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Developing Models to Integrate Early Childhood Education and Childcare in Korea

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The aim of this study is to explore models for integrated policies and systems of early childhood education and childcare in Korea. We proposed five prospective models and offered a possible roadmap toward the integration of administrative systems. The roadmap was constructed after obtaining feedback from professionals in the fields and by evaluating the advantages and limitations of each of the prospective models that were developed. After identifying significant disagreements among stakeholders, we recommended a roadmap for integration which could minimize the conflicts among key groups. We presented specific tasks to explore before undertaking the administrative integration. The suggested tasks included integrating the two existing committees of early childhood education and childcare under the supervision of the Prime Minister, accommodating the functions of kindergartens and childcare facilities, integrating teacher training and qualification systems, and equalizing public financial support and regulatory systems between the two sectors.

Key words: cooperation and integration, early childhood education, childcare

Early childhood education and childcare in Korea have been separately developed in their distinctive sectors for a long period. Historically speaking, kindergartens have been likely to provide fairly affluent children with educational programs since *Nanam Kindergarten*, the first kindergarten in Korea was established in 1909 for 60 children. On the other hand, childcare facilities, beginning in 1921 with *Seoul Social Evangelical Center's Daycare Center,* which offered private childcare services to a small number of underprivileged children, sustained an element of welfare, albeit temporarily, in caring for children of working mothers and economically marginalized families. The two sectors have maintained their independent roles in terms of service targets and functionality (Kim, 2004; Rhee, 2004).

Amid the all-out efforts for industrialization since the 1970s, a combination of factors including the growing female workforce, more intensified female education, and the population's zeal for educational achievement led to stronger demand for early childhood education and childcare. In accordance with the expanding needs for early childhood education and childcare services, service targets of the two sectors began to overlap[1] and the functional differences between the two have narrowed as similarities have increased.

This article is a part of *A study on cooperation and integration of early childhood education and care to improve the efficiency of national policies for young children* (Rhee, Kim, Shin, Moon and Choi, 2006).

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Despite the similarities of service targets and functions, the administrative dichotomy of early childhood education and childcare (henceforth, ECEC) produces setbacks in policymaking throughout the society. Kindergartens and childcare facilities, playing similar roles, had their separate administrative authorities in education auspices and childcare auspices, respectively, leading to substantial administrative and financial inefficiencies. For instance, expansion of financial support for ECEC was not linked to effective administrative and financial implementation under comprehensive planning. Also, families of three to five year old children also experienced unnecessary confusion because due to multiple ECEC institutions with similar functions. Furthermore, staff working with children, and even academic professionals in the two fields, are inevitably challenged with tiring conflicts (Lee, 1999; Presidential Committee on Aging and Future Society, 2004).

As a result of these challenges and inefficiencies, cooperation and integration of ECEC emerged as the top priority policy tasks to boost efficiency of ECEC policy for young children, though initial discussion on the topic of service integration failed to progress in the mid 1990s. ECEC integration has become ever more critical to efficiently expend the expanded ECEC budget because the ECEC budget in Korea is expected to rise continuously even amid the world's lowest birth rate.

When it comes to countries which have established advanced ECEC policies, they have efficiently conducted ECEC policies by overcoming the dual parallel system. As the need to set up more efficient and comprehensive ECEC policies emerged as a means to overcome the crisis of low birth rates and to support women's economic activities, Nordic countries including Sweden, Norway and Finland, as well as France, Spain and others have implemented integrated ECEC policies (Lindon, 2003; Mahon, 2002). OECD (2001, 2006) emphasized that integrated concepts for ECEC and the government's systematic approach are the only ways to curb duplication, conflict, and confusion resulting from separation of the two sectors.

Despite of the importance of integration between early childhood education and childcare, most of the previous policy research on integration development measures in Korea is unlikely to provide a precise vision for integration and cooperation. For instance, childcare has been officially institutionalized thanks to the legislation of the Childcare Act in 1991. Since then, policy research related to childcare has pinpointed the importance of a need for Korea to make its ECEC uniform, but ended up as a mere announcement (Childcare Research Group, 1994). Additionally, a consultative body to promote advancement of early childhood education, which was established under the supervision of the Prime Minister in 1997, tried to implement integrated policies for children from zero to five. However, it was merely viewed as a part of the overall education reform, failing to focus efforts on ECEC integration specifically. Furthermore, most precedents proposed several measures for integration, but lacked in adequate consultation with professionals and stakeholder groups. Accordingly, studies that solely focus on the topic of ECEC cooperation and integration, with detailed action steps and stakeholder involvement, are required at this time.

Research on the integration issue is required in terms of five aspects of ECEC policy in Korea. These are: (a) changes in the political and societal environment for ECEC policies have led to similar functions of services at kindergartens and childcare facilities, and the government's interest in cooperation and integration measures are being forged, (b) the two sectors of ECEC require measures for mutual communication, cooperation and integration, (c) there is a need to develop policy alternatives to boost rationality and equity in allocating the ECEC budget, (d) an integrated approach within ECEC as a topic of the world's universal childcare policy must be sought, and (e) proactive and specific research is required on the integration of early childhood education and childcare to overcome the limitations of the previous

research that merely stood as announcements.

This research will propose realistic models and specific tasks to realize Korea's ECEC cooperation and integration resulting from surveying staff working with young children at kindergartens and childcare facilities, interviewing public officials and academic professionals in the field, and in-depth reviews on domestic and foreign studies.

