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The History of the Development of School Libraries in the Republic of Korea

Byong-Ju Kim

*Department of Library and Information Science,
Sang Myung University, Seoul, Korea*

This article provides a history of the development of school libraries in the Republic of Korea. Numerous efforts have been made to establish and improve school libraries since national independence in 1945. Although a Library Law has been announced four times since 1963 and although official school library standards were developed 1967 and 1981, school libraries in Korea are not well developed. Lack of government support and limitations in the perceptions of the function of school libraries in education have been the main factors hindering school library development.

Introduction

The official name of the Republic of Korea is Taehan Minguk. It is located on the east coast of the Asian continent and has a total population of approximately 45,000,000. Its monsoon climate has four distinct seasons, with a huge temperature variation between summer and winter. Korean people are of a single race and speak the Korean language, using an original phonetic alphabet that is easy to read and understand. Korea is a constitutional republic and a democratic state with 5,000 years of history. With the president at the top, the government consists of three branches: the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. The nation is divided into 15 administrative units: the metropolis of Seoul, five metropolitan cities, and nine provinces in 38,269m². As of 1995, per-capita GNP reached \$10,076, and the volume of trade amounted to \$260 billion. Korea hosted the Asian Games in 1986 and the Olympiad in 1988. The global festival, Taejon EXPO '93, was participated in by 108 nations and 33 international institutions; Korea and Japan will co-host the 2002 World Cup.

General Education

The overall goal of the Korean education system is to raise a self-reliant individual equipped with a distinct sense of independence, a creative individual with a sense of originality, and an ethical individual with some sound morality and democratic ideology. In the 1980s, the government of the Fifth Republic established clearly in the Constitution the institutionalization of lifelong education. In addition, the Republic set as the nation's top priorities the formation of a sound personality through education and reform of civil education, emphasizing science and lifelong education. The

concerns of the 1990s and beyond were the pursuit of qualitative, rather than quantitative, growth of education, and the fulfillment of high public demands for education through extending compulsory education, popularizing secondary education, and increasing opportunities for higher education. The ultimate goal of education in this period is to contribute to individual self-realization and national development.

The Korean school system, a linear system of the 6-3-3-4 type, was first adopted by the Education Law of 1949 and remains in use (see Table 1).

All educational institutions are under the supervision of the Minister of Education. Article 81 of the Education Law declares that "Every citizen is entitled to an equal opportunity to receive education regardless of his or her religion, sex, or socioeconomic status." Korea has 5,721 elementary schools, 2,720 middle schools, and 1,892 high schools (Ministry of Education, 1997).

Preschool education aims at providing children of 3-5 years of age with a proper environment to encourage physical and mental progress. The kindergarten curriculum covers the five areas of physical, social, expressive, linguistic, and inquiry life. Elementary education in Korea is free and compulsory and provides general rudimentary education necessary in life. Middle school education aims to provide general intermediate education on the basis of elementary education. Entrance examinations to middle schools were abolished in 1969, and all applicants are allocated to schools near their residence by lottery. As of 1996, 99.3% of elementary school graduates go on to middle schools. Free and compulsory, middle school education was first introduced in 1985 to agricultural and fishing villages, and this will be extended to the entire nation within a few years. High school education aims at providing advanced general and specific education on the basis of middle school education. High schools are classified into three types: academic, vocational, and other (foreign language, art and athletic, and science high schools).

The History of School Library Development

The first Korean library was a "Kyung Dang" established in AD 372, in Kokuryo, the first national educational institution. In the modern era, until

Table 1
School Systems of Korea

	Preschool Education	Elementary Education	Secondary Education	Higher Education	
Grade		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	10 11 12 13 14 15	16 17 18 19	
Age	3 4 5	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	14 15 16 17 18 19 20	21 22 23 24 ...	
	Kindergarten	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	College and University
				Graduate School	

1945, there were classroom libraries. The modern style of school library began to appear after 1945 as the ideas of progressive education were introduced from the United States of America. The development of school libraries in Korea may be divided into four periods based on changes in society, culture, and education: the opening period (1946-1964), the developing period (1965-1975), the depressing period (1976-1985), and the period of promotion (1986-present).

The Opening Period (1946-1964)

After national liberation in 1945, the institutional basis of education was established by the enacting of the Education Law. The library concept was introduced in the textbooks of elementary education. In 1947, the Chosun Library Association was founded to promote the solidarity of all kinds of libraries. This association held several workshops for classification, cataloguing, and reference services for school librarians.

The ideas of progressive education were reflected in primary and secondary education. In 1952, the first modern school library was opened. In 1955, the nationwide Korean Library Association was founded. In 1956 an educational mission of Peabody Teachers' College opened the one-year library service seminar course for librarians who were university graduates, which operated until 1971. Yeonsae University, in 1958, and Ehwa Women's University, in 1959, established departments of library science for undergraduates. The Korean Library Association and Peabody Teachers' College had a great impact on the establishment of library science departments for bachelor's degrees in universities in Korea.

The government took the first measures related to the school library in 1959. Article 7 of the Facilities Standard Order of Educational School and Junior /Senior High School, under the Ministry of Education Instructions No. 82, stated that every school of three classes should hold more than 300 books and, in the event of there being more than three classes, 200 more books for every three additional classes should be added. In 1962, the government announced the official appointment of a school inspector in charge of school libraries. At the national library meeting of Korean Library Association, school librarians as well as national librarians proposed a library law, and at last in 1963, the National Library Law was enacted.

