

2024 KRI Discussion Paper No.2

**Comparative Policy Studies: Korea and Southeast Asia
Korea Research Initiatives ▪ University of New South Wales ▪ Australia**

Policy Case Studies

A POLICY STUDY: STRENGTHENING ASEAN-KOREA HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATION – CASES FROM VIETNAM, THE PHILIPPINES, AND MYANMAR

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COLLABORATION
– CASES FROM VIETNAM,
THE PHILIPPINES, AND MYANMAR**

KRI Research Team

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2024 KRI Discussion Papers

Since the 2010s, Korea and ASEAN have rapidly expanded their cooperation and exchange in a wide range of areas including politics, economy, society and culture. To further strengthen this close relationship, the Korea Research Initiatives at the University of New South Wales, Australia (KRI @ UNSW) has promoted and supported the establishment of a new platform for policy exchange and cooperation between Korea and ASEAN countries.

The series of 2024 KRI Discussion Papers are specially published by KRI @ UNSW as part of its efforts to establish the Korea-ASEAN Community of Policy Exchange (KACPE) amongst researchers, policy makers and experts from Korea and eight ASEAN countries including Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam.

These Discussion Papers examine policy development and exchange between Korea and the above mentioned ASEAN countries based on three key areas of discussion including economic development, public sector reform and socio-cultural exchange and cooperation. Using a comparative perspective, they seek to expand the possibility of policy formation and implementation in these countries.

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A Policy Study: Strengthening ASEAN-Korea Higher Education Collaboration – Cases from Vietnam, The Philippines, and Myanmar

I. INTRODUCTION ASEAN-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS - A NEW CHAPTER IN HIGHER EDUCATION COOPERATION

The year 2024 represents a key milestone in ASEAN-South Korea relations, celebrating the 35th anniversary of their dialogue partnership, which began in 1989, and the 15th anniversary of the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA) established in 2009. This occasion offers both ASEAN and South Korea the chance to assess the progress made in their collaboration and identify new opportunities to advance cooperation, especially in higher education, following the establishment of their strategic partnership in 2010.

Over the last 35 years, ASEAN and South Korea have developed a robust and multi-faceted relationship, encompassing various sectors. In recent years, this partnership has seen significant growth, particularly through initiatives like the New Southern Policy and the "ASEAN-Korea Future Community Vision" launched by former President Moon Jae-in in 2017. The establishment of the ASEAN Center that same year marked a new era in which ASEAN became a key focus of South Korea's foreign policy. In 2022, President Yoon Suk-yeol's Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative (KASI) reaffirmed South Korea's strong commitment to deepening ties and expanding collaboration with ASEAN, laying the groundwork for greater cooperation in higher education.

This paper reviews the current state of higher education collaboration between ASEAN and South Korea, highlighting both accomplishments and challenges. It traces key milestones in their relationship and underscores the critical role that higher education plays in fostering deeper cooperation. The paper emphasizes the need for harmonization, complementarity, and shared growth in promoting educational partnerships between the two regions. By analyzing existing frameworks, policies, and initiatives, the paper identifies strategic areas for future growth to achieve more comprehensive collaboration in higher education.

To fully grasp the potential of this partnership, the paper first examines Korea's cooperation with ASEAN countries across diplomatic, economic, political, social, and cultural domains. It then presents case studies from leading universities in Vietnam, the Philippines, and Myanmar, showcasing the challenges and opportunities in their partnerships with Korean institutions. The paper concludes by recommending that ASEAN and South Korea re-evaluate their strategic partnership in response to global and regional developments, paving the way for a future of mutually beneficial and dynamic cooperation in higher education.

II. ASEAN-SOUTH KOREA RELATIONS: A MULTIFACETED PARTNERSHIP

ASEAN-South Korea relations have blossomed over the past three decades, evolving from dialogue relations to a strategic partnership in 2010, marked by extensive cooperation across various sectors. This partnership has strengthened over time, characterized by mutual understanding and a shared vision for regional stability and prosperity.

Diplomatically, South Korea has actively engaged with ASEAN through its New Southern Policy (NSP), launched in 2017, aiming to strengthen partnerships with ASEAN nations. The policy prioritizes people-centered cooperation, focusing on areas like education, culture, and technology, and fostering a "Community of Peace and Prosperity" (Kim & Kim, 2020). South Korea's establishment of the ASEAN Center in 2017 further demonstrates its commitment to promoting cultural exchange and understanding between the two regions.

Economically, South Korea has become a major trading partner for ASEAN, with bilateral trade exceeding US\$160 billion in 2022 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023). The ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Agreement (AKFTA) has facilitated trade liberalization and fostered economic growth for both regions. South Korea also actively participates in infrastructure development projects in ASEAN, particularly in areas like energy, transportation, and telecommunications.

Politically, both regions share a commitment to promoting peace, stability, and security in the region. South Korea actively participates in ASEAN regional forums and initiatives, including the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN

Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus). This engagement reflects a shared commitment to addressing regional challenges and promoting collaborative solutions.

Socially, ASEAN-South Korea relations extend beyond government-level cooperation to encompass people-to-people exchanges. The popularity of Korean culture, known as "Hallyu", has contributed significantly to fostering closer social and cultural ties. South Korea's active involvement in social development programs, including healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation, further strengthens these ties.

Culturally, the exchange of arts, music, and literature has fostered deeper mutual understanding and appreciation between the two regions. The ASEAN Center in South Korea promotes cultural and artistic exchanges between ASEAN and South Korea, contributing to a vibrant cultural dialogue.

The ASEAN-South Korea partnership is a multifaceted and dynamic relationship, characterized by robust cooperation in diplomatic, economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. This partnership lays a strong foundation for further collaboration in higher education, contributing to mutual development and regional prosperity.

1. ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Cooperation: South Korea's Role in a New Phase in Regional Collaboration

The ASEAN Plus Three (APT) framework, established in December 1997, brings together the ten ASEAN Member States with the People's Republic of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK). Over the years, this cooperative framework has evolved into a cornerstone of East Asian collaboration, with the long-term objective of forming an East Asian Community centered around ASEAN.

APT has emerged as one of the region's most comprehensive cooperation frameworks, covering areas such as political security, trade and investment, finance, energy, tourism, agriculture, forestry, environment, education, health, culture, and the arts. Furthermore, APT has supported the implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, which seeks to improve living standards through deeper collaboration with China, Japan, and Korea.

The ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan (2023-2027) outlines a roadmap for strengthening ties over the next five years, focusing on political, economic, social, cultural, and connectivity-related aspects. The plan prioritizes the long-term goal of creating an East Asian Community, with ASEAN at the core.

The APT framework focuses on social and cultural collaboration across multiple areas to promote sustainable development and regional integration. Environmental protection is a key priority, with efforts to safeguard biodiversity and manage natural resources responsibly. The APT also addresses climate change challenges by promoting climate-resilient agriculture and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Poverty alleviation, social protection, and gender equality are central to the APT agenda. Initiatives aim to improve healthcare access, expand education, and empower marginalized communities, especially women, through increased leadership and employment opportunities.

APT also fosters cultural exchange, cross-cultural dialogue, and youth engagement. Capacity-building efforts in education and media are emphasized, supporting teacher training, media literacy, and ethical communication. These initiatives contribute to a more equitable and interconnected East Asia, promoting peace and mutual understanding.

In the realm of education, APT is committed to improving access to quality education across the region. This involves supporting teacher training, promoting research and innovation, and ensuring that education systems are more inclusive and equitable.

South Korea plays a prominent role in strengthening education systems within the APT framework. The country's "soft power diplomacy" is evident through people-to-people exchanges, technology transfers, and academic programs. The rise of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) has also contributed to a positive perception of South Korea among ASEAN citizens.

South Korea's commitment to education is reflected in its Korean Government Scholarship Program (KGSP), established in 1967, which has supported numerous ASEAN students in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. This illustrates the country's dedication to fostering friendly relations and regional development through educational cooperation.

APT's comprehensive and multifaceted approach to collaboration highlights its commitment to building a more interconnected and prosperous East Asia. South Korea's active participation, particularly in education and cultural exchange, reinforces its dedication to strengthening regional ties and promoting development.

2. Regional Cooperation in Higher Education with ASEAN Countries and Korea

In recent years, we often mention a concept that reflects the clearly emerging trend in higher education. This is the trend of regional cooperation in higher education, including intra-regional cooperation (such as the ASEAN Ministers of Education Organization, CAMPUS Asia Program, or the European Bologna Process), inter-regional cooperation (such as the European Union's Horizon 2020 Program, the Southeast Asia-Europe Joint Funding Scheme for Research and Innovation (SEA-Europe JFS)), and trans-regional cooperation (China's university alliances with countries under the Belt and Road Initiative, University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific UMAP). In fact, regarding the trend of regional cooperation in higher education in Europe with the Bologna Process, many researchers even call this phenomenon "higher education regionalism" with the participation of government agencies or international organizations and consider it a "political project to create a region" (Chou & Ravinet, 2015, 2016).

It needs a multi-dimensional approach for understanding the reasons for higher education cooperation across multiple levels (from nation-building efforts, regionalization, internationalization, and globalization) and multiple aspects of needs (human resource development; political development; socio-cultural development; economic and trade; and academic development). For a country, higher education provides the high-quality human resources necessary for policy planning, governance, management, and national development. Cooperation in higher education, at the national level, helps to seek the best opportunities for students to improve the quality of

human resources, attract high-quality labor, and increase the competitiveness and integration of that country's higher education system. In the context of globalization with the emergence of organizations requiring regional levels of governance and especially the development of the knowledge economy and the scientific and technological revolution, regional cooperation in higher education is an accepted and expanding trend. In this cooperation trend, higher education is not only seen as an effective and open diplomatic tool in strengthening existing relationships and establishing new ones but is also considered a tool for receiving and sharing knowledge to nurture global citizens and seek cooperation in "knowledge processing" at regional and global levels (Meng-Hsuan Chou et al., 2024).

Southeast Asia is the region where regional cooperation in higher education took place earliest in Asia with the establishment of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) in 1965. The purpose of this organization is to facilitate regional cooperation in the fields of education, science, and culture. However, higher education only really became a priority when Asian economies developed successfully in the 1990s and the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was established. Evidence of this is the establishment of the Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (RIHED) in 1994 and the ASEAN University Network (AUN) in 1995. The establishment of these organizations aims to promote equitable human development through enhancing the quality of higher education training towards ensuring harmony, compatibility, comparability, and cohesion of the education systems of countries in the region (Bilal Khalid & Joanna Kurowska-Pysz, 2024). In this context, the term "harmonization" has surpassed the idea of promoting dialogue between countries in the region and has become a "powerful discourse" (Que Anh Dang, 2017) bearing the ASEAN identity.