Developing Prospective Models for ECEC Integration in Korea

Procedures

Various methods were used to develop the integration models in this research: (a) reviews of related literature and prior research, (b) surveying academic professionals and staff working with young children at kindergartens and childcare facilities, (c) field visits to collect data on overseas ECEC cooperation and integration cases, (d) consultative meetings of public officials in the field, and (e) intramural workshops at Korea Institute of Child Care and Education. Data collection methods and procedures for this research are specifically described

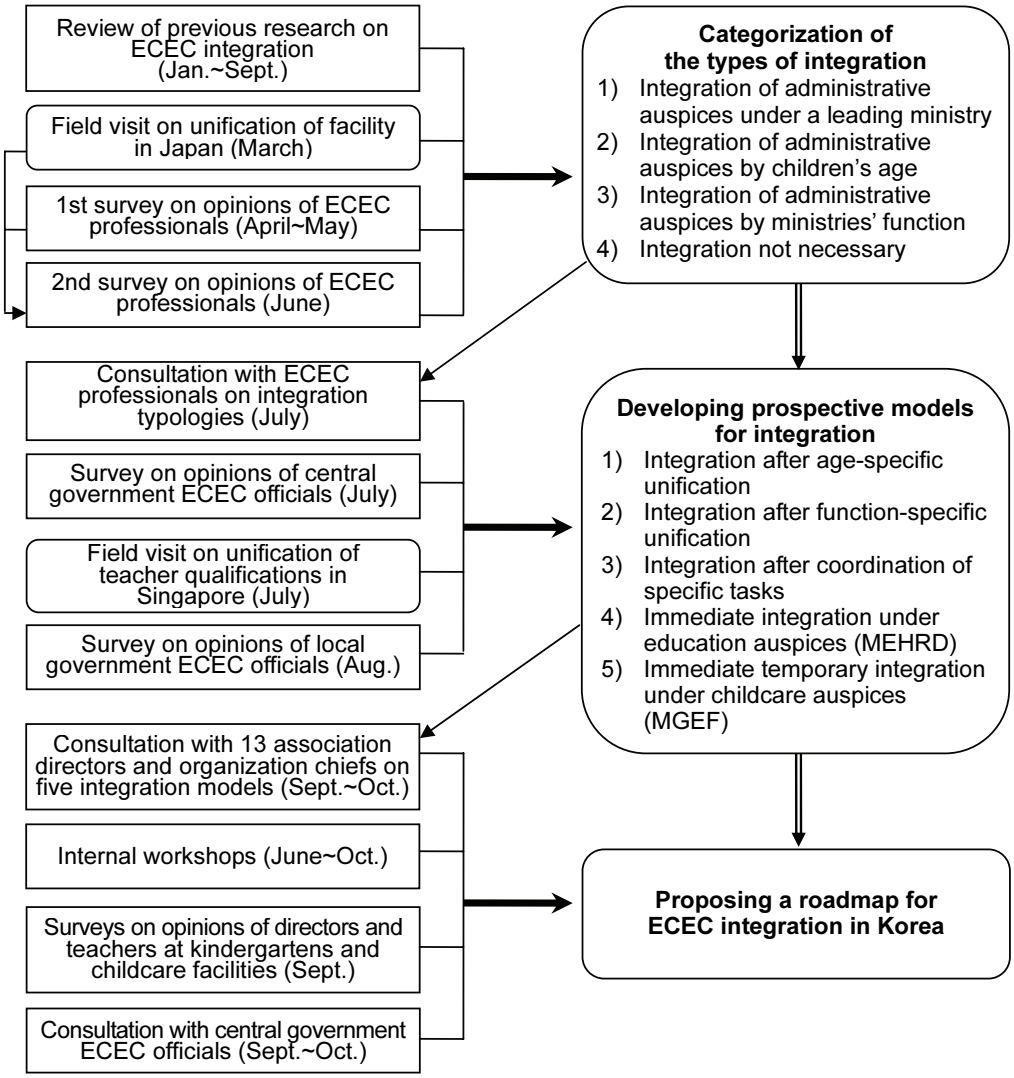

Figure 1. Data collection methods and procedures of research activities

in Figure 1.[2]

The findings from this research resulted in the following prospective models for integration: (a) integration after age-specific unification, (b) integration after function-specific unification, (c) integration after coordination of specific tasks, (d) immediate integration under education auspices (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development: MEHRD), and (e) immediate temporary integration under childcare auspices (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family: MGEF).[3] In this chapter, features, advantages, and limitations of each model are to be discussed.

Model 1: Integration after Age-Specific Unification[4]

This is a middle step of integration, mainly supervised under education auspices, which is a common trend worldwide. Age-specific unification infers that administrative authorities are uniformed according to the age of service targets. For the time being, older children among the ECEC service targets can be addressed by the MEHRD and younger ones by the MGEF in the coordination process for integration of the current dichotomous systems in the age-specific unification scheme. Among children under age six, service targets of childcare facilities are younger children, while kindergartens provide service to older children[5]. By doing so, overall supervision can be conducted under the auspices of the MEHRD after a certain period of coordination. The age distinction for each ministry is determined by a special task force under the supervision of the Prime Minister, and each ministry's role for its target children is maintained for the time being (see Figure 2).

However, close cooperation between two ministries is required for final integration under the MEHRD. Accordingly, a new type of coordination committee can be formed by integrating the ECEC Council according to the current Early Childhood Education Act and the Childcare Policy Coordination Council according to the Childcare Act. Such alignment will help coordinate the teacher training and qualification systems, services of ECEC institutions including kindergartens and childcare facilities, financial support systems, management supervision, and transfer systems.

