

A Case Study of Korea-China Collaborative Education

Ren Bingyang, Liu Ting, and Ko Jang Wan

Abstract – This study aims to systematically analyze the role and impact of Korea-China educational collaboration in the internationalization of Chinese higher education. Utilizing methods such as literature review, case study, and comparative analysis, this research explores the development, achievements, and challenges of Korea-China cooperative education. A comprehensive theoretical framework was established through an in-depth review of existing academic literature, examining the historical background, development status, and operational models of collaborative programs. Representative cases were selected to highlight key aspects of educational cooperation and its practical implementation. Findings indicate that Korea-China collaborative education reshapes the boundaries of traditional academic learning by offering students enhanced practical experience, flexible study options, and exposure to globalization. However, challenges persist. Issues such as curriculum misalignment and credit transfer inconsistencies between the two systems cause academic difficulties. Language barriers significantly hinder learning efficiency, particularly for Chinese students in South Korea. In addition, the lack of robust quality assurance mechanisms contributes to unsatisfactory outcomes in certain programs, affecting their long-term sustainability. Based on these findings, this study proposes several recommendations: (1) strengthen multi-tiered language training and cultural exchange activities; (2) align curricula and standardize credit recognition systems; (3) enhance joint educational resources and research collaboration; (4) streamline visa processing and financial aid systems; and (5) expand scholarships, paid internships, psychological support, and career guidance. These measures aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of Korea-China educational cooperation and further advance the internationalization of Chinese higher education.

Keywords – Korean-China Collaborative Education; Internationalization of Education; Cross-cultural Exchange; Chinese higher education, Policy Support, Language Support.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the acceleration of globalization and regional integration, education internationalization has become an important strategic direction for developing higher education in various countries. Against this global background, Finardi and Rojo (2015) mentioned three significant changes in higher education: university education becomes mass education, higher education models become more diverse, and higher education is linked to economic growth. This highlights the intrinsic link between educational internationalization and socioeconomic development, laying the theoretical foundation for Korea-

China collaborative initiatives. Within this global trend, the Asia-Pacific region has emerged as a critical hub for educational cooperation. As international student migration increasingly shifts toward the Asia-Pacific, Filippov (2015) emphasized that internationalization is not only a global trend but also a strategic direction for higher education development. In this context, regional collaboration becomes essential, offering opportunities to align education with economic integration and to foster multicultural learning environments. Programs like the U.S. "Global Center" and EU's "Erasmus Mundus" serve as key references, and countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, and Australia have become important destinations for international students. Amid these regional developments, Korea-China educational cooperation stands out as a significant case. Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1992, Korea and China have progressively expanded their collaboration from initial exchanges to deeper forms such as joint educational programs, student mobility, and academic cooperation. These initiatives enrich higher education systems in both countries and contribute to broader economic and cultural exchanges. However, challenges persist, including linguistic barriers, cultural adaptation, and administrative coordination. Moreover, the cooperation faces issues such as limited teaching fields, insufficient research collaboration, and relatively low academic levels in some joint programs. Despite these advances, there remains limited systematic theoretical and empirical research on the specific impact of Korea-China cooperative educational institutes on the internationalization of Chinese higher education. Key questions that need clarification include: What models of overseas educational internationalization are currently effective? What experiences can China draw from Korea-China collaboration? What is the current status and effectiveness of Korea-China cooperative institutes?