Currently, ASEAN cooperation in higher education is recognized as playing an important role in enhancing university research and improving the global competitiveness of higher education in this region. In the past decade, especially after the Covid-19 period, new learning methods applied in the face of challenges of global disruption have also opened up new approaches to higher education. Higher education has become a driving force for the global economy. Strengthening higher education is even seen as supporting national and international economic growth (Kuroda et al., 2014). With this approach, higher education has become a field prioritized by many countries in terms of policy, especially for enhancing cross-border higher education.

Regional cooperation in higher education is receiving increasing attention from stakeholders and policymakers. This is reflected in the increase in cooperation programs and participating members. In the East Asia and Asia-Pacific regions, both ASEAN and South Korea are currently participating in several inter/trans-regional higher education cooperation programs such as the "ASEAN Millennium Leaders College Student Exchange Program" within the framework of AUN + 3, University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students in Asia (CAMPUS Asia), ERASMUS and ERASMUS+ programs, Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU)... In this process, the movement of ASEAN students is showing an increasingly strong trend. Research by Bilal Khalid et al. shows that among ASEAN countries, Vietnam currently has the highest number of students studying abroad with 137,022 people, accounting for 2.1% of the total number of domestic students. This is followed by Indonesia (59,224 students, 0.9% of total domestic students), Malaysia (48,810 students, 0.8% of total domestic students). The main destinations for ASEAN students are identified as the United States (49,382 students), Japan (47,789 students), Australia (46,400 students), and South Korea (24,928 students). For Vietnam, this order is currently Japan, South Korea, and the United States (Bilal Khalid & Joanna Kurowska-Pysz, 2024).

3. ASEAN-South Korea Higher Education Cooperation: How Far Have We Come?

To discuss promoting ASEAN-South Korea higher education cooperation, it is first necessary to examine the achievements and shortcomings in higher education cooperation between ASEAN and South Korea.

ASEAN has developed qualification frameworks and quality assurance standards to increase compatibility and cohesion between the higher education systems of member countries. Additionally, credit transfer between universities without modifying existing national credit systems is ASEAN's approach to harmonizing the region's education system to create a common space that can promote program exchange and improve student mobility within the region. This improves the cross-border labor mobility of member countries, creating an open labor market. ASEAN countries are also said to be making efforts to narrow the gap between member states, with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia having the highest budget allocation for education, at approximately 20% compared to the overall average of about 14.9% (Bilal Khalid & Joanna Kurowska-Pysz, 2024).

Although ASEAN has many advantages in terms of demographic structure and the number of students enrolling in higher education institutions, with various cooperation achievements including faculty and student exchanges, dual degree or joint programs, and the development of cooperation networks between universities, higher education cooperation in the ASEAN region is still considered to face many challenges. These include accessibility and equity in educational opportunities; significant disparities in the number of higher education institutions among member countries; differences in culture and curricula primarily based on national citizenship foundations, not yet geared towards global citizenship education; and the unpredictability of harmonization as this process is not following a unified procedure but focusing more on each member's adaptability in seeking connection points with the system (Yavaprabhas, 2014). Specifically, the lack of consensus has led to ASEAN currently having three different credit transfer systems. This leads Hou et al. (2017) to conclude that "the diversity in national regulations, academic calendars, and grading policies in Asian higher education will continue to challenge the implementation" of adopted measures.

Meanwhile, South Korea is one of the leading countries in the Asian region that has implemented measures to improve education quality, promote information and communication technology in education, and has many policies to promote international cooperation in education, encouraging universities to integrate internationally by building global universities, attracting international students, and participating in international education networks. South Korea is currently a suitable choice for studying abroad for many ASEAN students, including Vietnamese students. Notably, the South Korean government is operating quite a few projects supporting curricula related to various fields such as unified education programs, public diplomacy, and international development cooperation.

According to statistics from the ASEAN-Korea Centre, in 2023, there were 99,584 ASEAN students studying in South Korea, with Vietnamese students numbering 70,212, continuing to lead in the number of international students in South Korea since 2021. Conversely, in recent years, along with the South Korean government's New Southern Policy, interest in education and research about Southeast Asia at South Korean universities has increased significantly. Like Japan, South Korea is increasingly interested in exchanges with ASEAN not only because these countries hold many market opportunities and natural resources, but also as a source of students and young skilled workforce that can supplement their aging demographic structure. Additionally, not limited to economic cooperation, Southeast Asia is becoming increasingly important as South Korea enters a multicultural era. However, until now, study programs related to Southeast Asia in South Korea are still very rare in terms of

both the number of courses and educational institutions operating such programs. The number of teachers is also very limited. To date, higher education cooperation between ASEAN and South Korea has mainly been carried out in the form of scholarship support programs, research capacity enhancement projects, support for teaching content related to South Korea, and so on.

III. COUNTRY CASE STUDIES: VIETNAM, THE PHILIPPINES AND MYANMAR

1. Vietnam: Collaboration in Higher Education - A Case Study of VNU-USSH and Korean Universities

1-1. Bridging Cultures: The Importance of University Collaboration between Korea and Vietnam

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1992, Korea and Vietnam have fostered a close partnership across political, economic, and socio-cultural spheres. The two nations have expanded economic ties through the signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and have seen a surge in cultural exchanges. The popularity of Korean dramas and K-POP has notably fueled increased interest in Korean culture in Vietnam.

Politically, Korea and Vietnam have strengthened mutual cooperation, maintaining a close partnership on the international stage. This cooperative relationship has fostered mutual understanding and trust between the two countries, laying a solid foundation for their continued development in the future.

Within this positive trajectory, university education cooperation between Korea and Vietnam plays a vital role in furthering the development of their bilateral relations. University exchanges can enhance academic and human resource exchange, fostering the development of talent essential for both nations. Programs that promote Korean language education and understanding of Korean culture are particularly crucial in deepening mutual understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

1-2. No 1. Vietnamese Students in Korea among ASEAN countries

The influx of Vietnamese students to South Korea represents a significant trend in international education, reflecting the deepening ties between the two nations. Vietnam currently leads ASEAN countries in the number of students studying abroad, with 137,022 individuals representing 2.1% of the total domestic student population. While Japan remains the primary destination for Vietnamese students, South Korea has emerged as the second most popular choice, followed by the United States (Bilal Khalid & Joanna Kurowska-Pysz, 2024).

This phenomenon is driven by a confluence of factors. The historical and cultural connections between Vietnam and South Korea, including their shared use of Chinese characters, provide a foundation for mutual understanding. The robust presence of Korean companies in Vietnam creates tangible job prospects for graduates with Korean language skills and cultural competence. Furthermore, the pervasive influence of Korean pop culture among Vietnamese youth has ignited a widespread interest in Korean language and society. The reputation of South Korean universities for high-quality education and research opportunities across various fields serves as an additional draw. Importantly, both Vietnamese and South Korean governments have implemented supportive policies and scholarship programs to facilitate and encourage student exchanges, further catalyzing this educational migration.

1-3. Korean Studies at VNU-USSH

The proliferation of Korean Studies programs in Vietnam mirrors the rapid development of Vietnam-South Korea relations. As of 2023, Vietnam boasts an impressive 63 higher education institutions offering Korean language and Korean Studies programs, with an estimated student population exceeding 50,000. This number is poised for further growth following the pivotal recognition of Korean as one of Vietnam's seven first foreign languages in 2021.

This signifies a transition from mere language acquisition to a more comprehensive academic interest in Korean culture, society, and language, reflecting the deepening intellectual engagement between the two nations. The

maturation of Korean Studies in Vietnam is evident in the establishment of dedicated academic bodies and publications. The Korean Studies Association of Vietnam (KRAV) serves as a focal point for scholars in the field, while the Korean Journal, Vietnam's scientific journal dedicated to Korean Studies, provides a platform for rigorous academic discourse.

This trend is particularly evident at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) in Hanoi, one of Vietnam's leading institutions for Korean Studies. USSH has emerged as a key player in fostering understanding and cooperation between Vietnam and Korea. As Vietnam-Korea relations continue to deepen across various sectors, the program's importance is likely to grow, contributing to the broader goals of cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the two nations. The growing importance of Korean language skills in Vietnam, evidenced by the inclusion of Korean as a second foreign language option in university entrance exams (Trang et al., 2024), further underscores the significance of the USSH Korean Studies program in the broader educational landscape of Vietnam.

The University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) in Hanoi, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU-USSH) was one of Vietnam's first institutions to offer Korean Studies (pilot training in 1993, officially established in 1995). The Faculty of Oriental Studies at VNU-USSH has been participating in the quality assurance assessment system of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) since 2016.

▪ **Support and Cooperation**

Since its establishment, the Faculty of Oriental Studies has received substantial support from Korean agencies and organizations such as the Korea Foundation (KF), Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), National Institute for International Education (NIIED), Academy of Korean Studies (AKS), King Sejong Institute Foundation (KSIF), and Korean enterprises operating in Vietnam (Samsung, LG, Lotte, etc.). These partnerships have fostered diverse forms of cooperation, including scholarship programs, student exchanges, teacher dispatches (1-2 teachers/year), support for building learning materials (comprehensive Korean language textbooks for Vietnamese, Korean History, Korean Society, etc.), training facility systems (multi-purpose classrooms, smart classrooms), organizing seminars and discussions to enhance research and training capacities in Korean Studies,

and online lectures with Seoul National University. These activities have contributed to the steady development of the Korean Studies program and the Faculty of Oriental Studies in both quality and quantity.

After 30 years of development, the Korean Studies program at the VNU-USSH's Faculty of Oriental Studies has now become Vietnam's leading training center for Korean researchers. Currently, VNU-USSH is operating the Seed Program for Korean Studies project of AKS to enhance Korean Studies training and research capabilities, the Sejong Korean Language Center of the Sejong Foundation, the KF Global E-school online teaching project, and more.

▪ Curriculum and Research Focus

The Korean Studies program at VNU-USSH offers a comprehensive curriculum that spans the breadth of Korean language, literature, history, politics, and economics. At the undergraduate level, students engage in intensive Korean language training, complemented by courses on Korean history, culture, and contemporary society. This foundational approach ensures a holistic understanding of Korea beyond mere linguistic proficiency.

The graduate program elevates this engagement to more specialized domains. Advanced research in Korean linguistics, comparative literature studies, and an in-depth exploration of Korea-Vietnam relations form the core of postgraduate studies. This tiered approach allows for a progressive deepening of knowledge and analytical skills as students advance in their academic journey.

