

KICCE POLICY BRIEF

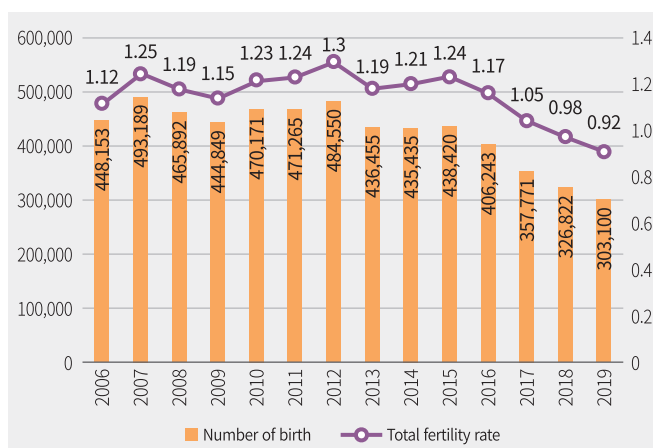
November, 2020 Issue 16

Transition and Outlook of ECEC in South Korea

Background

A steady decline in the total fertility rate(TFR) in South Korea

- According to the National Statistical Office, the TFR of South Korea in 2018 and 2019 was 0.98 and 0.92, respectively.
- The TFR in South Korea has gradually declined since 2006, when it was recorded at 1.12.



Note: "total fertility rate" refers to the average number of children a woman bears in her lifetime.
Source: National Statistical Office. <http://www.kosis.kr>

[Figure 1] Total fertility rate by year(2006-2019)

A decline in the number of children aged 5 years and under

- The number of children aged 0 to 5 years has declined since

1995. The estimated difference in the population between 1995 and 2020 is 1,940,749 people, the ratio of which being only 53.4%.

[Table 1] Number of children aged 0-5 years by year

Unit: Person			
Year	Number of children	Year	Number of children
1995	4,162,430	2015	2,740,039
2000	3,976,373	2017	2,623,429
2005	3,160,995	2019	2,351,325
2010	2,735,258	2020	2,221,681

Source: National Statistical Office. <http://www.kosis.kr>

Reforming national policies on population

- The Korean government shifted its national policy goals toward population growth from increasing the TFR itself to enhancing the quality of life. Additionally, this reform resulted in making national child-care policies more sensitive, concrete, and quality-oriented.
- The objectives of ECEC¹ policies were revised based on the new direction of the national population policy: a) enhancing the publicness of ECEC, which includes increasing the proportion of public enrollment up to 40%; b) supporting work-life balance by expanding child-care services at the workplace; and c) improving the quality of ECEC in terms of job conditions, staff qualification, and programs for full-day care.

1. Early Childhood Education and Care

Transition: Looking into the indicators of ECEC in Korea

Enrollment rate²

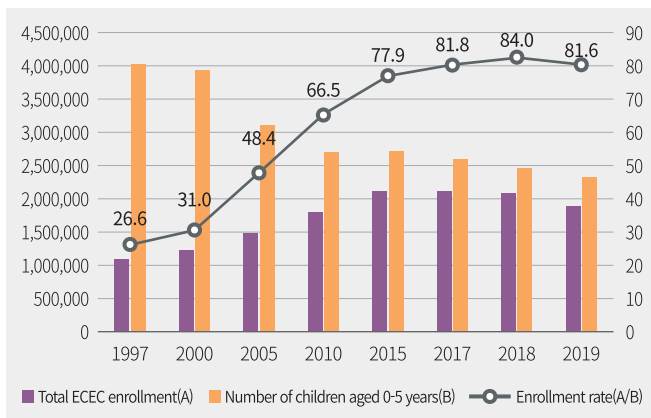
- The number of children aged 0 to 5 in ECEC has increased until 2016, but has declined since 2017.
- The enrollment rate in ECEC has increased such that there was a 270% increase from 2000 to 2018; however, the number of children aged 0 to 5 years from 2018 to 2000 was only 60%.
- The enrollment rate is expected to be somewhat stable since it seems to reach a maximum level of approximately 80%.

[Table 2] Number and rate of ECEC enrollment

Year	Total ECEC enrollment (A)	Number of children aged 0-5 years (B)	Enrollment rate (A/B)
1997	1,089,055	4,088,007	26.6
2000	1,231,263	3,976,373	31.0
2005	1,530,993	3,160,995	48.4
2010	1,818,497	2,735,258	66.5
2015	2,135,366	2,740,039	77.9
2017	2,144,874	2,623,429	81.8
2018	2,091,740	2,491,154	84.0
2019	1,918,541	2,351,325	81.6

Source: National Statistical Office. <http://www.kosis.kr>

- The enrollment rates by age are: 18.7% (under 1 year old), 77.6% (1 year old), 89.7% (2 years old), 90.2% (3 years old), 90.9% (4 years old), and 90.5% (5 years old).



