Country Report

10th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy, Auckland, New Zealand, November 2026

Country name

South Korea

This country report has been prepared for discussion and information purposes in connection with the 10th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy. It draws on an online questionnaire on the Symposium themes, which national teams were invited to complete in advance.

ICCDPP: Navigating new horizons - Country perspectives survey

Introduction

Q1. Do you agree to participate in this survey?

Yes

Q2. I confirm that I am providing a response on behalf of my country.

Yes

Q3. I confirm that I am happy for the responses to this survey to be shared publicly.

Yes

Q4. Is your country going to participate in the 2026 ICCDPP symposium in New Zealand?

Don't know yet

Q5. Who have you consulted with before completing this survey?

career development policy maker, researcher, CD practitioner and professor in the field of Career Development, Career Education and Career Guidance(counselling) in Korea

About you

Q6. What is your name?

Professor, Lee, Ji-Yeon

Q7. What organisation do you work for?

University

Q8. What is your job title?

Professor

Q9. What is your email address?

catslee@ajou.ac.kr

Q10. Are you happy for your contact details to be published on the ICCDPP website/ relevant documents as part of the publication of this data?

Yes

About your country

Q11. What is the name of your country?

South Korea

Q12. Which groups can access career development services in your country?

	Accessible and free to everyone	Accessible and free to some groups	Accessible to those who can pay	Not accessible
Indigenous people		X		
Young people in schools	X			
Young people in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)	X			
Young people in university or higher education	X			
Young people not in education or work (e.g. NEETs)	X			
Adults in education	X			
Adults in work	X			
Adults not in education or work (e.g. unemployed workers and the economic inactive)	X			
Migrants	X			
People in the criminal justice system				X
Employers/businesses	X			

Q13. Are there any other groups in your country, not listed in Question 12 above, that can access career development services?

No

About your country

Q14. How far do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The career development policies, programmes and services in my country are meeting the career needs of the population.		X			
School leavers in my country are well prepared for successful transitions to work or further learning.		X			

Q14. How far do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The career development policies, programmes and services in my country are meeting the career needs of the population.		X			
There is a strong evidence base to support the provision of career development services in my country.		X			
AI is having a major impact on the education system in my country.		X			
AI is having a major impact on labour market in my country.		X			
AI is having a major impact on the provision of career development services in my country.		X			

Q15. Are indigenous groups involved in the design of career development services in your country?

No

About your country

Q16. Please provide a short summary of your country's career development system. [Up to 300 words]

South Korea's career development system is based on the Career Education Act, with schools, government, and research institutions working together. Career guidance teachers are assigned to schools, while programs like the Free Semester System and High School Credit System support tailored learning. Online platforms such as CareerNet and resources operated by the Korea Employment Information Service (KEIS) provide information and counseling, helping youth and adults explore career paths and develop lifelong competencies.

Q17. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide insights into your country's career development policies and systems. [Up to 300 words]

Lee, J., & colleagues. (2022). Building a lifelong national career guidance safety net to support citizens' competencies and quality of life: Focusing on the linkage of education (training), employment, career guidance (counseling), and employment services. Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training / National Research Council for Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences.

www.career.go.kr
m.keis.or.kr

Q18. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the way in which your country organises its career development services? [Up to 300 words]

CareerNet provides a lifelong, stage-specific career development support system for all citizens—from children to adults—and includes resources for parents and teachers to guide students effectively.

Productivity and the inclusive economy

Q19. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Career development services contribute to economic growth.	X				
Career development services contribute to workforce productivity.		X			
Career development services deliver a positive return on investment on public spending.			X		
Career development services support entrepreneurialism.		X			
Career development services help to address employers' skills and labour needs.			X		
Career development services can be accessed by small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).		X			
Career development services improve levels of job satisfaction.		X			
Career development services contribute to decent work (jobs with access to training, a living wage and other benefits).		X			
Career development services support equality of access to learning and work opportunities.		X			
Career development services contribute to the green transition.		X			

Productivity and the inclusive economy

Q20. Provide further information about the way in which policies and practices for career development services in your country support productivity. [Up to 300 words]

Korea's career development services enhance productivity by improving skills–job matching, offering lifelong guidance, supporting emerging industries, reducing unemployment through faster transitions, boosting motivation via value-based counseling, and equipping parents and teachers to guide students effectively. Together, these practices strengthen human capital and adaptability, driving national productivity growth.