Research activities within the department are diverse and multifaceted. Scholars engage in comparative studies of Vietnamese and Korean languages and cultures, providing valuable insights into linguistic and cultural intersections. The analysis of Korea's economic development model and its potential applications to Vietnam's context represents a practical dimension of research with significant policy implications. Studies on Korean popular culture and its impact on Vietnamese society offer a window into the soft power dynamics shaping cultural exchange. Historical investigations into Vietnam-Korea relations contribute to a deeper understanding of the long-standing connections between the two nations.

The program's curriculum has expanded to cover various aspects of Korean society, supported by resources such as the KISS (Korean Studies Information Service System) database, which provides access to over 800,000 full-text articles covering most subject areas published since 1945 (University of Illinois Library, n.d.). Research collaboration between USSH and Korean universities has been facilitated by initiatives like the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund, which allocated \$14 million for educational projects in 2022 (ASEAN Secretariat, 2023). This funding has supported joint research projects, academic exchanges, and cultural programs.

▪ **Faculty and Resources**

The strength of the Korean Studies program at VNU-USSH lies in its diverse faculty, comprising Vietnamese scholars with expertise in Korean Studies and native Korean lecturers. This blend ensures a balanced perspective, marrying local context with authentic Korean insights in both teaching and research endeavors.

The program's academic infrastructure is robust, featuring a dedicated Korean Studies library housing an extensive collection of Korean-language materials, academic journals, and digital resources. Regular academic exchanges and guest lectures by Korean scholars enrich the learning environment, while cultural events complement the formal curriculum, providing students with immersive experiences beyond the classroom.

External support has been instrumental in developing both faculty and resources. Scholarship programs have facilitated faculty development, while teacher dispatch programs bring 1-2 Korean educators annually to enhance the authenticity of language instruction. Support for developing comprehensive learning materials, including textbooks on Korean language, history, and society tailored for Vietnamese learners, has been crucial. The establishment of modern training facilities, including multi-purpose and smart classrooms, has further enhanced the learning experience.

▪ **Student Engagement and Outcomes**

Enrolment in the Korean Studies program has seen significant growth, with a reported 30% increase in student numbers over the past five years (USSH Annual Report, 2021). This growth reflects the broader trend of increasing

interest in Korean language and culture among Vietnamese youth, driven in part by the popularity of Korean pop culture and economic opportunities associated with Korean companies operating in Vietnam.

The growth in Korean Studies at USSH aligns with the overall increase in ASEAN students studying in Korea, which rose from 8,946 in 2015 to 41,258 in 2021 (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2021). Student mobility between Vietnam and Korea has been supported by programs such as the AIMS (ASEAN International Mobility for Students) program. From 2016 to 2020, a total of 726 students (350 outbound, 376 inbound) participated in exchange programs between ASEAN and Korean universities through this initiative (Korean Council for University Education, 2023).

Many alumni secure positions in Korean companies operating in Vietnam, capitalizing on their language skills and cultural understanding to bridge business communications. The demand for translation and interpretation services provides another avenue for graduates to apply their expertise. Cultural organizations and diplomatic services also value the insights and skills of Korean Studies graduates, further diversifying career prospects.

For those inclined towards further academic pursuits, opportunities for advanced studies in Korea are facilitated by scholarship programs such as the Global Korea Scholarship. This pathway not only enhances individual expertise but also strengthens the academic ties between Vietnam and Korea, fostering a new generation of scholars and researchers in the field.

1-4. Current State of Collaboration of VNU-USSH with Korea

The internationalization of higher education has become increasingly important in the globalized world, with cross-border academic partnerships playing a crucial role in enhancing educational quality and research output (Knight, 2015). Vietnam and South Korea have been strengthening their diplomatic and economic ties, with education emerging as a key area of cooperation (Ministry of Education, 2020). This paper focuses on the potential for enhanced collaboration between the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) in Hanoi and Korean universities, examining current initiatives, challenges, and opportunities for future development.

USSH has established partnerships with several Korean universities, including Seoul National University, Korea University, and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (USSH International Cooperation Department, 2022). These partnerships primarily involve student and faculty exchanges, joint research projects, and cultural programs. Current collaborations focus on fields such as Korean Studies, Vietnamese Studies, linguistics, and cultural exchange. For instance, the Korean Studies program at USSH, supported by the Korea Foundation, has seen growing enrollment, with a 30% increase in student numbers over the past five years (USSH Annual Report, 2021).

There are few key challenges for collaboration. First, Language Barriers. Despite increasing interest in Korean language learning in Vietnam, with over 15,000 students studying Korean nationwide (Korea Foundation, 2021), language proficiency remains a significant obstacle to deeper academic collaboration. Second, Funding Constraints. Limited financial resources hinder the expansion of exchange programs and joint research initiatives. The average cost of studying in Korea for a Vietnamese student is approximately \$10,000 per year, which is prohibitive for many (ICEF Monitor, 2022). Third, Differences in Academic Systems. Disparities in credit transfer systems, academic calendars, and research methodologies pose challenges to seamless collaboration (Nguyen et al., 2020).

1-5. Areas of Collaboration of Educational Exchange in Higher Education between Vietnam and Korea

Despite these challenges, there are several promising areas for collaboration that can enhance educational exchange between Vietnam and Korea:

- **Joint Research Programs**

Establishing joint research initiatives can foster knowledge sharing and innovation. Focus areas could include fields of mutual interest such as technology, environmental studies, and social sciences. For example, the Vietnam-Korea Institute of Science and Technology (V-KIST) demonstrates the potential for collaborative research institutions (World Bank, 2016).

- **Dual Degree Programs**

Developing dual degree programs between Vietnamese and Korean universities can provide students with international exposure while addressing issues of qualification recognition. These programs can be designed to leverage the strengths of institutions in both countries, offering students a unique blend of educational experiences.

- **Language and Cultural Exchange Programs**

Implementing intensive language and cultural exchange programs can help address the language barrier and cultural differences. These could include short-term immersion programs, tandem learning partnerships, and cultural workshops. Vietnam's pilot program introducing Korean as a second language in middle schools since 2016 is a step in this direction (Ministry of Education, Korea, 2017).

- **Capacity Building Initiatives**

Collaborative efforts to enhance the capacity of Vietnamese higher education institutions can create a more balanced exchange environment. This could involve faculty development programs, curriculum enhancement, and infrastructure support. The World Bank's Vietnam - New Model University Project is an example of such capacity-building efforts (World Bank, 2020).

- **Industry-Academia Partnerships**

Fostering partnerships between universities and industries in both countries can enhance the relevance of educational exchanges to the job market. This could include joint internship programs, industry-sponsored research projects, and collaborative curriculum development in fields such as engineering, information technology, and business management.

- **Digital Learning Platforms**

Leveraging digital technologies to create virtual exchange programs and online collaborative learning environments can increase accessibility and reduce costs associated with physical mobility. The rapid growth of Vietnam's e-learning market presents opportunities for such initiatives (ICEF Monitor, 2023).

▪ **Scholarship and Funding Programs**

Expanding scholarship opportunities and establishing joint funding mechanisms can address financial barriers to educational exchange. The Global Korea Scholarship program, which includes Vietnamese students, is an example of such initiatives that could be further developed and expanded (National Institute for International Education, Korea, 2022).

Enhancing collaboration in educational exchange between Vietnam and Korea presents both challenges and opportunities. By addressing key issues such as language barriers, cultural differences, and institutional capacity gaps, while focusing on areas of mutual benefit like joint research, dual degree programs, and industry partnerships, both countries can create a more robust and effective framework for higher education exchange. This collaboration has the potential to not only benefit the students and institutions involved but also to strengthen the broader economic and diplomatic ties between Vietnam and Korea.

2. The Philippines: Forging Academic Collaborations with Korea - A Case Study of the University of the Philippines (UP)

2-1. Strategic Partnerships: Exploring the Potential of University Cooperation in the Korea-Philippines Context

Korea and the Philippines have enjoyed a longstanding friendly relationship, which has witnessed a remarkable intensification of cooperation in recent years across political, economic, and socio-cultural domains. This deepening partnership transcends mere diplomatic ties, evolving into a strategic alliance focused on mutual benefit and shared prosperity.

Korea plays a pivotal role in the Philippines' economic development as a major investor and trading partner. Korean investments, particularly in manufacturing, construction, and energy sectors, are flourishing. The signing of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries has served as a catalyst, further stimulating trade and investment flows. Korea and the Philippines have fostered mutual cultural understanding and affinity through active cultural exchanges. The popularity of Korean dramas (K-dramas) and K-POP has sparked a surge in interest in Korean culture within the Philippines. Conversely, the Philippines, with its breathtaking natural beauty and warm hospitality, has become a popular tourist destination for Koreans. Korea and the Philippines have maintained a close partnership on the international stage, strengthening mutual cooperation. Korea has notably played a supportive role in the Philippines' economic growth and social development through initiatives in development cooperation.

This multifaceted cooperative relationship has fostered mutual understanding, trust, and a solid foundation for continued progress in the future. Within this positive trajectory, university education cooperation between Korea and the Philippines emerges as a critical driver of bilateral development. University exchanges can enhance academic and human resource exchange, fostering the development of talent crucial for both nations. Programs promoting Korean language education and understanding of Korean culture are particularly important in strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation.

2-2. Korean Studies at the University of the Philippines

▪ Korea Studies Programs

According to Concepcion, Laranjo and Bae (2022), Korean studies in Philippine educational institutions are less developed compared to neighboring Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia.

Table 1. Philippine higher education institutions offering Korean studies

Institution	Program/Course
University of the Philippines	MA in Asian Studies, Specialized in Korea (Asian Center) Minor in Korean Language (Department of Linguistics) Elective Korean studies course (Center for International Studies)
Ateneo de Manila University	Minor in Korean Studies (Korean Studies Program)
University of Santo Tomas - Angelicum College	Elective Korean language courses (King Sejong Institute)
Far Eastern University	Elective Korean studies course (International Studies Department)
Polytechnic University of the Philippines	Elective Korean language courses
Tarlac State University	Elective Korean language courses
West Visayas State University	Elective Korean language courses
Philippine International College	AB in Korean Studies

Source: Bae, K. M. (2024)

The University of the Philippines (UP) has emerged as a pivotal institution for Korean Studies in the Philippines, reflecting the growing academic and cultural exchange between the two nations. Established in 1993, UP's Korean Studies Program has evolved to offer a comprehensive curriculum at both undergraduate and graduate levels, focusing on Korean language, literature, history, and culture (UP Korean Studies Program website, 2023).

