

DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

Group of National Experts on the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning

RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING
COUNTRY NOTE FOR KOREA

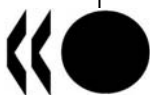
This document is the Country Note produced for Korea within the context of the EDPC activity on Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning. It is one in a series of 16 Country Notes prepared after a review visit – either Thematic Review or Comparative Policy Analysis or both – in each of the participating countries to this activity. This Country Note was prepared by the following team of experts: Mr. Gabor Halasz (rapporteur), Mr. Richard Sweet and Ms. Miho Taguma; and is based on a study visit which took place from 4 – 7 September 2007, as well as background documents prepared to support the visit.

The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of Korea, the OECD Secretariat or its member countries.

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RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

List of RNFIL Country Notes

A series of 16 Country Notes were produced within the context of the EDPC activity on Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning. These Country Notes were prepared after a review visit – either a Thematic Review or Comparative Policy Analysis or both – to each of the countries participating in this activity. The series of notes is being made available on OLIS under the code EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2. The list of codes for individual country notes is detailed as follows:

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART1 – Country Note – Australia

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART2 – Country Note – Belgium (Flemish Community)

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART3 – Country Note – Canada

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART4 – Country Note – Chile

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART5 – Country Note – Germany

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART6 – Country Note – Hungary

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART7 – Country Note – Ireland

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART8 – Country Note – Italy

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART9 – Country Note – Korea

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART10 – Country Note – Mexico

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART11 – Country Note – Netherlands

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART12 – Country Note – Norway

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART13 – Country Note – Slovenia

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART14 – Country Note – South Africa

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART15 – Country Note – Spain

EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART17 – Country Note – United Kingdom

All the 16 countries involved in a review visit, as well as 7 additional participating countries that decided not to be reviewed, provided a Country Background Report to the Secretariat in preparation for the visit and as background documentation for the preparation of the final International Synthesis Report [see EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)1]. The different Country Background Reports and Country Notes will be provided in separate instalments in order to guarantee flexibility (for a given country the PART number will be the same). Please note that there is no EDU/EDPC/RNFIL(2008)2/PART16.

The final International Synthesis Report which will be prepared by the Secretariat will draw on both the Country Background Reports and the Country Notes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Background	5
1.2 Collaborative Policy Analysis	5
1.3 The CPA visit to Korea	6
1.4 Special note on the Country Note.....	6
2. THE POLICY CONTEXTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN KOREA.....	7
2.1 Economic, demographic and labour market factors and RNFIL.....	7
2.2 Educational factors and RNFIL.....	7
2.3 Culture towards decentralisation and regionalisation and RNFIL	10
3. THE KOREAN TERTIARY RECOGNITION AND CREDIT ACCUMULATION/TRANSFER SYSTEM.....	12
3.1 The Bachelor Degree Examination through Self-Education System (<i>Dok-Hack-Sa</i>).....	12
3.2 The ACBS	13
3.3 Recognition and credit accumulation/transfer in the VET system	17
4. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES	19
4.1 Overall strategic orientation	19
4.2 Institutional and technical arrangements	23
4.3 Communication and trust-building strategies.....	30
4.4 Monitoring and research on RNFIL	30
5. POLICY OPTIONS	32
5.1 For better overall strategies	32
5.2 For better institutional and technical arrangements.....	35
5.3 For better communication and trust-building strategies	38
5.4 For advancing monitoring and research	38
REFERENCES	39
ANNEX 1: AGREEMENT ON THE FOCUS OF THE COLLABORATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS	41
ANNEX 2: STATISTICS ON THE ACBS	44
ANNEX 3: OECD REVIEW TEAM.....	50
ANNEX 4: NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND AUTHORS OF THE COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT	51
ANNEX 5. PROGRAMME COUNTRY VISIT OECD 4 – 7 SEPTEMBER 2007	52

Boxes

BOX A. A typical way of an ACBS client.....	14
BOX B. Combining qualifications and credit frameworks	27
BOX C. Methods developed for assessing non-formal and informal learning in the framework of the Norwegian “Competence Reform”	37

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is becoming high on the policy agenda in many OECD countries. In 1996, the OECD education ministers agreed to develop strategies for “lifelong learning for all”. The approach has been endorsed by ministers of labour, ministers of social affairs and the OECD Council at ministerial level. It is an approach whose importance may now be clearer than ever. Learning is a continuous process that takes place throughout life and in many settings. The concept of “from cradle to grave” includes formal, non-formal and informal learning. If learning is only recognised as the outcome of formal teaching, most of what is learnt is not recognised. From a policy point of view, when developing learning for economic and social benefits, this wider recognition of learning is clearly more effective. From the point of view of an individual, learning for its own sake may be sufficient for some but, for others, the recognition of learning outcomes may need to be incorporated into formal qualifications. The outcome of the whole process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning may bring benefits to the individual and the society.

2. How much evidence exists on the benefits of such recognition? Do governments know enough about the impact of national policies on such recognition? Under what conditions can such recognition be beneficial for all? To begin to answer these questions, a project entitled Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning was launched in 2006. The purposes, working methods, and issues for analysis are detailed in the project plan¹.

3. The main purposes of the Collaborative Policy Analysis (CPA) strand of the project are to sharpen the focus of the policy issues, promote more policy dialogue and analysis between the Secretariat and the country reviewed in a collaborative manner, and deliver outputs that will meet the needs of the country in a timely manner.

1.2 Collaborative Policy Analysis

4. Collaborative Policy Analysis (CPA) has been proposed as a new approach to country reviews within the framework of the RNFIL activity. It is a practical tool to inform countries of ‘good practice’ that may be ‘local’ or a ‘system in transition’ in a timely manner and to analyse, with countries, how best to scale up from a good practice into a model or to consolidate a system in transition, depending on the country’s specific contexts. This approach can be characterised by: 1) local and/or small entities, 2) sharpness in focus and, as a consequence, a timely delivery of a country note, or 3) medium-term collaboration and a possible follow-up. The detail of this approach is described in the project plan mentioned above.

5. Countries have been asked to select the focus of CPA. The focus, whilst being specific to a country, must be within the relevant scope of these selected issues:

- Visibility of learning outcomes;
- Transferability of learning outcomes;
- Impact on the users; or

¹ See EDU/EC(2005)17 (21 October 2005) or a summary at www.oecd.org/edu/recognition

- Transparency of the RNFIL system.

6. Korea has selected 'Transferability of Learning Outcomes' as the focus of the CPA, with a specific case study of the 'Korean Academic Credit Bank System' (Annex 1). The Korean Academic Credit Bank System has existed for 10 years and, therefore, is not a small scale or local initiative by the international standard. However, the authorities assess the system as 'not national yet', within a context of its non-federal system, and wish to enlarge its scale by linking the academic sector and the vocational and training sector – for the system to be fully national. To this end, the case study of the Korean Academic Credit Bank system was mutually agreed by the OECD Secretariat and the Korean authorities to be the focus to examine effective policies to promote 'transferability of learning outcomes'

1.3 The CPA visit to Korea

7. The OECD team visited Korea on 4-7 September 2007 and engaged in a full programme of visits and meetings arranged by the Korean Steering Group. Annex 5 shows details of the programme and the participants in all of the meetings that took place. This Country Note has been prepared by the rapporteur of the team (Gabor Halasz) with contributions from the other team members.

8. The OECD team would like to thank the Korean hosts for their warm welcome for the review visit and for preparing an informative and interesting itinerary. The OECD team is grateful to the Korean Steering Group and other individuals who assisted in preparing the CBR, especially Mr. Sang-Duk Choi, Ms. Eun Soon Baik, and Mr. Taek Seok Moon and/or ensuring that the Collaborative Policy Analysis visit be substantive and productive. The policy makers, researchers, practitioners, and target beneficiaries we spoke with during the visit were uniformly helpful in describing current practices and key issues that were not always covered or explained in depth in the Country Background Report, and were open in discussing problems that they face. The team also wishes to record its special thanks to Mr. Sang-Duk Choi and Ms. Jeung-Yun Choi who accompanied the team during the visit and other representatives who provided constructive feed back during the last debriefing session: Mr. Hyung-Yeel Koh, Ms. Eun-Soon Baik, Mr. Young-Ran Hong, Mr. Tae-Jun Kim, Mr. Chong Deuk Park, Ms. Kyung-Sook Ryu, Ms. Ki-Won Paik, Ms. Sun-Hwa Kwon, and Mr. Sun-Young Shin.

9. This Country Note on Korea forms part of the OECD's Thematic Review of the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL). This CPA Country Note should be read in conjunction with the Country Background Report (CBR) provided by the Korean Authorities in preparation for the visit. The CBR contains a great deal of descriptive commentary and statistical information about the Korean education and training system as well as observations on the process of recognising non-formal and informal learning.

1.4 Special note on the Country Note

10. During the course of the validation process of the draft Country Note by the country, the Korean Government has changed and a new administration was launched in February 2008. The country note needs to be read bearing in mind that the note was drafted prior to the new administration. For instance, the names of some institutions have changed and there were some mergers of agencies. The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development is now renamed the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. The Academic Credit Bank System used to be operated by the Center for Academic Credit Bank located in the Korea Education Development Institute. It is now operated by the National Institute for Lifelong Learning, which was newly launched in February 2008 with the new administration. The National Institute for Lifelong Learning is a government-funded institute, established as a result of merging the Center for Academic Credit Bank, the National Center for Lifelong Learning, and the Bachelor Degree Examination through Self-Education System (Dok-Hack-Sa) of the Korean National Open University.

2. THE POLICY CONTEXTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN KOREA

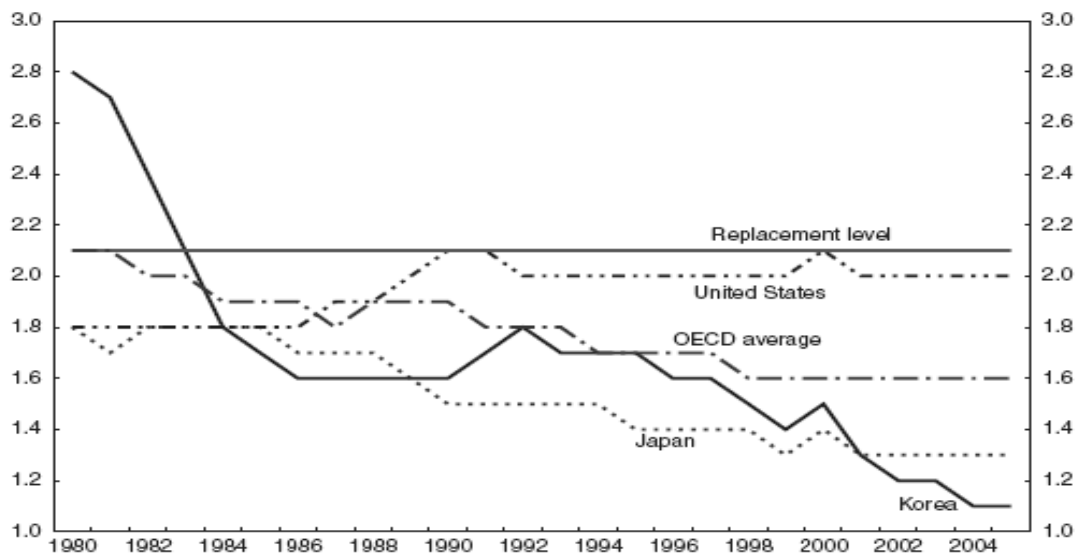
11. This section describes some of the economic, demographic, labour market, political, educational and cultural factors, which are relevant and important in illustrating the unique context for Korea's systems for recognising non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) and for credit accumulation and transfer (CAT). As a result of these factors, the Korean RNFIL/CAT system has emerged during the last one-and-a-half decades, significantly different from the systems that are found in other OECD countries.

2.1 Economic, demographic and labour market factors and RNFIL

12. Korea is, in many respects, unique in the OECD community. Between the sixties and the nineties, during three decades, it achieved an extremely high rate of growth: from 1966 to 1996, when it became member of the OECD, its average yearly per capita income growth was 6.8% (OECD, 2000). In less than five decades the country was transformed from a backward agricultural economy into one of the most competitive modern economies of the world (OECD, 2005). Korean high technology products and brand names are now well known all over the world.

13. Korea is facing the most dramatic challenge of ageing within the OECD community due to the steep drop of fertility rates during the last two decades (see *Figure 1*) and to the rapidly increasing life expectancy.

Figure 1. Trends in total fertility rates in OECD and some OECD countries (children per woman)



Source: OECD, 2007b

14. One biggest challenge for economic development in a rapid ageing society is to ensure active labour force. To do so, there is a rapidly increasing need to rely on the skills other than those of premium work force. The demand for RNFIL may be significantly influenced by demographic changes.

2.2 Educational factors and RNFIL

15. The educational factors that set the scene for the RNFIL development are: 1) the high level of learning outcomes and that of participation rates of the young learners; 2) strong policy orientation towards lifelong learning

and human resource development; 3) culture of ‘education fever’; and 4) the high level of private spending; and 5) certain features of vocational education and training.

2.2.1 *The high level of learning outcomes and of participation rates of the young population*

16. The PISA survey shows that the country reached high level performance with maintaining a high level of equity. Although the age at which compulsory schooling officially ends (14) is among the lowest in the OECD community, participation in secondary and higher education is very high. According to the OECD review on tertiary education, Korea both has one of the highest rates of students completing high-school studies (95%) and one of the highest rates of progression from upper-secondary to tertiary education: over 80% of all students completing high-school studies go on to university or college (Grubb et al., 2006). This transition rate from upper secondary to tertiary education has increased sharply over time (in 1990 the rate was only 33%). The very high formal education levels of the young population create a particular context for the RNFIL and CAT system which is increasingly used by already highly educated young people searching for a second or a third qualification.

2.1.2 *Strong policy for lifelong learning and human resources development*

17. A strong orientation of education policy towards lifelong learning may create favourable conditions for the development of RNFIL and CAT. As ‘learning besets learning’, the Korean context seems to be clearly favourable due to the high initial levels of education of the younger generation, which lays the essential foundations for the development of lifelong learning. The policy of economic development and competitiveness in Korea has been based on a strong commitment to develop human resources since the early sixties. From the middle of the nineties, when the existing RNFIL and CAT systems emerged, the country’s economic policy has been determined by a clear orientation towards the development of the knowledge economy, and the human resource conditions of this have also been clearly defined (Park, 2002; Andrew et al., 2007). Lifelong learning and human resource development based on the enhancement of lifelong learning have become, not only at the level of policy declarations but also through specific legal and financial measures, a guiding principle of education policy for more than a decade now. The country is now implementing its second middle term human resource development strategy for the period from 2006 to 2010 which “envisages the creation of a learning society and a creative Korea through ‘people-’ and ‘knowledge-oriented’ growth strategies” (Kim, 2005).

2.1.3 *Culture of ‘education fever’*

18. Korean attitudes towards learning and educational qualifications also have a significant impact upon how the RNFIL and CAT systems operate. Korean education is often characterised by what is called the “education fever”: that is, a particularly strong striving to reach ever higher education levels. This phenomenon, explained by various societal, historical, cultural and economic reasons, is perceived by foreign and domestic analysts as having both positive and negative sides. While it has certainly contributed to the rapid economic development of the country, it also leads to features such as an excessive academic orientation and academic elitism, instrumental educational motivations, extremely competitive educational attitudes and educational overspending or “over-education” (Lee, Jeong-Kyu, 2006). The Korean education fever can probably be better described as a striving for formal qualifications, and as the use of degrees for social promotion in a highly competitive social environment than as a search for the pleasure of learning or a striving for knowledge per se. This ‘education fever’ or ‘degree fever’ is complemented by other important features of the education system that help to shape the RNFIL and CAT systems: a long Korean tradition of using competitive written public examinations both for employment selection and for entry to higher education; a concern to use such public examinations as a means of increasing transparency and limiting opportunities for corruption; a very high level of national respect for teachers; and a teaching tradition that appears to value the formal transmission of facts over self-actualisation and discovery learning, which may be rooted in Confucianism.

