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The National Institute for Lifelong Education (NILE) has published Lifelong Learning in Korea since 2013. This is to share Korean lifelong education projects and cases with policy makers, researchers, and practitioners from all over the world. NILE wishes to contribute to the development of lifelong learning in the international community by sharing the vision and efforts for the promotion of Korean lifelong education. As the second issue of 2015, this issue features “lifelong learning educators”—certified lifelong education professionals—in Korea.

Lifelong Learning Educator in Korea

1. What Is a Lifelong Learning Educator?

To create lifelong education activities that are both systematic and efficient, thereby enabling lifelong learning to yield desirable results, it is necessary to incorporate the human resources with the appropriate professional expertise in relevant fields. The nature of lifelong education is to offer it to those who need it in order to benefit from it freely. In reality, however, there are still those who cannot participate in lifelong education as a result of the difficulties and hurdles in obtaining necessary information for learning (Ministry of Education & KEDI, 2014). This is an indication that, in order to realize a learning society we sincerely desire, it is important not only that we expand learning opportunities themselves but also provide professional support for prospective learners to fully benefit from the learning opportunities.

In Korea, lifelong education policy projects have expanded significantly since the 2000s, driven by the central government. As a way to ensure effective implementation of these policy projects, attention was increasingly paid on how to strengthen the professional expertise of those engaged in the various fields of lifelong education (NILE, 2008). Against this backdrop, the Lifelong Learning Educator system — a national certification system for professional educators performing in lifelong education — came into force.

A “lifelong learning educator” refers to educators who meet the set criteria required by the central government and are recognized with a certificate conferred by the Minister of Education in order to support them in professionally carrying out their lifelong education–related work. Lifelong learning educator is defined as a field specialist responsible for the management of the entire lifelong education process from program planning to implementation, analysis, evaluation and teaching (Lifelong Education Act, Article 24). The tasks of lifelong learning educators are laid out as follows:

- Analysis, development, operation, evaluation and consultation for lifelong education programs
- Provision of learning information for learners
- Consulting and teaching for lifelong education capability development
- Other related tasks, including the planning of lifelong education promotional projects

* Source: The Enforcement Decree of the Lifelong Education Act, Article 17.

The key features of Lifelong Learning Educator system in Korea are that, first, it is based on and operated in accordance with the Lifelong Education Act as a national certification system. The Lifelong Education Act stipulates the qualifications, training organizations, placement and employment for lifelong learning educators. The enforcement decree and regulations of the Lifelong Education Act contains detailed information on enforcing the Act.

To become a lifelong learning educator, one needs to obtain a predetermined number of academic credits in lifelong education–related subjects and be awarded the appropriate diploma from the designated educational institutions under the Lifelong Education Act. To this end, the Act stipulates on how to take credits for lifelong education–related coursework and attain the relevant diploma via universities, academic credit bank institutions, and other related organizations. Once

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the certificate is acquired, it is valid permanently since there is no recertification procedure.

Second, the activities of cultivation, placement and training are operated in an interconnected manner. This is to ensure systematic cultivation of certified professionals, to establish an adequate placement structure, and to implement qualitative management of the training system.

In particular, there has been a strong demand for institutional support to have well-trained professionals to serve in the field. This is based on the theory that unless social usefulness in the vocational perspective is bolstered, it would be difficult to demand lifelong learning educators to develop and maintain a high level of professionalism.

To this end, the Lifelong Education Act prescribes “the placement and employment of lifelong learning educators.” The Act makes it mandatory for city and provincial institutes for lifelong education, as well as city, county and village lifelong learning centers, to be operated in public areas to employ lifelong learning educators. The Act also recommends the heads of preschools and schools that run lifelong education programs, to employ lifelong learning educators.

<Table 1> Institutions Required to Employ Lifelong Learning Educators and the Criteria

Institutions required to employ lifelong learning educators	Criteria
1. National Institute for Lifelong Education, City/provincial Institutes for Lifelong Education	- More than five lifelong learning educators (including at least one with first grade level certification)
2. City/county/village lifelong learning centers	- More than 20 regular staff members: at least two lifelong learning educators (including at least one with first or second grade level certification) - Less than 20 regular workers: at least one lifelong learning educator(with at first or second grade level certification)
3. Lifelong education facilities (excluding credit acknowledged lifelong education facilities) covered by the Articles 30-38 of the Act/Academic credit bank organizations/Multi-purpose facilities, corporations, and groups covered by the Clause 2 of Article 2.	- At least one lifelong learning educator

* Source: The Enforcement Decree of the Lifelong Education Act, Article 22.

