers to the key critical question: 'What is your image of the child?' (Rinaldi, 2006). An important part of re-thinking, therefore, is the development of integrative concepts, concepts such as 'pedagogy' and 'education in its broadest sense', that is, ways of thinking about ECCE that go beyond the child care/early education divide. Integrative concepts and integrative structures are mutually reinforcing (pp. 116-7).

5.9. Another conclusion of the same study was that there were no widespread or substantive negative consequences of integration. The six cases of integration examined all reported positive consequences, especially for children under 3 years, but also in terms of curriculum development and pedagogical work. In only one of these cases, namely Sweden, the concern about 'schoolification', i.e. the downward pressure of the school system and its methods into the ECCE system, was raised.

5.10. However, agency history and culture are such that, even with the best intentions, ministries may continue to pursue past goals and objectives even after being given a different one. Therefore, it is likely to take time, willingness and effort to move toward deeper integration, both conceptually and structurally, regardless of which ministry is to be assigned the responsibility for all care and education services.

5.11. Integration of all services under a new agency: This is possible, but where would the new agency be located? Could it be jointly funded and administered by both agencies or would it be completely autonomous? If jointly administered, it could be considered a strong version of the coordination option. If given sufficient autonomy, such an agency could reduce the costs of developing policies and reaching consensus. The new agency could also have advantages in developing stronger integration of care and education while improving the quality of both. This would depend on making best use of the existing people and other resources of the current parallel system and bringing them together in a new more unified vision.

5.12. Integration of all services through devolution to local authorities: One needs to distinguish here between decentralisation to ministry local offices (as is the case, for example, with the present Ministry of Education offices in Korea) and real *devolution* of local policy, organization and management of early childhood services to local authorities, while retaining national policy, frameworks, regulation, national evaluations, monitoring and research at central level. Such devolution requires, of course, the allocation of sufficient financial resources.

5.13. This was the means employed by the Nordic countries to establish strong early childhood systems, sensitive to local needs, but under the policy direction and supervision of the central government. In turn, because the local authorities were relatively small, they brought together – for reasons of economy and efficiency – the administration of child care and education. Over the years, the separate committees for each sector were merged and common goals were created as administrators and professionals from the two systems worked side by side. A common concept of pedagogy emerged bringing together care, upbringing and education. At first, the central co-ordinating ministry was social welfare, as in the 1970s, child poverty and social status of minority populations remained a challenge in these countries. As welfare issues for children lessened, raising the quality of early education became a priority. For this reason, the management of early childhood services was transferred to education: in Iceland in 1986; in Sweden in 1996, in Norway in 2006 and in Denmark in 2011. In Finland, ECCE still remains within the social welfare sphere, although discussion about bringing these services under the management of education is taking place in many local authorities.

5.14. The advantages of integrating ECCE services at local level are many. Devolution helps to adapt services and resources to community needs, as it is generally recognized that early childhood policy and organization needs to be geared closely to parental needs and local circumstances. Depending on the context, integration can also encourage more efficient use of funding and co-operation across districts to innovate and share resources. Yet, while generally useful and necessary, the devolution of early childhood decision-making to local authorities can also lead to fragmentation and uneven implementation of national policies – a phenomenon that is further amplified by a lack of resources or by weak central monitoring.

5.15. The option requires, however, a revision of present local government arrangements, which would devolve responsibility for the sector to the local governments rather than to decentralised ministry offices. The UNESCO team learned that the level of autonomy given to local ministry offices, particularly in education, was modest. In Busan, 98 per cent of its education budget and 99 per cent of its health and welfare budget comes from the central government. The Ministry of Health and Welfare funding is earmarked for child care, but local education offices are free to decide on the proportion of central funding to be allocated to kindergarten education. The team was also informed that local education offices had little autonomy in terms of monitoring and supervision, and that they depended on the ministry – unlike local health and welfare offices which depend on the municipal governments.

5.16. A further variation on devolution could also be envisaged, namely, for local governments to integrate services while retaining the dual supervision and support of both the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. In this way, young children could receive enhanced funding allocated by both ministries. Above all, children's services would benefit from the expertise of the Ministry of Health and Welfare in matters of nutrition and health for young children and social assistance for families. This seems to be the thinking behind the UK House of Commons (2010) fifth review of *Sure Start and Children's Centres*[27] where it is stated:

> We believe that it was a backwards step to end formal Department of Health responsibility for the Sure Start programme at ministerial level, a situation which has carried over to Children's Centres. This is clearly not the only reason why local health services are not consistently involved in Children's Centres either strategically or operationally — there are many practical and professional reasons why collaboration is difficult. Nonetheless, the government should lead from the front by establishing joint Department of Children, Schools and Families and Department of Health responsibility for Children's Centres. The first task of the ministers who take on this role should be ensuring that Children's Centres are prominently and consistently reflected in both departments' policy priorities and performance frameworks.