Given this research gap, this study aims to analyze the role and impact of Korea-China educational cooperation on the internationalization of Chinese higher education by examining representative case studies. It will explore opportunities, such as improvements in students' language proficiency, cross-cultural competence, and professional development, as well as challenges like language barriers, cultural integration difficulties, and credit transfer issues. Based on these analyses, this study will offer practical suggestions to optimize cooperation models, improve operational efficiency, and contribute to the strategic development of Chinese higher education.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Development Process of Korea-China Cooperative Education

Korea-China cooperative education is an important component of the internationalization of Chinese education,

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dating back to the early 1980s. As China's reform and opening-up deepened, Sino-foreign cooperative institutions became important for improving educational quality and training international talent. In 1983, Deng Xiaoping emphasized that "education should aim at modernization, the world, and the future," laying the foundation for education internationalization. Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1992, the two countries have strengthened cooperation in education. In 1995, the National Education Commission issued the "Interim Regulations on Sino-Foreign Cooperative Institutes," strengthening foreign exchanges and cooperation. The 2003 and 2004 regulations further improved the legal framework for Sino-foreign cooperative education. In 2015, Korea and China signed a Free Trade Agreement, promoting education and cultural cooperation. In 2021, both presidents supported the "Year of Korea-China Cultural Exchange." In 2022, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was implemented, providing a foundation for deeper cooperation.

Korea's higher education reforms have supported the development of Korea-China cooperative education. Programs like Smart Korea Engineering, Regional Innovation University, and World-Class University improved internationalization by attracting students and scholars and setting evaluation indicators such as joint degree programs and foreign student proportions. Korea-China cooperation includes curriculum development, cultural exchanges, and academic collaboration. For example, the partnership between Shandong University of Finance and Economics and Woosong University promotes faculty exchanges and joint research, providing internationalized educational opportunities and enhancing bilateral cooperation.

Analysis of the Development Status of Korea-China Cooperative Institutes

Substantive educational cooperation between Korea and China commenced following the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. Since then, particularly under the impetus of the Belt and Road Initiative, an increasing number of institutions have engaged in bilateral academic exchanges and cooperative projects. These collaborations have explored diverse models such as dual-degree programs, joint education schemes, student exchange programs, and collaborative research. Both countries have continued to integrate educational resources and innovate in cooperation mechanisms. According to the list of Sino-foreign cooperative education institutions and programs released by China's Ministry of Education in February 2022, there were nearly 100 approved cooperative projects and institutes between China and South Korea at that time (Ministry of Education, 2022). On the basis of bilateral collaboration, multilateral exchange programs—such as the "Asia Campus" initiative in the humanities—have also been developed, playing a significant role in promoting youth interaction and advancing educational cooperation among China, South Korea, and Japan.

In terms of international student exchange, South Korea has long been a major destination for Chinese students due to its geographical proximity and cultural similarities. Data

from the Korea Education Development Institute (KEDI) show that between 2017 and 2021, the number of Chinese students studying in South Korea was 68,184; 68,537; 71,067; 67,030; and 67,348, respectively, accounting for 55.05%, 48.20%, 44.37%, 43.6%, and 44.2% of all international students in South Korea. Notably, the number peaked in 2019 with over 71,000 students, reflecting an increase of more than 20,000 compared to 2015. However, this figure declined starting in 2020 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, South Korean students have consistently represented the largest group of international students in China. In 2014, for instance, there were 62,923 South Korean students among 377,054 international students from 203 countries. From 2015 to 2018, the number of South Korean students in China remained the highest, with 66,672 in 2015, 70,540 in 2016, and 50,600 in 2018 (Statistics on Korean Students in Overseas Higher Education, 2021).

According to the Ministry of Education's information platform for the regulation of Sino-foreign cooperative education, as of October 2024, there were 1,289 undergraduate-level cooperative education institutions and programs across mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, comprising 189 institutions and 1,100 programs. Among these, 74 were China-South Korea cooperative programs (6.72%) and 2 were joint institutes (1.06%). At the graduate level and above, there were a total of 297 cooperative education initiatives, including 98 institutions and 199 programs. Of these, 7 were China-South Korea cooperative programs (3.52%) and 1 was a joint institute (1.02%). These programs are mainly concentrated in fields such as business administration, management, engineering, and technology. They aim to introduce high-quality educational resources from South Korea to enhance the internationalization of Chinese higher education (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Regionally, Korea-China cooperative programs are predominantly located in provinces such as Shandong, Jilin, Henan, and Hebei. In contrast, fewer such programs are found in western China, as well as in some economically advanced regions such as Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu—indicating significant potential for further development. Notable China-Korea joint institutions include the International Institute of Creative Design at Shanghai University of Technology, the Ulsan Ship and Maritime Institute at Ludong University, and the Qi Ming Institute at Changchun University.