As for the advantages of this model, possible conflict between the two sectors will be lessened if the number of children accessing kindergartens and

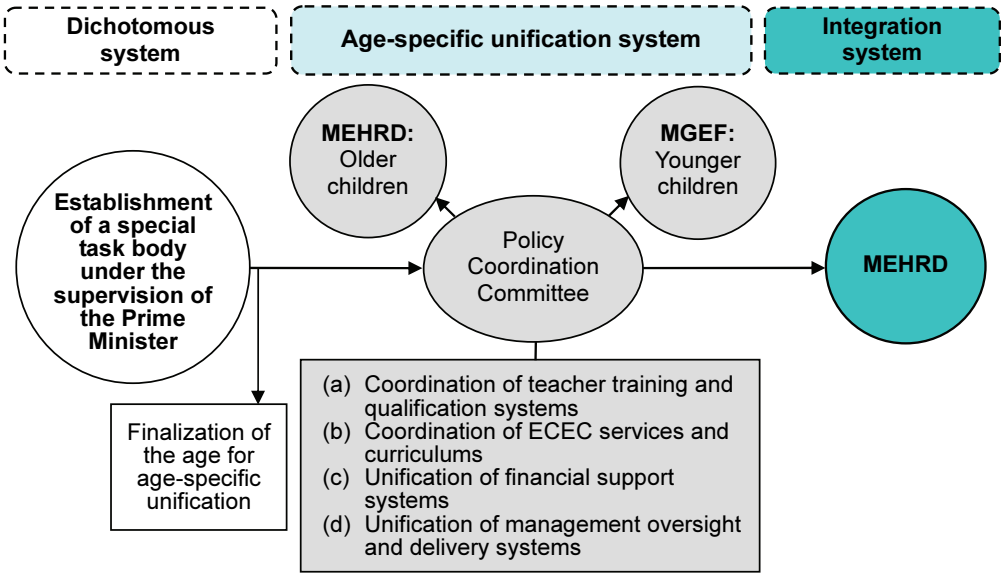

Figure 2. Integration model after age-specific unification

childcare facilities meets equilibrium. Also, administrative inefficiency and conflicts between directors of childcare facilities and kindergartens could be eased as the overlap of services targeting children aged three to five currently stands as an obstacle. It will be possible continuously to utilize specific functions, administrative delivery, and support systems of two sectors. In addition, developmental features of young children can be considered so that protection and fostering-oriented service can be available for younger children while education-focused services can be offered to older children. Plus, parents with children from three to five would no longer be confused by the current service overlaps of two sectors.

Nevertheless, several limitations exist. Most of all, forging consensus on age categorization may cause higher conflict among the two ministries (MEHRD and MGEF), throughout the discussion process due to different preferences of age categorization in each ministry. In addition, final integration of two administrative auspices could be challenging since the existing distinctive schemes may be difficult to change. As for younger children, only childcare facilities can be selected while for older children, only kindergartens could be in demand, which could limit the choice of children and families on the demand side of each service. Criticism may arise that administrative efficiency is being valued over the needs and developmental differences between younger children and older children. Furthermore, teachers' qualifications could be dichotomized to a greater extent, resulting in sustained conflicts. If kindergartens' full-day operation is not firmly set, there could be inadequate childcare service for older children.

Model 2: Integration after Function-Specific Unification[6]

This is an integration model that is for two ECEC-related ministries to fully utilize their strong points and infrastructure by carrying out each ministry's own specialized functions for ECEC services (see Figure 3). According to the model, the MEHRD is to

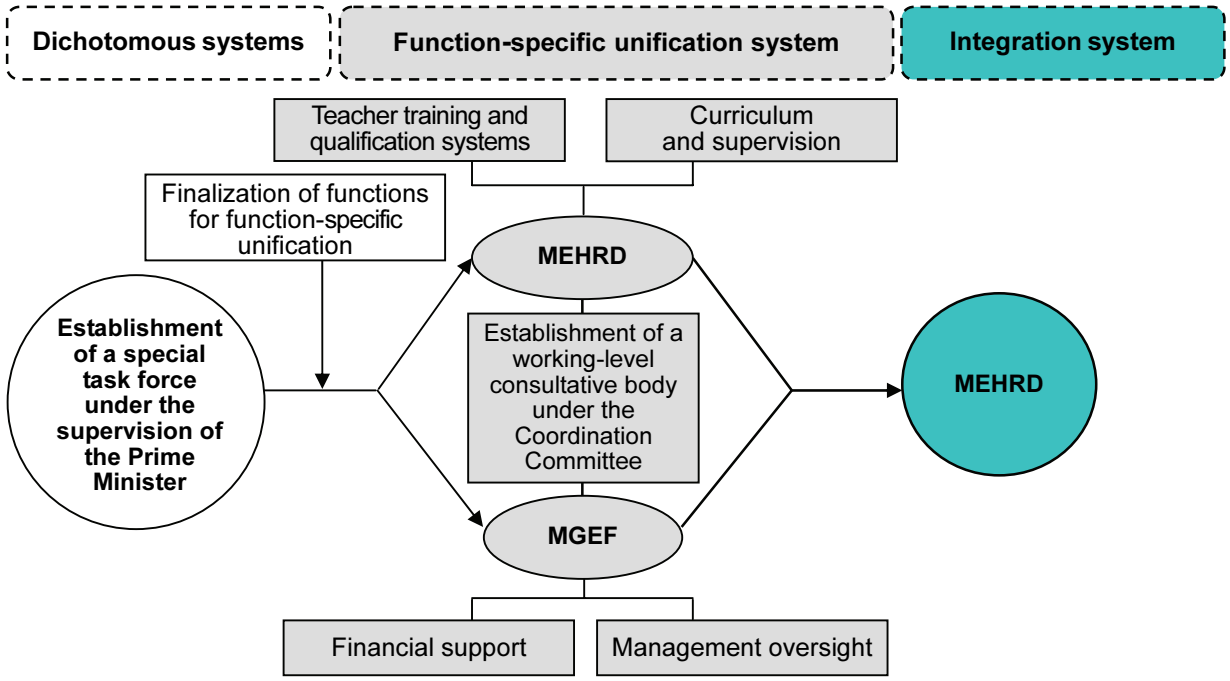

Figure 3. Integration model after function-specific unification

be in charge of teacher training, including pre-service and in-service education and qualification, curriculum, and supervision while the MGEF is to be responsible for financial support and institutional management. Such a road-map for integration of ECEC is a way that function-specific unification is maintained for the time being and is integrated under the auspices of the MEHRD after a coordination period. Analogous to Model 1, it is essential to establish a special task force to be formed under the supervision of the Prime Minister in order to maintain close cooperation between the two ministries via a working-level consultative body.