The National Institute for Lifelong Education manages the operations of the lifelong learning educator system. At NILE, the Department of Lifelong Learning Educator Certification System oversees the operation of lifelong learning educator certificate and training system, with the objective to ensure smooth cultivation of lifelong learning education professionals.

The management of the lifelong learning educator certification system is implemented through an online platform. NILE has established and operated the lifelong learning educator certification management website (<https://lledu.nile.or.kr>) to ensure a systematic operation of the system. The main functions of the website is that it provides a guideline on the lifelong learning educator certification system to prospective applicants who hope to acquire the certificate and to those who work at the training organizations. This website contains an overview of the lifelong learning educator certification system, as well as statistical data on the

current trends of training centers. It also provides consulting services regarding certificate acquisition.



[Figure 1] Lifelong Learning Educator Certification Management Website

2. Training of Lifelong Learning Educators

As mentioned before, the lifelong learning educator certificate is classified as a national certificate. Accordingly, the cultivation of lifelong learning educators should follow the stipulation of the Lifelong Education Act. Lifelong learning educators are classified into grade levels 1, 2 and 3. The process of promotion and cultivation differs by the grade. The Advancement Course requires the completion of the educational programs run by either NILE or other lifelong learning educator training centers. To join this program, the participants should have some field experience. This rule applies to the first and second grade courses. The Cultivation Course, which is for the third grade level, provides certificate depending on whether

the participants have taken certain courses designated by the Lifelong Education Act. The qualifications for each grade are as follows.

<Table 2> Lifelong Learning Educator Qualifications by Grade Level

Classification	Requirements for acquisition	Note
Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five years of field experience after acquiring the grade 2 certificate - Completion of grade 1 Advancement Course run by NILE 	Advancement Course
Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's or doctorate degree holders who have earned more than 15 credits in lifelong education coursework - Undergraduate-level diploma holders who have earned more than 30 credits in lifelong education coursework 	Advancement Course
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those who have three years of field experience after acquiring grade 3 and completed the grade 2 Advancement Course run by the NILE or other training centers 	Cultivation Course
Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undergraduate-level diploma holders who have earned more than 21 credits in lifelong education coursework - Those who have more than two years of field experience in lifelong education and have completed the grade 3 Cultivation Course (one year of experience if the applicant is a civil servant or a teacher) 	Cultivation Course

* Source: Enforcement Decree of the Lifelong Education Act.

There are two types of courses in the lifelong education–related coursework required in acquiring the lifelong learning educator certificate: compulsory courses and elective courses. Higher education institutions such as universities can offer lifelong education–related courses at any of its departments without limits to their main areas of studies. According to the NILE's internal data, lifelong learning educator coursework are mostly offered within universities' education–related departments (Ministry of Education & NILE, 2013a).

Compulsory courses include lifelong education theory, lifelong education methodology, management theory, program development theory, and field practicums. Elective courses are divided into practice-centered and methodology-centered courses. The practice-centered courses include those concerning the education of children, teenagers, female and elderly, while the methodology-centered courses include educational technology and education research methodology—courses that are related to the development of operation of lifelong education programs in field (NILE, n.d.).

One of the key characteristics is that, in order to meet the qualification standards for lifelong learning educators, lifelong education practicum is mandatory part of the course. The lifelong education practicum is an 8-hours per day, 4-week course that offers practical education experience. This helps prospective lifelong learning educators to gain a better understanding of the activities of the lifelong education institutions and the actual work in the field, so that they can improve their practical competency and capabilities (NILE, n.d.).

Another outstanding feature is that it is possible to take the lifelong learning educator training course not only at traditional educational institutes such as universities, but also at a variety of other institutions. As seen in the above-mentioned qualification standard, there are various ways to acquire the lifelong learning educator certificate, including completing the courses at lifelong education training institutions or taking the course of subjects acknowledged by the Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS).