With regard to the nature of student exchanges, most academic mobility between China and South Korea remains focused on language study. As of 2019, among the 71,067 Chinese students in South Korea, 14,960 were enrolled in language or non-degree programs, accounting for 21.05%. The number of Chinese students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees stood at 11,311 and 5,765, respectively, accounting for 15.92% and 8.11%. This data indicates that the proportion of students engaging in advanced degree studies remains relatively low. Similarly, Korean students in China tend to enroll in Chinese language programs and undergraduate courses. Due to the pandemic, the number of non-degree and language-training students declined significantly beginning in 2020 (Wan, 2024).

The Strategy of Sino-Korean Higher Education Cooperation

Recent Korea-China higher education cooperation has achieved remarkable results. Korea-China higher education cooperation significantly enhances educational quality and strengthens bilateral political, economic, and cultural ties.

As emphasized by Ambassador Xing Haiming in a speech at Woosong University, educational cooperation has become a vital component of bilateral relations, reflecting the evolving dynamics of China-South Korea ties. Tang and Yao (2021) further argue that in light of increasing global competition in higher education, the two countries must expand the scope and deepen the substance of their cooperation.

Currently, higher education institutions in both countries engage in diversified forms of collaboration, including student exchanges, faculty mobility, joint research, and Sino-foreign cooperative education. These activities have facilitated resource integration and joint talent cultivation. Park (2021), in his study of universities in high-rainfall regions, concluded that regional higher education cooperation between China and South Korea enhances the integration of educational and cultural resources while supporting regional socio-economic development. This model is considered a representative example of higher education internationalization.

A key achievement of this collaboration is the establishment of Korea-China Institutes. The first was founded in 2007 by Woosong University and Sichuan University, serving as a platform for language education and cultural exchange. Currently, there are 25 Korea-China Institutes in South Korea and 19 Sejong Institutes in China. These institutions have played a vital role in promoting mutual understanding and people-to-people ties. Wang (2020) also notes that the scope of cooperation includes not only undergraduate and postgraduate education but also lifelong learning, thus enabling ideological and institutional convergence across broader educational sectors.

Academic exchange and research collaboration represent another major outcome. Zhang et al. (2012), reflecting on the period from 1992 to 2012, highlighted the valuable experience gained in language learning, cultural communication, and academic cooperation. Jiang and Shi (2019) further point out that under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, bilateral cooperation has expanded, providing increased opportunities for international education and research collaboration between the two countries.

At the regional level, Postiglione (2019) observed that Sino-Korean cooperation has significantly contributed to East Asian educational integration, especially in the sharing of educational resources and research achievements. Hammond (2019) emphasized that such cooperation across multiple academic fields has had a profound impact on the overall quality and development of higher education and research in Northeast Asia.

Experiences and Prospects of Korea-China Cooperation in the Internationalization of Chinese Higher Education

In recent years, with continuous policy support and deepening regional collaboration, the internationalization of Chinese higher education has accelerated significantly, particularly in its partnership with South Korea. Korea-China cooperative institutes have played a crucial role in advancing student mobility, educational resource sharing, and academic research, contributing valuable experience to China's higher education internationalization (Sun & Jiang, 2014; Li, 2023).

For instance, the "CAMPUS Asia" initiative, jointly launched by China, Korea, and Japan, has promoted intercultural learning through student exchange, shared curricula, and academic collaboration. This program has notably expanded students' global perspectives and enhanced their cross-cultural competencies. Moreover, bilateral academic collaboration has deepened across multiple disciplines such as physics, chemistry, and materials science, with a marked increase in co-authored publications and scholarly engagement (Sun & Jiang, 2014).