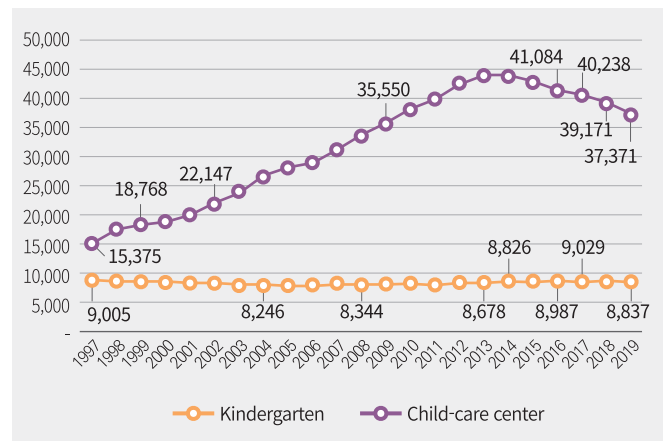
Source: National Statistical Office. <http://www.kosis.kr>

[Figure 2] Number and rate of ECEC enrollment 1997-2019

2. Enrollment rate refers to the proportion of those who use ECEC services among children aged 0-5 nationwide.

Number of ECEC centers

- Changing trends in the number of ECEC centers over a certain time period reflect the government's stance on policies in response to the number of children aged 0 to 5 years and ECEC.
- The number of child-care centers had increased until 2013, when policies on fertility rate and public responsibility for child-care were advocated by the government.
- Since 2013, the number of child-care centers has decreased as the National ECEC Curriculum (The Nuri Curriculum) was implemented and the tuition fee of kindergartens dropped.



Source: National Statistical Office. <http://www.kosis.kr>

[Figure 3] Number of ECEC centers by year

Public ECEC Services

- The number of enrollments in public ECEC services has increased rapidly since 2010.

[Table 3] Number of enrolled children in public and private ECEC centers

Unit: Person

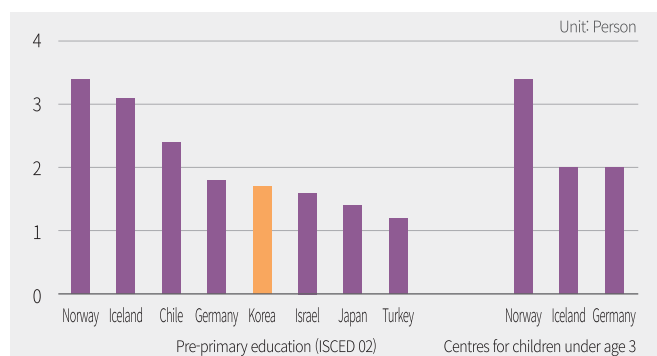
Year	Kindergartens			Child-care centers				
	total	national	public	private	total	public	private	work-place
2000	545,263	272	121,936	423,055	686,000	99,666	578,527	7,807
2005	541,603	253	124,030	417,320	989,390	111,911	864,494	12,985
2010	538,587	236	126,341	412,010	1,279,910	137,604	1,120,405	21,901
2018	675,998	249	172,121	503,628	1,415,742	200,783	1,152,328	62,631
2019	633,913	275	177,055	456,583	1,365,085	232,123	1,066,939	66,023

Source: 1) National Statistical Office. <http://www.kosis.kr>
 2) Korean Education Development Institute(2019). Annual report for Education Statistic
 3) Korea Institute of Child Care and Education(2019). Statistic on ECEC

- In 2019, a total of 20.5% of enrolled children were in public ECEC: 28% of enrolled children in early childhood education sector attend public kindergartens and 17% of children in child-care sector were in public centers.

Staff-to-child ratio

- The average number of staff (i.e., teachers) per ten children aged 3 to 5 in ECEC is 1.7, especially in large centers.
- This means that Korea’s ECEC structural quality represented by the ratio is higher than that of Israel, Japan, and Turkey; but lower than that of Norway, Iceland, Chile, and Germany, which were the countries that participated in the survey conducted by the OECD in 2018.

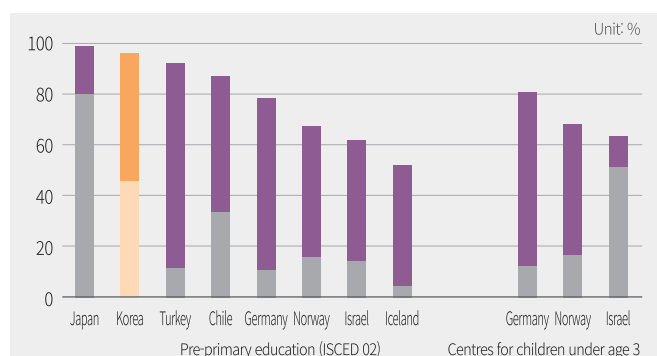


Source: OECD(2019). Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care. Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018, TALIS.

[Figure 4] Number of teachers per 10 children in 9 OECD countries

Teacher's Level of Education

- The percentage of teachers who attained college education is above 95%, indicating that Korea has a relatively high index of teachers' education among OECD countries.



Note: The dark part of the graph represents the percentage of 4 or more year college degree and the gray part represents the percentage of 2-3 year college degree.

Source: OECD(2019). Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care. Results from the Starting Strong Survey 2018, TALIS.

[Figure 5] ECEC staff's highest level of education

Outlook and Issue

Outlook of ECEC in Korea

- The number of enrollment has declined since 2017 and this downward trend will persist unless the fertility rate increases.
- The enrollment rate in ECEC has increased and this is expected to be sustained at the present degree.
- Due to the policy to expand public ECEC services, the enrollment rate in public ECEC has increased and is expected to increase further.
- The government will continue its efforts to improve the quality of ECEC.

Issues

- To strengthen the publicness of ECEC centers
 - Increase the number of centers run by public authorities and provide children aged 0-5 years with more opportunities for enrolling in public ECEC services.
 - Reinforce public transparency in accounting, especially among profit-making ECEC centers.
- To improve the quality of ECEC
 - Establish an ideal staff-to-child ratio for children aged 0-5 years.
 - Improve working conditions, salary, and social reputation of ECEC staff.
 - Monitor and support the implementation of the revised national Nuri curriculum.

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