Regarding advantages of this model, inter-ministerial overlapping of work would be reduced to raise administrative efficiency. Administrative strong points of the MGEF, including securing financial resources for ECEC and oversight of facility management, can be boosted, and the MEHRD's own strengths, such as curriculum and supervision, can be utilized. Not only that, it would be easy to establish a uniform system considering the supply and demand of teachers working with young children under the auspices of the MEHRD.

However, it is a model whose success is to be determined by inter-ministerial cooperation, making it difficult to forge consensus among the stakeholder ministries, and raising concerns over possible resistance of the related academic fields and those on the site. Even if consensus is reached on the function-specific unification as a transitional phase, completion of ECEC integration would be hard to realize because the transitional phase may become fixed. Therefore, this model may be an unrealistic expectation that does not comply with the integration model that the OECD recommends (OECD, 2001, 2006).

Model 3: Integration after Coordination of Specific Tasks

This is an integration model inducing gradual ministerial integration of specific tasks throughout the coordination phase. Its objective is not to propose any administrative ministry of ECEC in Korea; this model is meant to minimize possible conflicts between the two sectors, including professionals in academic fields, working staff on the site, and the ministries. An active, influential ECEC Council would be required in order to achieve final ministerial integration, and the council requires the participation of third parties outside the two sectors of interest (see Figure 4).

The model was utilized in the integration process in advanced ECEC countries, where ministerial

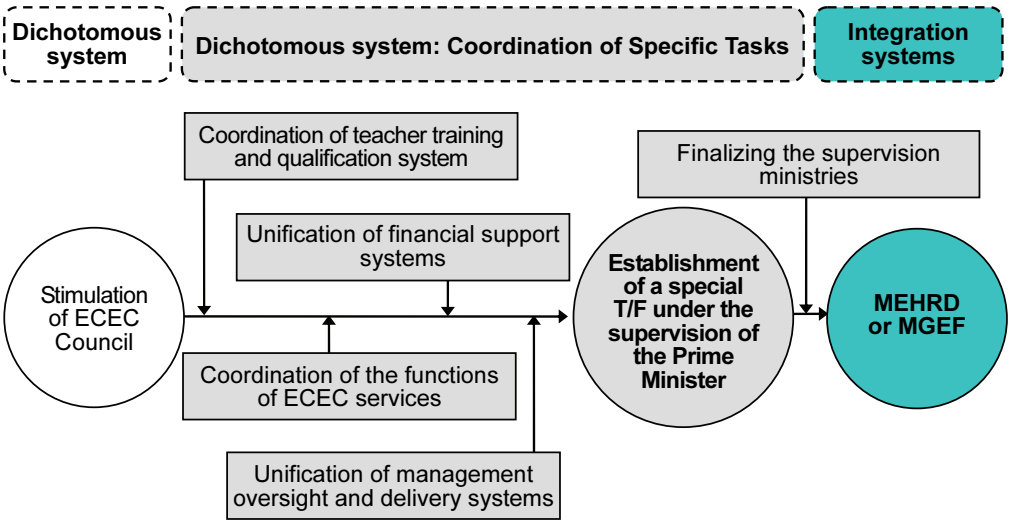

Figure 4. Integration model after coordination of specific tasks

integration took place (OECD, 2006). It seeks to unify the related major areas within the dichotomous ECEC system as in some overseas cases, such as how the Japanese government came up with a legal framework to coordinate kindergartens and childcare facilities and how Singapore integrated pre-service teacher training and qualification systems for teachers working with young children through the Steering Committee on Preschool Education (SCPE).

Concerns and conflict among those in academia and in the field could be minimized under this model. In particular, unnecessary misunderstanding and conflicts would not surface by not notifying the supervising ministry in advance. By substantially addressing core agenda items including unification of teacher training and qualification and unification of service functions of kindergartens and childcare facilities, specific tasks for integration can be implemented.

However, weaknesses of this model include possible continuity of administrative and financial inefficiencies in the short to medium term. Excessive dependence on the role of the coordination council can be another weak point. In some cases, conflicts between the two sectors on setting the core agenda for ECEC can be sustained or intensified, and new conflicts among stakeholder groups in determining the supervising ministry of a special task force body may be possible.

Model 4: Immediate Integration under Education Auspices (MEHRD)

The key of this a model is a special task force under the supervision of the Prime Minister, the guardian authority, to determine and implement the integration plan under educational auspices, namely MEHRD. This action would occur in the short term, without the coordination period assumed in the three previous models. Various agendas on integrating teacher training and qualification systems, ECEC services provided by kindergartens and childcare facilities, financial support systems, and supervision and delivery systems could be resolved by the leadership of the MEHRD (see Figure 5).

It is a framework where ministerial integration, which is a trend of the OECD countries, has been reflected in a short period of time. The phases prior to integration, as in the case of advanced countries which succeeded in ministerial integration, are eliminated in this model; all the specific tasks following integration are to be taken care of by the education-related ministries.