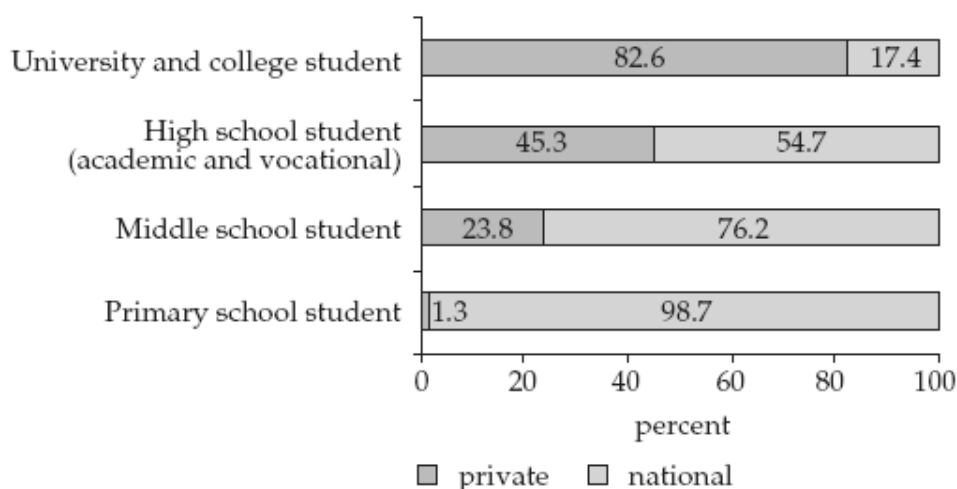
19. These contextual factors also have far reaching implications for the evolution of the national RNFIL system, and for both current obstacles and possible future policy options. For example, currently, it is being difficult for learning acquired outside to be ‘validated’ by formal educational institutions and for qualifications gained outside formal education (such as RNFIL degrees) to be highly valued. In the future, however, if effective targeted interventions are undertaken, the RNFIL and CAT may become the driver to promote self-learning, which is one of

the most powerful tools, when acted on collectively by much of the population, to boost human resource development of the whole nation.

2.1.4 *The high level of private spending*

20. A further key feature of the Korean context, reflecting also the broader context of Asia, is the determining role of private provision of education and the high level of private spending on education. The OECD Education at a Glance shows that Korea spends 7.2% of its GDP in 2004 on education on the official data, which is only the third on the OECD rank list (together with Denmark and following Iceland and the USA). Research evidence shows that, as the result of private tutoring after normal school hours, households might spend much more on education than is reflected in the official statistics, and counting this the country could be perhaps the first. The country has the most expanded private educational sector in the OECD community and the share of private funding is also the highest. More than 80% of higher education students and more than 45% of secondary students are enrolled in private institutions (see *Figure 2*). Households contribute almost 84% of the costs of tertiary education, significantly more than in any other OECD country (Grubb et al., 2006). Below the tertiary level recurring to private tutoring is almost universal, and the spending of households on private tuition is high. The review team has seen that the existence of a large private education and training market is a determining contextual factor as far as RNFIL and CAT system are concerned, as this system can improve the linkages between the private and the public sector and also between the non-formal and the formal forms of education. For example private institutions providing education that would not be seen as part of the formal system in some other countries are integrated into the formal system by the fact that they offer credits, which can later be recognised within the formal sector. The RNFIL and CAT system can also play a regulating role within the private sector, through setting standards and through determining which institutions (or students) are entitled to have access to public subsidies.

Figure 2. Ratio of Enrolment in Private Schools



Source: The World Bank, 2006

2.1.5 *Vocational education and training and RNFIL*

21. The Korean vocational education and training system also has a number of features that are significant in the context of RNFIL and that appear to be distinctive, although not completely unique, in a comparative context:

22. The expansion of tertiary education that has occurred over the last decade or more has resulted in a steadily increasing rate of transfer between the vocational strand of upper secondary education and tertiary study, and a progressive weakening of the direct pathway between upper secondary vocational education and the labour market. This strengthening of the pathway between upper secondary vocational education and tertiary education has in part been influenced by changes to tertiary education entry qualifications that have given an increased weight to vocational studies (Grubb et al., 2006).

23. Perhaps as a result of this, there are many programmes of study in tertiary education institutions in Korea, and in particular in the two-year colleges, that in other countries might be located within upper secondary institutions and which, at first glance, might not seem to be at the academic level traditionally associated with tertiary study. For example during its visit to study RNFIL the OECD team was provided with information on tertiary programmes including areas such as skin care, bakery, hair design and party planning.

24. In general the links between vocational education and the labour market do not seem to be strong in Korea. There does not seem to be a strong tradition of links between firms and educational institutions, with few opportunities for students to combine their studies with work placements or internships. There does not seem to have been a strong Korean tradition of workplace training (Jeong, 1995), and significant problems of mismatch between the supply of graduates and the needs of the labour market seem to be evident (OECD, 2007c).

25. In contrast to many other countries, the certificates and degrees issued by educational institutions do not by themselves or in many cases even at all act as occupational qualifications. A parallel system exists of licensing examinations that are required for entry to many occupations. For many of the trades (like electricians, cosmetologists, and auto mechanics), as well as many professions (like law, medicine, teaching, engineering, and architecture), students need to pass licensing examinations before working in that occupation. In most cases students need to complete the degrees given by education institutions, like the associate degrees of colleges and the baccalaureate degrees of universities, before they take licensing examinations; in some cases individuals may take licensing examinations without a parallel level of formal schooling. In general however, these are parallel systems because educational institutions do not prepare students specifically for licensing examinations. Instead students enrol in private tutoring to prepare for these exams, just as secondary school students enrol in private tutoring (Grubb et al., 2006).

26. These licensing examinations are reflected in a system of national vocational qualifications, administered primarily by the Ministry of Labour rather than the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and a parallel system of nationally recognised private qualifications (see more about this in the next section). There are several levels of these qualifications (five is the most typical but there are differences between, for example, technical and business areas), and the regulations that govern them specify the combinations of study and/or vocational training and of work experience that need to have been completed before sitting for the examinations at each level. The examinations at all levels of the vocational qualifications system consist of both written and practical tests, and they appear to be quite difficult qualifications to gain: between 1977 and 2002 only 21% of the nearly 33 million people sitting for all levels of the national technical qualifications examinations were successful (Shin, 2005).

2.3 Culture towards decentralisation and regionalisation and RNFIL

27. A final indispensable contextual factor is the commitment of the country to reform its governance and regulatory system and the various concrete steps it has made to achieve this goal. As a recent OECD review of the Korean regulatory reform states, “the government has been very active in implementing measures to promote regulatory reform, competition policy and market openness, and modernising the regulatory framework for information technologies”, and including measures targeting the education sector. One of the priorities of the government in higher education is to link the development of this sector to regional needs (OECD, 2007d). This is in accordance with the policy of administrative and fiscal decentralisation started in the late eighties when the first democratic government was elected and has continued since then. According to an OECD analysis from 2005 “the government considers decentralisation to be necessary for competing in a globalised world, creating a knowledge-based economy and promoting the development of civil society” and decentralisation and balanced regional development are major items on the country’s policy agenda.” (Jones - Yokoyama, 2005). These efforts to promote regional development in Korea in recent years owe much to the desire to counteract the traditionally strong dominance within Korea by Seoul and the wider Seoul region over national economic, employment, educational and cultural resources (McManus, 2001).

28. The policies of deregulation, decentralisation and regionalisation may have a significant impact on the future of the development of the RNFIL/CAT system. For example, if regional development strategies include strong lifelong learning components, regional actors may have a growing role in the development of various aspects of lifelong learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. There are clear signs in Korea that the national government encourages local and regional actors to play a more active role in promoting lifelong

learning, for example in the framework of a program called “Learning Cities” (see more about this below in the sections on challenges and policy options).

3. THE KOREAN TERTIARY RECOGNITION AND CREDIT ACCUMULATION/TRANSFER SYSTEM

29. The Korean recognition of non-formal and informal learning (RNFIL) and credit accumulation/transfer (CAT) systems have two major pillars: one academic and one vocational. As in many countries the connections between these two sectors are less than optimal. This review, on the request of the Korean authorities has focused on the **academic system**, therefore the linkages with the VET sector have been explored and analysed only partially. The review has also been limited to the tertiary or post-secondary levels; therefore the review exercise refers to lower levels only when the scope of the entire system is questioned.

30. The academic recognition and credit accumulation and transfer system in Korea can be described as consisting of two major institutional components. One is the historically older **Bachelor Degree Examination through Self-Education System** (BDES, in Korean *Dok-Hack-Sa*) which allows students, capable of individual learning, to pass examinations which lead to bachelor degree. This system is administered by the Korea National Open University (KNOU), and the degrees are awarded by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD).

31. The other is the more recent, much larger and much more sophisticated and complex **Academic Credit Bank System** which also allows students to reach both the bachelor (four-year) and associate (two-year) degree levels but offers significantly more than that. A student who becomes a client of the ACBS system, which is run by KEDI, the national educational research and development agency, can accumulate credits in different ways, and, after the accumulation of a sufficient number of credits, the student can demand the awarding of a degree. The degree is awarded, in this case as well, directly by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development (MEHRD). The president of a university may also confer a degree by the Academic Credit Bank System if the student has accumulated more than 84 credits in the university.

32. These two systems are conceived as part of the alternative higher educational system of the country. They offer alternative or non-regular ways for credit and degree acquisition to people who, for various reasons, could not or did not want to enter higher education as regular students. Beyond these there are many forms of adult learning where people can obtain lower (secondary) level academic qualifications but these are not organised into such well structured and visible national systems as BDES and ACBS, and no systematic information is available on them. They operate under the administrative surveillance of various ministries.

3.1 The Bachelor Degree Examination through Self-Education System (*Dok-Hack-Sa*)

33. Within the BDES open examinations are organised for those who do not attend university courses and are capable of preparing for the examination individually. In this system the responsibility for the preparation is entirely with the individual learner who can do it without any support but, naturally, learners can also have recourse to various forms of private tutoring. To acquire a bachelor degree, one has to pass four successive examinations, the fourth being the most difficult. Passing all the four examinations can be done within one year but people typically need more time (sometimes several years).

34. Requirements for the BDES are very demanding, and the failure rate is high (in 2007 the success rate was only 52%). Examinations in BDES are found to be more difficult than most regular university examinations. The organisers keep high standards deliberately to ensure the social recognition of the degrees earned through BDES equivalent to or even higher than those obtained from regular universities. Originally this examination was organised by a separate government agency, the National Centre for Evaluation, but in 1998 this agency was abolished and the

responsibility for running the system was transferred to the Korea National Open University (KNOU), a fully recognised higher education institution. As stressed above, the KNOU is keen to maintain high standards and sets demanding requirements as to ensure the social value to the degree. In spite of the efforts, the social esteem accorded to a degree obtained through BDES is lower than that of degrees obtained in regular universities.

35. In 2007 the BDES system received 1651 applications from candidates, from this 1366 were accepted and tested, and a degree was awarded to 708 of them. The most degrees are awarded in electronic computing, childhood education, English language and literature, home economics, nursing and Korean language and arts. The number of the degrees awarded was 17% higher in 2007 than three years earlier (when the success rate was only 42%). From the 1651 applicants in 2007, 308 (19%) were registered as jobless. Among the applicants there was a relatively high number of nurses (13%), teachers (11%) and civil servants (7%), and there was also a relatively high number of housewives (7%). These figures show that the BDES system, although it offers an important alternative pathway for those who are capable to prepare individually for a bachelor level examination, is not large. It provides recognition of academic knowledge only for a very small fraction of the society.

36. It is not easy to position BDES on the **formal – non-formal – informal continuum**. The best way seems to be to categorise it as covering all the three forms since while it is part of the formal system, learning takes place towards the degree from the BDES mainly in non-formal or informal contexts. Informal learning may play a role especially in the individual preparation to examinations although the fact that this is a very purposeful learning and it follows quite strict standards, therefore, it may be more appropriate to place such learning rather into the formal or non-formal than into the informal category.

3.2 The ACBS

37. The ACBS system emerged from a high level policy decision when, in 1995, a few years after the creation of BDES, a presidential commission on educational reform came to the conclusion that lifelong learning should become a particularly high priority in the way of promoting the Korean economy and society towards a knowledge economy and an information society. The decision was to create a new system that allows lifelong learners to turn the outcomes of their learning into credits that can be accumulated and transferred to further learning. The system was conceived in 1997 and put into real operation by 1998 following the adoption of an Act on credit recognition (Act No. 5275 accompanied by the Presidential Ordinance No. 1548). The first bachelor (or lower level associate) degrees were awarded within this new institutional framework in 1999.

38. The ACBS in its present form is the outcome of a ten-year long development. It now offers six different channels to get credits, to accumulate them and to turn them into nationally recognised tertiary level academic degrees at bachelor or associate degree level. This is a kind of open education system which allows people with various educational backgrounds to obtain a higher education degree. The system is operated by KEDI, the national educational research and development institute, which is connected with MEHRD.

3.2.1 Process

39. A person who wishes to use the ACBS has to enrol by making an application for “learner registration”. At this stage, there is no actual assessment of skills or non-formal and informal learning outcomes; except that applicants are asked to report what certificates/degrees they have obtained before on the registration card. After this he/she prepares a study plan with the help of the ACBS centre in KEDI, which provides learners with information on-line or through direct personal contact. On the basis of this information the learner decides how to acquire credits. After accumulating various learning experiences, the learner makes an application for “credit recognition” in order to convert the learning experiences into credits. The ACBS centre of KEDI evaluates the learning experiences according to criteria defined by legal regulations and recognises them. After accumulating the number of credits required for a degree, the learner makes an application for “degree conferment”. If the number of recognised credits is more than 80, he/she can receive an associate's degree, if they are more than 140, he/she can receive a bachelor. The degrees are conferred twice a year, in February and in August (a typical way an ACBS client may follow is presented in the box below).

BOX A. A typical way of an ACBS client

A person after completing high school has already done some learning in a training institute (in higher education or elsewhere) and he/she hears about the possibility of acquiring a degree through credit accumulation in the ACBS system. He/she goes to the ACBS client service, which resembles a bank with agents waiting for clients behind counters. He/she explains his/her desire to get a university degree to the agent and presents to him/her the documents that attest prior learning. The agent examines the documents and tells the client how many credits he/she can acquire on the basis of the documented learning already done. This is calculated following credit calculation rules defined by legal regulations. The agent can also propose specific further training at one of the private training providers accredited by the ACBS unit of KEDI in order to reach the number of credits necessary for a bachelor degree. The client accepts the proposal and is enrolled at the accredited programme of the training provider. This time he/she is also registered in ACBS as a student accumulating credits. Metaphorically he/she has opened a credit bank account. After completing the course with success he/she gets credits for the course and these, together with the credits received for the documented earlier learning, authorise him/her to demand the awarding of an academic degree. On his/her request the ACBS unit of KEDI forwards the demand for degree awarding to MEHRD, where the decision on degree awarding is taken. If chosen, he/she might also be invited to the ceremony where the Minister confers the university diploma in solemn conditions.

