

## Korea

### *Context*

Schools in Korea have very positive disciplinary climates in science lessons compared to other OECD countries, according to students' reports in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015, with an index of disciplinary climate of 0.63 (the average index value was 0.00). Student truancy in 2015 was among the lowest in the OECD: 1.9% of 15-year-olds reported skipping at least one day of school in the two weeks before the PISA 2015 test, compared to the OECD average of 19.7%. However, students in Korea were more likely to report that their science teachers adapt their instructions less frequently than the OECD average, with an index of adaptive instruction of -0.05 (the average index value was 0.01) (OECD, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>).

The PISA 2015 index of instructional educational leadership (measuring the frequency with which principals report doing leadership activities specifically related to instruction) was lower than the OECD average at -0.2 (the average index value was 0.01) (OECD, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>). The proportion of lower secondary teachers in 2016 aged 50 or over was 28%, which was below the OECD average of 35.4%. In 2017, teachers in Korea had fewer net teaching hours for general programmes than the OECD average. Teachers annually taught 671 hours at primary level and 533 hours at lower secondary level, compared to averages of 784 and 696 hours, respectively (OECD, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>). According to school principals' self-reports in PISA 2015, schools in Korea have one of the highest levels of autonomy over curriculum: 95.2% of principals reported that the school has primary autonomy over curriculum, compared to the OECD average of 73.4% (OECD, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>).

According to the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018, 67% of teachers in Korea said that if they could choose again, they would still become a teacher; this was lower than the OECD average of 75.6%. Furthermore, 67% of teachers felt that the teaching profession was valued in society, compared to an OECD average of 25.8% in 2018 (OECD, 2019<sup>[3]</sup>).

According to school leaders' reports in PISA 2015, school leaders in Korea are more likely than average to conduct self-evaluations of their schools (99.5% of students were in schools whose principal reported this, compared to the OECD average of 93.2%). They are also more likely than average to undergo external evaluations of their schools (86.3% of students were in schools whose principal reported this, compared to the OECD average of 74.6%) (OECD, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>). Teacher appraisal levels, as reported in the earlier cycle of TALIS 2013, were the highest among TALIS 2013 participants: 96.8% of all teachers had reported then having received an appraisal in the previous 12 months, compared to an average of 66.1% (OECD, 2014<sup>[4]</sup>).

The share of students enrolled in secondary schools whose principal reported in PISA 2015 that standardised tests are used to make decisions on students' promotion or retention was 28%, which was less than the OECD average of 31% (OECD, 2016<sup>[1]</sup>).

In 2017, school autonomy levels over resource management (allocation and use of resources for teaching staff and principals) were slightly lower than the OECD average: 25% of decisions in Korea were taken at the school level, compared to the OECD average of 29%.

Annual expenditure per student at primary level in 2015 was USD 11 047 in Korea, which was higher than the OECD average of USD 8 631. At secondary level, Korea spent

USD 12 202 per student compared to the OECD average of USD 10 010, while at tertiary level (including spending on research and development), Korea spent USD 10 109 per student compared to the OECD average of USD 15 656. In 2015, expenditure on primary to tertiary education in Korea as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) was 5.8%, which was higher than the OECD average of 5%. The proportion of expenditure on education (from primary to tertiary) coming from private sources (including household expenditure, expenditure from other private entities and international sources) in 2015 was higher than the OECD average at 28.9% of overall spending, compared to 16.1% (OECD, 2018<sup>[2]</sup>).

### *Evolution of key education policy priorities*

Korea's key education policy priorities have evolved in the following ways over the last decade (Table 8.18).