Its strengths include a minimized period of conflict in ECEC as a result of the decision to integrate within

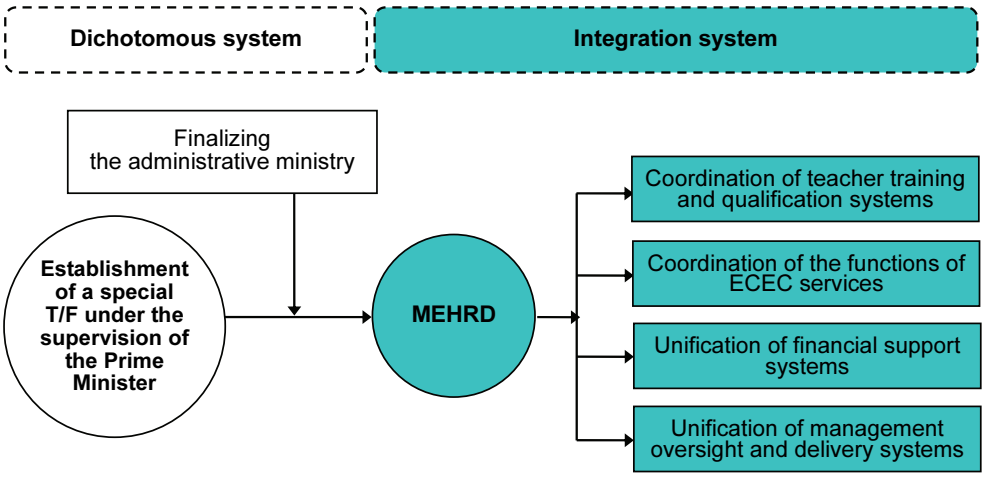

Figure 5. Immediate integration under education auspices (MEHRD)

a short period of time. Reduction of financial inefficiencies within a short period of time, as induced by the dichotomous system, relief of parental confusion on differences between kindergartens and childcare facilities, and higher ease of meeting the soaring zeal of Korean parents for education are also expected to follow from such integration. Alliance with elementary education, which is also under the control of the one ministry, can also be made easier.

However, strong resistance from the administrative staff and those in the childcare sector as well as the MGEF is expected due to abrupt integration, potentially presenting obstacles. If civic organizations, such as the women's groups that were influential in obtaining public childcare, were resistant, this model could become difficult to implement. In addition, an integration system under the auspices of education could lead to complaints about lack of protecting and nurturing of infants and toddlers. Other concerns include possible neglect of ECEC works for young children, particularly infants and toddlers, due to increased task pressures accumulated within the MEHRD which already handles all the tasks for elementary, secondary, and higher education as well as ECEC. Accordingly, growing efficiencies in financial management do not necessarily lead to expansion of the overall ECEC budget.

Model 5: Immediate Temporary Integration under Childcare Auspices (MGEF)

The last model is for the two ministries to finally integrate into the MEHRD after temporary supervision of the MGEF based on the Memorandum of Understanding between the two, without a coordination period, in a short period of time (see Figure 6).

This model assumes that a special task force, under the supervision of the Prime Minister as the guardian authority, decides on a detailed timeline and implements it in an integrated manner. Because the number of childcare facilities and children who use them are greater than the number of kindergartens and children attending them, and the amount of budget and staff members in the childcare field is greater than those in the early childhood education field, it would be burdensome for the MEHRD to be in charge of the childcare work on its own. In addition, considering the social conditions of Korea, childcare is required to have an element of welfare oriented toward family policy. As the MGEF was very much willing to push forward the policy as the supervising ministry, it would be better regarded as an ad hoc guardian authority, at least temporarily.

Similar to model 4 which assumes an integration process into the MEHRD without temporary supervision of the MGEF, this model can minimize

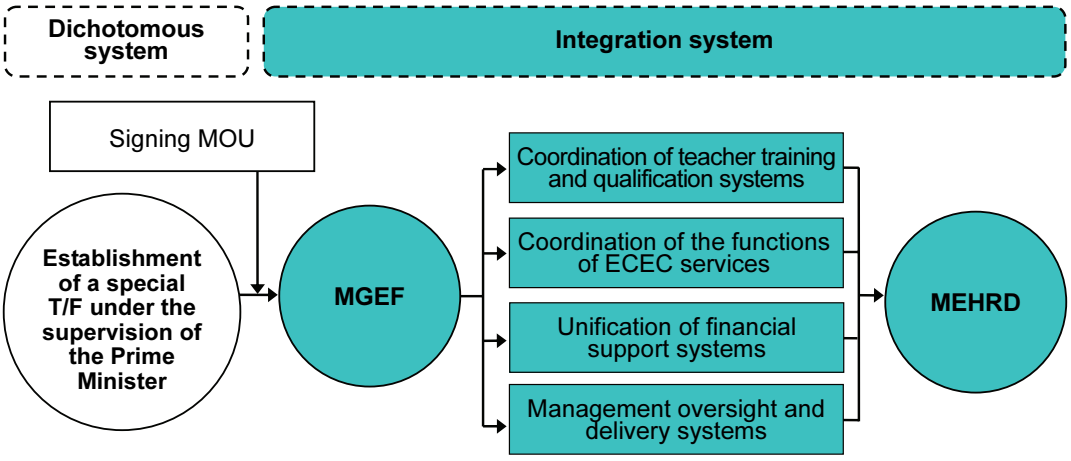

Figure 6. Immediate temporary integration under childcare auspices (MGEF)

the period of conflicts within ECEC resulting from decisions to integrate within a short period of time, possibly resulting in highly efficient administration and finance. In addition, the infrastructure of the MGEF, including network systems for childcare business, Childcare Information Centers that can play roles as delivery systems, and the Childcare Accreditation System could make the integration process easier while reducing parental confusion on ECEC demands. However, resistance from the early childhood education field including administrators and officials at the MEHRD might emerge due to abrupt integration, making it difficult to implement this model while confusion might arise as a result of ministerial transfer taking place twice. Standards of teachers' accreditation or service quality may be lowered if the two sectors agree on lower standards in the coordination phase under the supervision of the MGEF. In addition, parents' concerns over weaker educational functions might lead to higher dependence on private institutions and weaker alliance with elementary education.