3. How to Maintain Professional Expertise

In order to establish the recognition of lifelong learning educators accredited by the central government, it is also important to have a well-organized training system to maintain and further develop professional expertise of the lifelong learning educators.

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In particular, as the scope of duties for lifelong learning educators continues to expand, the importance of their training is also emphasized.

Taking this into account, the Lifelong Education Act has a stipulation with respect to the training of lifelong learning educators. NILE plays the critical role in the training of lifelong learning educators. The Lifelong Education Act regulates the training of lifelong education officials as one of NILE's main roles. NILE, accordingly, carries out the job and qualification training programs for lifelong learning educators.

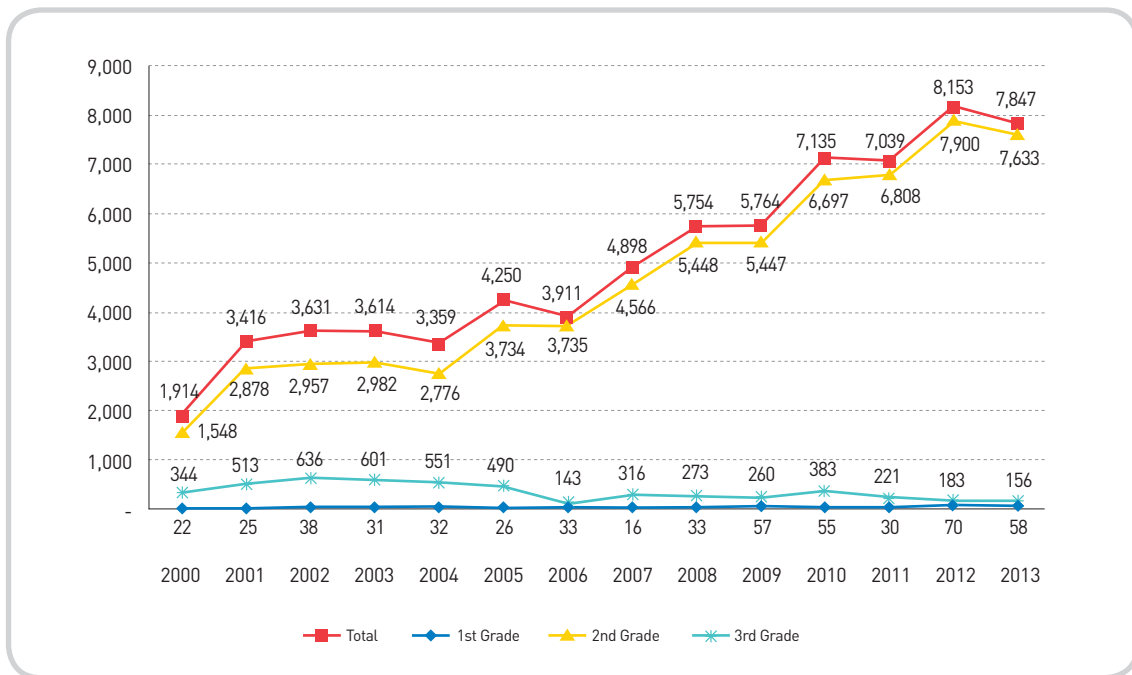
First of all, the job training programs target lifelong learning educators and the officials who work at lifelong learning educator development institutions and field practicum institutions. The programs for those who work at lifelong learning educator cultivation and field training institutions are designed to help them gain a better understanding of their roles and improve their professional expertise, aimed at eventually ensuring internal stability of the lifelong learning educator certification system and securing a higher level of credibility. In addition, NILE also frequently carries out training programs for the lifelong learning educators who are already engaged in lifelong education fields. This program provides instructions on the tasks that are needed to be performed as lifelong learning educators. It also focuses on introducing best field practices, sharing the successful experiences, and providing opportunities for lifelong learning educators to build their professional networks.

The grade advancement process is used with qualification training for lifelong learning educators. The process is divided into the first and the second grade advancement courses. This process provides lifelong learning educators with the opportunity to achieve a higher grade certification and to improve their professional skills and capabilities.

