

# South Korea strips AI digital textbooks of official textbook status

Source copy kept by wheresthe.ai for the story "South Korea strips AI digital textbooks of official textbook status" (<https://wheresthe.ai/d/kr-ai-textbooks-lose-textbook-status-2025-08/>).

Source: <https://asianews.network/south-korea-pulls-plug-on-ai-textbooks/>

Text saved 18 Oct 2026 (the page as published).

SHA-256 of the saved text: cf972959338c3ba6feda9270d8b81deccb2df1381cbe813f59ce9cb6f6b98ef0

---

August 5, 2025 SEOUL – South Korea's National Assembly passed a bill on Monday stripping artificial intelligence-powered digital textbooks of their legal status as official teaching materials, dealing a heavy blow to the previous Yoon Suk Yeol administration's flagship education reform project. The amendment narrows the legal definition of textbooks to printed books and e-books, excluding "learning support software using intelligent information technology." This reclassifies AI-powered textbooks as just another type of educational material, not official textbooks. The new classification takes effect immediately upon promulgation, effectively removing the legal and financial foundations for using AI digital textbooks in schools. The amendment, drafted and passed unilaterally by the ruling Democratic Party of Korea, is an updated version of the same legislation passed by the Assembly last year, which was ultimately scrapped after it was vetoed by then-Deputy Prime Minister Choi Sang-mok, who was the country's acting president at the time. Initially launched as a flagship initiative of the Yoon administration, AI textbooks aimed to provide personalized learning experiences for students using advanced AI algorithms. At least 533.3 billion won (\$385 million) was allocated to the project last year alone. The textbooks were piloted in the first semester of 2025 for English and math classes in grades 3 and 4 of elementary school, and for English, math and computer science classes in middle and high schools. Despite the ambitious rollout, the initiative faced widespread backlash from educators and parents, many of whom criticized the government for pushing the policy through without sufficient groundwork. In response, the Ministry of Education shifted to a school-by-school voluntary adoption model, after initially planning a nationwide mandate. Currently, the adoption rate of AI textbooks across schools hovers at around 30 percent. The bill's passage now leaves these schools without financial support for AI textbook subscriptions. A high school computer science teacher told The Korea Herald that although some schools secured subscription budgets for the second semester, future use is uncertain. "Unless the textbooks retain their legal status, we won't be able to receive the necessary funding. It's now almost impossible to use them in class," the teacher said. The publishing industry is also facing a looming crisis. Companies that invested heavily in AI textbook development, expecting the government to mandate their use, now say they are on the verge of collapse. Several firms filed an administrative lawsuit against the Education Ministry in April, citing losses due to low adoption rates and policy flip-flopping. Industry representatives warn that without the legal textbook designation, usage rates could drop further, jeopardizing the estimated 800 billion won in total investments made into AI textbooks. Layoffs and restructuring are now expected across the sector. A worker in her 30s from a major textbook publisher said her department may soon disappear. "Many companies hired researchers and engineers to develop AI textbooks. Now, with education policy changing depending on who holds political power, we risk not only losing our jobs but also degrading the quality of education itself," she said. Publishers have been staging a last-ditch push to reverse public sentiment and policy. Fourteen publishing companies have taken turns holding solo protests outside the National Assembly, while others have visited the Democratic Party's headquarters demanding reconsideration of the bill. The Education Ministry has yet to present a concrete roadmap for winding down the AI textbook program. A spokesperson said the ministry would suspend the current textbook review process, prepare guidance for schools to prevent disruption in the fall semester, and consult with regional education offices to minimize confusion.