A Roadmap for Integration of ECEC in Korea

After the five ECEC integration models above were developed, they were intensively reviewed through consultative meetings (see figure 1). Consequently, the most suitable roadmap toward ECEC integration is to be proposed that is most realistic in the current circumstance of Korea. Basic premises of this roadmap toward unifying the administrative leaderships are to be followed by discussions on detailed initiatives and tasks to realize the integration.

Basic Premises in Proposing a Roadmap for Integration

The most basic premise is to propose not an abstract and ideal model, but a forward-looking measure for integration, based on feasible plans dealing with specific tasks that should coordinated in the process of cooperation and eventually integration. That is, the ultimate goal would be the ministerial integration, but the initial focus would be on resolving or easing conflict triggers in the current dichotomous system and proposing detailed implementation tasks in the feasible roadmap toward integration. Therefore, a way that could minimize conflicts must be in place to have the public opinion favorable enough to accept it among the five integration models mentioned previously. This minimization of stakeholder resistance was also the top requirement in successful ECEC integration among OECD member countries.

It was decided that the supervising ministry is not to be notified in the roadmap. At this point, recommending or heralding the guardian authority in this research without adequate social consensus might lead to an unnecessary cause of conflict, possibly stunting productive discussion on integration itself. A series of discussions in Korea on major macro-policy agenda issues, including innovation of educational policy, are expected to influence the ECEC integration policy.

Instead of the top-down integration approach where abrupt and artificial integration of central ministries leads to coordination of specific systems, the basic stance is that inducing the integration of supervising ministries while adjusting specific systems serving as a major cause of conflict on the site would be more effective.

The Roadmap for ECEC Integration

The final model for ECEC integration unifies into a single ministry after adjusting each major conflict-causing system, including services provided by ECEC institutions, the teacher training and qualification system, management supervision, and financial support while complementing and maintaining the current dichotomous system under the goal of integrating ministries over the medium and long haul (see Figure 7). As it is a bottom-up approach, it is an advantage that conflicts in the middle of integration process can be minimized. The bottom line outcomes

of this model are twofold: (a) unification of the ECEC Council according to the current Early Childhood Education Act and the Childcare Policy Coordination Council according to the Childcare Act into the 'ECEC Coordination Committee' (henceforth, Coordination Committee) in order to promote ECEC integration, and (b) establishment of a working-level consultative body under the Coordination Committee in order to coordinate the specific policy agenda in ECEC.

The establishment of the Coordination Committee as a decision-making entity will have the Minister of Government Policy Coordination at the helm while partial correction is to be made for the composition of the ECEC Council and the Childcare Policy Coordination Council. Here, ex-officio members are Vice Minister of Education & Human Resources Development, Vice Minister of Health and Welfare, Vice Minister of Labor, Vice Minister of Gender Equality and Family, and Vice Minister of Planning and Budget. Meanwhile, the committee is to consist of neutrally-positioned academic professionals, parents, those working on-site and representatives of third parties so that it could play the role of a viable coordination entity. In order for the Coordination Committee to play a practical and smooth coordination role in agenda setting for each ministry, a secretariat office will be set up and operated within the committee.

After gradual coordination of service functions of kindergartens and childcare facilities, integration of teacher training and qualification systems, management oversight and financial support under the supervision of the Coordination Committee, a special committee on ECEC will be established and operated under the supervision of the Prime Minister as a decision-maker of the supervising ministry of ECEC in Korea. Having the special committee as a decision-making body leading the final ministerial integration will need to have a firm legal ground for its decision to be feasible and viable.

Top Priorities for ECEC Integration

Integration of kindergarten and childcare facility service. To integrate service functions of kindergartens and childcare facilities, service operation of the two different types of institutions must be coordinated and eventually identical. Kindergartens, which mostly provide half-day programs, are to be gradually expanded into full-day programs to become available for working mothers. Also, service days at kindergartens, which are currently set at 180 days per year, should be increased in order for children of working mothers to access the services all year.

Meanwhile, opening hours at childcare facilities should be coordinated as well. In Korea, childcare

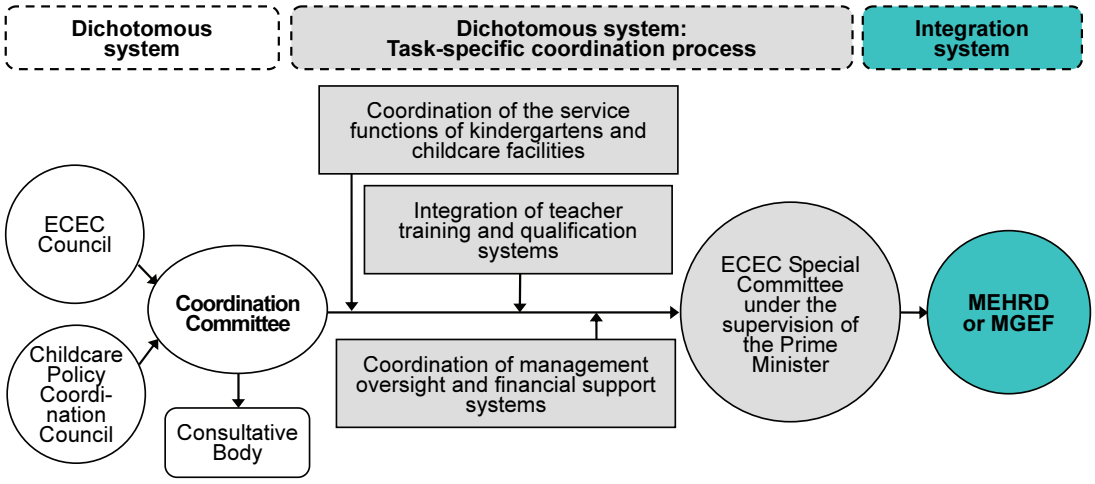

Figure 7. The roadmap for integration of ECEC

facilities currently should provide services at least 12 hours per day and service fees are charged for 12 hours even if families do not utilize the services fully. Therefore, service hours are to be divided so that half-day childcare facilities can be accessed. In accordance with the desire for diversity of service hours at childcare facilities, childcare usage fees can be graded so that feasibility of the time division can be boosted (see Figure 8).