UP's commitment to Korean Studies is evident in its diverse academic offerings. The university has introduced three specialized Korean courses: an MA in Asian Studies with a specialization in Korea at the UP Asian Center, a minor in Korean language at the UP Department of Linguistics, and a Korean studies elective course at the UP Center for International Studies. This multi-faceted approach positions UP as one of only eight higher education institutions in the Philippines offering formal training in Korean studies, and notably, the sole tertiary institution with a graduate program in the field.

The MA program, in particular, exemplifies UP's interdisciplinary approach to Korean Studies. Students benefit from a curriculum that integrates various academic disciplines, including anthropology and literary criticism. This

multidisciplinary framework enables a more critical and integrated understanding of Korean culture, history, and society within the broader Asian context.

Enrolment in the Korean Studies Program has seen steady growth, with over 100 students currently participating across various levels (UP Korean Studies Program website, 2023). This increase aligns with the rising popularity of Korean culture in the Philippines and the growing demand for Korean language proficiency in various sectors.

The program's success is underpinned by its dedicated faculty, who bring expertise in Korean Studies and maintain strong ties with Korean institutions. These connections have facilitated valuable partnerships with organizations such as the Korean Foundation, the King Sejong Institute, and various Korean universities. These collaborations enhance the program through student and faculty exchanges, joint research projects, and access to specialized resources.

To further strengthen its position in the field, UP KRC (Korean Research Center) is actively seeking collaborative and comparative research opportunities. This initiative aims to attract more local Korean studies experts, thereby enhancing the depth and breadth of Korean Studies scholarship in the Philippines.

The university's efforts in Korean Studies align with its broader mandate as the national university of the Philippines. By pioneering this field of study, UP fulfills its responsibility to set academic standards and drive innovation in teaching and research across the country. The program not only contributes to academic excellence but also plays a crucial role in fostering cultural understanding and strengthening diplomatic ties between the Philippines and South Korea.

As the Korean Studies Program at UP continues to evolve, it stands as a testament to the university's commitment to academic innovation and global engagement. By providing a comprehensive and critical approach to Korean Studies, UP is not only meeting the growing demand for expertise in this area but also contributing significantly to the broader landscape of Asian Studies in the Philippines and beyond.

▪ **UP Korea Research Center: At the forefront of Korean scholarship in the Philippines**

Since its founding in 2011, UP KRC has significantly contributed to the academic and cultural landscape of UP and strengthened ties between Korea and the Philippines. This success is guided by three pillars: research, education and networking.

Research: The University of the Philippines Korean Research Center (UP KRC) conducts policy-oriented research on Korean language, culture, and Korea-Philippines relations, primarily focusing on the social sciences and humanities to produce interdisciplinary insights. It publishes the academic journal *Hanpil: Studies on Korea and the Philippines* and organizes The Philippine Koreanist Congress.

To expand its reach beyond the UP Diliman campus, the UP KRC actively engages with other constituent universities within the UP System. Last year, the Global Korean Studies Roundtable brought together representatives from UP campuses in Los Baños, Baguio, Cebu, and Mindanao. This August, the 6th Philippine Koreanist Congress Korean Studies Special Roundtable will further enhance this reach by bringing together speakers from UP Diliman, Los Baños, Manila, and Tacloban. This event highlights the multi-disciplinary nature of Korean studies, with speakers from diverse fields including engineering, food science, and health professions. This approach reflects the understanding that today's complex challenges require a multi-faceted perspective, enriching discussions and demonstrating the broader impact of Korean studies across various sectors.

Because of the important initiatives and accomplishments of the UP KRC, other constituent universities have shown great interest in integrating Korean components into their curricula and research agendas as a way of enriching their program offerings as well as enhancing the global perspectives of their students and faculty. There have been initial efforts to develop Korean studies programs and Korean language classes in other constituent universities. The possibility of building Korean hubs in the constituent universities to encourage equal development and systemwide collaboration is also being explored. With this development, UP hopes to ensure that all campuses have the support and infrastructure needed to promote and sustain interest in Korean culture and scholarship.

Education: The University of the Philippines Korean Research Center (UP KRC) collaborates with academic units within the UP System, including the UP Asian Center, the UP Center for International Studies, and the Department of Linguistics, to offer students a wider range of academically and culturally enriching courses. These partnerships are crucial as the UP KRC itself cannot directly award course credits.

The collaboration with the UP Asian Center, in particular, promotes an interdisciplinary approach to Korean studies. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding Korea's socio-economic, political, and cultural landscape within a broader Asian context. This perspective is particularly relevant in today's interconnected world, highlighting shared histories and the potential for collaboration among Asian nations. However, this broader context does not diminish the uniqueness of Korea's cultural traditions, social achievements, and geopolitical significance. This interdisciplinary framework fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation for Korea's contributions to the region.

Similar collaborations with the UP Center for International Studies and the Department of Linguistics further strengthen the interdisciplinary focus on Korean studies. These partnerships equip students with a more comprehensive understanding of Korea's role in global affairs and foster proficiency in the Korean language, preparing them for meaningful cross-cultural exchanges. These initiatives enhance educational opportunities and strengthen the Philippines-Korea connection, promoting critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding – essential skills for navigating today's interconnected world.

External Networking: The UP KRC maintains strong connections with institutions locally and internationally. In the Philippines, the center partners with student organizations such as UP Arirang, the premier Filipino-Korean friendship organization at UP Diliman, to support youth-focused initiatives. Korean culture and language are of great interest to Filipino youth, as evidenced by their enthusiastic support for Hallyu, or the Korean Wave. This interest in Korean culture has grown significantly since the early 2000s, with the Philippines emerging as the region's largest fan base for Korean culture (Hicap 2019, as cited in Concepcion, Laranjo, & Bae, 2022).

This enthusiasm is evident in the fluency with which many Filipino youth can sing Korean songs, replicate K-pop dance moves, and incorporate Korean fashion trends into their own styles. The popularity of Korean food further reflects this cultural fascination. Responding to this demand for greater knowledge of Korean culture, the UP KRC organizes initiatives such as the NextGen Koreanist Workshop, Cultural Workshop and Seminar, and the Korea Essay Contest. However, these organizations are not solely focused on Filipino students. For example, UP Arirang was established in 2006 to also assist the growing number of Korean students at UP in adapting to the Philippine lifestyle and environment. The presence of approximately 150,000 Koreans in the Philippines in 2019, many of whom were students attracted by lower tuition fees and living costs (Concepcion, Laranjo, & Bae, 2022), further highlights this reciprocal nature of cultural exchange.

Locally, the UP KRC collaborates with various Philippine-based Korean associations, including the Korean Women's Association, which established a scholarship fund for Korean Studies students at UP Diliman for the 2023-2024 academic year. Other partners include the Global Korea Scholarship Alumni Association Philippines, the Korean Cultural Center Philippines, and the Philippines-Korea Society. The Global Korea Scholarship program, supported by the Korean government, provides Filipino students with opportunities for global education in Korea. As of 2023, there are approximately 8,700 alumni from this program in 63 countries, with 145 Filipino graduates. The program has facilitated the completion of master's degrees (69%), undergraduate degrees (17%), doctorate degrees (9%), research (3%), and language programs (1%). Notable institutions with Filipino alumni include Seoul National University, Yonsei University, Korea University, and Sogang University. This extensive network, along with collaborations fostered through personal academic connections, empowers the UP KRC to strengthen its educational and research initiatives and contribute to the global community of Korean studies scholars and practitioners.

▪ **Cross-Institutional Collaboration: The University of the Philippines and KRI@UNSW in Strengthening Korean Studies in Southeast Asia**

The University of the Philippines (UP) actively partners with international institutions to enhance its educational programs and research initiatives. A notable collaboration is with the Korea Research Initiatives (KRI) of the University of South Wales, which has significantly advanced Korean Studies at UP.

KRI played a crucial role in establishing a Korea research center within the UP System, assisting with proposals and planning. This effort culminated in 2016 with the establishment of the UP Korea Research Center (UP KRC) under the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, supported by a three-year funding from the Academy of Korean Studies.

A highlight of this partnership was UP's hosting of the 7th Korean Studies Association of Southeast Asia (KoSASA) biennial international conference in 2016. KoSASA, founded in 2003 by KRI and five top national universities from Southeast Asia, has expanded to include leading universities from across the region, with UP as a member.

UP KRC, now the only research center in the Philippines focused on Korean studies, exemplifies UP's commitment to promoting deeper understanding of Korea's socio-economic and cultural dynamics. This initiative reflects the growing importance of Korean studies in Southeast Asia and UP's instrumental role in this academic field.

2-3. UP's External Network in Southeast Asia and Korea: A Strategy to Enhance Internationalization

▪ Cooperation with ASEAN and Korean universities

As the national university of the Philippines, UP actively pursues its mission to serve as a regional and global institution. UP's membership in prestigious networks such as the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), ASEAN University Network (AUN), and Korean Studies Association of Southeast Asia (KoSASA) underscores its commitment to international collaboration and academic excellence.

These partnerships have significantly boosted UP's research productivity. From 2015 to 2019, the COOPERATE program facilitated 164 academic visits, resulting in 58 international publications. This initiative promotes co-advisership with international experts and fosters active research cooperation. Consequently, UP maintains its position as the top-performing university in the Philippines and ranks 18th out of 148 universities in Southeast Asia.

UP's international reach extends to partnerships with 350 universities worldwide, including 25 Korean institutions. These collaborations span diverse fields such as language, culture, international business, economics, and agriculture. In the 2023-2024 academic year, UP sent 127 students to Korea and 323 to other countries for academic exchanges, with 32 faculty members serving as advisers in Korea and 489 in other nations.

Through these global engagements, UP enhances its visibility and impact in international academic communities while elevating its standards of excellence. The university aims to set a benchmark for academic and research excellence in the Philippines, inspiring other institutions to pursue innovation, collaboration, and social contribution. UP's global strategy thus serves to shape the future of Philippine higher education, encouraging a path of international engagement and academic distinction.