In the field of language education, cooperative teaching models have also yielded significant outcomes. According to Li (2023), the joint instruction by Chinese and Korean teachers has enhanced students' Chinese language proficiency while increasing their interest in Chinese culture. Nevertheless, alongside these achievements, several operational challenges persist. Lu (2013) emphasizes the need to shift from a focus on quantity to one on quality by improving institutional frameworks and service systems, thus enhancing coordination between partner institutions.

Language and cultural barriers remain a key obstacle to effective instruction. Ouyang (2023) notes that both teachers and students involved in cross-cultural education must overcome linguistic, cultural, and technological challenges to ensure smooth teaching delivery. In terms of research collaboration, Zhou (2020) highlights the difficulties in reconciling disciplinary differences and institutional disparities, which often hinder deeper academic cooperation. Jeon (2023) further argues that educational cooperation between China and South Korea is not merely pedagogical but also reflects broader stakeholder dynamics and institutional negotiation.

At the national level, China has actively promoted higher education internationalization through initiatives such as the Confucius Institutes, Luban Workshops, and the China-ASEAN Vocational Education Union (Wang, 2024). With the advancement of digitization and informatization, new directions for internationalization have emerged (Cao, 2024). However, structural challenges remain, including limitations in educational philosophy, weak global academic influence, and imbalances in regional development (Jiang, 2023; Zhou, 2014). In particular, institutions in China's western regions struggle to attract and manage international students due to geographical and socio-economic constraints (Gu, 2023). To address this, Wei (2017) proposes the establishment of a "center-system" and integrated international talent cultivation models to improve regional internationalization capacity.

Comparatively, China still lags behind developed countries in terms of competitiveness and revenue from education exports. Countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom have implemented comprehensive strategies including international legislation, cross-border talent mobility, and research partnerships, thereby establishing well-structured systems for higher education internationalization (Liang, 2008; Chen, 2024). These experiences provide valuable policy references for China's reform and development.

Against this backdrop, China and South Korea have continued to introduce supportive policies to deepen educational cooperation. China's "Education Modernization 2035" and the "Higher Education Quality Improvement Action Plan" emphasize international student recruitment, faculty mobility, and collaborative research as core strategies. Cheng (2014) underscores the foundational importance of language policy in enabling sustainable educational cooperation.

On the Korean side, the "Regional Innovation System and Education" (RISE) plan aims to attract and retain high-quality talent by providing competitive compensation, research funding, and career development pathways, thereby addressing population decline and promoting regional revitalization. Korea has also expanded its use of digital universities, transnational education programs, and MOOCs to attract a diverse student body and enhance the global competitiveness of its higher education system (Liang, 2008).

Increasingly, universities in both countries are aligning educational collaboration with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Joint research efforts have addressed pressing global issues such as climate change, energy transitions, and public health. These collaborations not only enhance bilateral research capacity but also contribute to global sustainable development. As Bermeo (2014) points out, South Korea's success in educational innovation and international collaboration offers valuable insights for strengthening China–South Korea cooperation on global challenges.

Looking ahead, Korea–China higher education cooperation is expected to deepen further through continued policy support and institutional innovation. Yoo (2018) highlights South Korea's new faculty evaluation system as a useful model for improving teacher development and quality assurance within bilateral programs. Moreover, Hamidi and Said (2008) argue that technical and vocational education represents a vital area of cooperation between the two countries, with the potential to promote economic growth and regional integration.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining literature review and case study methodologies to analyze the specific role of China–South Korea cooperative institutes in promoting the internationalization of higher education.