Second, the age of children receiving the service must be coordinated and unified. Childcare services for children aged zero to two must be offered in kindergartens, and the teacher to child ratio in kindergartens needs be reduced to the level of childcare facilities. The teacher placement criteria for specific children's age within kindergartens and childcare facilities need to be unified. In the meantime, class capacity of both institutions by laws can gradually be made the same.

Third, the regulations and standards for establishing both kindergartens and childcare centers must be made identical. That is, standards on facilities and equipment need to be reviewed and adjusted including the location and the scale of buildings, playrooms, kitchen, and playground, water supply, safety facilities, and more. The higher of the current standards of kindergartens, compared to childcare facilities, shall set the precedent for unified standards. Not only the standards, but also the procedures in establishing new institutions need to be made the same through the permissions from local authorities of both institutions. The existing kindergartens and childcare facilities need be converted into an integrated type of institution in demand depending on their features and conditions. New facilities are to be set up as integrated ECEC centers.

Lastly, the curriculum of ECEC needs to be developed in a more integrated and universal way for children at age zero to five. In the coordination process, the current two national curriculums in Korea, National Kindergarten Curriculum and National Childcare Curriculum need to be adapted to each other as an integrated curricular. In practices, individual kindergartens and childcare centers may modify specifics while they follow the general guidelines of the integrated curriculum. A more

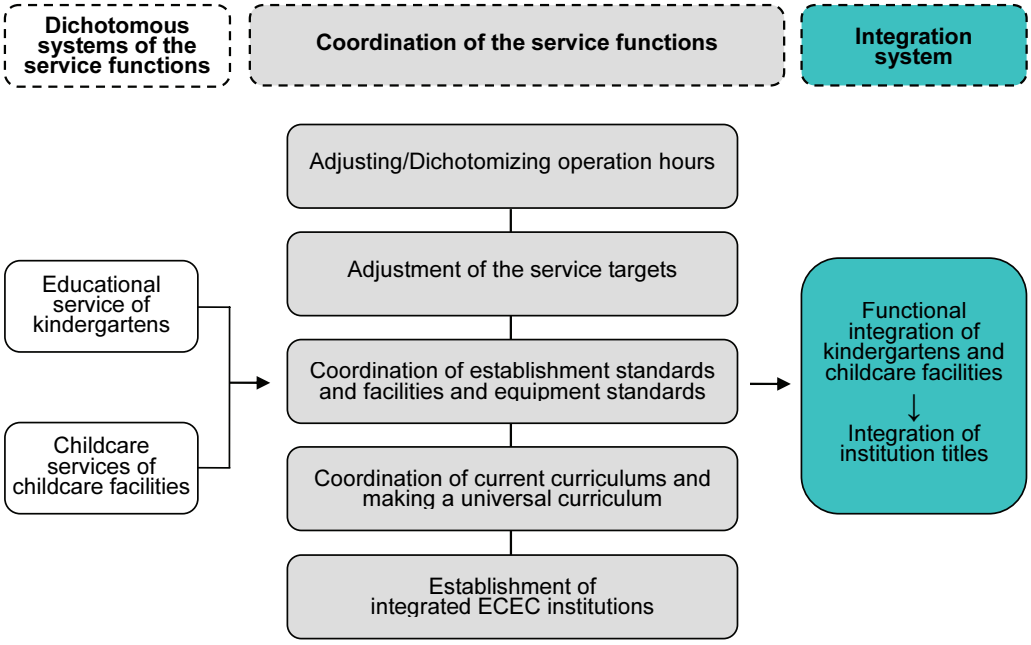

Figure 8. Tasks of service integration between kindergartens and childcare facilities

'educational' curriculum for children aged three to five must be developed within the integrated curriculum by mutually complementing the standard childcare program and the national kindergarten curriculum. The standard childcare program for children at age zero to two must be aligned with the integrated curriculum for older children.

Integration of teacher training and qualification systems. Integration of the teacher qualification systems is a top-priority task at the moment toward ECEC cooperation and integration. Furthermore, childcare facilities must be allowed to employ those meeting the needs of both institutions regardless of their qualification.

First of all, qualification standards for kindergarten and childcare teachers need to be adjusted (see Figure 9). It would be desirable to upgrade the current childcare teacher qualifications equivalent to those of kindergarten teachers, which are currently more advanced. The curriculum content and the required credits of the teacher training must be modified to comply with the integrated pre-service teacher training curriculum. Accordingly, it could be uniformly applied to the current training for kindergarten and childcare teachers. The integrated pre-service teacher training curriculum needs to include courses of kindergarten teacher training as well as courses needed for working with younger children, such as development of infants and toddlers. In particular, the qualification system of the Grade 3 childcare teachers (those who complete one-year training) must be terminated, and the training centers for these teachers need to be converted to serve different functions, such as in-service ECEC teacher training centers.

Second, prior to integration of teacher qualification systems, measures must be underway to allow their mutual employment at private kindergartens and childcare facilities. On the other hand the national and public kindergarten teacher appointment examination must be maintained as it is. Furthermore, universities and colleges need to adjust the quota of prospective ECEC teachers working with children at age zero to five according to the demand and supply plan of teachers. After integration of the teacher qualification systems, the centers need to become higher level in-service training facilities so that the new childcare workforce, including assistant teachers, could be trained.