**Table 8.18. Evolution of key education policy priorities, Korea (2008-19)**

Identified by	Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-19 <sup>1</sup>	Evolution of responses collected by the Education Policy Outlook, 2013-19 <sup>2</sup>
School improvement	The OECD found that Korea needs to better define its goals and content for early childhood education and care (ECEC). [2012]	An ongoing priority identified by Korea is ensuring less stressful learning environments for students, which cater to the individual students' needs and motivations. Korea also identified an ongoing need to ensure that teachers' and principals' knowledge and professional skills are up-to-date and help them meet emerging needs in today's knowledge society and digital age. [2013; 2016-17]
Evaluation and assessment	According to OECD evidence, the lack of a unified, integrated national monitoring system between childcare centres and kindergartens in the ECEC system often results in different quality standards and quality levels, and less unification. There is a need for a balanced and consistent monitoring system as well as assurance that monitoring results have a substantial effect on improving service quality and overall system performance. Monitoring results can be used to influence policy that can further strengthen quality and result in higher efficiency. [2016]	Korea reported that providing a coherent and well-aligned overall evaluation system is an ongoing challenge. [2013]
Governance	The OECD identified a need to better define goals and content for ECEC. Another challenge is the falling share of high school graduates advancing to tertiary education, which is predicted to fall below admission quotas for tertiary institutions by 2020. Korea has few world-class universities and produces few high-impact publications by OECD standards. While universities employ around three-quarters of PhD holders in Korea, they performed only 9.2% of the overall work on research and development (R&D) in 2014 in Korea, about half of the OECD average. A greater university role in R&D would enhance basic research: only about 20% of basic research takes place in universities compared to 50-75% in other countries. [2012; 2016]	N/A
Funding	According to OECD evidence, there is a high number of tertiary institutions, and those outside of Seoul struggle to fill their student quotas. Most institutions run operating deficits. [2016]	Korea had previously reported the need to better co-ordinate overall education spending and budget plans, now distributed at different government levels, to increase resource-use efficiency. Another ongoing priority is to ease financial

Identified by	Selected OECD country-based work, 2008-19 <sup>1</sup>	Evolution of responses collected by the Education Policy Outlook, 2013-19 <sup>2</sup>
		burdens for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure access to tertiary education. [2013]

*Notes:*

1. See Annex A (OECD publications consulted).
2. See Reader's Guide (years and methods of collection).

***Institutions****Selected education policy responses*

## Evaluation and assessment

- Korea selected 42 schools for the introduction of the test-free semester programme in 2013 (National information reported to the OECD). The aim was to reduce students' stress from tests and help them engage in various activities, including researching careers and acquiring life values. In 2014/15, the programme opened up to any school that wanted to adopt the policy. Middle schools only have three national test subjects (Korean/literature, English, mathematics), and elementary schools no longer apply achievement tests. Local education offices aim to create simpler academic evaluations. Student assessments are based on preparation, choice of courses, curriculum organisation, participation and predictions of the outcomes of their courses.

**Progress or impact:** The programme covers an increasing number of middle schools from 25% in 2014 to 79% in 2015 (MoE and KEDI, 2017<sup>[374]</sup>). A 2014 survey found that student, parent and teacher satisfaction had increased. As of 2016, all middle schools had to adopt the programme with 100% coverage. The government also introduced the programme for lower secondary students in 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2018<sup>[375]</sup>). As of 2017, the programme extended to a test-free year for 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Also, pilot programmes started for 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

*Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries*

## School improvement

- In Korea, the Master Teacher initiative (2011) intends to improve the quality of education by granting suitable roles to teachers with specialities and further enhance teacher capacity. Master teachers mainly serve as teaching consultants for new teachers. Teachers with 15 or more years of work experience can apply for the programme based on recommendations by schools. Selection and appointment are based on document screening, peer evaluation, in-depth capacity evaluation and training. Every four years, an evaluation of the selected teachers takes place with the possibility of reappointment. Master teachers teach a reduced number of hours of classes and can access research funds in addition to their salaries.

- The Ministry of Education in Korea introduced a Leave of Absence for Self-training System (2016) to boost teachers' morale, which gives teachers who have worked for more than ten years in primary and secondary schools a chance to take a once-off leave for no longer than a year to undergo training, self-improvement or to prepare for retirement. Also, Teacher Education Emotion (TEE) centres have been set up and run TEE centres at the level of metropolitan and provincial offices of education. Their objective is to comprehensively protect teachers' work performance by preventing infringement on their activities, or assisting and providing follow-up management for those who have been harmed in the school environment.

#### Evaluation and assessment

- Korea extended its evaluation and assessment framework (2010) to encompass the whole education system (student assessment and teacher appraisal, and evaluations of schools, principals, local education authorities, research institutes and educational policies). The School Information Disclosure System and statistical surveys of education provide data collection and management. Specific measures aim to link the systems to allow policy makers to better understand school developments rather than looking at the outcomes of educational administrative bodies. They also address linking data collection and management systems with the evaluation systems (National information reported to the OECD).

