Foreword

Education plays a central role in the development of society and fuels a virtuous circle of improvement and growth. Korea has built a well-educated workforce that has propelled the country to the forefront of the global knowledge economy. The importance of education for economic growth and well-being creates high demands on the system. School leaders, teachers and parents expect every student to succeed and students push themselves to exceed those expectations. Correspondingly, teacher recruitment, training and support are focused on building a profession where quality has traditionally been a priority.

Korea strives to continuously improve its education system. Recent reforms have adjusted the curricula, teaching methods and materials to foster more well-rounded and creative talents in order to be more competitive in a fast-changing world. However, some areas of policy require further attention. Developing skills in response to today’s economy and ensuring a smooth school-to-work transition will be key to continued success. Developing skills in response to today’s economy and ensuring a smooth school-to-work transition will be key to continued success and Korea needs more effective policy responses to provide equitable education for social cohesion.

The report *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for Korea* has a twofold purpose. Firstly, the report should help Korea to identify and address education policy challenges from an international perspective. To this end, it assesses the Korean education system through the prism of PISA, considers recent policy developments and suggests specific policy options to foster improvements. It also provides an in-depth analysis of the experience of other high-performing countries and economies, including Finland, Hong Kong (China), Ontario (Canada), Shanghai (China), and Singapore. Secondly, the report should be a useful reference for countries seeking to improve their education systems.

I am grateful to the Korean authorities for their cooperation in the preparation of this report and hope that they will find it of value in better understanding the key ingredients for success, and will gain insights on how to achieve effective reform.

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