[27] *Children, Schools and Families Committee, Sure Start Children's Centres, Fifth Report of Session 2009–10,* Volume I Summary (House of Commons, 2010).

5.17. It is easy to understand why this regret was expressed in Parliament in the United Kingdom. Unlike Finland, which has very low child poverty rates, high levels of child poverty exist in the UK.[28] In such a situation, the access to health services of mothers and young children becomes critical as does the funding of expanded and/or comprehensive services[29] in kindergartens and schools. At the same time, the primary goal of Children's Centres and of early services in general is educational, both vis-à-vis the children and their parents.

Lessons from other countries

5.18. In the United States, decisions about the administration and integration of early childhood sectors have sometimes been motivated by a desire to reduce costs rather than to improve quality. By removing authority from education and moving it to welfare, workforce, or some new agency, it becomes easier to pay child care teachers at lower rates than public school teachers and to have lower standards for facilities. This erodes quality and educational effectiveness so that ECCE quality as measured by widely used standardized assessments of early learning environments and teaching practices tends to be higher when programmes are administered by education agencies (see for example, Karoly et al., 2008). Even the U.S. federal government's Head Start programme can be seen as suffering from inadequate attention to education because it is administered as a social welfare programme (Haskins & Barnett, 2010). Increased coordination between welfare and education agencies has been introduced at the national level and in some states to address this issue and increase quality across both sectors.

5.19. Many U.S. states are seeking to address the quality problem with rating systems that apply a single set of criteria to all ECCE programmes across all agencies, and by applying them to both public and private programmes and across all ages of children. Such systems are too new to adequately evaluate their consequences. These efforts must also fight against tendencies to move down to the lowest standards across programmes rather than trying to raise all programmes to the highest levels achieved by the sector.

5.20. Other countries studied in the UNESCO (2010) report, *Caring and Learning Together*, also provide lessons to ponder. These countries were Brazil, Jamaica, New Zealand, Slovenia, and Sweden. Mostly, integrating care and education under the auspices of education has been very positive in these countries, especially for children under 3 years and for the services and staff that cater for this younger group. In addition, integration greatly improved curriculum development and pedagogical work. For example:

[28] According to the most recent child poverty research by Save the Children, 1.6million children across the UK live in severe poverty. In 29 local authorities, more than one in five children live in severe poverty, rising to over 25 per cent of children in Manchester and Tower Hamlets.

[29] *Expanded services* can be found in kindergarten, pre-school or public pre-primary programmes. Following the definition of Barnett (2003), an expanded service would include at least three of the following: 1) snacks and at least one meal provided on site; 2) an extended day of seven hours minimum on the same site; 3) health screening and medical referrals; 4) regular liaison with social and/or family services for children considered to be at risk. A further degree of outreach to other services is provided by *comprehensive services.* Typically, a comprehensive services centre – as the Children's Centres in the UK - works in co-operation with other community services and pays particular attention to parents. The centre provides, when necessary, courses and advice on parenting (in particular, how to support child development), employment and job training, and leisure activities

- In New Zealand:
    - The link with education inspired the creation of the Te Whariki curriculum and a specific learning evaluation instrument: 'Learning Stories' (Carr, 2001).
    - Even more striking were workforce changes: higher qualifications for ECCE staff and improvements in pay supported by the creation in 1994 of a combined union for early childhood and primary school teachers.
    - According to the Ministry of Education, the integration of services brought about 'a continued growth in the number of students in, and graduates from, early childhood teacher education colleges' (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p.40).
    - There has been a continued growth in the percentage of trained teachers in the early childhood centres. Today, 70 per cent of all early childhood classrooms have the services of a fully qualified teacher with assistants.
- With the exception of Jamaica, four of the five countries now have a recognized early years professional, a graduate-level worker educated to work with both under- and over-3 year-olds.
- In Slovenia and Sweden, a universal entitlement to services, at least from 12 months, has resulted, with clear evidence, in Sweden at least, of a significant narrowing of inequalities in access. In addition, both of these countries share a concept of pedagogy that integrates care, upbringing and education and both have a common curriculum for children aged 1-6 years.[30]
- In Sweden, integration has gone furthest to include the workforce, financing, regulation, organization and structuring at local level, national and municipal inspection (but with inspection teams sufficient in number and fit for purpose). In addition, curricula are linked and a broad consensus has formed around 'Norms and Values', which emphasise – at all levels of education – democracy, care and consideration towards others, solidarity, gender equality and tolerance.