### *Systems*

#### *Selected education policy responses*

#### Funding

- Since 2012, all higher education students in Korea can apply for funding from the National Scholarship System (2012) regardless of their financial conditions. The national scholarship project aims to reduce the financial burden of high tuition for low-income families. National data show that the government scholarship budget subsequently increased by 480% between 2011 and 2013 (OECD, 2017<sup>[376]</sup>). According to information reported to the OECD, although all students are eligible to apply for and receive funding, the system only awards full scholarships to students from low-income families. Students from middle or middle-high income families could expect to receive less than half of the amount of a full scholarship, according to data reported to the OECD. To further reduce the financial burden of higher education tuition fees, the government introduced the Income-linked Half Tuition (2012) policy in collaboration with universities.

**Progress or impact:** The first-year budget of KRW 1.75 trillion for the National Scholarship System (NSS) doubled to KRW 3.65 trillion, and the government has reportedly strengthened the support for university students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (MoE, 2016<sup>[377]</sup>). Results from the 2013 evaluation of university tuition support indicate that the NSS lacks a long-term plan that would allow the government to secure financial resources, organise the budget of other institutions related to the scholarship system and raise the predictability for scholarship recipients. The National

Assembly Budget Office (NABO) suggests that the government should determine the amount of aid students need before deciding on a budget that corresponds to this demand. Further challenges include the difficulty scholarship recipients from low-income families may have maintaining their scholarships while working to supplement their aid. Increased working hours may lead to poor grades, which might disqualify some students from scholarships. In some cases, the scholarship system pays the difference for reduction of tuition fees, but this decision depends on the universities. Consequently, scholarship amounts vary between schools and students, meaning students with similar, if not the same, economic conditions risk receiving different financial aid amounts (National Assembly Budget Office, 2013<sub>[378]</sub>).

### *Additional education policies of potential interest to other countries*

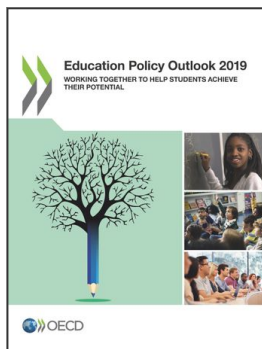
#### Governance

- In 2015, Korea introduced the Revised National Curriculum with the aim to teach students 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. These include self-management competency, knowledge-information processing skills, creative thinking skills, aesthetic-emotional competency, communication skills and civic competency (Ministry of Education, 2018<sub>[375]</sub>). Also, liberal arts and national science tracks are now integrated into one curriculum. Previously, these were delivered through two separate curricula. A further part of the curriculum is software (SW) education, which aims to equip students with the skills to guide the future creativity-based society (Ministry of Education, 2018<sub>[375]</sub>). According to national information provided to the OECD, Korea aims to perform assessments that are more focused on the learning process, including encouraging students to review their learning and using the outcomes of the assessments to improve teaching.
- Korea implemented a range of measures promoting school autonomy in 2008. As part of these measures, the Korean Education Development Institute (KEDI) reports that the Ministry of Education began transferring decision-making authority over administrative and budget decisions to regional Offices of Education. By 2017, the government counted 17 metropolitan and provincial Offices of Education and 176 district Offices of Education (KEDI, 2018<sub>[379]</sub>). These regional offices were established for the management and support of education policy implementation in local schools. Although some critics view the policy as an attempt to control schools rather than liberalise them and decentralise education, others view the policy as supportive of the development of curricula that meet the needs of local communities and/or schools, including offers of extracurricular activities (Chung, 2017<sub>[380]</sub>).
- A university assessment system (2014) in Korea aims to manage enrolment capacity in higher education in the face of demographic decline and ensure quality in the higher education system. Three assessments will take place between 2014 and 2022 (one every three years). The best performing universities will be allowed to maintain higher enrolment capacity. Low-performing universities will receive lower funding and will be expected to restructure their bachelors' programmes. They will receive guidance to support them in this restructuring process. However, if the outcomes of the consulting process show that the university still performs at

a marginal level, the university will need to change to a non-profit foundation or become a vocational education institution (Ministry of Education, 2018<sup>[375]</sup>).

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More information is available at <http://www.oecd.org/education/policyoutlook.htm>.



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