The Developing Period (1965-1975)

Together with economic growth, there was an increase in student numbers and educational facilities, and improvement in educational conditions. In 1968, the National Charter of Education ensured that entrance examinations for admission to middle school were no longer required, and interest in lifetime education was increasing.

In 1966, the Korean Library Association sponsored the 5th National School Library Meeting, and 207 professionals participated. At the 6th Na-

tional School Library Meeting, held in 1967, the Standard for School Libraries was adopted.

During this time, the Ministry of Education appointed 33 persons to school librarian positions. It was an exceptional time in the history of the school library in Korea. So many teachers wanted to be school librarians that only competent teachers who were trained in library science or had majored in library science with 21 credit hours in education could be appointed as school librarians. At that time, teachers had great interest in school library activities, and the field was lively. The Standards of School Library No. 6854, amended for the third time in 1973, made school library facilities compulsory and specified the number of seats and books to be provided for the library.

The Depressing Period (1976-1985)

The Constitution of the Fifth Republic provided for a lifetime education and emphasized education reform and cultural promotion, but school education was focused on military culture and on preparation for the entrance examination for college. School libraries became decorative facilities, instead of performing the central role of education. The Ministry of Education prepared the School Library Operation Guide in 1978. However, the courses on school libraries gradually disappeared from the training for principals, assistant principals, school inspectors, and teachers, and the perception of the importance of the library in the school gradually lessened. The function of the school library was reduced to reading education, instead of being an active instructional school library program, so many school librarians began to leave their positions.

In the 1980s, the Korean government tended to train technical persons only for economic development. In 1985, the Educational Reform Committee, an institution under the president's direct control, established a reform bill for the purpose of preparing Korean citizens for the 21st century. However, the idea of educational reform neglected the appropriate function of school libraries, and they were used only for individual study. Lack of the administration's support, the absence of promotion for the school librarian, and also lack of funding were the main problems that prevented school libraries from performing their proper function.

The Period of Promotion (1986-Present)

Almost 50 years have passed since the first modern school library was founded in the Republic of Korea. Statistics from the Korean Library Association (1997) show that school librarians are appointed in only 252 of the 8,140 total schools (Table 2). In many cases, the school library position is treated as a refuge before retirement so that the school library itself is little more than a name.

Fortunately, the second Library Law amended in 1987, the third Library Promotion Law amended in 1991, and the fourth Promotion Law of a Library and Reading amended in 1994 make it compulsory for every school to

Table 2
School Libraries in Korea

Number Section	Total	Primary School	Junior High School	High School
	8,140	3,522	2,412	2,206
Student	8,490,271	3,793,410	2,219,678	2,477,183
Seat	427,340	113,738	104,218	209,384
Resources	21,654,233	8,741,055	6,099,333	6,813,845
School Librarian	252	23	54	175
Budget	10,285,018	3,671,100	3,362,845	3,251,073

Source. Korean Library Association (1997), p.16.

establish a school library and collect materials necessary for a school education and that a school library shall be under the supervision of the supervisory offices. However, the administrative authorities have little interest in the basic components of a school library-school librarian, materials, facilities, and budget-and have conservative attitudes toward supervising school libraries. There is no appointed position and/ or detailed program for effective school library management.

Legislation and Professional Standards

There is no single independent legislation for the school library, but it is included in the Library Law, which has been revised three times since it was first enacted in 1963. The main contents of this amended law include the organization of a library development committee and the establishment of a library promotion fund, the organization of a library information cooperative network, and legislation of tax reduction regulations. The Library Promotion Law, enacted in 1991 and amended in 1994, and the present Law of Library and Reading Promotion provide that a school library shall be installed, but there were no succeeding measures or policies. In addition, the Ministry of Education has no department responsible for school library matters.

The Korean Library Association adopted the *Standards of a School Library* in 1967 and amended them in 1981. The contents of the eight chapters of the *Standards* include principle, purpose, employees, facilities, equipment, operation of a school library, and library education. The idea of educational reform proposed after enacting the Standards in 1981 was expected to develop a school library but, in fact, this has not occurred. The appointment of the school librarian was not achieved properly, the school library was not well provided for in facilities and materials, and a budget was not even secured.

Conclusion

Strong movements to activate the school library through private meetings of professional school librarians have been organized by progressive young school librarians all over the country since the middle of 1997. They regularly contribute diverse manuscripts about modernizing the school library to several well-known professional journals of primary and secondary education and to daily newspapers in order to cry out against the present condition of the school library and to gather strong supportive assistance for improving the school library.

However, it is expected that school library development in the Republic of Korea will continue to be difficult. The laws related to the school library need to be amended, and the policy fostering the development of the school library needs to be actively enforced. The Korean Library Association needs to make every effort to support the development of the school library by conducting research on the management of school libraries and the training of the school librarian. The Korean Library Association needs to cooperate with international professional organizations and related institutions. Ultimately, one of the most important solutions to school library development is strong support from the government and adequate understanding of the value of the school library from school administrators.

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Author Note

Professor Byong-Ju Kim is the Head of the Department of Library and Information Science, Sang Myung University, Seoul, Korea. She has taught librarianship for the past 20 years. She was educated at Ewha Womans University for her undergraduate and master's degrees and also studied at the School of Library and Information Science of Rosary College, River Forest, Illinois, USA. She also has a PhD in Library Science from Sung Kyun Kwan University in Korea.