[30] Because of generous parental leave allowances, children in these countries are rarely found in early childhood services before the age of one year.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and conclusions

6.1. A brief visit and review of the Korean ECCE system provides a limited basis for recommendations regarding policy changes. As a result, only a handful of recommendations are put forward, which address issues about how to go about decision-making, rather than advocating policies to be adopted.

6.2. While not ignoring potential administrative cost savings and increased efficiencies from larger programmes due to economies of scale, the primary focus should be on the potential benefits to children and Korean society from improvements in coverage (still relatively unequal) to quality of care and, especially, education within both sectors. The potential benefits of improving quality are probably much larger than any potential cost savings from administrative reform. This is particularly true because the rapid expansion of the child care system has opened some gaps in quality, which suggests that the most urgent need in this part of the system is to expand the administrative and support infrastructure.

6.3. The starting point for decisions about the administration of the ECCE system should be an analysis of the most important needs for improvement and how these might be addressed. Our brief review suggests several key issues:

- A multi-tiered system places low-income families at a disadvantage, substantially reducing the economic benefits of government subsidies for ECCE and increasing future inequality.

- A relatively high reliance on fees also tends to increase inequality and discourages parents from having more children.

- At the administrative level there is some duplication of effort and decision-making can be slow and expensive when agencies must agree on coordinated plans.

- Lack of coordination across agencies can raise costs for the private sector if providers must comply with regulations from multiple agencies.

6.4. Consideration should be given to further reducing the fee burden on parents, particularly for lower-income families, if it is found that cost adversely affects decisions about participation and equal access to quality. At the same time, increased subsidies are needed to equalize quality across the sectors generally. As resources are limited, there is a need to balance efforts to reduce the fee burden on parents with efforts to increase quality. The economic benefits to the nation as a whole depend on ensuring that all ECCE is of sufficiently high quality.

6.5. Consideration could also be given to the feasibility of turning private services into semi-public services in order for them to receive public support and subsidies comparable to those that public services receive at present. However, as in England, this may be difficult to achieve; much depends on the size of the private sector, its desire for cooperation, and its willingness to forgo

profit. Other countries such as Norway have managed the private-public divide better, and private providers, who cater to over half of Norway's children, are obliged to cap their fees at a non-profit level and comply with the licensing and quality criteria set by the Ministry of Education. The United States also offers examples of private providers competing to provide ECCE services and offering parents a choice but at high quality levels set by education departments, with government paying the vast majority of the costs and parents paying only small fees for extended hours (as in New Jersey's Abbott programme).

6.6. More information is needed about the quality of services, both public and private, delivered across agencies – whether and to what extent they contribute to the child's well-being, learning and development, and whether they meet the needs of parents. Such information would inform decisions about how best to improve services and would help to better coordinate the existing parallel systems or to opt for the integration of ECCE services within one agency. Empowering and funding a single agency to collect such data across systems could provide vital information to inform coordinating or integrating agencies and their policy.

6.7. Continued collaboration on the effective implementation of the common curriculum for 5-year-olds is likely to pave the way for greater coordination and integration across the child care and kindergarten sectors. In addition to joint elaboration of a common curriculum, joint curriculum implementation – which would include joint training of child care and kindergarten teachers as well as joint support and monitoring mechanisms – is recommended. Similarly, the continuation and expansion of the Yeong Cha Project is recommended, as it contributes to a bottom-up sharing of understanding, goals and practices vis-à-vis young children, regardless of their age, background or the setting in which they receive care and learning.