3.2.2 *Six different channels to obtain credits*

40. Individual learners in the ACBS can obtain and accumulate credits through **six different channels** which can be combined in a flexible way (that is, credits gained through one channel can be combined with credits gained through another channel). The six channels (sources of credit) are the following:

1. Credits from formal higher education institutions;
2. Credits from recognized non-formal education and training institutions (if the learner completes a course in a private or public training institution accredited by the ACBS system);
3. Credits obtained by taking part-time courses;
4. Credits obtained by acquiring national vocational qualifications (if the learner possess a vocational qualification of at least secondary level, that is above the level of industrial technician);
5. Credits acquired through an exemption course or passing an exam course in the BDES (Dok-Hack-Sa) system.
6. Credits obtained by completing the so called accredited Important Intangible Cultural Properties learning (that is through accomplishing learning at an accredited master who exercises an activity in a recognised area that belongs to the cultural heritage such as dance, music or painting);

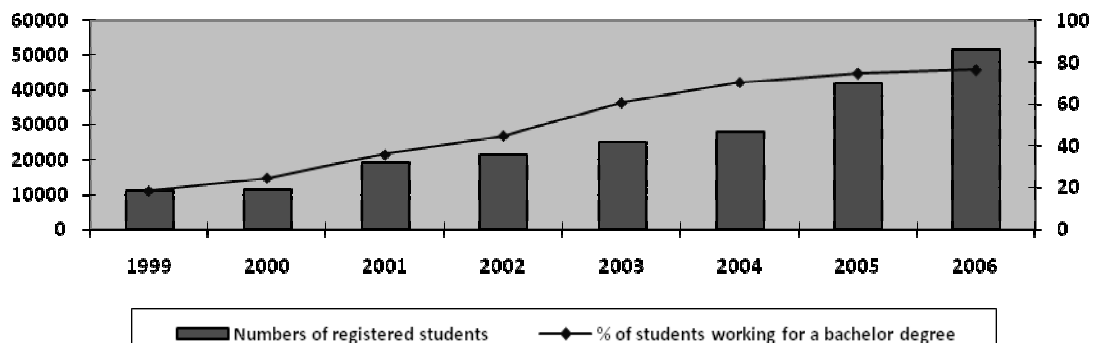
41. In light of the distinctive features of Korean education outlined above, it is important to note the emphasis within these six channels upon formal as well as non-formal learning, and the relatively low emphasis upon informal learning.

42. The second channel deserves particular attention because in this case ACBS operates also as an **accrediting agency** recognising institutions and training programs run by these institutions. These may be outside the regular higher education system (for example various private tutoring schools or training centres run by companies) but they may also be linked with a higher education institution, that is, they may be part of the formal system (for example lifelong learning centres run by or affiliated with universities). Institutions accredited by the ACBS may gain increased recruitment (and income) as they can offer learners officially recognized credits, which, if accumulated, may lead to a higher education qualification. Training institutions are accredited if they meet the standards set by law and this is recognised by the accreditation agency (the ACBS unit of KEDI). The assessors employed by KEDI for the ACBS are not assessing individual learners but training institutions and their programs, and their job is quite similar to that of inspectors doing institutional evaluation for accreditation. Institutional accreditation is based also on programme accreditation. The accreditation agency defines curricular standards for specific areas, and training

institutions receive the recognition of their programs if these meet the curriculum standards set by KEDI. Curricular standards are rather short documents which define, for example, the number of hours, the specific subject areas to be taught and the assessment methods to be used.

43. The ACBS is much more extended than the BDES.. The number of registered learners in 2006 was 51 496, that is around 1.5% of the total number of students in higher education (and 8.7% of new entrants). This number is the result of a gradual and unbroken growth since the establishment of the system (see *Figure 3*). From its inception in 1999 to 2006 the system enrolled has almost 210 000 students. In 2006 more than 76% of registered students were aiming at acquiring a bachelor degree, while the rest was attempting to obtain an associate degree.

Figure 3. Numbers of registered learners in the ACBS system, and the proportion of students working for as bachelor degree, 1999-2005



Source: KEDI ACBS database

44. In 2006 the number of bachelor degrees earned through the ACBS system was 14 009 (and the number of associate degrees was 5082). More than 90% of these degrees were conferred directly by the Minister of Education and Human Resources Development and less than one tenth by the presidents of universities or colleges. Between 1999 and 2007 more than 76 000 people earned a degree through the ACBS system. In April 2007 18% of registered ACBS learners were younger than 24 and also 18% were older than 40: slightly more than two-thirds were under 30 years of age (see Table 2 in Annex 2). The most numerous age-group (42%) was 25-29 year-olds. The number of ACBS affiliated (accredited) training institutions in April 2007 was 435, slightly lower than one year earlier, when this figure was 463. The largest group amongst them is the lifelong learning centres² operated by or affiliated with colleges or universities (see *Table 1*).

² Lifelong Learning Centres are public or private institutions providing adult education. They may be operated by various agencies, including universities, or by others but affiliated with universities

Table 1. Types and number of training institutions affiliated with (accredited by) ACBS (April, 2007)

Types of training institutions	Number (%)
Lifelong Learning Centres affiliated with 2-3-year Colleges or Universities	217 (50%)
Computer Education Institutions affiliated with colleges or universities	2 (<1%)
Community Institutions that offer public lectures or in-depth courses	36 (8%)
Private Institutions	55 (13%)
Technical & Vocational Training Schools	60 (14%)
Others	48 (11%)
Institutions for Important Intangible Cultural Properties	17 (4%)
Total	435 (100%)

Source: KEDI ACBS database

45. Two important trends in the relative share of credits coming from the six credit-acquisition channels must be noted from Table 2. On the one hand, an increasing proportion of credits is now being accorded on the basis of learning achieved within the formal higher education system (see Table 1 in Annex 2). On the other hand, the proportion of credits earned on the basis of learning in training institutions accredited by ACBS is decreasing (from 54% in 2000 to 28% in 2006). This shows a functional shift in the operation of the ACBS system, due certainly not to deliberate policies but to the ways people and institutions are using it (see Table 2). Between 1999 and 2004 the ACBS recognised almost 4 000 000 credits that is, on average, 570 000 credits per year. It is important to note that ACBS is financed mainly from fees received from learners and from accredited institutions. Learners enrolled in ACBS pay approximately 1 USD for one credit. Credits are, in this system, real currency: they measure not only the quantity of knowledge but also, in a certain way, the price of its registration, documentation and formal attestation.

46. Similarly to DBES, the placement of ACBS on the formal – non-formal – informal continuum is not evident. Clients of ACBS may be students (or ex-students) of both the formal and the non formal system (e.g. they may have acquired a VET qualification in the formal VET system, they may study in training institutions run by companies or may have studied a programme with a vocational focus in a two year college, which is naturally part of the formal system). Many students are enrolled in institutions (training providers) which have been accredited by the ACBS because they agreed to run courses on the basis of standard curricula elaborated by KEDI, and they went through a process of accreditation based, among others, on a site visit by the experts contracted by KEDI to make inspection. ACBS seems best categorised as covering both the forms of formal and non-formal but not the informal learning category. Concerning the recognition of informal learning, the Academic Credit Bank System confers ‘credits’ to the skills gained as important intangible cultural properties. The skills as intangible cultural properties are transmitted (or trained) in a form of apprenticeship. The learners are classified as Yisu-ja (who has completed an apprenticeship and is in the advanced training course) and Junsu-ja (who is in the apprenticeship). Although Table 2 shows 0 % for the credits accredited through the important intangible cultural properties, there are small but constant numbers of credits obtained by getting skills recognized through training or apprenticeship in important intangible cultural properties.

Table 2. The distribution of credits between the six channels (sources) of credit acquisitions, 2000-2006 (%)

Year	ACBS affiliated institutions	Credits from HE institutions	Part-time courses	VET qualifications	Dok-Hack-Sa	Important Intangible Cultural Properties	Total
2000	54	30	5	11	0	0	100
2001	61	22	3	13	1	0	100
2002	62	21	3	12	2	0	100
2003	56	24	4	15	1	0	100
2004	44	31	7	16	1	0	99
2005	32	35	12	17	3	0	99
2006	28	42	14	14	2	0	100

Source: ACBS KEDI

3.3 Recognition and credit accumulation/transfer in the VET system

47. The focus of the report is the ACBS and, therefore, mainly the higher education sector. It has to be stressed, however, that a great part of RNFIL in Korea occurs outside of the academic area, within and connected to the systems of vocational training and qualification. As stressed earlier, in several other countries, the linkages between the general and the vocational systems of training and qualifications are not optimal. Significant initiatives have already been made in order to establish a unified national qualifications framework, which would aim, among others, at improving these linkages.

48. Korea has a complex and open system of vocational or professional qualifications which allows various professional associations and private market players to develop new qualifications and have them, if they wish, publicly recognised. The 1997 Framework Act on Qualifications made it possible for every legal entity to create and operate private qualifications, which may compete with each other for national recognition. As the result of developments over the last decade the vocational qualifications system now consists of two major branches: on the one hand, there are more than 700 **national qualifications**, and, on the other, more than 900 **private qualifications** (Ministry of Labour, 2007). From this latter group more than 100 are recognised by the state: approximately half of these are so called company based qualifications issued by company based training institutions. As for the former group, 120 national qualifications are defined by various, often sector-related legislative acts (e.g. lawyers, doctors or accountants), and the remaining more than 580 by the Ministry of Labour under the 1973 National Technical Qualifications Act.

49. Some of the training leading to vocational qualifications is organised within large companies, outside the formal public system, and on the borderline of what one could qualify, in general, formal and non-formal.³ However much of the training that is provided within companies seems to be designed only to meet company needs and requirements, and the review team was explained that in many instances firms show little interest in the national vocational qualifications and that, particularly at the lower levels, this type of training can confer little labour market advantage. Within this huge area of private training and qualifications there might be a great diversity of various RNFIL practices, but the review team was not able to collect evidence on this. Some elements are, however, visible. Within the largest and the oldest sector of the VET qualifications system (National Technical Qualifications) there is an explicit recognition of prior professional experiences.

³ It is debated whether training with clear goals and structures organized in companies is part of the formal system or not.

50. There are three VET-related aspects that are particularly relevant to discuss the future orientation of the ACBS. The first is the possibility that exists through the ACBS for a connection between the vocational and the academic qualifications systems. This results from the ACBS giving credits for qualifications gained through the vocational education and training qualifications system. When a learner received a certain amount of credits or a degree through the Academic Credit Bank System in certain specialised professional areas, the learner may be qualified to the same degree as the traditional university graduate. For instance, the learner may work as a social welfare worker or a child care teacher or can be qualified to take an examination to become a lawyer or a certified public accountant. In this respect, credits obtained through the Academic Credit Bank System are well linked to national qualifications. According to the background report there are (in April 2007) more than 560 qualifications that can be recognized in the form of credits (equivalent to credits from colleges) in the academic recognition system: from this 46 are nationally recognized private qualifications; the others are national qualifications. The transformation of VET qualifications into academic credits is done according to credit recognition computation standards defined in legal documents.

51. The second feature that is particularly interesting is the ways in which informal learning and more varied assessment methods are incorporated into the system. For example the prerequisites to apply for the exams for National Technical Qualifications specify experience as a prerequisite at all levels, and experience gained at one level of qualification can count towards the requirements for sitting the exams at a higher level. At the lowest level (Mechanic) experience alone is needed without further academic background being required. At higher levels experience ranging from two to 11 years is specified as a prerequisite in addition to formal education and training. Whilst there is no separate assessment of the knowledge and skills gained from (work) experience and from formal study, all examinations consist of both a written and a practical assessment. For the Professional Engineer level this practical examination consists only of an interview.

52. The third feature of interest is the ways in which the broad requirements for certification are specified in terms of outcomes. For example the criteria for a Craftsman are that “The applicant has the ability to carry out task management duties such as produce, manufacture, operate, repair, and inspect” and for a Professional Engineer that “The applicant has the ability to plan, research, design, analyze, test, operate, construct, evaluate or guide and supervise these activities based on a high level of expert knowledge and field experience”

4. STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES

53. The Korean RNFIL and CAT system is, as discussed earlier, unique in many respects. One of its major characteristics is its **open and multifunctional structure**. This makes it particularly difficult for the external observer to fully understand its daily way of operating, its continuous development and its potential for the entire lifelong learning system. The current structure also presents both strengths and weaknesses. These are found in four areas: 1) overall strategic orientation; 2) institutional and technical arrangements; 3) communication and trust-building; and 4) monitoring and research on RNFIL.

4.1 Overall strategic orientation

54. One major weakness that the review team found with the current RNFIL policy orientation in Korea was the relative weakness of overall strategies. This may raise questions concerning the development of a **more coherent strategic orientation, the targeting of users, and the involvement of regional/local actors**.

4.1.1 *Open and multifunctional structure and a need for a more coherent strategic orientation*

55. The ACBS as an academic credit accumulation and transfer system was conceived in the middle of the nineties as an alternative route to higher education degrees, in the framework of an overall national lifelong learning policy. Once institutionalised in 1997, it met with various interests and potential uses by various parties. The ACBS is an open system under continuous evolution, responding to the changing needs of various actors. The open structure and flexible institutional arrangements allow new components with new functions to be added on. The flexibility can be seen as strength as it may facilitate to meet the needs of various potential users and to serve different purposes. Simultaneously, the open and multifunctional structure can also be seen as a weakness as it may lead to losing focus as far as its use and its target groups are concerned, and, therefore, may hinder the creation of a critical mass. This openness might be seen not only as offering new opportunities but also as a source of 'potential risk' by some of the stakeholders, such as universities and colleges, national authorities, private education and training providers, local and regional authorities, employers, professional bodies and learners.

4.1.1.1 *Universities and colleges*

56. As they face a steep demographic decline, may see the ACBS as a potential competitor. Some of them feel threatened if the number of their enrolled students may decline as the path to a university degree through the ACBS gains legitimacy and acceptance among candidates. Although this may not be a realistic picture for the time-being, these universities start neutralising the threat by establishing a lifelong learning centre, as a separate unit, within the university, and have the centre be accredited by the ACBS. This way, they too operate a non-formal learning provider outside the regular university mechanism and, therefore, they open themselves to the emerging world of lifelong learning, without being obliged to modify their core academic activities.

57. A challenge to move towards a comprehensive learning society (both lifelong and lifewide) is the **lack of portability of credits** between the formal education sector and non-formal and informal learning, as well as between the academic education sector and the vocational training sector. In the mid-term or long-term, universities need to be more open to accept credits coming from outside (non-formal learning and vocational training). This could be done building on the infrastructure that ACBS has created and should continue to create in order to increase the

portability/mobility of such credits. In the meantime, it is critical that, within the university sector itself, a credit accumulation and transfer system should be better established and practised.⁴

58. It is worth mentioning in this context that some universities and colleges are “currently recognizing experience-based learning such as internships as credits” and “the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development actively encourages higher education institutions to recognize credits obtained from experience-based learning” (The Korean Country Background Report). For example in a project called “Promoting the Cooperation between Industry and Two-year Colleges” the participating colleges are invited to demonstrate that they recognise company internship as academic credits. The colleges selected as beneficiaries in this project recognize up to eight credits for participation in internships (Choi et al., 2007).

59. A resistance of traditional universities against accepting credits brought from non-formal learning may be aroused by their **concern for the quality** of learning offered by the ACBS-accredited institutions. They may claim that this system cannot assure quality at the same level as they (traditional universities) do. Therefore, there is a need for a quality assurance mechanism for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, which should be used both by the ACBS and the traditional universities.

4.1.1.2 *The national administration*

60. The national administration directly manages the ACBS, through the KEDI. The KEDI defines a possible direction, sets curricular standards, and decides on the requirements for assessment. While the autonomy of the university sector puts limitations on the national administration’s ability to influence the content and the goals in higher education, it has considerably **broadened its room to manoeuvre** the development of higher education by creating the ACBS, which may compete with the traditional university sector. The pressure may push universities to be more open to less traditional client groups, and to make their contents more relevant to the lifelong learning needs, without the direct intervention by the national administration.

61. National authorities, under the pressure and resistance of traditional universities, endeavour to balance the trade-off between **quality assurance and relevance**. If the ACBS is not managed under the strict quality control on its contents and assessment, at the expected academic norms of traditional universities, it can easily be accused of lowering the academic standards by creating non-regular pathways to a degree acquisition, like allowing ‘degree mills’. However, if the system too rigidly follows the traditional academic norms, it may miss the opportunity to push itself towards more flexible and more relevant arrangements that are responsive to the needs of the labour market and the lifelong and lifewide learning with greater access. This is, in fact, the *raison d’être* of the alternative system. The issue of trade-off is also applicable to the private education and training providers.

4.1.1.3 *Education and training providers*

62. Education and training providers, being accredited by the ACBS, can enter the higher education market without being granted a degree awarding entitlement. Through this arrangement, they are giving access to various types of students, some of whom may find learning at these institutions as a stepping stone towards a degree acquisition.

