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Understanding the 2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum

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Understanding the 2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum

I . Achievements and Limitations of Nuri Curriculum¹⁾

- Establishment and meaning of the Nuri Curriculum
 - ▶ Korea has a dual system in which the Ministry of Education is in charge of kindergartens, while the Ministry of Health and Welfare is in charge of child care centers.
 - ▶ The Korean government announced the “Common course for 5-year-olds” in May 2011 and the “Nuri curriculum for 3 to 5-year-olds” in July 2012 to strengthen the nation's responsibility for early childhood education in July, 2012.
 - ▶ Nuri curriculum is applied to both kindergartens and child care centers, so that children aged 3-5 years are subject to the same national curriculum.
 - ▶ Nuri curriculum is a national-level curriculum, which guarantees equal educational opportunities for all children at the beginning of their lives by providing free educational expenses.
- Achievements of the Nuri Curriculum
 - ▶ The enrollment rate of kindergartens and child care centers is increasing. In 2011, before the initiation of the Nuri Curriculum, the enrollment rate of kindergartens and child care centers was 87.0% for 3-year-olds, 76.8% for 4-year-olds, and 82.7% for 5-year-olds. As of 2018, they have risen to 90.0%, 92.5% and 96.2%, respectively.²⁾
 - ▶ The levels of satisfaction of managers and parents with the Nuri curriculum also have improved. In a previous study, participants perceived various positive changes such as ensuring equality in early stage of life by narrowing the quality gap in education between kindergartens and child care centers, improving teachers' professional competence and wage, and reducing parents' tuition burden.
- Limitations of the Nuri Curriculum
 - ▶ Important characteristics such as nature of the curriculum and the vision of an educated person were missing, thus undermining its system as a national curriculum.
 - ▶ Since its contents were presented in five different areas for each age, the excessive amount of teaching materials was burdensome to the practitioners.
 - ▶ Nuri Curriculum might limit autonomy and diversity in the field due to its detailed descriptions of education plans, environment compositions, and evaluations.

* Korea Educational Development Institute (2014). Education Statistics Service Ministry of Health and Welfare (2014). Childcare Statistics.

1) Based on Eunyoung Kim, Buyeon Lim et al. (2018). Nuri curriculum revision policy research. the Ministry of Education, Chungcheongnam-do Office of Education, and Korea Institute of Child Care and Education.

II. Background of Nuri Curriculum Revision

- Moon Jae-in administration's five-year government plan (July, 2017)
 - ▶ The five-year government plan is composed of five national goals, which include “Nation Responsible for My Life”, and 20 national strategies, which include “Nation Responsible for the Childcare and Education.”
 - ▶ The reorganization of the student-centered curriculum, one of the national agendas, contains ‘legalization of guaranteeing proper learning time and rest time for young children and elementary students’, which is the basis for setting the direction of revision of the Nuri curriculum.
- Early Childhood Education Innovation Plan (December, 2017)
 - ▶ Vision: Realizing public good of education by strengthening national responsibility for early childhood education and by innovating education culture.
 - ▶ Goals: 1) Ensuring high-quality early childhood education and equal educational opportunities through strengthening national accountability; 2) Supporting early childhood development, cooperating with educational communities such as kindergartens, teachers, and parents; 3) Securing publicity of early childhood education by establishing a cooperative system with educational fields.
 - ▶ The second set of tasks for the plan is to create an child-centered education culture through the classroom innovation. The first of these tasks is to shift the educational paradigm to center on young children. The reform of the curriculum centering on young children and play is specified as a national task in this first task.
 - ▶ Innovation direction of the Nuri curriculum: 1) Considering various characteristics of individual young children, 2) Encouraging children's free play 3) Respecting teachers’ autonomy
- World trends³⁾
 - ▶ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - It specifies the rights of the child including the right to survive, the right to protection, the right to develop, and the right to participate.
 - In terms of early childhood education, it is necessary that the curriculum respects children's initiatives and rights of participation and play. This is linked to the “child- and play-centeredness,” which is the direction of the Nuri Curriculum Revision.
 - ▶ UN SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals)

3) Based on Eunyoung Kim (2019). Understanding the Nuri curriculum revision direction and notices, 2019 revised Nuri curriculum teacher training materials. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Korea Institute of Child Care and Education. p. 7 ~ 8.

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- Sustainable Development Goal 4 is to ensure an integrated and equal quality of education and expand lifelong education opportunities for all, and Goal 4.2 specifies equal access to high-quality early childhood education.
 - Performance indicator 4.2.1 considers the aspects of health, learning, and psychosocial well-being, which are linked to the “child-centered” direction of the Nuri curriculum revision.
 - ▶ OECD Education 2030 Learning Framework
 - Pursue the well-being of individuals and society through the competencies embedded knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for the future in a rapidly changing world.
 - The OECD Learning Compass 2030 emphasizes children’s ability to search and find directions by themselves in unfamiliar situations instead of following established guidelines or teacher’s directions. It is based on the notion that children actively learn and explore through play, which is associated with the “child- and play-centered” direction of the Nuri Curriculum.