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Annex I: Schedule of the review visit

Sunday, 12 June

- Arrival of UNESCO Team in the Republic of Korea

Monday, 13 June

- 09:00-10:00 - Briefing Session on the Country Background Report and Visit Schedule

  Participants:
  UNESCO Team & National Team (Mugyeong Moon & Moon-hee Suh)

- 10:00-10:30 - Meeting with President of Korean Institute of Child Care and Education

  Participant:
  President Bokhee Cho

- 10:30-12:30 - Meeting with Representatives of Academic Associations of Early Childhood Education and Care

  Participants:
  Profs. Kyu-Su Kim, Yonghee Hong, Jeong Ae Eum (from early childhood education)
  Profs. Mi-Jeong Lee, Youngsook Se (from child care)

- 14:00-16:00 - Meeting with representatives of Kindergarten Association and Child Care Association

  Participants:
  President Deok-Hyeon Yun and 2 other representatives (from child care association)
  President Ho-Hyeon Seok and 2 other representatives (from kindergarten association)

- 16:00-16:30 - Debriefing Session

Tuesday, 14 June (Busan)

- 08:00-10:30 - Move from Seoul to Busan

- 11:00-12:30 - Visit to and Meeting at demonstration site (I) of Yeong Cha (Collaboration of kindergarten and child care) Project
  Young-il independent public kindergarten and *Young-do* elementary school-attached child care centre

Participants:
2 Directors Mi-Gyeong Kim, Jeong-Suk Wee with 2 teachers
Prof. Hae-Ik Hwang (Busan National University)

- 14:30-15:30 - Visit to the *Busan Early Childhood Education and Development Institute*

  Participants:
  President Su-Bok Lee, Researcher Seon-Ok Kim, Prof. Hae-Ik Hwang

- 16:30-18:00 - Visit to and Meeting at demonstration site (II) of Yeong Cha Project *So Shim* private kindergarten and *Sommaru* private child care centre

  Participants:
  2 Directors, Min-Jeong Kang, Shin-Ae Seong with 2 teachers

Wednesday, 15 June (Busan)

- 09:30-12:00 - Visit to the *Busan Child Care Support Centre* and meetings with Officials of Busan City Government and Busan Metropolitan Office of Education, director of Busan Child Care Support Centre

  Participants:
  Du-Jong Kim, Head of the Child Care policy team and Seok-Hwan Park, Senior Officer (Busan City Government)
  Suk-Ja Kong, Supervisor (Busan Office of Education)
  Eun-Mi Koh, Director (Busan Child Care Support Centre)
  Prof. Hae-Ik Hwang (Busan National University)

  14:30-17:30 - Move from Busan to Seoul

Thursday, 16 June

- 10:00-11:00 - Meeting with the Ministry of Strategy and Finance Officials (in Charge of Child Care Budget)

  Participants:
  Director Ki-Seon Bahng, Deputy Director Jin-Ho Park (Welfare Budget Division)

  14:30-16:30 - Meeting with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology Officials

  Participants:
  Director Hyeong-Ju Han (Early Childhood Education Division)
  Senior Advisor Jeong-Eun Ahn & Advisor Kyong-mee Oh (Early Childhood Education Division)
  Deputy Director Tae-Kyeong Kim (Local Education Finance Division)

Friday, 17 June

- 10:00-12:00 - Visit to the National Assembly

  Participants:
  Representatives Hae-Kyu Im and Chun-Jin Kim (Education, Science and Technology Committee); Representatives Hui-Mok Won and Seung-Yong Ju (Health and Welfare Committee)

- 14:00-16:00 - Meeting with the Ministry of Health and Welfare Officials

  Participants:
  Director Heon Joo Kim (Division of Child Care Infrastructure)
  Deputy Director Hye-Seong Im, (Division of Child Care Policy)
  Assistant Director Jeong-Hun Yu (Division of Child Care Policy)

Sunday, 19 June

- 16:00-17:30 – Debriefing/Discussion Session

  Participants:
  UNESCO Team & National Team

Monday, 20 June

- 10:00-11:00 - Briefing Session on Preliminary Analysis of the Results of Visits and Meetings

  Participants:
  Ministry of Health and Welfare & Ministry of Education, Science and Technology officials

- 13:30-18:00 - Policy Seminar on the integration and coordination of ECCE, The Press Centre

Annex II: Review team

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The Republic of Korea has made great strides in early childhood care and education (ECCE), and continues to invest in its improvements in terms of equity and quality. ECCE is provided mainly through childcare centres, catering to children from age 0 to 5, and kindergartens, catering to children from age 3 to 5. These provisions – 'early childhood care' and 'early childhood education' respectively – are subject to separate but increasingly coordinated policies, administrations, regulations, funding, workforce and curricula. The report focuses on the parallel ECCE systems of the Republic of Korea, exploring issues related to their integration and coordination, analyzing various integration options, and suggesting recommendations on way forward. Issues include the concepts of 'care' and 'education', demographic trends and their impact on the parallel systems, and workforce and quality assurance. The report is based on the findings of a policy review implemented by UNESCO.