This study selected and filtered literature based on the following three principles to ensure its academic value and relevance. To ensure the scope and authority of the literature, several international academic databases were

used in the search. The primary database used was the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the most comprehensive academic journal database in China, which includes numerous studies on Korea–China cooperation institutes, educational internationalization, and related policies. The internationally authoritative database, Web of Science, was primarily used to search for international research literature on international higher education and multinational cooperation. JSTOR and EBSCOhost were mainly used to search for academic literature on international educational cooperation models, multicultural education, and other fields, as well as to obtain research results on related multinational educational cooperation. In addition, Google Scholar was used to search and read many articles for this study.

To ensure that the retrieved literature matched the theme of this study, carefully designed keyword combinations were used. The main keywords were 'Korea–China cooperation institutes' and 'internationalization of higher education,' while related keywords included 'educational cooperation models,' 'multicultural education,' 'educational resource sharing,' and 'international talent cultivation.' Furthermore, to ensure the comprehensiveness of the literature search, Chinese and English keywords were combined according to the characteristics of various databases.

In the process of literature analysis, this study combined inductive and deductive approaches to systematically classify the specific experiences and outcomes of China–Korea cooperative institutes in promoting the internationalization of higher education. By thoroughly reading and organizing the literature, this study summarized the active roles played by China–Korea cooperative institutes, including the sharing of educational resources, pedagogical reform, and cultural exchange. Specifically, the study addressed the historical background and development process of the operation of cooperative institutes, their operational models, and their effectiveness. By organizing the relevant literature, the study analyzed the impact of policy backgrounds and changes in international relations on the development of China–Korea cooperative institutes. Through inductive reasoning, the study summarized the cooperation models of China–Korea cooperative institutes in areas such as curriculum design, teacher exchange, and student education, and verified specific outcomes in the internationalization of higher education. This allowed for a systematic overview of the specific roles played by China–Korea cooperative institutes in the internationalization of higher education. Strict procedures were applied in the literature search and screening process, maintaining high standards regarding authority, relevance, and timeliness to ensure the academic value and reliability of the sources. The literature analysis provided a theoretical foundation for the subsequent case study and offered in-depth background data necessary for understanding the successful cases of China–Korea cooperation and their contributions to the internationalization of higher education in China.

Case study

According to relevant research literature, current studies on the internationalization of cooperative education mainly focus on case analysis, which emphasizes analyzing each country's internationalization cases of cooperative education (Zhu Xueqiao, 2024; Chang Xiaolin & Yin Wei, 2023; Lane, 2011; Arislanovna & Bakhtiyorvich, 2001). The case study method is considered an effective way to analyze problems (Schoch, 2020), and it is also used as an important methodology in this study. This study conducts an in-depth analysis of specific school cases to explore how China-Korea cooperative education operates in the context of higher education internationalization, including the content and outcomes of the cooperation. At the same time, it analyzes cooperative education programs in other countries to examine their development models in depth. By comparing them with China-Korea cooperative education programs, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the current issues in China-Korea educational cooperation and contribute to formulating reasonable suggestions.

This study takes into account both undergraduate and graduate-level cases, as well as two levels of analysis: cooperative education programs and cooperative institutions. Through this, the study presents concrete results at the operational level of China-Korea cooperative education, such as educational resource sharing, educational innovation, and the promotion of international talent cultivation. Simultaneously, the China-Korea cooperative education cases are compared with school operation cases through cooperation with other developed countries. Based on this, the study selects and analyzes the following cases: The joint undergraduate logistics management education program operated by Shandong Normal University and Woosuk University in Korea; The joint Master's program in Educational Administration between Tianjin Normal University and Sehan University in Korea; The jointly established institution Ulsan Ship and Maritime University by the Ludong University.