The grade 1 advancement course run by the NILE is a 105-hour program, while the grade 2 advancement course is a 70-hour program. The grade 1 program course for the year 2015 covers various subjects, including the setting of the vision for lifelong education, the planning and development of educational programs, a lifelong education consulting, the learning and evaluation of lifelong education teaching methods, the management of lifelong education organizations, and the promotion of changes and new designs of regional communities. In addition, there are individual projects such as the study visits to the lifelong education institutions. When one completes the program, a comprehensive exam is conducted. The second grade program consists of courses that include the planning of lifelong learning and environmental analysis, the development, operation and evaluation of lifelong education programs, regional network, teaching/learning techniques and consulting. Just as with the first grade program, individual projects need to be completed, followed by a comprehensive exam conducted after program completion (NILE, 2015).

4. Current Trend of Lifelong Learning Educators

In 2013 alone, a total of 7,847 lifelong learning educators were certified with the cumulative number reaching 70,705 during the period from 2000 to the present. As can be seen in Figure 2, the number of lifelong learning educators has been on an upward trend steadily since 2000. Grade 2 certificate holders account for the vast majority, while the share of first grade certificate holders remains the smallest group (Ministry of Education & KEDI, 2014).



[Figure 2] Number of Lifelong Learning Educators by Year

* Source: Ministry of Education & KEDI (2014). Lifelong Education Statistics Institution Survey. Seoul: KEDI.

The main factor behind the continued increase in the number of lifelong learning educators is the increase in opportunities of acquiring the lifelong learning educator certificate as a result of the diversification of the institutions that offer development and training courses. The lifelong learning educator training courses, which had been run mainly by universities, are now offered via NILE, and institutions participating in the ACBS, all of which have made it easier for those who have an interest in acquiring the certificate to participate in the cultivation programs. Another factor is that with the variety of lifelong education projects have been being actively driven by the government since 2000s, the demand for professional lifelong education experts has increased rapidly as well.

Among the 7,847 people who acquired the lifelong learning educator certificate in 2013, 5,633 or 71.8% acquired the certificate by participating in regular education courses run by colleges and universities. The remaining 28.2% or 2,214 people obtained the certificate through non-traditional education programs managed by lifelong education institutions participating in the ACBS, NILE and other non-traditional education institutions. When viewed by institution, the number of lifelong learning educators who acquired the certificate through lifelong education institutions participating in the ACBS accounted for the largest share at 25.42% or 1,995, followed by colleges and universities with 25.37% or 1,991, and air and correspondence universities with 21.36% or 1,676 (Ministry of Education & KEDI, 2014).

<Table 3> Lifelong Learning Educator Certificates awarded by Educational Institutions (2013)

Category	Number of Certificates Issued	Percentage
Junior College	521	6.64
University of Education	-	-
University	1,991	25.37
Air & Correspondence University	1,676	21.36
Industrial University	146	1.86
Technical College	-	-
Miscellaneous School	23	0.29
Distance/Cyber University	1,244	15.85
College in the Company	-	-
Polytechnic College	-	-
Graduate School University	151	1.92
Major University	59	0.75
National Institute for Lifelong Education	41	0.52
General lifelong education facilities	1,995	25.42
Total	7,847	100.00

* Source: Ministry of Education & KEDI(2014). Lifelong Education Statistics Institution Survey. Seoul: KEDI.

At present, 72.5% of the organizations that are classified as lifelong education institutions¹ by the Lifelong Education Act employ lifelong learning educators, with the average number of one lifelong learning educators employed in each organization. When it comes to lifelong education facilities affiliated with businesses, about 96% have employed lifelong learning educators, the highest level among all types of organizations (Ministry of Education & KEDI, 2014).

5. Future Outlook and Tasks Ahead

Lifelong learning educators are engaged in jobs related to lifelong learning policy projects and lifelong education programs, and they perform specialized activities by promoting community members' participation in lifelong learning. They also serve as a driving force behind the formation and operation of networks between lifelong education organizations and learners. Through professional management of lifelong education-related performances, they contribute to establishing a foundation for a sustainable lifelong education. Given these roles of lifelong learning educators, they are professionals and their specialty should be socially recognized (Kim, 2013). Only when lifelong learning educators are properly recognized as professionals, it will give them a stronger sense of social existence and influence. With this, they could play a more central role in invigorating lifelong education.