Third, cooperation between the MEHRD and the MGEF is required to coordinate their management of teacher qualification systems. The existing Teacher

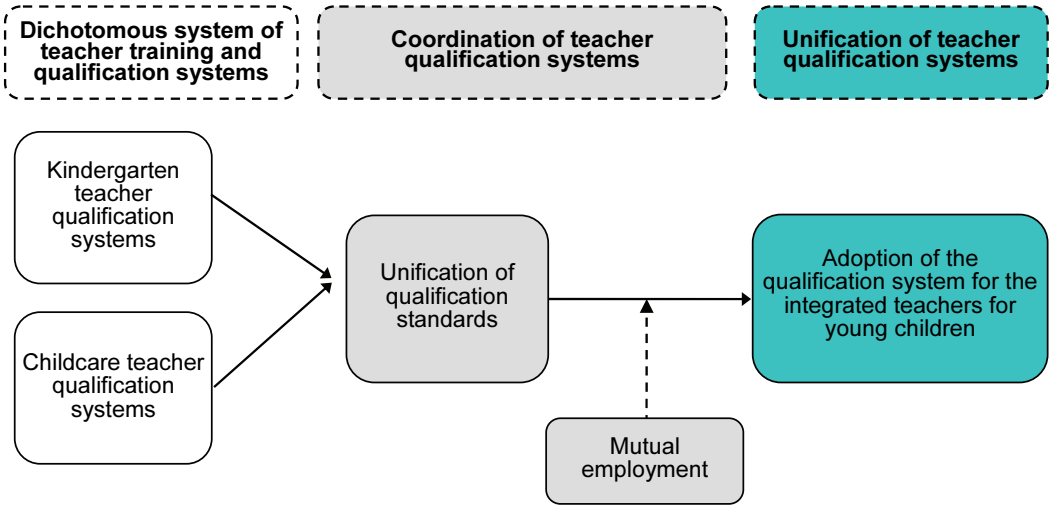

Figure 9. Integration process of teacher qualification systems

Training Division at the MEHRD and the Office for Childcare Teachers' Qualification Management (CTQM) at the MGEF must work out integration plans collaboratively. Management of the information on kindergarten and childcare teacher qualifications as well as the corresponding systems need to be coordinated so that suitable outcomes could come about.

Coordination of management, supervision, and financial support. Toward integration, the local governments and the Offices of Education must coordinate the service delivery systems of the childcare and early childhood education. To this end, the Coordination Committee must be formed both at the central ministerial and the local government levels, and a cooperative framework must be in place to seek support from all stakeholder groups. That is, the Consultative Body must be formed consisting of those from the current childcare and education delivery systems. At the same time, the Consultative Body can be in operation on a regular base within each cooperative body. By doing so, nationwide consensus can be forged on ECEC cooperation and integration. In addition, the currently operating Information Center for Childcare can be integrated into the Information Center for Childcare and Education which would cover kindergartens and childcare facilities, and be managed accordingly so that its information service can be expanded.

An integrated body is to be established to evaluate the quality of kindergartens and childcare facilities. This will encourage the superintendents of Offices of Education and the inspectors in the Childcare Accreditation Council to cooperate. The areas and the scope of evaluation need to be expanded and coordinated so that the opening hours, health, nutrition, and safety standards can be maintained for kindergartens while establishment standards for childcare facilities can be upgraded.

Meanwhile, to increase fairness in the financial support system, increasing subsidies per child to an adequate level, streamlining of the facility-specific teacher salary scales, as well as possible upward appropriation of salaries would be necessary. This would require efforts to minimize conflicts of not only users, but also suppliers. Financial support for national and public institutions vis-à-vis private facilities must follow equitable standards.

As it is necessary to fix and streamline service usage costs, service fees including kindergarten tuitions and childcare fees need to be charged by time intervals and the difference between the flexible tuitions of kindergartens and the maximum childcare fees of childcare facilities need to be adjusted. Moreover, the gap in subsidizing kindergartens and childcare facilities, and the gap among various child-specific support systems need to be revised. In order to facilitate such gap-reducing processes, budget policies of the ECEC Council must be in proper operation.

Conclusion

Integration of the childcare and early childhood education systems is an issue of high importance for children, families, and communities in Korea. Using a multifaceted research process, this project has proposed five prospective models of ECEC integration, and has offered a roadmap that may be feasible for implementation in Korea. A bottom-up action towards integration is urged in order to provide more efficient, cost-effective, and higher quality ECEC services, while limiting bureaucratic duplication. Such action would ultimately be in the best interests of children, families, communities, and government throughout Korea.

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Notes

[1] Currently in Korea, service target ages of kindergartens are three to five and childcare facilities are zero to five.

2 Details about research methods are in Rhee et al. (2006).

[3] Titles of each ministry in this research including the Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development (MEHRD), the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MGEF) and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) are the byproducts of the 2006 central administrative scheme being researched at the time. Since 2008, their titles have been changed or work scope has been transferred in some cases to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family (MHWF) and the Ministry of Strategy and Finance (MSF), respectively. This research has used the administrative titles from 2006, when the research was conducted.

[4] The 'age-specific unification' refers to one where ministries in charge are divided according to the age of ECEC service targets. Previously, it was also expressed as 'age-specific dichotomy,' but in this research, it is expressed as 'age-specification' after going through consultative meetings to mean unifying supervision ministries targeting the children according to their age in ECEC services. However, in this research, this scheme is a middle-step one with a premise of integration under education in the end.

[5] Age classification scenarios are (a) 0~2/3~5, (b) 0~3/3~5(age 3 being overlapped), and (c) 0~4/5.

[6] The concept, "function-specific unification" refers to the case where the MEHRD and the MGEF are given their own roles and work scope so that administrative childcare support and educational support are conducted by the single ministry in charge. In this research, "function-specific unification" is a middle-step stage with the premise of the integration into the Education Ministry.