Table 2. Number of Korean higher education institutions with active exchange programs with UP

No.	Name of Korean HEI	Courses/programs/fields of study often enrolled in
1	Asia Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics	<i>Not provided</i>
2	Busan University of Foreign Studies	Economics, International Business, Language & Culture
3	Chonnam National University	Agriculture, Engineering, International Business
4	Chung-Ang University	Medicine
5	Chungnam National University	Engineering
6	Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology	<i>Not provided</i>
7	Gyeongsang National University	Agriculture and Food Science/Forestry and Natural Resources
8	Hallym University	Media and Film
9	Handong Global University	<i>Not provided</i>
10	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies	Language and Culture
11	Hannam University	Language and Culture, International Business
12	Kangwon National University	Agriculture, Economics, International Business, and Language and Culture
13	Konkuk University	<i>Not provided</i>
14	Korea National University of Education	<i>Not provided</i>
15	Posco TJ Park Foundation	<i>Not provided</i>
16	Pukyong National University	Science
17	Seoul National University	<i>Not provided</i>
18	Seoul National University of Science and Technology (SeoulTech)	Engineering

19	Seoul Women's University	<i>Not provided</i>
20	Sookmyung Women's University	Hospitality and Tourism, International Business
21	Sunchon National University	<i>Not provided</i>
22	Sungshin Women's University	Humanities
23	Sungshin Women's University	<i>Not provided</i>
24	University of Seoul	Engineering
25	Yonsei University	International Business, Language and Culture

Source: UP System Office of International Linkages, (2024)

Table 3. Total number of UP students (undergraduate and faculty) in student exchange

System/Constituent University								
	OIL System*	Baguio	Diliman	Los Baños	Manila	Visayas	Tacloban	TOTAL
In Korea for 2023-2024								
Students	59	0	61	5	0	1	1	127
Faculty	0	0	12	20	0	0	0	32
In ASEAN and other countries for 2023-2024								
Students	264	1	5	32	21	0	0	323
Faculty	10	0	396	76	7	0	0	489
Historical data for previous academic years								
<i>Reckoning Period</i>	2004 - 2022	2008 - 2024	2018 - 2022	<i>Not provided</i>	2017 - 2023	<i>Not provided</i>	<i>Not provided</i>	
Students	405	8	130	<i>Not provided</i>	356	<i>Not provided</i>	<i>Not provided</i>	899
Faculty	69	<i>Not provided</i>	109	<i>Not provided</i>	49	<i>Not provided</i>	<i>Not provided</i>	227
*Note for OIL System Data								
Indicated numbers are MOVE-UP Grantees (students) and COOPERATE Grantees (faculty adviser)								

Source: UP System Office of International Linkages, (2024)

▪ Challenges for International Cooperation

Sustaining international cooperation hinges on fostering long-term partnerships and mutually beneficial engagements. While short-term initiatives, such as the 2024 Layag: Humayo at Matuto sa Ibang Ibayo study

abroad fair organized by the UP Office of International Linkages, can encourage collaboration and exchange, long-term partnerships are crucial for achieving true internationalization.

Building and nurturing partnerships with diverse institutions is essential. These partnerships should focus on projects with tangible outcomes that benefit all parties involved. A proactive approach is needed to sustain existing partnerships and seek stronger strategic collaborations, particularly between Korea and the ASEAN region.

Rosland (2020) emphasizes the limited impact of one-time or short-term events, highlighting the need for long-term projects. For example, establishing ASEAN and Korea modules in prestigious universities could foster deeper understanding between students from both regions. Integrating these initiatives into regular events further enhances their effectiveness, ensuring ongoing engagement and collaboration.

2-4. Increasing Inbound Mobility: A Challenge to UP and the Philippines

The imbalance in international student exchange between Korea and the Philippines presents a significant challenge. While UP sends students abroad, it also serves as a destination for international students, hosting at least 10 students from Korea and 74 students from ASEAN and other countries in 2023-2024 (Table 3).

To foster more impactful collaborations, partnerships should be reciprocal. This is further emphasized by the growing global recognition of the importance of international research collaboration. Leading university ranking systems, such as Times Higher Education and Quacquarelli Symonds, now include metrics for international research, acknowledging its role in innovation and addressing global challenges.

UP's high score of 68.4/100 in international research networks in the 2025 QS World University Rankings demonstrates its commitment to collaborative research. A prime example is the partnership between UP's Marine Science Institute and the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST). This collaboration focuses on research in oceanography, marine biodiversity and ecology, marine chemistry, and paleoclimatology of coral

reefs in the Western Pacific. The partnership also includes joint training projects, exchange of scientific information, and technology transfer between the Philippines and Korea. KIOST, a government-supported research institute, plays a crucial role in advancing ocean science for the benefit of the Korean people.

Table 4. Total number of international students hosted by UP in student exchange

System/Constituent University							
	OIL System	Baguio	Diliman	Los Baños	Manila	Visayas	TOTAL
From Korea for 2023-2024							
Students	1	0	<i>Not provided</i>	9	0	0	10
From ASEAN and other countries for 2023-2024							
Students	14	0	<i>Not provided</i>	20	40	0	74
Historical data for previous academic years							
<i>Reckoning Period</i>	2003 - 2019	2008 - 2024	2018 - 2022	<i>Not provided</i>	2017 - 2023	<i>Not provided</i>	
Students	356	7	<i>Not provided</i>	<i>Not provided</i>	559	0	922

Source: UP System Office of International Linkages, (2024)

However, despite UP's extensive partnerships, it remains a challenge for UP to attract more foreign students and faculty to study and teach at the University. In the 2024 QS World University Rankings, our lowest scores were in the international faculty ratio at 1.6 and the international students ratio at 1.1. In the 2025 QS Asia University Rankings, UP scored its fourth lowest in inbound exchange at 1.4. This is the case for UP even though around 22,247 international students have chosen the Philippines as their study destination in 2022, a growth of 52.7% since 2021, with 74% studying STEM courses (Martin 2023). The Philippines lags behind its ASEAN neighbors, having the lowest number of international students in Southeast Asia even with its advantage of using English as the primary medium of instruction in universities. While the figures for UP may seem disappointing, this only challenges us to further enhance our presence internationally and make it more attractive for global talent. There might be two reasons why the Filipino universities have lower number of overseas students, especially from Korea than other ASEAN countries.

- **Structural issues with complex processes and procedures in the overseas student system in the Philippines**

The Philippines' stringent immigration policies for students and academics pose a significant barrier to attracting international talent. While some international students at UP have been issued tourist visas with special study permits, these require frequent renewal, creating administrative hurdles. Obtaining a student visa involves a lengthy and complex process, requiring extensive documentation, including proof of financial capacity, academic records, and acceptance from the institution.

The process involves coordination with multiple government agencies, including the Philippine Commission on Higher Education, the Bureau of Immigration, and the Department of Foreign Affairs, taking several months to complete. This contrasts sharply with countries like Australia, where the process typically takes 1 to 4 months. The lack of clear information on the official website further complicates the process for potential applicants.

The ASEAN has recognized that streamlined visa processing is crucial for attracting international students. Malaysia and Singapore have established dedicated agencies to support visa applications. This contrasts with the Philippines' cumbersome system, which can be discouraging for prospective students.

The challenges extend to foreign researchers and scholars. While they can hold non-regular positions such as lecturers or visiting professors in UP, their functions are limited by their foreign status. Simplifying the visa process and expanding opportunities for permanent tenure would be critical steps in attracting international talent and fostering a more vibrant and inclusive academic environment.

- **Low Filipino visibility in Korea**

The limited visibility of Filipinos in Korea contributes to the imbalance in student exchange. According to Bae (2024), Korean academics study the Philippines less than other Asian countries. Filipino is not considered a critical foreign language by the Korean government, leading to reduced attention and resources. This lack of Filipino cultural and academic presence in Korea might make Korean students less aware of the opportunities and

advantages of studying in the Philippines, prompting them to choose other countries with more prominent promotional efforts.

However, this perception gap is not unique to the Philippines. Aji and Anindhita (2022) highlight a similar observation: while ASEAN youth are familiar with Korean culture due to the Hallyu wave, the reverse is not true. This perception gap is confirmed by various studies, including those of Jin-pyo and Ji-hyeon, and Rosland (2020), who notes that Koreans have limited knowledge of ASEAN cultures.

Addressing this gap requires concerted efforts. Establishing an institution dedicated to teaching ASEAN cultures, languages, and concepts to Koreans would be a significant step. The UP Office of International Linkages could facilitate the establishment of Filipino studies in Korean universities, similar to initiatives in Japan, Europe, and the United States.

While Filipino was introduced at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) and Sogang University in 2010, and a full BA in Filipino program was established at Busan University of Foreign Studies (BUFS) in 2015, the program was discontinued in 2020 due to lack of funding. The discontinuation of these programs underscores the need for sustained support to develop and expand Filipino studies in Korea.

2-5. Enhancing Internal Capacity for Internationalization

▪ Support from the national government: Promoting key initiatives

The Philippine Embassy in Korea, led by Ambassador Maria Theresa De Vega, is actively strengthening international relations and promoting Filipino culture. These efforts are increasing Korean interest in Filipino culture and academic opportunities. The embassy seeks partnerships with Korean government ministries and organizations to build people-to-people relations between the two countries.

A notable initiative was the Philippines' participation in the 2023 Global Education and Innovation Summit in Korea, attended by over 200 global education leaders and keynoted by Vice President Sara Duterte. The summit focused on innovation in education during the digital transformation era. Vice President Duterte also met with Korea National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin-pyo to discuss key priorities in Philippines-Korea relations, including education.

Other initiatives include Filipino students participating in the International Mathematical Science Creativity Competition and discussions on educational cooperation, particularly in assisting the Philippines with its national science museum and partnering with Philippine institutions leading in STEAM education. An agriculture genomics research center was established at UP Los Baños through collaboration among UP, the International Rice Research Institute, and the Korean government.

The year 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of Philippines-Korea relations, with the embassy planning various commemorative activities. These bilateral relations, ongoing since 1949, have resulted in geographical, economic, and cultural benefits for both nations.

The Philippine Commission on Higher Education prioritizes internationalization in higher education institutions to elevate university rankings and harness education's transformative power for national development. Internationalization, particularly through student exchanges and faculty collaborations, leads to a broader understanding of development issues and offers significant economic advantages.

For instance, in Baguio City, international students contribute substantially to the local economy. Korean students, in particular, have a higher average contribution compared to other nationalities. On a larger scale, the OECD reports that direct export revenues from international students more than doubled between 2010 and 2019.

National-level initiatives are crucial for fostering deeper cultural and academic exchanges. An example is the Spanish Ministry of Education and Vocational Training's program for Filipino university students or graduates to

teach English in Spain. This program promotes cross-cultural understanding while enhancing language skills, enriching the educational experience of students from both countries and promoting global citizenship.

By implementing comprehensive strategies that go beyond short-term events, sustainable connections can be built to enhance mutual understanding and benefits between nations.