63. The price of the **accreditation** is that the providers must accept the curriculum profiles and standards set by KEDI. This may be a constraint on the part of the private providers, while the ACBS manifests itself as an open and flexible structure. Unless the standards are set to fit the purpose, the contents that the providers offer may be less relevant for labour market needs. Indeed, some of the training providers that the review team interviewed made this point: they explained that the curriculum standards are not responsive to the emerging needs of the labour market or of the lifelong learning agenda for regional developments. For example, one interviewee explained that they would prefer to provide an agricultural training course with a specific focus on the characteristics of regional industries; however, this is not possible unless the current curriculum standards are revised to include the subject or the decision on some subjects is delegated to regional authorities. While private providers can use the ACBS to enter the market,

⁴ At present there is no general credit accumulation and transfer system within the higher education sector in Korea, although some universities make agreements on mutual credit recognitions. One of the suggestions of the tertiary review was the building up of such a system (Grubb et al., 2006; paragraphs 213-215.)

they do this sometimes at the price of losing some market segments or of losing flexibility. National authorities may use the ACBS accreditation as a quality control tool to regulate the extended private higher education system and, at the same time, must ensure flexibility for private providers.

4.1.1.4 *Employers*

64. Employers are also among the key stakeholders of the ACBS. With the increasing notion of enterprises becoming '**learning organisations**', some enterprises have their own in-service training centres accredited by ACBS, and provide their employees with opportunities not only for organised vocational training but also academic qualifications associated with the type of training as a bridge between the two sectors. Large companies, such as Samsung or Hyundai, can this way link their own training systems to the broader system of higher education, without setting up a 'corporate university' which would require huge costs and the deregulation of the higher education framework.

4.1.1.5 *Professional bodies*

65. Professional bodies, in control of licensing to certain professions, are also important stakeholder groups. As the ACBS opens up non-regular pathways to certain professions, professional bodies are cautious and, often sceptical, of such pathways. They are concerned with a potential risk of losing control over the standards and a danger of easing them. Therefore, their interest lies in being part of the body to define the standards and practise assessment. The professional organisation of nurses, for example, is intensively involved in defining the ACBS curriculum standards for nursing, particularly to ensure that they meet the safeguard requirements.

66. Finally, the most important users of the ACBS are **individual learners** whose needs and interests may be extremely diverse (see in Table 4 and 5 in Annex 2). Many use it as a second chance to get an academic degree, after failing the first time. This is probably the most frequent use, as most of the interviewees stressed. An increasing number of learners are using the ACBS to increase career prospects, by changing to or adding on another field of study. As a result of the current university selection policy, **the higher admission system is inflexible** in Korea, and what matters is which university a student graduated from, rather than what he/she has learnt while at the university. Therefore, if students wish to find a job in the field different from their selected major, they may be obliged to learn something other than their registered university courses. For example there has been a rise, since 2004, in the proportion of bachelor degrees, and the fall in associate degrees awarded (see Country Background Report for data). This illustrates how the system is more and more used to get a four-year degree rather than a two-year degree, more and more used for **social competition and emulation**. The review team found that the ACBS is seen by those students who seek a second chance as an opportunity to pave a way to upgrade from a two-year to a four-year institution, and to transfer from less prestigious regional institutions to more prestigious universities in the Seoul area.

67. The review team thinks that the Korean RNFIL system offers a unique possibility to allow the complexity of lifelong learning to grow and still to keep it under control. This system reflects the complexity of the emerging world of lifelong, and particularly, life-wide learning, which is different from the world of formal schooling born in the industrial society of the nineteenth century. However, the variety of the behaviour of the various stakeholders' also creates conflicts of interest. As we could see, the various users with different intentions constantly increase the complexity of the system. In this complex environment the integrity of the system can be preserved only if the national authorities provide a clear and coherent strategic orientation. The review team thinks, therefore, that there is a need for a carefully planned strategic action programme to guide the further development of the RNFIL system in Korea, striking a balance between strengths and weaknesses so that, on the long run, the opportunities provided by the openness and the multifunctionality of the system could be preserved.

4.1.2 *Target users and short-term and mid-term perspectives*

68. Originally, the ACBS and the BDES were set up to offer a second chance for those who had missed higher learning in the "regular age" and, thus, to ultimately enhance equity. Currently, however, they are increasingly used by those who are already highly qualified. This is part of the unintended policy outcomes but it presents an important illustration of the Korean academic RNFIL and CAT system. Most of those who enter the system are led not by intrinsic motivation for learning but by the external motivation of earning a qualification that can enhance their social promotion. The system is less aimed at reaching and empowering the less motivated than at screening the highly, but

externally motivated. It focuses more on preserving academic standards in a degree-hunting environment than on reinforcing the self-esteem of those who failed. Such an environment is, in fact, not very favourable for the recognition of informal experiential learning, which is a key function of RNFIL systems in most OECD countries.

69. As mentioned earlier, due to the higher education admission policies, many students study in areas which are not in accordance with their personal or professional interests or ambitions. Under this system, coupled with the cultural contexts such as ‘degree fever’ and ‘high education level and participation of young populations’, those who are already highly educated find incentives in the system and have become the active users for the recognition systems to further their career or change the career path. For example many of those who enrol in nursing programmes through the ACBS are qualified nurses who wish to obtain the four-year degree that is required to enrol in a masters level degree and so become a specialist nurse. This way the academic recognition systems, particularly ACBS, enhance the flexibility of the labour market as they make it possible for people with relatively high level qualifications to shift from one profession to another and to advance in their careers.

70. One of the major weaknesses of the Korean RNFIL/CAT system is the lack of the strong link with the overall socio-economic strategies. The ACBS, for example, does not define its main target users, linked to the priorities of socio-economic policies. If the country aims at further deregulating the labour market policies and if there is a strong policy concern about the young population who may need to change the career path, the increasing use by the highly educated should be further promoted. But if, in addition, the overall policies are more concerned with the challenges of the demographic change and the shrinking labour force, the system should strengthen its base by addressing the new target users. Examples include older workers, women, foreign workers, people who completed military service, and North Koreans.

4.1.2.1 *Older workers*

71. The latest OECD country economic survey estimates that the share of Korea’s total population over the age of 65 is expected to double from 7% in 2000 to 14% by 2018. Furthermore, more than half of the total population will be over the age of 50 by 2030 and over the age 56 by the middle of the century (OECD, 2007b). This will boost the elderly dependency ratio from the second lowest in the OECD area in 2000 to the fourth highest by the mid-century, which is by far the largest increase among OECD countries (OECD, 2007b). To lessen the actual dependency ratio by encouraging extending the retirement age, Korea will have to encourage higher labour force participation in the older generation which has a lower educational level.

72. In the last decades, as a consequence of the extremely rapid modernisation and economic growth, the difference between the education levels of the younger and the older generations grew enormously in Korea. According to the OECD thematic review on adult education (OECD, 2005), the difference between the 25-34-year-old and the 55-64-year-old age groups is much larger than that found in any other industrialised country (while 95% of the former age group has at least an upper secondary level qualification, only 30% of the second has this qualification level). The latest OECD economic country review found that two-thirds of unemployed persons over the age of 50 failed to complete secondary school (OECD, 2007b). The adult education thematic review also stresses, based on evidence from research, the high illiteracy rate among older people, especially among women. The low skilled adult population can certainly be an increasingly important potential target group for the RNFIL system, especially if, as recommended by the adult education thematic review, their participation in adult learning, which is still very low, can be increased.

4.1.2.2 *Female workers*

73. The female employment rate is, at 52.5%, well below the OECD average of 60%. If the participation rate of women was to increase to the same level as that of men, the labour force would be 20% larger by mid-century than in the case of unchanged participation (OECD, 2007b). Many women withdraw from the labour force at the time of childbirth. It is important to stress that most of them are highly educated: 97% of the 25 to 34 year old women have finished at least upper secondary school. This has far-reaching implications for how the recognition system, within the broader system of lifelong learning, should be developed further in the future.

4.1.2.3 *Foreign workers*

74. A third potential new labour reserve and also potential new clients for the recognition system is the foreign labour force. At present, the proportion of foreign workers in the labour force is among the lowest in the OECD community: in 2006 this was only 1.8%, that is, the fourth lowest in the OECD (OECD, 2007b). The majority of the 425 000 foreign workers were employed in jobs requiring either no qualifications or low level qualifications. Korea already has a policy to increase of the number of foreign workers: in the future, this policy will probably be more open and more flexible than at present. The growing inflow of foreign workers, especially if the current limitations on letting them settle with their family in the country are relieved, may also bring new clients to the RNFIL system.

4.1.2.4 *People in military service*

75. In addition, military service is mandatory in the country, ranging from 24 to 27 months. In order to recognise that the duration of the service is indeed the time period of non-formal and experiential learning, RNFIL should be actively used by this group. Expanding the user groups would require radically new approaches, including improved information, guidance and advice, which have a key role to play in all effective RNFIL systems (OECD, 2004). This can be possible either by expanding the resources devoted to the ACBS, or by improving the advice and guidance systems for targeted groups in the wider community settings. Given that the existing RNFIL and CAT system in Korea is structured quite open, and that some pilot projects have already been started, the adoption of new approaches as an add-on to the ACBS seems to be appropriate and feasible.

4.1.2.5 *North Koreans*

76. The political future scenario also points to the future use of RNFIL. The review team, being aware that the plan depends on political decisions, points to a need and a challenge for bringing in a future scenario perspective and designing a further potential new client group: the North-Koreans. The review interviews revealed a possible future need of the country's RNFIL system, linked with the fact that the current education systems of the two countries are not comparable. The North-Korean labour force may play a growing role in the South-Korean economy and may even appear on the South-Korean labour market. If the intention of South Korea to promote the creation of an economic community on the Korean peninsula by expanding the inter-Korean economic exchanges and cooperation is progressing through, for example, the development of special economic zones in the North⁵, the questions of how to recognize the skills and competences of the northern workers may become relevant.

4.1.3 *Potentials and challenges for getting local and regional partners involved*

77. Local and regional communities are a new and emerging key stakeholder in the operation of the ACBS, strongly driving by the national government's interest in regional economic developments, decentralisation and **learning regions**. 'Learning cities' are being created in the framework of the *Lifelong Learning City Project*, started in 2001 as one major government-supported program aiming at reducing huge economic disparities between regions and the economically dominant Seoul region. According to the current plan, 100 learning cities will be created by 2008 throughout Korea. Learning cities are expected to create favourable conditions for lifelong learning for their inhabitants. Any cities can apply to be a 'Learning City' and, if they pass the criteria set by the Ministry, the cities are officially given the title of 'Learning City' and have access to the extra government financial support.

78. There is, however, a gap between the national policy intention and the actual practices of local partners. The local partners need to be encouraged to be involved, as policy actors, more actively in the RNFIL implementation process, such in provision of more diverse non-formal learning opportunities, individual assessment, and development of curriculum standards.

4.2 **Institutional and technical arrangements**

79. To advance the currently existing RNFIL institutional arrangements for the better, one fundamental question is how responsibilities could be shared between the highly **institutionalised ACBS and BDES**. Another

⁵ See, for example, the goals and planned or ongoing actions presented at the website of the Korean Ministry of Unification (<http://www.unikorea.go.kr/en/ECO/ECO0200L.jsp>)

important question is how such responsibilities could be also shared among those current and future training providers growing in the private sector. When thinking about the future of the Korean RNFIL and CAT systems one has to pay special attention to the existence of the large, private training sector in the country. To this end, the government may seize the opportunity of the current policy discussion on **the reform of the qualification systems and an emerging qualification framework**. For better technical arrangements, the most critical issue is the use of **appropriate and valid assessment methods**.

4.2.1 *Strengths and weaknesses of the ACBS and the BDES.*

80. The two systems, BDES and ACBS, at the moment operate rather independent of each other. They have different strengths and weaknesses mainly with the four dimensions below:

7. **Direct assessment** of the knowledge or competencies of individuals;
8. Accreditation of **institutions** versus assessing **individuals**;
9. Focus on **input** or provision of education versus **learning outcomes** or results of education; and
10. **Modularisation of learning** or breaking learning into smaller units (modules, credits), and **transfer of the smaller units**

On these four dimensions the two systems differ significantly (see Table 2).

81. The ACBS does not assess directly the knowledge or competencies of individuals: this is done only in the BDES. The ACBS operates like a quality assurance agency for private training providers, and more like a registration office than an assessment centre for individuals. The ACBS recognises, by accrediting, training institutions, and let **them** assess the knowledge or competency of individual learners and produce documentation. The ACBS sets the standards for institutional and programme accreditation and judges whether institutions meet the standards. Individuals register themselves at the centre, receiving some guidance on required training and possible credit accumulation to complete a degree, take courses at the ACBS accredited institutions, bring the documented assessment results from the institutions to the centre, where the documentation is examined to be valid and sufficient and be awarded a MEHRD-issued diploma. In contrast, the BDES functions as an assessment agency. It directly assesses the competencies of individuals, using traditional examinations for assessment. Therefore, the ACBS examines **institutions' input factors** (such as the qualification level of teachers and the compliance with the ACBS curriculum standards), while the BDES examines **individuals' learning outcomes**, although in a rather traditional way.

82. Modern lifelong learning systems by definition support the uptake of learning regardless where, when and how it took place and the recognition of the outcomes of such learning. One critical factor in doing this is whether such learning can be recognised, accumulated and transferred to other sectors. The capacity of both BDES and ACBS to modularise learning is rather modest, especially from the 'transfer' perspective. In fact, the potential of ACBS to promote the breaking of learning into smaller units can be harnessed only if this is well received by other systems of training and qualification.

Table 3. The main characteristics of ACBS and BDES

	Direct assessment of knowledge/competencies	Focus on institutions vs. individuals	Focus on inputs vs. outcomes	Accumulation of smaller units (credits, modules)
ACBS	no (only administrative evaluation of cases)	institutions (accreditation)	inputs checked (according to standards for recognition of programs/institutions)	yes
BDES	yes (traditional examinations)	individuals (examinations)	learning outcomes tested (through examinations)	no (breaking only into 4 succeeding examinations)

83. **The direction of the transfer** between the two systems seems to be rather unidirectional. That is, the ACBS is a destination of the transfer rather than a point in action. In other words, the ACBS is mainly used as a way to get an ACBS diploma by recognising non-formal learning that took place in ACBS-accredited institutions, rather than to receive credits to use at other training providers or universities. A mechanism for doing this does, however, exist. For example, there is a calculation system that allows ACBS credits to be transformed into examination exemption entitlement in the BDES (see Table 3). This calculation mechanism makes it possible for a person who accumulates 105 credits in ACBS to be exempted from three of the four BDES examinations (although, as we were told, this opportunity is very rarely used). The transfer operates the other way, as well. A person who passes three BDES examinations with success can collect 70 credits, which is half of what is needed for a bachelor degree.

Table 4. Credit calculation and transfer between ACBS and BDES

35 ACBS credits = exemption from 1 st BDES examination	1 st BDES examination = 20 recognised credits by ACBS
70 ACBS credits = exemption from 2 nd BDES examination	2 nd BDES examination = 30 recognised credits by ACBS
105 ACBS credits = exemption from 3 rd BDES examination	3 rd BDES examination = 30 recognised credits by ACBS

Source: Korean National University BDES unit

84. The credit transfer mechanism between ACBS and BDES, which is at the Korea National Open University, could be a model for other universities to accept the ACBS credits. Currently, however, universities do not accept such credits, partly due to the lack of operating mechanisms of higher education credit accumulation and transfer in general, and they are not legally obliged to do so. As a consequence, the ACBS system has not yet its full potential for breaking learning into smaller units and transferring to other institutions, which may allow customising individual learning pathways within the Korean tertiary education system. The modularisation of learning within higher education institutions is a challenge in Korea, as in many other countries calling for deliberate considerations to resist against the fragmentation of academic knowledge.

4.2.2 *The reform of the national qualification systems and a new national qualifications framework*

85. If there is an intention to extend the scope of RNFIL in the future, the following question has to be raised: should the current ACBS and BDES cover more informal learning and expand to different levels? Should the current systems be more rigorously linked to a national qualification framework?

