As one of the richest countries in the world, 14th in total GDP according to 2014 data in US dollars, according to the CIA fact book (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.), you would think that there would not be a lot of problems with schooling. I am going to look at three things to find out if that is the case according to the following criteria that the UN has set as priorities; lack of learning materials, foundations for early learning, and shortage of classrooms.

Seeing how South Korea is home to one of the largest companies in the world in Samsung, first we are going to look at the lack of learning materials. Given my background in technology, I think it is important to use technology in the classroom, so that is where I am going to focus in this area. South Korea was supposed to be completely digitizing every textbook by 2015. But South Korean officials are looking to take a step back from that idea, due to problems with addiction to internet. (Strauss, 2012) South Korea has a 100% broadband internet rate in their schools (Trucano, 2013). Whether they continue to try to digitize all of their textbooks or not this is a huge leap over other countries where there is limited internet at all. Where this can help is that not everyone is going to see a huge boost from using computers in the classroom, but South Korea can use a more individualized approach to education rather than a one size fits all approach.

South Korea takes their early childhood education very seriously. According to the (Center on International Education Benchmarking, n.d.), South Korea passed a law in 2008 beginning the “Head Start” program. This program helps the younger students to work on everything from social skills, improving language skills, and helping them develop emotionally to be ready to start elementary school on an even playing field with their peers. (Center on International Education Benchmarking, n.d.) There are also several projects helping students with special needs as well. There is the Wee (We+Education+Emotion) Project for children with ADHD which helps with access to consultation and therapy, and at least one special school in each province that serves the special needs students who would not survive in a mainstream classroom because of severe handicaps. Children with mild or moderate needs are encouraged to remain in a mainstream classroom. There is much focus on intervention and detection of special needs as well. (Center on International Education Benchmarking, n.d.) Because of all of this recent activity, I believe that South Korea receives high marks on their educating of children, especially with the special needs, and pre-elementary schooling.

There is no shortage of classrooms in South Korea. According to (Clark & Park, 2013) there are a total of 3,299,133 students in the Primary grades, from 1-6, and 1,979,656 students in Middle school grades, 7-9 which is the end of free compulsory education. There are a total of 5,855 schools in the primary grades, of which 77 are private schools, and 3,144 schools for middle school students of which 658 are private. (Clark & Park, 2013) If we assume that there is at least fifty classrooms in each school, there would be less than the almost 30:1 classroom size that we see here in the US. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012) in 2010 that number in primary school is under 30 with lower secondary education slightly above 30 students in each class. In a growing economic powerhouse like South Korea, I think that they are doing very well in this area.

Overall, according to the data that I was able to find, I think that South Korea’s educational system is very much improving. It may have taken until 2008 to start a “Head Start” program, but a late start is better than no start at all and the special education improvements are nothing to sneeze at. While the class sizes could see improvement, they are on average with most of the world. The technological advances in the classroom can be traced to South Korean schools, but even they know that there can come a time when you need to step away from the screen, and I think it is commendable. There is really nothing I found in my research on these three topics that is scathing or bone jarring, but this is just a small sample of the educational system in South Korea.

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