▪ **A lesson from Korea**

The strategies adopted by Korea to attract international students could serve as a model for the Philippine government, especially given that the UP figures reflect the state of internationalization of universities at the national level. In the early 2010s, UP students preferred universities in Japan or Australia over Korea. In response, the Korean government introduced more scholarships for Southeast Asian students, promoting student exchanges with the Philippines and other ASEAN countries.

By 2019, South Korea became the second most popular destination for student and faculty exchanges at UP, with 123 undergraduate students participating in exchanges from 2017 to 2018, and 14 faculty members pursuing graduate studies at 36 Korean universities in 2019. Initially, student exchanges between UP and Korean universities were balanced at a 1:1 ratio. The use of English as the official language of the ASEAN Economic Community also enhanced the Philippines' regional standing in higher education.

However, post-pandemic, the exchange became imbalanced, with fewer Korean students coming to the Philippines compared to the number of Filipino students studying in Korea. This trend aligns with the declining Korean population in the Philippines, which fell from approximately 90,000 in 2019 to around 34,000 after the COVID-19 pandemic (Bae 2024). By 2023, the majority of international students in the Philippines—about 16,013—came from India, followed by 4,462 from China. Two contributing factors to this shift may be complex systems and limited visibility.

▪ **Enhancing collaboration with ASEAN and Korean universities**

Fostering educational exchange between ASEAN countries and Korea requires comprehensive national and transnational policies. These initiatives should aim to remove barriers and create opportunities for active exchanges between countries and educational institutions, while simultaneously strengthening diplomatic and economic ties.

A significant challenge, particularly for the Philippines, lies in its complex immigration policies for students and academics, which diminish its attractiveness for student exchanges and research collaborations. Streamlining these policies and addressing bureaucratic procedures could significantly enhance the country's appeal for international academic activities. The University of the Philippines (UP) could play a pivotal role in driving such reforms.

Benchmarking against successful Korean and ASEAN universities offers valuable insights. For instance, Seoul National University's strategy of hiring foreign faculty has indirectly boosted its global ranking. Expanding scholarship opportunities, similar to Korea's approach, can facilitate greater student exchange. Additionally, reviving English language programs could attract international students who currently prefer destinations like Malaysia and Australia for English studies.

To become globally competitive, ASEAN countries like the Philippines need to implement policy changes and invest in infrastructure and support systems for international students and academics. This includes language support, access to basic services, and improved safety measures.

The focus should be on establishing long-term linkages rather than short-term engagements to develop deeper, more meaningful connections. Integrating courses into formal university programs, as UP has done, can enhance cross-cultural understanding and global citizenship. Exploring joint programs between higher education institutions and sustaining collaborations are crucial for continuous knowledge exchange and research growth.

The Philippines, through UP, is committed to strengthening its academic partnerships with Korea, aiming for mutual understanding and collaboration. This partnership, rooted in shared goals of academic excellence, cultural exchange, and innovative research, has the potential to drive significant change in both countries and beyond.

3. Myanmar: Higher Education Cooperation with Korean Universities - A Case Study of Yangon University of Economics

3-1. The Strong Cultural Relationship between South Korea and Myanmar: a Surge in the Number of Myanmar Students in Korea

Republic of Korea and Myanmar have had long history of diplomatic relation since 1955. Korea and Myanmar have worked together closely on a range of issues, including economic development, security, and regional cooperation in human resource development. The economic relationship between South Korea and Myanmar is strong and growing. South Korean companies have invested heavily in Myanmar's energy and infrastructure sectors. In 2013, South Korea's exports to Myanmar totaled \$1.1 billion, making it one of Myanmar's largest trading partners. South Korean companies are also active in Myanmar's telecommunications, construction, and automotive sectors.

The cultural relationship between South Korea and Myanmar is also strong. In recent years, there has been a surge in the number of Myanmar citizens studying in South Korea. In 2013, more than 4,000 Myanmar students were enrolled in South Korean universities. South Korean pop culture, including K-pop and K-dramas, is also popular in Myanmar. The South Korean-Myanmar relationship is strong and growing. The two countries have a shared interest in promoting economic development, regional peace and stability, and cultural and educational exchange. (Insight Myanmar (September, 2022)). Because of the long history of closely cooperation between Korea and Myanmar, the study will highlight the collaboration of educational exchange between Korea and Myanmar focusing on higher Education.

This paper highlights the collaboration of educational exchange in higher education between Myanmar and Korea based on the secondary data of Korea scholarship and research activities between Korea and Myanmar. Republic of Korea has been supporting the human resource development of Myanmar by offering the different types of scholarship for various industries. It also finds out the research collaboration of Korea and Myanmar based on the collaboration of Korean Universities and Institutions with Yangon University of Economics.

3-2. Cooperation with South Korea and the Importance of Higher Educational Exchange

Myanmar has become a member of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) since July, 1997. Since 1997, Myanmar actively participates in sustainable development programs conducted by ASEAN plus three nations. (ASEAN Community Vision, 2025).

The relationship between Myanmar and South Korea has steadily developed since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1975, with significant acceleration following Myanmar's political reforms in the 2010s. This relationship encompasses both political-economic cooperation and socio-cultural exchanges, demonstrating notable progress in various domains.

In terms of political-economic cooperation, South Korea has emerged as a major economic partner for Myanmar. As of 2020, South Korea ranked as the 6th largest foreign investor in Myanmar, with bilateral trade volume increasing from approximately \$700 million in 2010 to \$1.3 billion in 2019 (KOTRA, 2021). Korean companies have actively entered Myanmar's energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing sectors, with large-scale projects such as the Korea-Myanmar Economic Cooperation Industrial Complex further strengthening economic ties between the two nations.

In the realm of development cooperation, South Korea stands as one of Myanmar's primary aid donors, collaborating in areas such as sharing economic development experiences, human resource development, and rural development. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) provided approximately \$200 million in grant aid until 2019, contributing to institutional capacity building through initiatives like supporting the

establishment of the Myanmar Development Institute (MDI) (Kim & Park, 2019). These cooperative efforts simultaneously contribute to Myanmar's sustainable development and enhance South Korea's international standing.

Korea exports industrial products to Myanmar and Myanmar exports natural resource based products to Korea. The various forms of economic cooperation between Myanmar and Korea can be seen as cooperation in Korean capital investment in Myanmar's natural resources and Myanmar's under-utilized facilities, cooperation in garment factories involving Korean capital and technology, cooperation for technology development, cooperation in international transportation and communications and cooperation in financial field. Economic cooperation of Korea and Myanmar causes the win-win situation for both nations and Myanmar looks upon Korean as a role model of development. (Nyun & Oo, 1992)

Socio-cultural exchanges have flourished, largely due to the influence of the Korean Wave. Korean popular culture, including K-pop, Korean dramas, and movies, has gained popularity among Myanmar's younger generation, leading to a surge in interest in learning the Korean language. As of 2019, about 4,000 Myanmar students were studying in South Korea (Ministry of Education, 2020), a fourfold increase compared to 2010. Additionally, the number of Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) applicants has been steadily increasing, with approximately 5,000 applicants reported in 2019 (National Institute for International Education, 2020).

Furthermore, the South Korean government and businesses have been participating in cultural heritage preservation and restoration projects in Myanmar. For instance, KOICA has been supporting cultural heritage preservation efforts in the Bagan region, contributing to the enhancement of cultural understanding between the two countries (KOICA, 2018).

However, the military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 has brought a new phase to bilateral relations. The South Korean government, while participating in international efforts to restore democracy, has taken a cautious approach considering the economic cooperation between the two countries. It has suspended arms exports to the

Myanmar military and temporarily halted some development cooperation projects, but has not imposed direct sanctions on private sector economic activities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

The future development of bilateral relations is expected to be significantly influenced by changes in Myanmar's political situation and the international community's response. If Myanmar's democratization process gets back on track and relations with the international community normalize, there is a high possibility that Korea-Myanmar relations will deepen and develop further. However, if the current political instability persists, the scope and depth of cooperation between the two countries may be limited.

In the context of these exchanges, university cooperation has emerged as a crucial element for the future of bilateral relations. University exchanges go beyond mere academic collaboration, playing a vital role in nurturing future talent and promoting mutual understanding between the two countries. Several Korean universities have signed MOUs with Myanmar universities, actively engaging in student exchanges, joint research projects, and faculty exchanges. For example, Seoul National University has been maintaining a cooperative relationship with Yangon University since 2013, operating various academic exchange programs, while Hankuk University of Foreign Studies is training specialized personnel through its Myanmar language department (Seoul National University, 2020; Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, 2021). These inter-university collaborations are contributing to deepening cultural understanding between the two countries and forming networks among future leaders. They also serve as channels for transferring South Korea's development experiences and technologies to Myanmar, providing practical assistance to Myanmar's economic development and human resource development. Therefore, the continuous expansion and deepening of university exchanges are expected to form an important foundation for the long-term and stable development of bilateral relations.

3-3. Building a Modern Nation Through Education in Myanmar: A Need for Strong Cooperation with Korea

The Ministry of Education in Myanmar, guided by the powerful motto "to build a modern developed nation through education," is dedicated to fostering quality education across all levels, from basic to higher education. Recognizing that education is a cornerstone of sustainable development, the Ministry aligns its efforts with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), prioritizing SDG 4: Quality Education.

This commitment to quality education is rooted in the understanding that it is not just a means to acquiring knowledge but a powerful tool for driving social and economic progress, empowering individuals, and achieving national prosperity. The Ministry recognizes that quality education can contribute to the eradication of poverty, promote gender equality, foster equity, and propel technological advancements, ultimately leading to a more just and sustainable society.

To achieve this ambitious vision, the Ministry has implemented a comprehensive and far-reaching 30-year National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) since 2016. The current NESP (2021-2030) is guided by three overarching goals:

Producing a Robust Intellectual and Intelligentsia Base: This goal emphasizes the need to cultivate a strong intellectual workforce through quality education, focusing on critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and lifelong learning.

Elevate the Quality of Teaching and Learning: This commitment aims to enhance teaching methodologies, improve learning environments, and provide opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and knowledge, ultimately creating a more effective and engaging learning experience for students.

Fuelling Applied Research and Innovation: By encouraging research and innovation, the Ministry aims to address pressing national challenges, generate new knowledge, and promote economic development. This goal also emphasizes the need to bridge the gap between academia and industry, fostering a culture of applied research and entrepreneurial thinking.