¹ The lifelong education entities, stipulated by the Lifelong Education Act, includes the facilities, corporations and organizations approved, registered and declared under the Lifelong Education Act, the private academic institutions that offer lifelong job education, and other facilities, corporations and organizations which have lifelong education as their main purpose (Lifelong Education Act, Article 11). Lifelong education facilities include school-affiliated lifelong education facilities, remote-type lifelong education facilities, business-affiliated lifelong education facilities, civil group-affiliated lifelong education facilities, media-affiliated lifelong education facilities, knowledge and HR development-type lifelong education facilities and lifelong education centers.

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Nearly 30 years have already passed since the certificate system was first introduced under the Social Education Act (former version of the Lifelong Education Act). However, efforts are still underway to make lifelong learning educators socially recognized as professionals.

In particular, the annual growth of lifelong learning educators expanded from 1,914 in 2000 to 7,847 in 2013. Considering the quantitative growth and the reality facing the lifelong learning educator training organizations, there are doubts as to whether the quality of education they receive is good enough. To sustain and develop the specialty of lifelong learning educators, discussions are still underway (Yoon & Kim, 2014). This is a matter of interest not only for the central government that runs it, but also for those who are involved in lifelong education-related fields and for academic communities. Accordingly, various studies have been conducted with respect to how to improve lifelong learning educator training and certification systems and the roles and tasks of lifelong learning educators, leading to continued publications of a series of Master's and Doctoral theses on such topics.

Most critical issue at hand regarding the operation of the lifelong learning educator system is how to strengthen its credibility as a national certificate system. To this end, the lifelong learning educator system has continuously undergone a series of improvements. A good example of this is the unification of the certificate issuance channel. In the early stages of the system, the lifelong learning educator certificates were issued by the heads of the institutions operating the training programs. At present, however, the certificates are issued only by NILE under the name of Minister of Education (Ministry of Education & NILE, 2013). This aims to establish the form of a national certificate system and enable NILE to manage the system in a more comprehensive and systematic manner.

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Another area of interest in light of system improvements is the question of how to maintain the operation and management quality of training organizations in order to ensure reliable operation of the lifelong learning educator training courses and how to boost the employment of lifelong learning educators.

The fate of the lifelong learning educator system depends on the level of specialty of the lifelong learning educators in the field. Demands are high in establishment of measures to provide direct support to help lifelong learning educators develop their expertise. In particular, once the lifelong learning educator certificate is acquired, it remains valid permanently. With this in mind, many have pointed out the necessity to set up a new mechanism to encourage lifelong learning educators to continue to develop their specialties even after acquiring the certificate.

Although a variety of training programs are in operation under the management of NILE, there is a need to make a paradigm shift from a program-based approach towards a more comprehensive career management approach that will focus on the idea of continuing education after the process of certificate acquisition, covering career management and training participation (Ministry of Education & NILE, 2013).

Korea's lifelong learning educator system is an extraordinary case that the lifelong learning educators are designated as professionals through legal and institutional mechanisms and their certifications are managed at a state level. Not only in Korea but also in many other countries which hope to carry out lifelong education policies and programs, shared view is that competent experts are needed to ensure the success of such policies and programs. Therefore, lifelong learning educator system of Korea which cultivates and manages professionals at a state level could serve as an exemplary case, giving significant implications to those who wish to implement similar system in their countries.

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[Annex] Past Issues of “Lifelong Learning in Korea”● **2013 Issue**

01. Lifelong Learning City Empowering Project

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDEDHGBIJC&pageNo=2>

02. The 3rd National Lifelong Learning Promotion Plan

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDEDHGBIJC&pageNo=2>

03. Adult Literacy in Korea

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDEDHGBIJC&pageNo=2>

● **2014 Issue**

01. For Working and Learning Together

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDEDHGBIJBA&pageNo=1>

02. Recognition and Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDEDHGBIJCI&pageNo=1>

03. Lifelong Learning for All : Focusing on the Cases of “Lifelong Learning Centers for Happiness”

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDEDHGBIJFD&pageNo=1>

04. Lifelong Learning for All : Online Lifelong Learning in Korea

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDFCECEBEEC&pageNo=1>

● **2015 Issue**

01. Survey of Koreans Participating in Lifelong Learning

<http://www.nile.or.kr/contents/contents.jsp?bkind=report&bcode=CAHAAAA&bmode=view&idx=BCJDFCECEBEID&pageNo=1>