86. The current systems institutionalised in BDES and ACBS allow recognition and credit accumulation/transfer at tertiary level for **non-formal learning** but barely opens up to **informal learning**. The recognition of informal learning does exist in the system such as thorough the BDES, however, it is very limited in practice or it is indirect, not systematic, and stronger in the vocational qualifications system than in tertiary education. The institutions that provide training recognised by ACBS or BDES may recognise informal learning but this is at their discretion. When, for example, the Korea National Open University recognises the outcomes of self-study in the framework of BDES or when KEDI recognises credits on the basis of training in institutions accredited by it in the framework of ACBS they do not care whether learning has taken place in a formal, non-formal or informal context. Another important aspect of the two academic (non vocational) recognition and credit accumulation and transfer systems is, as already stressed, that they cover only the tertiary level. At lower level no similar, institutionalised recognition and credit accumulation and transfer mechanisms exist in Korea.

87. The country's academic recognition and credit accumulation and transfer system can therefore be described as **not** covering a large area of informal non-tertiary level learning. Attempts to extend the system to these areas are now on the agenda of Korean education policy. The recent amendment of the Act on lifelong learning might open a new way in this direction by the creation of a "System of Learning Credit Account". This – still in an experimental phase and developed parallel to the Korean skill standards based on learning outcomes ("Standardization of Learning

Outcomes”) – may push the current recognition and credit accumulation/transfer system towards the not yet covered non-tertiary and informal areas.

88. The notion of **learning accounts** is relatively new in Korea. The last amendment of the Act of lifelong learning was adopted after Korean experts carefully studied experiences in this area in other countries.⁶ At present there are two pilot activities to create individual learning accounts that are being led by the Ministry of Labour and the MEHRD. These two activities follow different conceptual lines. The one led by the Ministry of Labour has a **financial orientation**: it provides financial support for individuals (particularly in the low skilled category) that can be used for paying the costs of training (Ministry of Labour, 2007). The other pilot initiative, led by the MEHRD, defines learning accounts not in financial but in **educational terms**. It intends to make it possible for individual learners to accumulate credits based on various learning experiences, similarly to the way this is being done at present in the ACBS system, but not necessarily at tertiary level. This could be one way to extend the current system to the areas that are not yet covered.

89. The international practice shows the emergence of two divergent development models. One is represented by the North American countries (Canada, US), where there is no national training or qualifications system and infrastructure to link non-formal or informal learning to national systems of qualifications. In these countries the recognition of non-formal or informal (e.g. workplace) learning is typically confined to various education and training providers. The other is represented by those countries (e.g. Australia and New Zealand) which have national training and qualifications systems, developed advanced national qualifications systems, and have adopted sophisticated competency and skills recognition mechanisms as part of the qualifications system (Dyson & Keating, 2005). While the development of a new national qualifications framework in Korea may have an impact on how this question is answered, the answer may be largely determined by the already existing structures.

90. Although the current qualifications system of Korea has made significant development during the last decade, it still lacks the capacity to link together the various qualification-related systems of recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the world of lifelong learning in general. The existence of the ACBS has already contributed to establishing better linkages between the systems of academic and vocational qualifications, but these linkages are still rather weak. There are coordination challenges also within the vocational qualifications system as it operates, with the coordination of the Ministry of Labour, under the control of various sectoral ministries.

91. To overcome the challenge, the country is now considering to establish a new national qualifications framework, which will 1) incorporate both the academic and the vocational qualifications systems, 2) link together various sectoral qualifications systems and 3) enhance the development of the system towards linking qualifications with learning outcomes and acquired competencies rather than with input standards and teaching requirements (Lee Dong-Im, 2006). This seems to be a logical development in Korea where the development of qualification mechanisms has already reached the level of complexity that prompted most developed countries to move into this direction (Coles, 2006). While the Ministry of Labor (National Occupational Standard) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (National Skill Standard) have been preparing this, an integrated standard which includes National Occupational Standard of the Ministry of Labor shall be developed through the National Qualification Policy Commission (chairman: MOE, vice-chairman: MOL) which was established by amendment of Framework Act on Qualifications (Apr. 2007) for general management of the national qualifications system.

92. From the particular perspective of this review, i.e. ‘transferability of learning outcomes’, there are two key questions to be considered with respect to the new national qualifications framework. The first is how far the descriptors of qualifications will be based on learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and, if this is achieved, how to adapt the existing curriculum standards and, possibly, assessment methods to the new qualification descriptors based on learning outcomes. At present, the review team has seen that the curriculum standards used in the ACBS system are not yet based on the description of learning outcomes, and they do not yet encourage training providers to focus on this when assessing the performance of their learners.

93. The second question is how far qualifications can be constructed as being composed of smaller units (modules or credits). The relative share of the six credit-acquisition channels (sources) in the ACBS is changing: the

⁶ Lásd: International Policy Seminar on *Making lifelong learning a reality*. IIEP/KRIVET/NCVER/NIER collaborative project. Seoul, Republic of Korea, 24-26 June 2003
(<http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/19149/Documents%20and%20Settings/wb230542/Desktop/Seoul/UK%20Finalized%20paper.doc>)

proportion of credits awarded on the basis of studies completed in the formal higher education system is increasing, while the proportion of credits earned on the basis of learning in training institutions accredited by ACBS is decreasing. This may be a sign of the ACBS increasingly serving the credit accumulation and transfer needs of the formal higher education system. This was not its original goal, but it is not surprising, given the fact that the Korean higher education system does not have a formal institutionalised credit accumulation and transfer mechanism: that is, the possibility of accumulating and transferring credits depends on the willingness of universities to make discrete bilateral or multilateral agreements.

94. The review team, however, has not heard about intentions in Korea to integrate the credit principle with the idea of a qualifications framework, but this may become an option to be considered. In this respect, the experiences of those countries (for example England, Scotland or Ireland), which recently merged qualifications and credit frameworks, or intend to do so, may be particularly valuable (see box on “combining qualifications and credit frameworks”). The experiences of these countries also show that there is a positive correlation and synergy between basing qualifications on learning outcomes and shaping them so that, at the same time, they enhance credit accumulation and transfer (Coles, 2006).

BOX B. Combining qualifications and credit frameworks

England: Integrating the credit principle into the National Qualifications Framework:

“All qualifications accredited to the NQF will be expected to have credit value assigned to their units according to an agreed timetable. All units and qualifications within the NQF will continue to be based on learning outcomes together with assessment requirements. Credit value is derived from the learning outcomes and the assessment criteria within a unit. Credit may be awarded for the achievement of either units or qualifications.” (QCA, 2004)

Scotland: Credits and qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework:

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) was developed to meet the needs of Scotland's learners and was created by bringing together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. It was developed in partnership by the Scottish Qualifications Authority, Universities Scotland, Quality Assurance Agency Scotland and the Scottish Executive and was launched in December 2001. (...) The SCQF uses two measures to describe qualifications and learning programmes: (1) the level of the outcomes of learning; (2) the volume of outcomes, described in terms of the number of credit points. (...) SCQF credit points are used to quantify the learning outcomes and give them a value or currency. The allocation of credit points is based on the amount of time that an ‘average’ learner at a specified level might expect to take to achieve the specified learning outcomes. One credit point represents a notional 10 hours of learning time. Credit points can be used to assist learners to transfer between programmes of learning. However, it is the responsibility of the college, university or awarding body to determine how much credit can be transferred into their programmes. This decision will depend upon the nature/content of the learning for which the credit has been given and the requirements of the programme into which transfer is being sought.” (SCQF Partnership, 2007)

Ireland: Learning units and credit systems

“The concept of lifelong learning implies that learners should be able to undertake units of learning at varying rates of progress, and perhaps not all in a continuous process. This, in turn, implies that it should be possible for the learner to receive recognition for their learning achievements in units far smaller than many existing awards. It will be policy that the design of the National Framework of Qualifications will facilitate the development of a system (or systems) of credit accumulation and transfer, based on learning units. However, the development of such a credit accumulation system will take some time and is linked to, but not part of, the National Framework of Qualifications.” (NQAI, 2003).

4.2.3 Challenges for diversifying assessment methods towards competence based and individual-based

95. One of the characteristics of the Korean RNFIL and CAT system, which the review team has seen as a weakness is the nature or the content of knowledge and learning recognised by the system. It is known that the learning culture of a country determines strongly how RNFIL systems are conceived and operated (see for example Schuur, 2005). Korea does not employ various assessment methods concerning RNFIL. Diversifying assessment methods is a critical issue, for which the country has to face various challenges of **quality and efficiency, risk of corruption, social and cultural norms, obstacles to recognise informal learning and self-learning.**

96. Questions of **quality** were often raised by the interlocutors during the review visit. The Korea National Open University seemed to be seriously concerned about assuring not only the same but possibly higher quality than regular universities through setting particularly high standards and also keeping failure rates high. The ACBS as an agency and its assessors seemed to make serious efforts to examine whether the training providers seeking accreditation have met their standards. As these institutions (BDES and ACBS) offer alternative routes to socially valuable academic degrees they permanently have to prove that this route is not of second class, and they continuously have to face the potential criticism of the regular sphere of higher education for making concessions in quality standards. This built-in pressure to keep high standards seems to be very strong in these systems, at least as long as they compete with the traditional sector on its playground and with identical goals. However, if goals shift and the current RNFIL and CAT system moves towards new learning targets (competencies and complex learning outcomes) and towards new client groups (e.g. lower skilled adults who do not envisage obtaining traditional academic degrees) new quality concerns may arise.

97. It is important to stress that the quality challenge appears quite differently when a recognition agency does the direct assessment of the competencies of individuals than it does when this is done by others (e.g. the training providers). This difference is already present in the two complementary models represented by BDES (which assesses individuals) and ACBS (which accredits training providers and accepts their assessment results). Although the current indirect role ACBS plays in assuring the quality of learning seems to be a good basis for a possible future development, it is far from being without problems. If, for example, there is a goal to move towards assessing more complex learning outcomes, the national agency cannot leave the solution of this problem entirely to the training providers. At present the quality assurance mechanisms the ACBS operates (e.g. setting curriculum standards and encouraging assessors to check input standards like infrastructure or teacher qualification) do not send relevant messages to the training providers. If new messages are to be sent to those who do the direct assessment, new elements have to be built into the existing quality assurance mechanisms.

98. At present quality concerns are still dominated by efforts to prevent learners from gaining unjustified extra benefits from choosing the non-regular way to acquire an academic degree. This is heavily determined by the strong competitive drive and the typical use of learning for social promotion, as described earlier. In this context the risk of some people abusing the opportunity of an alternative way to get a diploma is seen as a major threat and this may have an impact on how quality assurance mechanisms are conceived and used. Some of the standards have simply a function to prevent such abuses. For example, in order to prevent regular students from using the ACBS system to make their regular studies easier, there is a limitation on the number of credits that can be accumulated by them through ACBS channels (maximum 42 credits in a year, and 24 credits in a semester). Without these limitations theoretically it would be possible for a student to accumulate the number of credits needed for a bachelor degree even in one year just through finding those training providers who are known for their not very strict assessment procedures, and attending their courses.

99. In addition, the possible further modularisation of teaching and learning may also create new challenges for quality assurance, as breaking qualifications into smaller units may lead to the breaking of mechanisms that had been used for assuring the quality of the qualification. If qualifications can be put together from smaller units, the possibilities for making prior learning experiences recognised naturally increase (Coles, 2006) but this may happen at the price of growing risks of losing trust in quality. Giving the complexity of an RNFIL system that allows credit accumulation, transfer and recognition, no rigid quality assurance methods can be used. This is the reason why many countries create general principles for RNFIL which makes a strong connection between quality assurance and trust-building.

100. At present the question of **efficiency** or costs of RNFIL is not in the focus of discussions in Korea, because (1) most of the costs are met by those who want their knowledge or competencies to be recognised and (2) the assessment methods are rather simple. The current Korean system is financed mostly by those who use it (individuals and training providers) and not from the public purse. The current assessment methods are not costly, either: BDES organises standard written examinations and ACBS lets the training providers to do the assessment exercise. This may, however, change in the future if (1) new target groups are addressed who cannot or do not want to pay (e.g. low skilled adults), (2) more expensive assessment methods (e.g. individual portfolios) are used and (3) the national agency of the ACBS starts playing a more active role in developing and enhancing new assessment methods. This may bring the questions of financial efficiency into the focus of debates on the future of RNFIL.

101. A further factor, closely related to striving for degrees and to the enormous role degrees play in determining social status, that has to be taken into account in the specific Korean context is **the risk of corruption**. This risk is always higher in systems characterized by heavy competition for status and by an extended use of academic qualifications for determining social positions. This aspect has a particular relevance for RNFIL and CATS systems as they create unconventional ways of academic promotion, which may open space for incorrect solutions. This is the reason, for example, why the national university admission examinations are organized under extremely high security control and why "softer" assessment methods such as portfolio assessments, are generally seen as inadequate. Although one can find many examples of using flexible assessment methods within the Korean education and training system (e.g. practical tests and interviews used in the national technical qualifications system, assessments based on practical projects and teamwork in universities or judgements made on the basis of workplace performance in industry) there is an apparent reluctance, especially in high stake assessment situations, to use less standardised methods.

102. The reluctance to use assessment methods is strongly linked with **the cultural and social norms** in Korea. As often described in publications about the cultural and social characteristics of the country, Korean society is traditionally organised following a pattern that makes a particularly sharp distinction between those who are somehow connected to the individual and those who remain alien (see for example Breen, 2004). In this highly competitive society people tend to join various binding social networks, they offer support to other members of the same network and demand support from them, and they tend to reject those who are outside the network. This increases the probability of people making unfair judgments, and of favouring recognised network members (e.g. those living in the same region) against those who are not recognised as belonging to the same network. This may be one of the reasons why portfolios are not used in the ACBS system, though the main reason mentioned in the background report is the high financial and administrative burden it may put on those who use it.

103. "Softer" assessment methods may also strengthen the gap between the social esteem attributed to "normal" university diplomas and qualifications acquired through more flexible recognition mechanisms. This is particularly true in Korea. Although quality control is quite strong in the ACBS and the academic degrees are awarded formally at the highest possible level (by MEHRD), diplomas obtained through ACBS do not have the same informal social value as those acquired through regular university studies. In the other recognition system, BDES, quality control is, as we have seen, particularly strict (examinations here are particularly demanding and failure rates are very high). However, BDES diplomas also have a lower informal social value than regular diplomas.

104. Furthermore, the **recognition of informal learning, experiential learning and self-learning** is particularly difficult in Korea, which may be rooted in Confucianism placing a high value on learning from 'teachers of high quality – great masters'. In addition, the dominant learning culture is heavily influenced by the intensive use, as we have also seen, of academic degrees for social selection and promotion. This strong learning culture which characterises Korea – and still many other OECD countries – emphasises the memorisation of pre-determined facts and places less value upon experiential learning or self-learning. The authors of the OECD country note on Korean tertiary education (Grubb et al., 2006) have devoted a whole chapter to this issue (Chapter 5. "The quality of teaching and learning"). As they wrote: *"Most of Korean education has been concerned largely with information transfer, and this pedagogical approach is certainly consistent with Confucian thought. But many students appear dissatisfied with the lack of participation and discussion in their classes, and many Koreans have recognized that conventional lecture-dominated teaching is not a good way to prepare entrepreneurs, creative thinkers, or new perspectives on Korea's role in a changing world. The existing efforts to change teaching and learning appear relatively weak and isolated."* The challenge is, in this respect, that the existing learning culture seems to be reinforced by the current system of RNFIL. This is a major difference between Korea and most other OECD countries with advanced RNFIL systems, where RNFIL not only tends to challenge the dominant learning culture but is deliberately used for this purpose.