These goals are further articulated through ten Transformational Shifts, designed to reshape the education system by 2030. These shifts, covering a broad range of critical areas, aim to create a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking education system for the 21st century:

▪ **Transformational Shifts**

Access and Inclusion: Ensuring quality education for all school-going-age children, regardless of background, with a strong emphasis on inclusivity and eliminating discrimination. This includes policies to address the challenges of child labor, poverty, and disparities in access to education.

Blended Learning: Integrating technology into education to create a dynamic learning environment that combines traditional classroom learning with online and digital resources. This shift aims to leverage technology to personalize learning, expand access to knowledge, and enhance student engagement.

Lifelong Learning: Promoting a culture of continuous learning and development, providing pathways for workers and adults to access formal TVET and higher education. This shift acknowledges the evolving needs of the workforce and aims to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the 21st-century economy.

Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship: Fostering a culture of research and innovation within educational institutions, encouraging students and faculty to engage in inquiry-based learning and explore new solutions to challenges. This includes providing access to modern curricula, laboratory equipment, and research funding.

Future Technology and Education 4.0: Integrating emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data, and robotics, into the curriculum to prepare students for the jobs of the future.

School-Industry Partnerships in Regions and States: Building strong partnerships between educational institutions and industries to align curriculum with industry demands, provide students with practical experience, and foster entrepreneurship.

Internationalization: Enhancing international collaborations through student and faculty exchange programs, joint research projects, and the use of broadband networks for blended learning. This includes encouraging the

development of international partnerships to gain exposure to global best practices and promote cultural exchange.

Resilience and Preparedness: Creating a robust education system that is resilient to challenges such as natural disasters, pandemics, and social unrest. This includes developing contingency plans and building capacity to respond to emergencies.

Ministry of Education Systems and Structures for the 21st Century: Modernizing the Ministry of Education's systems and structures to be more responsive to the needs of the 21st century. This includes streamlining processes, improving communication, and embracing digital technologies.

Strong and Well-Financed Public Sector Education Institutions: Investing in public sector education institutions to ensure that they have the resources and infrastructure to deliver quality education to all.

These shifts are not isolated but interconnected, working together to create a robust and sustainable education system. The first four shifts focus on improving learning outcomes for all educational sectors, while the last six are dedicated to strengthening the drivers of good performance in the education system.

▪ **Specific Focus Areas**

Expanding Access to Quality Education: The Ministry aims to ensure that all children have access to at least KG+9 years of quality education, minimizing dropouts and addressing barriers to access.

Promoting Lifelong Learning: The Ministry aims to create smooth pathways for workers and adults to access formal TVET and higher education, empowering individuals to adapt to changing job markets and pursue further learning.

Fostering Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship: The Ministry is investing in modern curricula, laboratory equipment, and research funding to create an environment that encourages research and innovation, and nurtures entrepreneurial spirit.

Enhancing Internationalization: The Ministry is promoting international collaborations, leveraging broadband networks for blended learning, and encouraging student and faculty exchange programs.

▪ **Key Institutions**

The Ministry of Education oversees 75 universities and colleges, while other institutions operate under the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Science and Technology, and Ministry of Culture. The Department of Higher Education (DHE) within the Ministry of Education oversees 47 universities and 2 degree colleges. The DHE is currently implementing the ambitious Thirty-Year Long-Term Education Development Plan (2001-2002 FY – 2030-2031 FY) with a focus on human resource development, technology utilization, research expansion, lifelong learning, quality enhancement, and preservation of national identity and values.

▪ **International Collaboration**

To enhance the quality of education, Myanmar universities actively seek partnerships with international agencies and universities, engaging in student and faculty exchange programs and collaborative research projects. These collaborations expose students and faculty to global best practices, advance knowledge creation, and contribute to the development of a more interconnected and globally competitive education system.

▪ **Looking Ahead**

Myanmar's Ministry of Education is committed to building a modern, dynamic, and inclusive education system that equips its citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to thrive in the 21st century. The ambitious plan outlined by the NESP, with its ten transformational shifts, represents a comprehensive approach to realizing this vision. By focusing on quality education, promoting lifelong learning, and fostering international collaboration, Myanmar aims to create a future where education is the driving force for national progress and individual empowerment.

3-4. Cooperation with Republic of Korea in Higher Education

According to Aung (2021), three programmes for cooperation in education, have been implemented, namely the international college student exchange programmes between ASEAN and the ROK and the ASEAN-Korea Academic Exchange Programme which have been conducted annually since 2006, and the ASEAN Millennium Leaders College Student Exchange Programme which has also conducted since 2010. The ROK also provided funding for ASEAN-ROK Scholarship for Korean Studies Programme coordinated by the ASEAN University Network (AUN). These scholarship programmes have been on-going since 2010.

Republic of Korea also friendly assists in development of Education in Myanmar by exchange students program, scholarship program, joint research and providing grants for research project. The Korean Government has been sponsoring postgraduate students of Myanmar since 2002 and the number of recipients have been remarkably increasing since 2008 (Pei, 2011). The number of recipients and types of scholars are presented in the following Table 5.

Table 5. Korea Scholarship Recipients of Myanmar by Types (2018-2023)

Types	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Training /Seminar (less than one month)	78	171	7	0	13	78	347 (37.55%)
Training /Seminar (one month to three months)	26	66	12	1	9	26	140 (15.15%)
Training (more than 3 months)	4	34	5	3	1	4	51 (5.52%)
Diploma & bachelor's degree	4	10	2	19	0	4	39 (4.22%)
Master's degree	16	98	54	99	12	16	295 (31.93%)
PhD Degree	7	8	10	10	10	7	52 (5.63%)
Total	135	387	90	132	45	135	924

Source: Scholarship Selection Approval Working Committee, Myanmar (2018-2023)

According to Table 5, most of the scholarship recipients went to Korea to attend short term training and workshop and seminars. It accounts about 37.55%. About 32% of Myanmar scholarship recipients achieved Master Degree and it is the second largest figure and 5.63% attained PhD degree. By these figures, Republic of Korea has been supporting the development of Myanmar human resources. It is needed to highlight the institutions and association of Korea which mostly support the human resource of Myanmar. Table 6 shows the Korean associations and institutions which mostly offer the scholarship for Myanmar citizens.

Table 6. Korean Association and Institutions Mainly Supported to Human Resource Development of Myanmar (2018-2023)

Korean Sponsors	Training/ Seminar	Bachelor/ Diploma	Master	PhD	Total
Chonbuk National University	17	-	-	-	17
Korean Development Institute(KDI), Korean Government Program sponsored by National Institute for International Education(NIIED)	1	-	23	10	34
The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)	64	-	152	-	216
National Institute for International Education, Ministry of Education	-	-	10	13	23
Sejong City Office of Education	23	-	-	-	23
Seoul National University(SNU)	39	2	8	9	58
Soongsil University	-	-	11	-	11
Yeosu Academy	13	-	-	-	13
Yeungnam University	5	-	7	-	12
The Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB)	10	-	-	-	10
DAWONSYS Co.Ltd	10	-	-	-	10
Embassy of the Republic of Korea	18	14	13	-	45
IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)	19	-	-	-	19
Incheon Dental Association (IDA)	10	-	-	-	10
Industrial Bank of Korea	-	13	3	-	16
Korea Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources(KIGAM)	12	-	-	-	12

Korea Foundation for International Healthcare(KOFIH)	7	-	6	-	13
Korea Land & Housing Corporation (Myanmar)	11	-	-	-	11
Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency(KOTRA)	60	-	-	-	60
Ministry of Health and Welfare, National Rehabilitation Center	16	-	-	-	16
Mitsubishi Corporation	10	-	-	-	10
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT)	11	-	-	-	11
Total	356	29	233	32	650

Source: Scholarship Selection Approval Working Committee, Myanmar (2018-2023)

According to Table 6, there are 24 Korean institutions which mainly offer 70.35% of scholarship to Myanmar. Most of the scholarship are awarded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the second largest number of scholarship are offered by the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and the third largest number of scholarship are offered by Seoul National University(SNU). Among these institutions, nine institutions are academic institutions as highlighting the collaboration of higher education of both sides by means of academic exchange, and student exchange programmes. Therefore, it reveals that Korean institutions play a vital role in internationalization of Myanmar universities in the global context.

3-5. Cooperation of Republic of Korea and Yangon University of Economics

The Yangon University of Economics is a public university which is under the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education. The University was established as a professional institute to train economists, accountants, statisticians, and management personnel and to conduct researches on economics, business and statistical issues concerning the Myanmar Economy.

The University now has six major teaching departments, namely, Economics, Applied Economics, Statistics, Applied Statistics, Commerce, and Management Studies. The other supporting Departments of the university are

the Myanmar Language, English, Mathematics, and Geography Departments. The University is organized with the Rector, Pro-Rectors and Heads of Departments forming the Administrative Board and the Academic Board. There are at present a total of 420 full-time staffs in the university, out of which 230 are engaged in teaching and research. The rest are administrative and support personnel. The total student enrolment each year is about 8579, of which 1200 are fresh admissions. Courses in Economics, Statistics, Commerce, and Management are offered at the Bachelor, Honours, Diploma and Master levels. At present, the University is offering the courses for 9 bachelor degrees, 9 master degrees, 4 post graduate diploma degrees, and 3 doctoral degrees. The University has nurtured more than 60,000 graduates who specialized in Economics, Statistics, Commerce and Business Studies. (YUE, 2020).

Under the Human Resource Development Programme, Yangon University of Economics is offering Master of Public Administration, Master of Development Studies, Master of Business Administration, Master of Banking and Finance, Master of Marketing Management, Master of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Master of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Innovation, and Master of Applied Statistics Degrees. Concerning the post graduate diploma degree, Post Graduate Diploma in Marketing Management, Post Graduate Diploma in Management, Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management, and Post Graduate Diploma in Research Studies are also offered in order to meet the needs for continuing education and professional development of people in Myanmar by means of blended teaching and learning methods.

Educational Philosophy of Yangon University of Economics is “Creation for innovation”. Its vision is “To be an internationally recognized and a locally leading university”. To achieve this vision, six missions will be implemented. These missions are (1) to produce the highly qualified graduates in accordance with the requirements of the stakeholders, (2) to broaden the student’s perspective to become continuous life-long learners contributing innovative solutions to the society, (3) to enhance the capability of faculty through mutual beneficial networking with international academic institutions, (4) to upgrade the research competencies and skills through university-industry collaboration and (5) to nurture the intellectually and morally developed professionals for the development of the economy of nation. To attain these objectives, international collaboration is carried out with various international universities and associations.