III. Characteristics of 「2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum」⁴⁾

- Specifies the nature of the Nuri Curriculum as a ‘common curriculum’
 - ▶ One of the distinguishing features of the 2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum is that it specifies the nature of the Nuri Curriculum as a ‘common curriculum announced at the national level.’
 - ▶ By designating the Nuri Curriculum as a common curriculum, it is expected to alleviate the discord in the field caused by different terms used in kindergartens and child care centers.
 - ▶ The current curriculum is expected to provide a high-quality curriculum and narrow the experience gap between children aged 3 to 5 years in kindergartens and child care centers.
- Establishes the system of curriculum organization
 - ▶ The 2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum specifies the vision of an educated person that was missing from the previous Nuri Curriculum for Ages 3-5.
 - ▶ By doing so, it promotes transition to elementary and secondary school curricula, which also reflect the vision of an educated person related to the core competencies for nurturing future-oriented human beings in the 21st century.

4) Based on Eunyoung Kim (2019). Background and Characteristics of the 2019 Revised Nuri curriculum. Public hearing for revised 2019 Nuri curriculum plan. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Korea Institute of Child Care and Education. p. 4 ~ 5.

- Maintains its existing structure and simplifies the contents of the five areas
 - ▶ In order to ensure the stable implementation of the 2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum, which emphasizes child- and play-centeredness, the basic direction and structure of the previous Nuri Curriculum for Ages 3-5 are intended to be maintained.
 - ▶ More specifically, the names of the five learning areas are retained as follows: physical exercise and health, communication, social relations, art experience, and nature exploration
 - ▶ However, the '2019 revised Nuri Curriculum' consists of contents that all young children aged from 3 to 5 should experience, whereas the previous 'Nuri Curriculum for Ages 3-5' divides contents by children's ages.
 - ▶ The content categories are adjusted to about three areas, and the key elements of the detailed contents previously presented by ages are integrated and adjusted to 59 contents.
 - Pursues child- and play-centeredness
 - ▶ The 2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum intends to support playful learning, which is the basic component of early childhood education.
 - ▶ Criticism has been raised that the previous Nuri curriculum is centered on teacher-led activities, so that child-led play is not fully achieved. Therefore, in the notice of the Nuri Curriculum, it emphasizes 'play' and dictates 'enough time to facilitate children's play.'
 - ▶ Through this, the 2019 Revised Nuri Curriculum aims to unify the direction of education, focusing on play, rest, and learners, which is emphasized in the direction of educational innovation.
 - Emphasizes execution of the Nuri Curriculum and teacher's autonomy
 - ▶ In the curriculum, terminology that hindered child-centered practice is adjusted. The contents of the five areas of learning are simplified to focus more on experience and play.
 - ▶ Criticism of uniformity has been raised as the Nuri Curriculum practice was centered on teachers' guidebooks, not public notices. Therefore, the teacher's autonomy is emphasized to support the implementation of the curriculum in which child is an active learner, and play is restored.
 - Simplifies evaluation
 - ▶ Based on the opinion that teachers have a great burden on evaluation because the method of evaluation is listed in the notice, the evaluation of the Revised Nuri Curriculum is described in brief terms, primarily focusing on the purpose, subject, method, and application of the evaluation.
 - ▶ Through this, the implementation of field-based autonomous evaluation is expected to improve the understanding of young children and the operation of the curriculum.
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IV. Policy Suggestions

- Develop and disseminate on-site support materials for settling the 2019 revised Nuri Curriculum.
 - ▶ Continuous development and dissemination of field support materials so that the revised Nuri Curriculum can be applied to various sites.
 - ▶ Develop and disseminate materials that can be applied to the field by supporting field research conducted by teachers.
- Improve on-site execution competence through training and consulting for teachers and related personnel.
 - ▶ Provide on-going training for teachers, principals, vice principals, supervisors, and directors of child care support centers.
 - ▶ Consult and share case studies for teachers in kindergarten and child care center.
- Promote the sharing of various field materials such as play cases and environmental improvement cases.
 - ▶ Encourage on-site practice of the revised Nuri curriculum through teaching contests of play cases and environmental improvement cases.
 - ▶ Expand the sharing of materials of play and environment improvement cases through Nuri Curriculum's online portals.
- Support the implementation of the revised Nuri Curriculum by improving teacher training curriculum.
 - ▶ Designate play-oriented courses as requirement, and avoid grouping by subjects in order for teachers to practice the play-centered curriculum in the field.
 - ▶ Improve the teacher training curriculum to practice the child- and play-oriented curriculum.
 - ▶ Train teacher educators to improve the revised Teacher Training Curriculum.
- Ensure autonomy of kindergarten and child care center teachers by improving institutional evaluation.
 - ▶ Ensure on-site autonomy in environment organization and implementation of the Nuri curriculum by improving indicators of required evaluations on kindergartens and child care centers.
 - ▶ Switch to support-oriented consulting rather than management in order to guarantee teachers' autonomy.
- Improve site conditions for the implementation of child- and play-oriented curriculum.
 - ▶ Support the implementation of curriculum centering on young children and play by reducing the teacher to child ratio.
 - ▶ Support the improvement of the physical environment for the implementation of curriculum centering on young children and play.

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