105. In addition, this type of learning cannot easily be standardized and, therefore, its assessment necessarily requires more complex and more flexible methods. Most of these methods (like peer evaluation or personal portfolios) are more exposed to the risk of subjective judgment and give more room for potential unfair evaluation than standardised and impersonal methods. Furthermore, the perceived higher risk of fraud may push the users of these instruments towards increasing standardisation which may, in the end, undermine the complex and flexible character of the instrument and it may become inappropriate for a genuine evaluation of informal learning. This may have an inverse effect: recognition procedures end up blocking, instead of unleashing, the learning potential. "Softer"

recognition methods remain in use mainly in company based training environments where, as it was mentioned by the representative of a company based training provider during our interviews, assessment through observation by the superior in working conditions is used as a natural method. In the Korean context, transparency and trust building alone might not be sufficient for more open and more flexible assessment methods to be used, but there might be a need for enhancing the emergence of a new assessment culture which allows flexibility without leading to increased unreliability.

4.3 Communication and trust-building strategies

106. There is no doubt that the existence of the ACBS is very widely known and understood in Korea, which is a unique positive feature, especially in the light of the issue of visibility being a high concern in many OECD countries. The specificities of the Korean context, such as the extensive information available on the Internet and the important role of word of mouth and informal networks, seem to have played an important role in bringing this about. However, the review team heard several issues concerning communication and trust-building.

107. The lack of comprehensibility of ACBS for individual learners is the most frequently cited problem. This issue arises from the nature of the system itself (e.g. having six different channels to obtain credits), but it is also related to the availability of information, advice and guidance for the users of the system. Korea has invested significant efforts into developing web-based and other multi-media forms of basic information about its RNFIL systems. However for those who wish to obtain not only the basic information but also personal advice and guidance on how best they could use the ACBS to further their careers and meet their personal goals, the situation seems to be less clear, and sources of help do not seem to be as readily accessible as they could be. The Country Background Report (CBR) provided by Korea for this review (see Table 18 in the CBR) shows that between April 2005 and April 2006 the number of calls to the ACBS consultation centre rose sharply from nearly 6 000 to nearly 16 000, but that the number that were dealt with stayed stable at around 4 800 (Choi et al., 2007). Also, some interviewees explained that telephone guidance was not sufficient but it was not possible for the working professionals to visit the ACBS to receive guidance as the centre is open during the working time from Monday to Friday. This suggests a sharp rise in demand for information and advice that available resources are not able to meet. This points to the importance of other sources of individual advice and guidance about the ACBS apart from the ACBS consultation centre itself⁷. The OECD review of career guidance policies in Korea (OECD, 2002) pointed to weaknesses in some aspects of career guidance in Korea, although some of these are currently being addressed through a national five-year plan to promote life-long career development (OECD, 2007c).

108. The review team heard from those who are designing and managing the system that the problems of visibility and comprehensibility of the system could trigger a trade-off. Pushing the system towards more simplicity or lowering its complexity through, for example, further standardisation would certainly improve its comprehensibility but at the price of losing relevance and of missing special demands, as was discussed earlier. The issue of visibility and comprehensibility needs to be incorporated in designing an overall strategy by taking into account the perspectives of all the actors in the open and multifunctional system.

109. Another frequently cited problem was the lack of value or parity of esteem of the RNFIL-related qualifications. To respond to this challenge, trust-building especially by getting enterprises involved, as potential employers of the RNFIL-qualified persons, is critical. This may take some time; however, this is a fundamental step for RNFIL to gain the actual currency in the labour market in the long term. To this end, trust-building should be developed hand-in-hand with the development of a national qualifications framework, which shifts the focus from inputs to learning outcomes, and allows transfers between the academic sector and vocational training.

4.4 Monitoring and research on RNFIL

110. The ACBS and the BDES have started to collect information on the users, but this is still very limited. The information is not sufficient enough to thoroughly understand the incentives and disincentives of the users and their specific profiles.

⁷ However it should be noted that information about the ACBS is also available at the regional offices of the MEHRD.

111. The MEHRD pilot activities may, in the near future, lead not only to the extension of what the BDES and ACBS systems are currently achieving, but also to the emergence of a new governance of RNFIL and CAT in Korea. For instance, the pilot to extend the current system to the non-tertiary level with the new paradigm may lead to a change in the governance of the RNFIL and CAT system.

112. The creation of new RNFIL mechanisms may also be part of actions taken at the city level to develop lifelong learning. The projects KEDI is currently pursuing are implemented at local level, in a more decentralised framework, in some of the "learning cities", which may link the development the RNFIL and CAT system with the current efforts to decentralise governance. In some of these cities, recognition commissions have been set up with the purpose of assessing and recognising non-formal and informal learning at lower than tertiary level. However the review team could not find any evidence on the assessment methods that these commissions are proposing to use. Evidence may be available in the future as research is being conducted to explore the concrete forms and impacts of local initiatives.

113. The review team was informed that one impact study of the RNFIL on the users was being carried out. However, at the time of the visit, the team was not able to obtain the results. To establish the legitimacy of the RNFIL and to raise the social esteem of the RNFIL-related qualifications, impact studies or longitudinal studies seem to be necessary.

5. POLICY OPTIONS

114. The review team recognises that the Korean academic RNFIL and CAT system has a strong basis for further development and that it may bring a substantive change if deliberate efforts are made within a new strategic framework. For the country to promote better **transferability of learning outcomes**, it needs to develop a strategic action plan for the RNFIL/CAT system. The review team proposes eight options as possible policy responses to the needs for better overall strategies, institutional arrangements, technical arrangements, communication and trust-building strategies and research, which were discussed in the previous section. All the eight options are seen as essential to promote transferability of learning outcomes between the academic sector and the vocational education and training sector, i.e. the selected focus of the CPA.

115. The eight policy options are proposed, like a menu, from which the country is encouraged to select the one(s) that are most feasible to implement, appropriate for its policy context, and highly relevant to its national policy objectives at the time. The most important consideration is the **feasibility** in order to ensure possible **impact** of our policy proposals. To this end, the most of the suggested actions or measures for consideration are based on existing initiatives and on processes already in course, which was part of the fruitful results of the process of the collaborative policy analysis.

5.1 For better overall strategies

Policy Option 1: Draw a strategic action plan for RNFIL

116. Under the changing contextual factors and the associated challenges, the review team recommends that Korea review the current RNFIL/CAT system and practices in a critical way and start a strategic reflection on the future of the system. In doing so, six key areas should be considered with the following related questions:

1. **Goals, functions and target groups:** What should the main goals of the RNFIL and CAT system be? What balance should be created between, on the one hand, satisfying individual learning demands, and enhancing the social promotion or career change needs of individuals, and, on the other, unleashing the still unexploited human potential, promoting the development of less advanced regions, enhancing the labour market integration of less educated adults and the social integration of potential foreign labour force? Where should the balance be maintained between a universal policy and a targeted policy for RNFIL? In case of advancing a targeted policy, who should be the priority group(s) among current users as well as potential users? Should the current goals and functions kept more or less unchanged or should they be altered in the light of the current and future challenges?
2. **Linkages with the higher education system:** Should the RNFIL and CAT system remain part of the higher education system as it is now, or should it be broadened and linked better to the other sectors of lifelong learning? Should the current system play the role of promoting credit accumulation and transfer for the higher education sector, or should the higher education sector create its own credit accumulation and transfer mechanisms, based on a more active participation of higher education institutions and other key players of the tertiary sector?
3. **Institutional frameworks.** If there is a need for broadening functions and target groups, should that be done within the current institutional framework, through its further development, or should new institutional arrangements be created, according to the new needs? Would a potential merger of ACBS and EDBS improve the operation of the system and would this be feasible? If the institutions of the current

system take new functions (e.g. developing assessment tools and enhancing the professionalisation of RNFIL-related assessment) how should this be achieved? Who should finance the new developments, and how? If there is a need to develop the professional assessment of individual learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal learning, should that be done through an integrated national service or through the activities of a variety of local and institutional actors? What would be the implications of relaxing the regulations that limit 40 credits in a year and 24 credits in a semester and those that require at least two institutions from which the credits have to be gained?

4. **The national qualifications system and the RNFIL/CAT system.** What connections should be created between the emerging new national qualifications framework and the current RNFIL and CAT system? If the new national qualifications framework encourages RNFIL and CAT mechanisms, what impact could this have on the existing academic RNFIL and CAT system? Is it feasible to reform national qualifications so that they become more ‘learning outcome-based’, instead of describing levels by ‘inputs’ of learning? If this is feasible, how learning outcomes should be described in the two systems? How far modularisation should go in the two systems? In other words, should the national qualification system embrace a credit framework and, therefore, should the framework become a ‘national qualification and credit framework’? How far vocational and academic qualifications systems should follow similar principles?
5. **The RNFIL/CAT system and the teaching and learning culture.** What role should and could the RNFIL and CAT system play in a potential renewal of the teaching, learning and assessment culture of the country? Should it enhance approaches that are based on the assessment of learning outcomes and competencies in teaching practices? If the answer to this question is yes, could the RNFIL be part of a national teaching and learning strategy? Is the current way of defining “learning outcomes” appropriate, or is there a need for a new definition (based on a broader concept of knowledge and competences)?
6. **Partners and stakeholders.** What role should the various stakeholders (e.g. different national agencies, training providers, professional assessors, local communities etc.) play in the development and the operation of the RNFIL and CAT system? If new actors enter the scene (e.g. local communities and lifelong learning centres run by them) what impact could this have on the operation of the current system?

117. Although the further policy options presented below form a coherent whole, it is important to weight them according to their urgency and their possible costs. Urgency and costs may change according to contextual changes. For example, the progress of the elaboration of the new national qualifications framework and the direction this work takes may elevate certain policy issues to the top of the urgency list. Similarly, various options may become more or less feasible and also more or less desirable according to the directions the work on the national qualifications framework takes. If, for example, defining learning outcomes in terms of competencies or enhancing modularisation are gaining support in the work on the national qualifications framework, the same elements may become more feasible and more desirable in the RNFIL/CAT system as well.

Policy Option 2: Address new target groups, especially the older workers, women, immigrant workers, and people in military services.

118. The review team recommends that Korea should make use of its academic RNFIL and CAT system in an effort to meet the emerging demographic and labour market challenges. At present, as stressed several times in this report, this system is actually used by the younger, already highly educated population. The review team commends the current practice taken up with a demand-driven as the system meets the need of the young population for career change.

119. The review team, however, believes that the ACBS could extend its services to new target groups. As discussed in section 4, the new target groups should include: older workers, inactive women, and immigrants, especially those who have not yet completed upper secondary education, people who participated in the military services, and North Koreans.

Policy Option 3: Involve local partners and realign responsibilities between central and local actors

120. To ensure an effective operation of the RNFIL system with new functions and target groups it is essential (1) to give an increasing role to local and regional partners, (2) to give them new responsibilities and (3) to reshape the distribution of existing ones between central and local actors (including training providers). The involvement of new local and regional partners should be aligned with high priority policy frameworks, such as 'Learning Cities'. If the current users of RNFIL will shift from those individuals who seek social promotion and career change to the new target groups as described in Policy Option 2, it may have an impact on regional economic development as the new target groups tend to reside in less advanced regions. The review team believes that the creation of Learning Cities is a particularly valuable initiative, into which RNFIL/CAT should be strategically integrated. Involving local actors in the RNFIL process will require, first and foremost, the building up of new capacities at local level because local/regional governments are currently not among the key partners in the operation of the ACBS. It will also require defining and understanding the shared responsibility between the local actors (including training providers) and the national agencies, particularly the relevant stakeholders responsible for the operation of the ACBS.

121. The role of local actors is expected to:

- Identify skill shortages in the region, considering the features of its industries, demography, etc;
- Explore who should be the target users in the region for its most potential regional economic and social development;
- Improve horizontal cooperation (e.g. between local and regional non-formal learning providers such as lifelong learning centres of universities, enterprises – especially SMEs – and municipalities);
- Conduct the direct assessment of individuals (the competencies or skills that individuals possess besides formal qualifications);
- Experiment getting involved in the RNFIL assessment on a pilot project basis.

122. In order to extend partnerships to local governments and to assign the new tasks above to them and to training providers, the national agencies, especially the KEDI, are expected to assume a stronger coordinating and advisory responsibility. Their role is particularly important as to implement the direct assessment of the knowledge and competencies of individuals. To this end, the expected tasks for the national agencies include:

- Develop new assessment tools, standardised procedures and guiding principles for the direct assessment of individuals' competencies to be used by local education and training providers;
- Provide local education and training institutions with financial and technical support for pilot projects to conduct the direct assessment of individuals;
- Evaluate the pilot projects and disseminate the outcomes for sharing good practice among local actors; and
- Develop a user's guide for local education and training providers on how the assessment results should be converted into formal 'credits' or 'qualifications' and ensure the infrastructure for the locally recognised credits/qualifications to be transferable to the credits/qualifications at the national level such as the ACBS.

123. It is important to stress that the assessment tools and recognition methods should be made transparent, which is one of the critical factors to build trust on the validity of the assessment and recognition associated with RNFIL.

5.2 For better institutional and technical arrangements

Policy Option 4: Integrate the existing systems, namely the ACBS and the EDBS.

124. The most immediate institutional development is to better integrate the existing recognition and credit accumulation and transfer systems. The review team was informed that the possible integration of the two existing systems in the academic sector, the ACBS and the BDES, is being considered as part of the new amendment of the Act on lifelong learning. The separation of these two systems has partly historical reasons, but, they also represent different paradigms. Integrating them into one unified institution should not lead to the loss of their specificities. On the contrary, the unified system should draw on the strengths that the both systems can bring: i.e. the high up-take, the visibility of the system, the ‘credit-based assessment, and the possible link with the vocational qualifications (from the ACBs) and the direct assessment of the individuals and the assessment focusing on learning outcomes (BDES). It is important, however, to stress that the ACBS should not develop towards an examination organising agency (which the BDES currently represents), but should play a role in developing more sophisticated assessment methods and instruments. Most importantly, the merger should be made understandable for and communicated well with the potential clients.

125. In brief, the unified system should combine the positive sides of each system. Therefore, the system should be based on: 1) a new definition of learning outcomes understood as competencies rather than formal certifications; 2) more sophisticated methods to assess individual competencies; and 3) ‘credits’-based; and 4) more opportunities for individuals to construct their own individual learning paths and experiences.

Policy Option 5: Develop a ‘National Qualification and Credit Framework’ as part of the reform of the national qualification systems

126. The establishment of a ‘national qualification and credit framework’ can be an effective policy initiative for Korea, considering the fact that the government is in the process of reviewing all the vocational qualification systems and rearranging the vocational qualifications to be converted into academic credits. To establish the framework, three key goals should be met: 1) the assessment standards should be descriptive of learning outcomes, 2) the qualifications should be modularised into and defined by credits, and 3) the framework should be overarching both the academic and vocational qualifications. If these three conditions are met, the RNFIL and CAT can be systemically and efficiently embedded into the framework. The comprehensive *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)*⁸ can be a good reference for Korea.

127. This option should require a mid-term plan given that each one of the goals would need a sufficient timeframe to achieve. To begin with, as to set up a qualification framework based on **learning outcomes**, rather than input such as curricular standards, it needs to start describing **knowledge, skills and competencies**, as learning outcomes, required for each qualification. This will require a significant amount of work for the already established qualifications as well as the new qualifications. In the mid-term or long-term, however, the work will eventually allow assessing learning outcomes, particularly those occurred from non-formal and informal learning, and will encourage life-wide learning in a genuine sense. Such a qualification framework may be developed most efficiently if coupled with the development of reliable assessment tools: if reliable mechanisms to assess learning outcomes would require the standard that describes skills to be acquired at certain levels, not the curriculum. If Korea wishes to move towards a lifelong as well as life-wide learning society, it should clearly find a great advantage of initiating the task of defining qualifications based on learning outcomes at this very moment. This should start *now*, given the goal behind the recent amendment of the Act on Lifelong Learning. Simultaneously, the country should also undertake another task in parallel of developing reliable methods to assess learning outcomes, regardless of the way they were acquired.