Q21. Provide further information about the way in which policies and practices for career development services in your country support an inclusive economy. [Up to 300 words]

Korea's career development services foster inclusive growth by offering lifelong tailored support, ensuring equity through free online access, aiding vulnerable groups, guiding adaptation to new industries, and strengthening social capital via parent and teacher involvement.

Q22. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide further insights into the relationship in your country between policies for career development, and policies for productivity and the inclusive economy. [Up to 300 words]

OECD. (2023). Inclusive and sustainable well-being in Korea. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/inclusive-and-sustainable-well-being-in-korea_a8940343-en/full-report.html

The Productivity Institute. (2022). Boosting productivity to sustain economic growth in South Korea. The Productivity Institute.

World Bank Group. (2023). Republic of Korea: Country overview. World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/korea/overview (worldbank.org in Bing)

Enhancing skills and developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Q23. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Career development services support people to develop skills		X			
Career development services support people to access training	X				
Career development services support the uptake of TVET pathways	X				
Career development services support lifelong learning	X				

Q24. What are the biggest challenges for participation in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system in your country? [Please tick all that apply.]

The practice of compulsory assignment of students with academic challenges to TVET programmes
School staff do not know enough about TVET pathways and the occupations they lead to
Career development practitioners do not know enough about TVET pathways and the occupations they lead to
Lack of career development services for learners considering TVET
Shortage of employers offering training placements

Enhancing skills and developing technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

Q25. At what age do young people generally move onto a TVET pathway if that is the path they take?

Middle school graduation: typically around age 15
High school entry (including general high school, specialized vocational high school, and technical schools): age 15–16
Timing for choosing vocational/technical education: immediately after graduating from middle school

Vocational or technical schools (such as specialized high schools or Meister high schools) are entered at the same time as general high schools, but they focus on developing specific career and technical skills.

Q26. Does the age of pathway selection cause challenges for your TVET system?

No

Q27. Is there anything else that you would like to say about the age of pathway selection? [Up to 300 words]

Yes—there are a few additional points worth mentioning about the age of pathway selection:

1. Early decision, but not permanent
Choosing a pathway (general vs. vocational/technical) at around age 15–16 is relatively early, but it is not a lifelong decision. Students can often change paths later through: Transferring schools, pursuing different majors in college and entering the workforce and retraining

2. Individual readiness varies
Even though the system sets the selection age at mid-teens, students differ in:
Career awareness, academic strengths and personal interests
So, some may be ready to choose a technical path early, while others may benefit from a more general academic route first.

3. Increasing flexibility in education systems
Many education systems, including Korea's, are gradually offering:
Career aware & exploration programs in elementary & middle school, more flexible curricula and pathways that allow movement between academic and vocational tracks

4. Importance of career guidance
At this age, career guidance from teachers, parents, and counselors is crucial. Good support helps students:
Understand their strengths, explore career options and make informed decisions rather than rushed choices.

Q28. Provide further information on the ways in which policies for career development services in your country enhance policies for skills development, TVET, and lifelong learning. [Up to 300 words]

Career development service policies in Korea play an important role in strengthening skills development, TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), and lifelong learning in several ways:

1. Early Career Guidance and Integration with Education
Career education begins in middle school through structured programs that help students explore occupations and understand their aptitudes. This early guidance is closely linked with TVET pathways, encouraging informed choices between general and vocational tracks. As a result, students entering vocational high schools are more likely to align their education with labor market needs. However, the values of the older generation—particularly parents—who believe that completing higher education is essential still remain deeply embedded in Korean society.

2. Strengthening TVET Relevance
Career development policies support strong collaboration between schools, industries, and government. Programs such as internships, field training, and industry partnerships in specialized and Meister high schools ensure that technical education reflects real workplace demands. This alignment improves employability and supports national skills development goals. However, due to the continued disparity in social perception and treatment between vocational high school graduates and university graduates, many students still choose university over vocational high schools. As a result, there is growing demand for a competency-based society in which individuals are valued and rewarded in the labor market based on their skills and abilities, regardless of their educational background.

