

Seoul Stimulus Paper

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◆Seoul at a glance

Seoul, the capital of South Korea, has a population of one-fifth that of the whole country. As of 2013, the population is 10,437,737 in Seoul, and the elderly population over 65 years old is 1,130,508 (10.8%). This number shows that aging of the population is not that serious, but the rate of aging is increasing quickly, having doubled in the last 10 years. It is predicted that Seoul will achieve the status of a super aging society accordant to the current speed.

The multi-culture nature of the population is drawing widespread attention in recent years as there is an increasing number of people in the foreign work force and in international marriages. The special attention goes not only to those marriages of men in Korean low-income and rural areas to foreign females, but also to the foreign females who settled in Seoul and their children. Namely, the multi-culture family is becoming a crucial social problem in Korea. The number of foreign residents in Korea as of 2011 is 1,265,006, and the number in Seoul has climbed to 245,680 in 2012, compared to 67,908 in 2001. What's more, the number of members in the average Seoul family is decreasing: there were 4.52 members per family in 1980, and in 2013 there are only 2.44. In addition, the number of single-member families is continually increasing. It is noticeable that 46.9% of single-member families are elderly people who are at least 60 years old.

The population is not only large; educational and cultural facilities and resources, and human resources are also rich in Seoul. In addition, ever since Wonsoon Park, a citizen activist, was elected as mayor of Seoul in 2011, various community projects are being carried out in Seoul now.

◆Lifelong Education Development Promotion System

Based on the "Lifelong Education Law" revised in 2008, Seoul established its "Lifelong Education relevant regulations" on Mar. 18th, 2009. Of these, the 8th regulation requests the founding of a "Lifelong Education Association" covering plans, implementation and reviews for education. In accordance with this regulation, the newly-founded association held its first meeting. In this association, the Mayor of Seoul holds the post of president, the Vice-chairman of the Education Committee has been

appointed as the VP, and senators of the Municipal Government of Seoul, civil servants and specialists from the education-relevant fields serve as its members.

Next, Seoul established the “Lifelong Education Development Plan (2010~2014)” with the advice from Lifelong Education specialists. Aiming to become one of the Top 10 Lifelong Education Cities, Seoul is promoting the construction of a Seoul Model Lifelong Education City. It includes: 1) the construction of a Lifelong Education foundation, 2) the provision of various education programs, and 3) a network construction.

In order to promote and implement the above plan, Seoul isolated the previous Lifelong Education-related responsibilities managed by the municipal government strategy planning office, founded an “Education Assistance Office,” and set up an education support department, an education diversity department and a lifelong education department on the 27th of September, 2010. In addition, a lifelong education planning section, a lifelong education project section and a lifelong education supporting section were set up (with an additional Citizens College management section in 2013), which eventually consummated the lifelong education planning and affairs support system.

◆Promotion of lifelong learning with a focus on the humanities

Seven communities of Seoul were designated for the lifelong learning city project that the Korean government began in 2001, and these communities have been working in the development of a lifelong learning city. Also, in order to improve the citizens’ quality of life through developing and supporting high-quality Lifelong Education projects, Seoul has been publicly offering educational projects, holding announcement campaigns and giving awards for excellent examples since 2010.

On the other hand, in the year 2013, Seoul reorganized the lifelong learning promotion plan under the slogan of "happy lifelong learning wake me up and change the world." The purpose of the plan is to provide a lifelong learning course that mainly concentrates on the humanities by establishing a "Seoul Citizens College" in Seoul City Hall, and promoting cooperation with local libraries and local (Maeul) communities. As a matter of fact, the past lifelong learning plan was carried out mainly by providing simple courses that were concerned with hobbies and culture, but nowadays, the plan has been changed to provide citizens with not only an opportunity of self-reflection, but also many educational programs that are mainly concerned with the humanities to enhance the students’ abilities as mature citizens. On every Tuesday and Thursday in

Seoul Citizens College, there are 72 free courses provided to citizens on many different themes, such as "reflection based on the humanities," "civil democracy," "base of the life," "artistic imagination," and so on. The formation of the citizens college is composed of the citizens colleges established in Seoul Citizens Hall and the University of Seoul that are run by the Seoul government, and colleges of other areas that cooperate with the Seoul government.

In addition, Seoul tried its best to provide a better environment to make it possible for everybody to learn anytime and anywhere, such as by promoting a method of "lifelong learning visiting" in which a citizen with a particular specialty can become a lecturer, and by setting up the "Seoul City life study portal site" for busy and handicapped people. In addition, Seoul also has been taking measures actively to support the public self-running study groups of all areas, to develop a variety of learning modes, and to set plans to promote future development of the learning community movement that can be led by the public. Many other measures have been taken to strengthen the operation of various local intensive lifelong learning projects, and to expand the support projects for those using school facilities to carry out lifelong education activities.

◆References

Homepage of Seoul www.seoul.go.kr

Seoul Lifelong Learning Portal Site <http://sll.seoul.go.kr>

Seoul Statistics Site <http://stat.seoul.go.kr>

Questions

1. What do you regard as the main features of the Seoul approach to building a learning city?
2. Are there lessons for your city?
3. What value do you see in the civil democracy and reflection courses offered by the Seoul Citizens College?
4. Why do you think the humanities have been prominent in the promotion of lifelong learning in Seoul?