128. In addition, reinforcing the learning outcomes-based approach could be one policy response to the current concern of **parity of esteem** between qualifications acquired from the formal education and from the RNFIL systems (both from the ACBS and the BDES). If the awarding of qualifications or academic degrees is based more on what individuals really know than on the place where this knowledge has been acquired, there will be a common ‘ruler’ to measure the equivalency between the two different types of qualifications and, eventually, there will be no difference between the two, as with the case of the qualifications gained through RNFIL (*la validation des acquis de*

⁸ <http://senate.gla.ac.uk/academic/scqf/index.html>

l'expérience) in France. The parity of esteem for RNFIL-related qualifications may potentially increase, if the qualifications could be conferred based on the actual knowledge, skills and competencies of an individual.

129. The national qualifications framework should be set up within which a qualification consists of a number of **modularised units such as 'credits'**. By cutting a qualification into smaller chunks, a means to obtain a qualification is **diversified** in accordance with the diverging purposes for learning. With some learning modes, e-learning for example, an emerging practice is to organise courses by building blocks of learning units, called 'learning objects'. This may very well create the needs for recognition of learning outcomes at a smaller unit-level, in order to ensure continuity by providing **flexible learning**.

130. The modularised recognition may create incentives for learning. With this model, the already acquired knowledge, skills and competencies can be made visible as in a form of 'credits' and, therefore, credits may shorten the overall duration to obtain a qualification by waiving some courses. This will contribute to **diversifying** the means to validate the knowledge, skills and competencies regardless how they are acquired. It is important to stress that creating a 'credit matrix' to define equivalency between credits is of itself a time-consuming task. But, when it is completed, this model will eventually be one powerful means to **personalise** a way to obtain a qualification.

131. The credit-based recognition may also allow individuals to learn at different institutions, **accumulate and transfer credits**, and obtain a qualification. Though, under the current system, the ACBS is already credit-based and allows credit transfer, there are still opportunities to further the scope. The review team observed that the credit transfer possibilities of the ACBS are not yet fully exploited. New scope should include universities and vocational training. In doing so, **quality assurance** is the key. Therefore, the government should establish the guidelines of quality assurance concerning the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, such as, for example, the *Guidelines on the Accreditation of Prior Learning* in the UK⁹. The government could also prepare the guidelines regarding the credit-based learning, such as, for example, the *Guidelines to support colleges and higher education institutions: Facilitating credit-based links in higher education* in Scotland.¹⁰ These guidelines should be embedded in the national qualifications and credit framework.

132. Concerning the practice, the government should encourage a step-by-step and bottom-up approach, which will eventually build the system gradually and with credibility. The government should first encourage universities to build an internal credit accumulation and transfer mechanism within universities, starting with a pilot such as among universities of the same level (like 'star universities'), of the same region, or of the same principles in accordance with the quality assurance principles. In doing so, it is important to include 'recognition of knowledge, skills and competencies' gained through non-formal and informal learning opportunities such as *internships* and *volunteer activities*. This is in line with the increasing needs for 'career-oriented education' at universities that are expected to be more response to the labour market needs. In parallel to the initiatives taken up by universities, vocational training should also initiate a CAT mechanism among enterprises of the same industries, of the size (e.g. SMEs), or of the region, respecting the quality assurance guidelines. In the meanwhile, the ACBS and the BDES should, applying the same guidelines, further recognise outcomes, especially those of informal learning, which is the weakest area of the current system. Finally, credits gained through each mechanism in different sectors can start being transferred across the sectors and across the different learning modes.

133. Eventually, the national qualification credit framework, together with the guidelines for credit-based learning and those for RNFIL, will help increase the **comparability between the academic degrees awarded by the higher education system and qualifications acquired through vocational training**. The experiences in Europe shows that merging these two types of degrees or qualifications into one common framework is one of the most difficult exercises. These experiences also show, however, that the more the national qualifications framework is based on learning outcomes, the better the chances are. The mechanism created by the ACBS system should be the starting point for the formal education sector (higher education institutions) and the vocational training sector (enterprises) to act on.

⁹ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf>

¹⁰ http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/scottishadvisory/credit_based.asp

Policy Option 6: Shift the focus of assessment towards competence based and individual-based

134. The current academic RNFIL and CAT system in Korea, as stressed several times in this report, does not focus on the individual's learning process or on informal learning due to its historical tradition (the Confucius value of having a teacher) and its cultural value (the importance of formal learning). Naturally, in order to obtain a qualification, learners are tested to prove if they have learnt the knowledge taught by a teacher in a formal setting.

135. As the learner profiles and the learning modes are diversified, there is a need to re-think assessment methods. **Diverse assessment procedures and methods** should be developed, accompanied by a stronger focus on the recognition of **informal or experiential learning**. If Korea wishes to act on this policy option, the feasibility has to be carefully analysed, and the 'who does what' needs to be clarified between the national and local agencies. In the analysis, the review team recommends that the country places its priority on: 1) quality assurance; 2) the development of new assessment instruments; and 3) trust-building.

136. The main role of national agencies could be to develop the national guidelines that should include an item on assessment (procedures and methods). To this end, the *Prior Learning Recognition Guidelines* (Australia)¹¹, the *Principles and Operational Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning* (Ireland)¹², and the document paper '*Developing Approaches to the Assessment of Prior Learning*' (South Africa)¹³ may be useful references for Korea. With this model, the actual responsibility of assessment is delegated to local agencies or education and training providers.

137. Creating new assessment procedures and tools is a costly exercise. Therefore, it requires a careful estimation of the costs as well as the planning of who should pay the costs. The basic principle already practised in Korea, i.e. most of the costs being covered by those who use the services, should be preserved. However, when the target groups of assessment and recognition are those who are from the low socio-economic background and seriously discouraged by the costs, the government should intervene with a targeted policy and share the costs, possibly through, for example, the Employment Insurance Fund, or funds aiming at regional development.

138. Assessment, as is well known, may have a tremendous impact on the learner motivation and the way whether or not further learning is undertaken. Those OECD countries that attempt to increase the bottom end of low qualified population have accumulated much experience in developing and using alternative assessment methods than the traditional high-stake 'pen and paper' test, with various pilot projects. The example from Norway may be useful in this respect (see Box C).

BOX C. Methods developed for assessing non-formal and informal learning in the framework of the Norwegian "Competence Reform"

Dialogue-based method: This method requires individual preparation and a one-to-one meeting. It has been tested out on a large number of candidates. The conclusion is that the method fits in with both vocational and general subjects. A dialogue-based method covers tacit knowledge, and seems to be good for adults who have difficulties with reading, writing and numeracy.

Assessment of portfolio: A method based on assessment of written documentation, photos, etc. The candidate sends a "charting" form to a "service centre" together with certificates and reports. This method demands good written documentation of individuals' own skills and does not require one-to-one meetings.

Vocational "testing" starts off with an interview in which the background, training, work experience, language skills and objectives of the adult are charted. After the first general interview a professional specialist interviews the individual in the particular subject, after which the individual shows the abilities in practice, so that both the theoretical and the practical side of the trade is assessed. This method picks up knowledge and experiences which are not documented and works well irrespective of learning and language difficulties.

Source: Mohn, 2007

¹¹ <http://www.aqf.edu.au/rplnatprin.htm#assessment>

¹² <http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/documents/NFQ-principles06brown.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.saqa.org.za/focus/rpl-assessment.pdf>

139. It is important to stress that the development and particularly the use of non-conventional, less standardised assessment methods is a complex procedure that needs time and much experiment. Assessors who are not used to these methods not only have to learn how they can be used effectively and reliably but also have to establish credibility of these methods. They must first convince themselves of the validity and reliability these methods and, then, convince others – those who use the assessment results – about this. Some of the methods may be highly expensive, such as interviews and observations. The development of new assessment methods is a challenging new task for the national agencies. Besides the development of the national guidelines or principles and the financial assistance to the targeted groups, national agencies could help develop the standards for assessors and the training courses for assessors.

5.3 For better communication and trust-building strategies

Policy Option 7: Develop an effective information and guidance strategy

140. In alignment with the expansion of the use of the RNFIL/CAT system in Korea, the impact will emerge only if the country develops an effective information and guidance strategy, developed hand-in-hand with the development of the system itself. The strategy should be developed; the responsibility for it should be shared among the ACBS/BEDS, universities, public and private training providers, local governments and employers. To this end, in designing the new national qualifications framework, the two components, i.e. RNFIL and information and guidance, should be systemically incorporated.

141. Although the ACBS is well known in the society, the guidance provision today is not sufficient to respond to the current users either by telephone or site-visits. The national government is now supporting the ACBS to develop a consolidated website to provide information and guidance. The review team sees this as a culturally effective initiative, given that the country is one of the most advanced countries in the adaptation of new technologies in daily life. As the ACBS becomes more and more open, the details of the system as well as its assessment procedures and methods should be disclosed.

142. As has been stressed earlier, there is a risk of losing reliability and of creating frauds by using such less standardised assessment methods. With much experience over time, a balance is expected to be found by improving the methodology of flexible assessment and by its standardisation. However, to ensure the credibility of the qualifications gained through RNFIL, it is critical for all actors to be involved in the assessment procedures and methods, where appropriate, in order to build trust among potential users of the system (learners) as well as those who will use the recognition results or provide qualifications (employers, universities).

5.4 For advancing monitoring and research

Policy Option 8: Better monitor RNFIL and further advance research

143. To understand the learners' behaviour (age, educational background, motivation, etc.), the ACBS database is being developed (Annex 2). The statistics, however, needs to be further developed in order to collect 'evidence' of who uses the ACBS, and for what. The data should be collected on an annual basis. In addition to the basic statistics, evaluation of pilot projects should be carried out.

144. Furthermore, an impact study or a longitudinal study could be launched to research what benefits the recognition may bring to the learners upon completion of a degree through the ACBS and the BDES. To do this, a study carried out in Portugal may be a good reference¹⁴. Possible positive effects were explored and identified: i.e. increased self-esteem, re-orientation of one's personal and professional plans, better status, salary and progression in the labour market, and more uptake of further learning.

¹⁴ *The impact of the Recognition and Certification of Lifelong Learned Competences RVCC* (2004). The CIDEDEC for the General- Directorate for Vocational Training of the Portuguese Ministry of Education

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ANNEX 1: AGREEMENT ON THE FOCUS OF THE COLLABORATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS



**Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
(OECD)**

**Appendix to the Guidelines for Country Participation in the
Collaborative Policy Analysis, CPA**

**South Korea Participation in the CPA
Background Questionnaire**

1. Agreed focus of the Collaborative Policy Analysis

Selected focus

Transferability of the learning outcomes has been selected as the focus of the study.

2. The policy relevance of the CPA focus

Why is the focus or the topic you have chosen for the CPA important in your country?

The Academic Credit Bank System and the System of Academic Degree Acquisition through Self-Education (*Dok-Hack-Sa*) are the open lifelong learning systems that provide alternative ways to those who have not had the opportunity to acquire degrees through regular higher education institutions. In particular, the Academic Credit Bank System plays a crucial role in facilitating transferability of non-formal and informal learning in Korea. The system focuses on providing standards for mutual recognition of academic credits in non-formal and informal learning institutions. Some examples of such standards include the one that the learning activities of 15 hours per week, which last at least four weeks, can be converted into one academic credit. The Credit Bank System also sets up the standard for qualifications of instructors and learning programs in institutions of non-formal learning. The primary role of the Academic Credit Bank System is to offer a bachelor's degree by recognizing academic credits accumulated through various institutions providing opportunities for non-formal learning.

Some details of links between recognized learning outcomes to academic and vocational qualification system are as follows:

Connection with the academic qualification system

Academic credits of non-formal and informal learning acquired from different colleges and universities can be recognized officially through the Academic Credit Bank System and utilized as additional credits at the time of entering advanced level of higher education. Such credits can be used as following three ways: First, many universities and colleges currently recognize experience-based learning such as internship as credits. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development actively encourage higher education institutions to recognize credits obtained from experience-based learning; Second, through the Academic Credit Bank System, non-formal and

informal learning is converted into academic credits under certain conditions and learners can accumulate these credits to acquire an associate's or a bachelor's degree. Learners also use these credits to get admission to regular universities or even graduate schools after receiving degrees through the Academic Credit Bank System. Third, when an individual applies for colleges and universities, qualifications or field experiences (the result of informal learning), which are obtained through non-formal and informal learning and are recognized through the Academic Credit Bank System, may give the applicant an edge as a form of additional credits. In such a situation that demand for college entrance is larger than supply, these additional credits can be of considerable benefit to the learner. In Korea, non-formal and informal learning outcomes connects more closely with academic qualifications than with vocational qualifications because academic qualifications are socially recognized as more important than vocational qualifications.

Connection with the vocational qualification system

The link between recognized non-formal and informal learning and the vocational qualification system is observed in two aspects: exemption of part of the subjects in the Vocational Qualifications Examination and gaining the qualification of applying for the Vocational Qualifications Examination.

First, when an individual acquires a vocational qualification through non-formal and informal learning, the acquired vocational qualification itself gives the individual complete or partial exemption from the subjects in the examination leading to other vocational qualifications. For National Qualifications, relevant laws stipulate detailed standards for the exemption. For Private Qualifications, standards of the exemption are presented by the Qualifications Management Operating Provisions, which is prepared by the Staffs of Private Qualifications Management. However, it should be noted that no exemption will be made if the applicant does not have the proper qualifications, regardless of how much non-formal and informal learning the applicant has undergone.

Second, in reference with prerequisites to apply for exam for vocational qualifications, limiting prerequisites to apply for exam is one of the many ways to enforce non-direct connection between qualifications. And the way to place limitations in these prerequisites determines the way of recognizing both formal learning and non-formal and informal learning. In other words, in the case of formal learning, prerequisites to apply for exam place more emphasis on academic background and in the case of non-formal and informal learning, prerequisites place more emphasis on various life experiences such as employment history in industry field.

As stated earlier, the Academic Credit Bank System and the System of Academic Degree Acquisition through Self-Education (*Dok-Hack-Sa*) provide a legal basis for ensuring transferability of recognized learning outcomes in Korea. In practice, however, several complicated factors still impede transferability of the learning outcomes. It is expected that this Collaborative Policy Analysis will provide valuable opportunities for articulating what are the impeding factors to transferability of the learning outcomes and what should be done to remove them.

3. What is working or not working in relation to transferability of the learning outcomes? What is working in relation to transferability of the learning outcomes?

The Academic Credit Bank System presents a national framework for recognition of non-formal and informal learning. As of 2005, more than 440 institutions participate in the recognition of non-formal learning through the Academic Credit Bank System. Since 1997 when the system was established, the number of the learner in the system has been increasing dramatically, amounting to 42,089 in 2005. More and more learners benefit from the system, reflected in that 3,900 students obtained associates degrees and 9,994 students obtained bachelors' degrees through the Academic Credit Bank System in the year of 2005.

The Academic Credit Bank System relates to a national qualification framework. In fact, the Credit Bank System is characterized by its role of linking the track of academic qualification system and the track of vocational qualification system.

What is not working in relation to transferability of the learning outcomes?

Considering that the standardized curriculum for the accreditation by the Academic Credit Bank System is based on curricular of traditional higher education institutions, it can be said that the system is limited in recognizing

various learning experiences in working places and in local communities. That is, the Academic Credit Bank System lacks diverse assessment methods customized to individual learners and a variety of learning experiences.

The Academic Credit Bank System is also limited in that it places too much emphasis on recognition of non-formal learning in non-formal education and training institutes, although it recognizes some types of informal learning such as Skills and Arts Inheritance of Important Intangible Cultural Properties. Currently on-the-job training taking place in the industrial sector is not recognized through the academic credit bank system.

Given the limitation of the coherent national qualification framework in Korea, it is hard to establish a firm standard for recognizing credits for qualifications. The national qualification system in Korea is not based on strict standards articulating detailed description. Thus, the system is limited in that it lacks coherent linkage for the transferability between academic qualification and vocational qualification system. A couple of factors contribute to this incoherency of the system, including several Ministries involving the national qualification system with relevant coordination. In addition, there is discrepancy in assessment methodology including assessment standards, assessment tools, and assessment contents between the two systems.

4. The policy relevance of the CPA approach

How the outcomes of the study will be important for policy makers?