Research Analytical Framework

This study first reviewed the development background and relevant policies of China-Korea cooperative education and theoretically analyzed its impact on promoting the internationalization of higher education in China. Subsequently, it selected the cooperation project between Shandong Normal University and Korea's Woosuk University, as well as the joint operation model between the Ludong University and Korea's Ulsan Ship and Maritime University, as representative cases, and conducted in-depth discussions on their successful experiences and practical challenges. By studying the cases of the three universities mentioned above, this paper examined the strengths and weaknesses of China-Korea cooperative education in terms of language, cultural integration, curriculum articulation, and quality assurance in education.

Finally, this paper proposed strategic suggestions for optimizing China-Korea cooperative education. These

suggestions include strengthening language support, improving curriculum design, promoting the sharing of educational resources, and enhancing cross-cultural exchange mechanisms. Through this, it provides reference materials for further deepening China-Korea educational cooperation and promoting the internationalization of Chinese education.

In the process of discussing China-Korea cooperative education and the internationalization of Chinese higher education, this study established a multi-level analytical framework by combining the literature review method and the case study method in order to achieve systematic and scientific research outcomes. This analytical framework mainly consists of three aspects: policy, cooperation models, and student development. Through this, the study reveals the operational mechanisms of China-Korea cooperative education and its impact on the internationalization of higher education from multiple perspectives, and clearly identifies the weaknesses and areas for improvement exposed during the process.

IV. ANALYSIS OF CHINA-KOREA COOPERATIVE EDUCATION CASES AND CHALLENGES

Based on the principles of case selection, this study selected and analyzed three cases: the undergraduate logistics management education program jointly operated by Shandong Normal University and Korea's Woosuk University; the master's degree program in Educational Administration jointly operated by Tianjin Normal University and Korea's Sehan University; and the cooperative institution jointly established by the Ludong University and Ulsan Ship and Maritime University. Through these cases, the study conducted a multi-dimensional analysis of faculty resources, cooperation models, and cooperation outcomes of both sides. By comparing these cases with equivalent cooperative institutes in other countries, a comprehensive understanding of the current status and development trends of China-Korea higher education cooperation can be achieved. Moreover, such analysis can provide valuable experience and reference materials for policy formulation and implementation.

Cooperative Education Program between Shandong Normal University in China and Woosuk University in Korea

Shandong Normal University is a key university in Shandong Province, possessing numerous top-tier academic departments, with outstanding academic capabilities in both its doctoral and master's programs, and a wealth of faculty resources. Woosuk University in Korea is a well-known private university, recognized by the Ministry of Education of China as a higher education institution in Korea. It has an active doctoral program and holds significant influence particularly in fields such as Business Administration and Journalism. The faculty and student resources of Shandong Normal University and Woosuk University in Korea are shown in Table 1. The data is based on information published on the official

website of the College of International Education at Shandong Normal University. Although the number of enrolled students at Shandong Normal University is relatively high, the number of international students is lower than that of Woosuk University in Korea.

The undergraduate logistics management program jointly operated by Shandong Normal University and Woosuk University in Korea began in 2012 and is conducted in China. It adopts a cooperative teaching model involving both Korean and Chinese instructors. Upon graduation, students receive a jointly issued diploma and bachelor's degree certificate from both Shandong Normal University and Woosuk University in Korea, recognized as general higher education undergraduate qualifications. The program involves 32 Chinese faculty members and 10 Korean faculty members.

TABLE I: FACULTY AND STUDENT STATUS OF SHANDONG NORMAL UNIVERSITY AND WOOSUK UNIVERSITY IN KOREA

Content	University	Number of Enrolled Students	Number of International Students	Number of Faculty and Staff
	Shandong Normal University (China)	35,300	191	2,329
	Woosuk University (Korea)	10,407	Around 1,000	Around 100

the Official Website of Shandong Normal University

In terms of course structure and educational content, a total of 11 courses have been introduced. Among these, major courses such as Basic Korean, Marketing, International Logistics Management, and E-commerce are conducted in Korean. These courses are designed by integrating industrial demand and educational standards from both Korea and China to ensure the quality of education. The jointly developed curriculum is delivered through bilingual instruction. A total of 13 Korean instructors have been recruited, and short-term faculty exchanges between the two countries are also carried out. Teachers from both sides are encouraged to visit each other's institutions to learn teaching methods and educational philosophies, thereby improving teaching quality. Every year, 2 to 3 Chinese instructors are selected and dispatched to Woosuk University in Korea to further the development of educational standards at both institutions.