Table 7 Foreign University and Association Collaborating with YUE

Nation	University		Institute	
	Name	Activities	Name	Activities
China	Yunnan University of Finance & Economics (YUFE)	Student Exchange, Faculty Exchange	Taiwan Shin Kong Commercial Bank	Scholarships for Students
Japan	1. Teikyo University 2. KOBE University 3. Sitama University 4. Okayama University	Student Exchange Joint Research Student & Faculty Exchange Student Exchange	1. Sumitomo Corporation 2. Charitable Trust Mizuho Asian Fund 3. AEON 1% Club Foundation	Scholarships for Students
Korea	Kyung Hee University	Joint Research	1. Korea Myanmar Research Association 2. Korea Development Institute	1. Joint Research and Seminar 2. Joint Research
Singapore			East Asia Institute of Management PTE LTD, Republic of Singapore	Scholarships for Students
Germany	University for Sustainable Development, EBERSWALDE (HNE)	Support for Research Fund		

Source: Record of IRO, YUE, (2024)

The universities and institutions which actively collaborate with Yangon University of Economics with respective activities are presented in Table 7. Yangon University of Economics has been jointly publishing the Myanmar Journal with Korea Myanmar Research Association (KOMYRA) since 2014. There are total of 9 volumes in the journal presenting 283 papers. Among them 62% of authors are from Myanmar side and 38% are from Korean side. These figures point out the collaboration of Myanmar and Korea in research and innovation of social science field.

3-6. Future Cooperation of Higher Education between Myanmar and Korea

▪ A Complex Landscape for Higher Education Collaboration

Myanmar is now trying to attain the peace and stability for development of country. Myanmar is trying to attain the quality education because education is a key driver of sustainable development and human resource development that depends on high quality education. Because of this, the State Administration Council has prioritized to support learning and academic excellence among the Myanmar people. Currently, Myanmar is facing many crises and there are few opportunities for development today. There is a need for positive international humanitarian assistance to overcome these difficulties. Korea is one of countries who supports the development of Myanmar citizens and development of Myanmar not only in education but also in job opportunities.

However, despite being geographically distant, Myanmar and Korea share deep historical ties and have witnessed a recent surge in economic and cultural exchange. Higher education presents a vital area for collaboration, offering the potential for mutual growth and development. However, several key challenges hinder the smooth flow of cooperation: political instability, economic hardship, and language and cultural differences.

Political Instability: Since the 2021 military coup, Myanmar has been plunged into political turmoil. This has had a profound impact on the education system. Educational institutions face operational instability, students are forced to discontinue their studies or lose educational opportunities, and faculty members struggle in a precarious environment. This political instability significantly hinders educational exchange and collaboration between the two countries. Korean educational institutions find it difficult to implement safe and effective exchange programs within the unstable context of Myanmar. Myanmar students, meanwhile, are hesitant to pursue studies in Korea due to political uncertainties.

Economic Hardship: Political instability has led to severe economic challenges in Myanmar. This directly affects the education system, resulting in a shortage of educational facilities and equipment, inadequate support for teacher training and professional development, and reduced education budgets. These difficulties contribute to a decline in the quality of education and negatively impact educational exchange and collaboration with Korea. Korean educational institutions face difficulties implementing effective exchange programs due to the poor educational infrastructure in Myanmar. Furthermore, many Myanmar students are forced to abandon their dreams of studying in Korea due to financial constraints.

Language and Cultural Differences: Korean and Myanmar languages have distinct linguistic structures, and their cultural backgrounds diverge significantly. These differences can lead to communication difficulties, cultural misunderstandings, and adaptation problems during collaboration. Myanmar students with limited Korean proficiency may struggle with their studies in Korea. Korean professors, in turn, might find it challenging to understand the cultural backgrounds and learning styles of Myanmar students.

▪ **Four Key Areas of Future Higher Education Collaboration between Myanmar and Korea**

Future cooperation in higher education between South Korea and Myanmar can be summarized in four key areas.

Expansion of Student and Faculty Exchange Programs: Enhancing student and faculty exchange initiatives between universities in both countries can significantly strengthen academic collaboration. By expanding existing programs, such as the ASEAN-Korea Academic Exchange Program, more Myanmar students can gain educational opportunities in South Korea. This exchange will foster cultural understanding and strengthen academic networks, allowing participants to share diverse perspectives and experiences.

Promotion of Joint Research Projects: There is potential for expanding collaborative research projects between South Korean and Myanmar universities, particularly in fields such as science, technology, and engineering. Strengthening partnerships through joint research initiatives can contribute to the academic advancement of both nations. Support from organizations like the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) can further enhance Myanmar's research capabilities, facilitating knowledge transfer and innovation.

Development of Online Education Platforms: In line with plans for establishing an ASEAN-Korea Cyber University, developing online education platforms specifically for Myanmar students can provide continuous access to quality education regardless of the political situation. This initiative would help bridge educational gaps and promote digital learning environments that cater to the needs of students in both countries.

Collaboration on Policy and Institutional Development: Sharing South Korea's economic development experiences can support Myanmar in developing its higher education policies and institutions. Strengthening organizations like the Myanmar Development Institute (MDI) and utilizing knowledge-sharing programs such as the Korean Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) can aid in creating a robust framework for national development. This collaboration will contribute to improving Myanmar's higher education system and overall economic growth.

These cooperative strategies will not only enhance higher education collaboration between South Korea and Myanmar but also improve Myanmar's educational and research capabilities. Furthermore, they are expected to positively impact the broader relationship between the two countries. Despite current political instability, cooperation in education remains a vital aspect of bilateral relations, with potential for expansion as Myanmar stabilizes politically.

IV. ENHANCING COLLABORATION OF EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION BETWEEN ASEAN AND KOREA

1. Strengthening ASEAN-Korea Educational Partnerships: Government Initiatives and Outcomes

The ASEAN-Republic of Korea relationship has significantly evolved since its inception in 1989, with education playing a pivotal role in strengthening ties. The 2010 Joint Declaration on ASEAN-Republic of Korea Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity and the 2017 New Southern Policy have been instrumental in fostering this collaboration (ASEAN Secretariat, 2022). Notable initiatives include the ASEAN-Korea Centre, established in 2009, and various scholarship programs such as the ASEAN-ROK Scholarship for Korean Studies and the Korean Government Scholarship Programme (KGSP) (Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea, 2023).

According to recent data, the number of ASEAN students studying in Korea has increased by 30% from 2018 to 2022, reaching over 64,000 students (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2023). This growth underscores the success of Korea's efforts in attracting ASEAN talent and promoting cultural exchange.

2. Navigating Complexities: Challenges in ASEAN-Korea University Exchange Programs

The collaboration between ASEAN countries and Korea in higher education faces several significant challenges that require strategic solutions.

Socioeconomic Disparities and Educational Infrastructure: Lee and Park (2022) highlight the varying levels of economic development within ASEAN countries, resulting in uneven educational infrastructure and resources. This disparity complicates the establishment of standardized exchange programs and can lead to imbalanced partnerships. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2023), the gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education ranges from over 80% in South Korea to less than 20% in some ASEAN countries, illustrating the stark contrast in educational development.

Linguistic and Cultural Barriers: Kim et al. (2021) found that 45% of surveyed ASEAN students in Korea reported difficulties in academic integration due to language barriers. This challenge extends beyond mere communication to impact the overall learning experience and research collaborations. Cultural differences in teaching styles, academic expectations, and social norms can also lead to adjustment difficulties for exchange students.

Asymmetrical Mobility and Funding Challenges: Data from the Korean Ministry of Education (2023) shows a significant imbalance in student mobility, with over 64,000 ASEAN students in Korea compared to fewer than 5,000 Korean students in ASEAN countries. This raises concerns about brain drain and missed opportunities for cross-cultural learning. Additionally, Park and Kim (2023) note that many ASEAN-Korea exchange programs rely heavily on government funding or short-term grants, making long-term planning and program sustainability difficult.

Recognition and Competitive Landscape: The lack of a unified accreditation system across ASEAN countries and Korea complicates the recognition of credits and degrees obtained through exchange programs (Lee, 2022). Furthermore, Korea faces stiff competition from countries like Japan, China, and Western nations in attracting ASEAN students, adding another layer of complexity to the development of successful exchange programs.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, including developing more inclusive programs, enhancing language support, creating sustainable funding models, and working towards greater harmonization of educational standards.

V. CONCLUSION: PATHWAYS FOR ENHANCED HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATION BETWEEN ASEAN AND KOREA

Despite the existing achievements in ASEAN-South Korea cooperation, there remains significant room for improvement in higher education collaboration. Promoting harmonization, complementarity, and mutual development is crucial for achieving a more comprehensive and effective partnership. The 35th anniversary of ASEAN-Korea dialogue relations offers a timely opportunity for both regions to review their cooperative framework, reassess their priorities, and establish a new roadmap for higher education collaboration that is aligned with the demands of the knowledge economy and the 4.0 revolution.

To foster a more robust and mutually beneficial partnership in higher education, ASEAN and Korea must adopt a multifaceted approach that addresses current challenges while leveraging the strengths of both regions. This collaborative strategy should focus on creating synergies that transcend mere student exchanges, encompassing comprehensive academic and cultural integration.

A cornerstone of this enhanced collaboration should be the development of joint academic programs that focus on cultivating both hard and soft skills critical for success in the global marketplace. By combining Korea's technological prowess with ASEAN's diverse cultural insights, these programs can offer a unique blend of knowledge and practical skills. For instance, joint degrees in fields such as sustainable development, digital

innovation, or cross-cultural management could prepare students to tackle regional and global challenges effectively.

Furthermore, strengthening the nexus between academia, industry, and research institutions across ASEAN and Korea is paramount. This trilateral collaboration can foster innovation ecosystems that drive economic growth and address societal needs. By establishing research clusters focused on shared priorities such as climate change mitigation, smart city development, or public health, both regions can pool resources and expertise to achieve meaningful outcomes.

Building robust academic networks and communities of practice between ASEAN and Korean institutions is another crucial step. These networks can facilitate knowledge exchange, collaborative research initiatives, and professional development opportunities for faculty and students alike. Regular academic symposiums, virtual collaboration platforms, and joint research publications can help sustain these networks and drive continuous engagement.

Lastly, cultural immersion and language proficiency programs should be expanded and deepened. By fostering a deeper understanding of each other's cultures and languages, ASEAN and Korea can build a foundation for long-lasting partnerships that extend beyond academia into broader socio-economic cooperation.

Through these concerted efforts, ASEAN and Korea can forge a higher education partnership that not only enhances academic excellence but also contributes to regional integration, innovation, and sustainable development.

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