3. Lifelong Career Support Systems
Korea promotes lifelong learning through career development services available beyond formal schooling. Public employment services, career counseling centers, and online platforms provide guidance for job transitions, upskilling, and reskilling. This helps workers adapt to economic changes and technological advancements throughout their lives. Nevertheless, a recent study (Lee Ji-yeon et al., 2023, KRIVET) highlights the existence of disparities in career development support services between school-age and non-school-age populations. It also emphasizes the need to restructure a nationally integrated system that

Q28. Provide further information on the ways in which policies for career development services in your country enhance policies for skills development, TVET, and lifelong learning. [Up to 300 words]

supports continuous career development for general workers, retirees, and lifelong learners.

Q29. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide further insights about how career development services can enhance skills and support TVET. [Up to 300 words]

Lee, J.-Y., Ahn, J.-S., Kwon, H.-W., Lee, D.-H., & Kim, K.-H. (2022).
A Study on Building a Lifelong National Career Guidance Safety Net to Support National Competencies and Quality of Life: Focusing on the Linkage between Education (Training), Employment, Career Guidance (Counselling), and Employment Services.
Sejong: Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET)

https://www.krivet.re.kr/repository/handle/202405/5793

Ensuring disadvantaged and vulnerable groups can thrive

Q30. To what extent do policies for education, training, and employment in your country reflect the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Career development services help vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to thrive.			X		
Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups can access career development services.			X		
Career development services support vulnerable groups to access decent work.			X		
Career development services support vulnerable groups to access the education and training system.			X		
There is adequate funding for career development services targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.			X		
Policies for social inclusion intersect with policies for education, training, and employment.			X		

Q31. Which disadvantaged and vulnerable groups does your government have policies to support and which are provided with bespoke or targeted career development services. [Tick all that apply]

	Government has policies to support	Provided with bespoke or targeted career development services
Indigenous people		
Women and girls	X	X
Men and boys		

Q31. Which disadvantaged and vulnerable groups does your government have policies to support and which are provided with bespoke or targeted career development services. [Tick all that apply]

Ethnic minorities	X	
Religious minorities		
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people		
People from low-socio-economic backgrounds	X	
People with low skill levels	X	
Migrants	X	
People with disabilities	X	
People with health and mental health challenges	X	
Younger people	X	X
Older people	X	X
Other		

Ensuring disadvantaged and vulnerable groups can thrive

Q32. Can you provide any further information about the way in which policies for career development in your country support vulnerable and disadvantaged people? [Up to 300 words]

Career development policies in Korea play a significant role in supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups by providing targeted, integrated, and lifelong services. These policies are closely aligned with active labour market strategies that prioritize individuals facing barriers to employment, such as unemployed youth, career-interrupted women, older workers, and low-income populations. A key feature is the provision of integrated “one-stop” employment services, such as Employment Welfare Plus Centres, which combine career counseling, vocational training, job placement, and social welfare services. This system ensures that individuals with multiple disadvantages receive coordinated and personalized support, reducing the risk of exclusion from the labour market.
For vulnerable youth, including those not in education, employment, or training (NEET), Korea implements customized career guidance and holistic support programmes. These initiatives offer one-to-one counseling, career assessment, job search assistance, and even psychosocial support to address complex barriers to employment.
In addition, specific policies target career-interrupted women, providing job-seeking allowances, internships, and hiring incentives to facilitate their return to work. Such policies aim to address structural gender inequalities and promote continuous labour market participation.
Korea also promotes lifelong learning and skills development through training subsidies, learning vouchers, and reskilling programmes, enabling disadvantaged individuals to continuously upgrade their competencies and adapt to labour market changes.
Finally, with rapid population ageing, policies increasingly focus on older workers, offering career transition support, vocational training, and reemployment services through specialized programmes.
Overall, Korea’s career development policies adopt a life-course and inclusive approach, ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to continuous support, skills development opportunities, and pathways to sustainable employment.

Q33. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide further insights into the way that your country's career development system supports vulnerable and disadvantaged people. [Up to 300 words]

https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/strengthening-active-labour-market-policies-in-korea_44cb97d7-en.html
https://m.career.go.kr/webres/pds/careernet_eng.pdf

Q33. Please provide links to any key reports, articles or websites that provide further insights into the way that your country's career development system supports vulnerable and disadvantaged people. [Up to 300 words]
https://english.moe.go.kr/sub/infoRenewal.do?m=0307&page=0307&s=english


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