Currently, Korean government is trying to rebuild the national qualification system in more coherent way. Policy recommendations by OECD experts, which incorporate the comparative analysis of recognition of non-formal and informal learning in OECD countries, will provide great momentum to push ahead with the plan for overhauling the national qualification system as well as practical information on how to establish a coherent national qualification system.

Also, some experts suggest that diversifying assessment methods including portfolios should be one of the ways to enhance transferability of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. It is expected that the CPA will be a good chance to exchange ideas about addressing this issue.

ANNEX 2: STATISTICS ON THE ACBS

Table 1. The number approved credits by the credit sources in the ACBS (April, 2004)

Classification	Approved credits classified by the Credit Sources							
Classification	The ACBS-affiliated institutions	Acquisition of Qualifications	Dok-Hack-Sah		Credits from recognized prior college & Univ.	Important Intangible Cultural Properties	Part-time Enrolment	Total
Classification	The ACBS-affiliated institutions	Acquisition of Qualifications	Bachelor's Exam	Exam Exemption	Credits from recognized prior college & Univ.	Important Intangible Cultural Properties	Part-time Enrolment	Total
1999	139,075	19,428	613	-	20,669.5	-	556	180,341.5
2000	209,501	46,927	1,230	-	67,818.5	-	21,542	347,018.5
2001	440,114	96,536	2,495	3,272	155,663.5	-	24,506	722,586.5
2002	721,427	141,461	2,742	17,093	239,475	1,680	31,257	1,155,135
2003	841,077	210,171	4,332	14,293	348,029	1,061	54,888	1,473,851
2004	805,434	305,951	14,481	10,659	498,008	676	138,802	1,774,011
2005	968,738	501,369	74,582	11,397	881,941.5	1,015	373,643	2,812,685.5
2006	1,104,114	619,025	52,280	6,462	1,795,414.5	487	524,492	4,102,274.5
2007	455,028	302,048	8,247	2,769	308,541.5	377	329,039	1,406,049.5
Total	5,684,508	2,242,916	161,002	65,945	4,315,561	5,296	1,498,725	13,973,953

Source: KEDI ACBS database

Table 2. The number of registered learners in the ACBS by age (April, 2004)

Age	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total (%)
Younger than 20	373	3,097	4,118	7,819	7,687	7,363	6,946	6,934	8,251	82	52,670 (23.96%)
21~24	109	3,470	3,156	4,891	5,752	7,510	7,922	9,823	11,621	1,527	55,781 (25.38%)
25~30	89	2,930	2,421	3,467	4,017	5,249	6,877	11,601	15,680	3,816	56,147 (25.54%)
31~40	36	1,072	1,159	2,082	2,644	3,176	3,875	8,648	9,378	2,408	34,478 (15.68%)
41~50	46	467	563	938	1,136	1,325	1,858	4,077	5,068	1,148	16,626 (7.56%)
51~60	15	56	72	100	178	259	423	901	1,347	343	3,694 (1.68%)
Older than 61	3	1	12	5	19	29	62	105	151	39	426 (0.19%)
Total	671	11,093	11,501	19,302	21,433	24,911	27,963	42,089	51,496	9,363	219,822

Source: KEDI ACBS database

Table 3. The number of registered learners in the ACBS by fields of study (April, 2004)

Classification	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total (%)
Engineering	35	421	813	1,819	2,221	3,518	5,590	7,834	7,451	1,450	31,152 (23.08%)
Business Administration	6	67	215	1,463	2,500	2,427	2,458	4,500	7,920	2,128	23,684 (17.55%)
Liberal Arts	63	214	273	536	650	1,130	1,808	6,341	8,812	2,728	22,555 (16.71%)
Science	43	260	183	999	1,216	1,963	2,172	2,192	2,454	164	11,646 (8.63%)
Military Science	-	-	-	-	-	2,110	2,471	1,660	1,947	336	8,524 (6.32%)
Music	1	450	431	776	971	1,057	1,026	1,372	1,296	44	7,424 (5.50%)
Fine Arts	16	55	302	365	501	775	857	1,444	1,888	334	6,537 (4.84%)
Laws	-	13	13	18	44	132	586	3,027	1,146	158	5,137 (3.81%)
Sports	1	76	47	232	402	587	969	1,140	1,282	81	4,817 (3.57%)
Theology	1	366	376	436	430	520	538	626	689	19	4,001 (2.96%)
Domestic Science	3	35	72	147	242	276	219	372	528	60	1,954 (1.45%)
Health Science	-	-	-	3	-	2	7	16	1,823	82	1,933 (1.43%)
Arts	-	30	23	9	17	69	549	487	616	46	1,846 (1.37%)
Tourism	-	1	2	19	267	369	175	185	305	25	1,348 (1.00%)
Nursing	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2	774	14	792 (0.59%)
Public Administration	-	26	63	47	47	45	99	139	240	37	743 (0.55%)
Dancing	-	-	-	10	52	53	90	74	83	2	364 (0.27%)

Classification	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total (%)
Traditional Arts	-	-	1	-	14	39	95	110	67	5	331 (0.25%)
Library & Information Science	-	2	-	8	12	12	4	8	19	-	65 (0.05%)
Economics	-	3	4	2	3	7	3	6	15	6	49 (0.04%)
Oceanography	-	-	1	3	-	2	11	6	7	2	32 (0.02%)
Advertising	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	12	2	20 (0.01%)
Total	169	2,019	2,819	6,893	9,589	15,093	19,730	31,545	39,374	7,723	134,954

Source: KEDI ACBS database

Table 4. Learning motivations by age groups participating in RNFIL systems (%)

	College enrolment	Graduate school enrolment	Degree acquisition	Qualification acquisition	Employment	Promotion	Self attainment	Total
20 years old and under	38.9	9.3	27.7	6.9	12.3	0.1	4.7	100
21 years old~ 25 years old	28.1	16.7	31.0	5.3	9.8	2.4	6.8	100
26 years old~ 30 years old	14.3	25.8	30.6	9.8	6.9	1.3	11.3	100
31 years old~ 35 years old	4.8	35.6	20.1	14.5	3.5	0.7	20.8	100
36 years old~ 40 years old	5.3	31.1	23.4	18.7	4.3	0.0	17.2	100
41 years old~ and over	2.9	24.3	23.6	23.2	1.7	0.7	23.6	100
Total	23.2	19.1	28.3	9.5	8.4	1.3	10.2	100

Source: Research data from the Country Background Report (Choi et al., 2007)

Table 5. Learning motivations by occupational groups participating in RNFIL systems (%)

	College enrolment	Graduate school enrolment	Degree acquisition	Qualification acquisition	Employment	Promotion	Self attainment	Total
Students	23.9	17.6	28.3	10.3	8.5	1.4	9.9	100
High ranked & Professionals	26.1	21.5	25.5	7.9	8.6	0.9	9.5	100
Office workers & Military personnel	18.0	19.7	29.5	11.0	6.8	2.3	12.7	100
Service Industry	28.0	16.8	26.6	10.5	10.5	0.7	7.0	100
Simple labour industry	23.2	21.7	17.4	11.6	11.6	1.4	13.0	100
Total	23.5	18.6	27.7	10.0	8.4	1.4	10.2	100

Source: Research data from the Country Background Report (Choi & Choi, 2007)

ANNEX 3: OECD REVIEW TEAM

Mr. Gabor Halasz (rapporteur), Professor, ELTE University Budapest, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Centre for Higher Educational Management

Mr. Richard Sweet, Professorial Fellow, Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning, University of Melbourne and Director, Sweet Group Pty Ltd

Ms. Miho Taguma, Policy Analyst, Education and Training Policy Division, Directorate for Education, OECD

ANNEX 4: NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND AUTHORS OF THE COUNTRY BACKGROUND REPORT

National Coordinator

Mr. Sang-Duk Choi, Director, Office of Higher and lifelong Education, Korean Educational Development Institute

Background Report Authors

Mr. Sang-Duk Choi, Director, Korean Educational Development Institute
Ms. Eun-Soon Baik, Director-General, Korean Academic Credit Bank System
Mr. Taek-Seok Moon, Director, Korean Academic Credit Bank System
Mr. Jong-Soo Shin, Director, Korean Academic Credit Bank System
Mr Ki-Soo Jeong, Professor, Hanyang University

ANNEX 5. PROGRAMME COUNTRY VISIT OECD 4 – 7 SEPTEMBER 2007

Tuesday 4 September, 10:00 – 15:00, location: *Seoul, the Korean Educational Development Institute, the Centre for Academic Credit Bank System*

Session 1: “Session for the OECD delegates”

The purpose of the morning program of 4 September is to answer the first questions of the OECD delegates about the country background report and to look ahead at the country visit.

- 10:00 Introduction
- 10:15 Presentation of the headlines of the Country Background Report
- 10:35 Questions and answers
- 11:35 Looking ahead at the country visit
- 12:00 Lunch

Session 2: “The Centre for Academic Credit Bank System”

In the afternoon of 4 September, we will visit the Centre for Academic Credit Bank System, which plays a crucial role in recognizing non-formal and informal learning in Korea. This year the Centre for the Academic Credit Bank System is celebrating the 10th anniversary of Academic Credit Bank System. On 28 August 2007, the Centre will hold an anniversary ceremony and a seminar to commemorate its 10th anniversary, in which policymakers, academics, and diverse participants in non-formal and informal learning in Korean will discuss what has been accomplished and what should be done in the future in recognizing non-formal and informal learning in Korea. The presenter of the morning session will brief the major results of the seminar as well as the basic information about the Academic Credit Bank System including the history and major roles of the Centre.

- 13:30 Arrival at the Center for Academic Credit Bank System and Introduction
 - 13:40 Presentation by the director-general of Centre for Academic Credit Bank System
 - short history of Academic Credit Bank System
 - roles of the centre and relevant organisations
 - brief introduction of the 10th anniversary events of Academic Credit Bank System
(Accomplishments and prospects of the Academic Credit Bank System in Korea)
 - 14:20 Discussion
 - 15:00 End
- With:
- OECD
 - National coordinator and staff(Sang-Duk Choi, Jeung-Yun Choi)
 - Director-General and staffs of the Centre for Academic Credit Bank System

Wednesday 5 September, 10.00 - 17.30, location: *The Korean Educational Development Institute, Ministry of Labor (MOL)*

Session 3: “Discussion with diverse stakeholders”

In the morning session of 5 September, we will meet diverse stakeholders of non-formal and informal learning in Korea, including individual participants, assessors, and providers. Individual participants in non-formal and informal learning will be selected and invited for this session, considering gender, age, and types of participating institutions. Individual assessors participating in this session will be selected from two types of organizations: colleges and universities and professional bodies for quality assurance and/or accreditation (e.g., Korean Accreditation Board of Nursing: KABON). Individual providers of non-formal learning participating in this session will be grouped into three: providers in higher education institutions, organizations for vocational training, and local governmental agencies of lifelong learning.

- 10:00 Introduction

- 10:10 Discussion
- Talking to individual participants (Learners from Incheon Culture & Art College)
 - Talking to individual assessors (Experts from Dae-Lim College and Korean Accreditation Board of Nursing)
 - Talking to individual providers of non-formal learning (Experts from Lifelong Learning Center of Hanyang University, Incheon Culture & Art College, Lifelong Learning Center of Chilgok-Gun)
- 12:00 Lunch

Session 4: “Meeting with a national stakeholder- Ministry of Labor (MOL)”

The first afternoon session of 5 September focuses on meeting experts from the Ministry of Labor. The Ministry of Labor, one of the important national stakeholders in recognizing non-formal and informal learning, is in charge of National Qualification Frameworks. Main issues at the meeting will be: “how is recognition of non-formal and informal learning linked to academic and vocational qualification systems,” “recent governmental initiatives to link recognition of non-formal and informal learning with the national qualification system,” and “challenges and national policy directions in promoting recognition of non-formal and informal learning.”

- 14:00 Introduction
- 14.10 Presentation by Direct of Skill Development Support Team (MOL)
- 14:30 Plenary discussion, challenges and national policy directions in promoting recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- 15:30 End of the session

Session 5: “Meeting with experts of Information and Consultation on Employment”

In the second afternoon session of 5 September, we will meet a couple of experts of Information and Consultation on Employment.

- 16:00 Introduction
- 16.10.1 Discussion with experts from Korea Employment Information Service (KEIS) and Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education & Training(KRIVET)
- 17:30 End
- With:
- OECD
 - National Coordinator and Staff (Sang-Duk Choi, Jeung-Yun Choi)
 - Diverse stakeholders including Learners from Incheon Culture & Art College, Two experts from Dae-Lim College and Korean Accreditation Board of Nursing, Three experts from Lifelong Learning Center of Hanyang University, Incheon Culture & Art College, Lifelong Learning Center of Chilgok-Gun
 - Director and staffs of Skill Development Support Team (MOL)
 - Two experts from Korea Employment Information Service (KEIS) and Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education & Training (KRIVET)

**Thursday 6 September, 10.30 – 20:00: *The Korean Educational Development Institute*
Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOE), Bachelor’s Degree Examination Department**

Session 6: “Meeting with a national stakeholder- MOE”

In the first session of 6 September, we will meet another important national stakeholder-the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development plays a central role in recognizing non-formal and informal learning in Korea. Main issues at the meeting will include: national policy directions in promoting recognition of non-formal and informal learning, especially relating to Academic Credit Bank System and the System of Academic Degrees Acquisition through Self-Education (“*Dok-Hack-Sa*”).

- 10:00 Introduction
- 10.10 Presentation by Director-General of Lifelong Learning Policy Division (MOE)
- 10:30 Plenary discussion, challenges and national policy directions in promoting recognition of non-formal and informal learning
- 12:00 Lunch

Session 7: “Meeting with stakeholders in industries”

Discussion in this session centres on recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an element of human resources management.

- 13:30 Discussion
- Talking to a representative of large companies
 - Talking to a representative of small and medium companies
 - Talking to representatives in service training (Hyundai, Samsung, LG Inc.)
- 15:30 End of the afternoon session

Session 8: “Meeting with experts from Bachelor’s Degree Examination Department”

In the second afternoon session of 6 September, we will meet experts from Bachelor’s Degree Examination Department, located within Korea National Open University.

- 16:00 Discussion
- 16:10 Presentation by Director of Bachelor’s Degree Examination Department
- short history and roles of Bachelor’s Degree Examination Department
 - accomplishments and prospects of the System of Academic Degrees Acquisition through Self-Education (“*Dok-Hack-Sa*”)
- 16:30 Plenary discussion
- 17:30 End of the afternoon session

With:

- OECD
- National Coordinator and Staff (Sang-Duk Choi, Jeung-Yun Choi)
- Director-General and staffs of Lifelong Learning Policy Division (MOE)
- Representatives in industries
- Director and Staffs of Bachelor’s Degree Examination Department
- President of the Korean Educational Development Institute

Friday 7 September, 09.30 - 12:00, location: *The Korean Educational Development Institute*

Session 9: “Session for the OECD delegates and Conclusion”

Internal discussion by the OECD delegates, preparing the conclusions.

- 09.30 Internal discussion by the OECD delegates
- 11.30 Conclusions. Presentation by the OECD delegates
- 12.00 End

With:

- OECD
- Key stakeholders (Mr. Hyung-Yeel Koh, President of KEDI; Ms. Eun-Soon Baik, Director-General of the Centre for Academic Credit Bank; Mr. Young-Ran Hong, Director, Office of Human Resources Development, KEDI; Mr. Tae-Jun Kim, Researcher, Office of Human Resources Development, KEDI; Mr. Sang-Duk Choi, Director, Office of Higher and Adult Education, KEDI; Ms. Jeugn-Yun Choi, Researcher, Office of Higher and Adult Education, KEDI; Mr. Chong-Deuk Park, Researcher, Centre for Academic Credit Bank; Ms. Kyung-Sook Ryu, Program Specialist, Centre for Academic Credit Bank, Ms. Ki-Won Paik, Program Specialist, Centre for Academic Credit Bank; Ms. Sun-Hwa Kwon, Program Specialist, Centre for Academic Credit Bank, Ms. Sun-Young Shin, Program Specialist, Centre for Academic Credit Bank).