The credit acquisition process includes the completion of 160 credits over four years in China, or studying in Korea. Credits obtained in Korea are also recognized by Shandong Normal University.

As China-Korea trade exchanges grow closer, the demand for logistics professionals has been increasing. The cooperative program aims to meet this demand by focusing on cultivating talents equipped with international logistics knowledge. In the student training process, the program emphasizes the integration of theory and practice and encourages students to participate in logistics-related field training. Students are also given the option to go to Korea for internships and study. To create a high-quality language

environment, 2 to 3 native Korean instructors are invited each semester to teach Korean language classes.

Cooperative Education Program between Tianjin Normal University in China and Sehan University in Korea

Tianjin Normal University is a key university in the province and currently holds 31 first-level disciplines authorized for master's degrees and 19 professional master's degree categories. As of now, the university has 35,232 students, of which international students account for 3.07%. The number of faculty members is 2,561. According to the information from the university's official website, Tianjin Normal University has established cooperative programs with universities in 35 countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, Japan, and Canada.

Sehan University in Korea is a comprehensive and prestigious university with a high degree of academic stability. In the 2024 QS World University Rankings, it was ranked 644th. Sehan University also actively engages in academic exchange and external cooperation with many countries, including the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Since 2003, Tianjin Normal University and Sehan University have jointly operated a master's degree education program and have now graduated ten cohorts of postgraduate students.

Tianjin Normal University and Sehan University jointly operate a Master of Education Administration degree program, adopting a China-Korea joint degree training model. The standard academic duration is two years, with a flexible system allowing completion within two to four years. Generally, students complete coursework during the first three semesters. Courses include "Theory and Practice of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era," "Marxism and Social Science Methodology" or "Introduction to Dialectics of Nature," "Educational Sociology," "Educational Psychology," "Teacher Theory," "Research on Teaching Methods," "Communication Studies," "Supervision Theory," "Educational Administration," "Educational Research Methodology," "Organizational Behaviour," and "Educational Policy Studies."

In the fourth semester, students write their master's thesis and attend the thesis defense in Korea at the end of the semester. The defense can be conducted in Korean, English, or Chinese. Students who complete the required coursework, pass the examinations, and successfully defend their thesis are awarded a master's degree (in Management or Education) by Sehan University. The obtained degree certificate can be authenticated by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange of the Ministry of Education.

Sehan University was one of the first universities in Korea to initiate educational exchanges with China and also established a Confucius Institute. Tianjin Normal University and Sehan University jointly established a Confucius Institute, where translation support is provided in Chinese during lectures, and master's theses can be written in either English or Chinese. The thesis defense may be conducted in Chinese.

Currently, Tianjin Normal University and Sehan University are jointly operating the Master of Educational Administration degree program. However, language and cultural differences still remain as primary obstacles. This study mentions that students at the Confucius Institute of Sehan University are experiencing difficulties due to disparities in language proficiency. In addition to language and cultural issues, although the curriculum includes comprehensive knowledge of educational administration, it lacks alignment with the specific education systems and policy practices in China.

Although there is a certain level of communication and cooperation between the two universities, actual faculty and student exchange activities and resource sharing are relatively limited, which has affected the optimal utilization of educational resources on both sides.

Jointly Established Institution between the Ludong University and Ulsan Ship and Maritime University

The jointly established institution between the Ludong University and Ulsan Ship and Maritime University is the **first China–foreign cooperative institution** founded as a **local independent legal entity** following the promulgation of the "Regulations on China–Foreign Cooperative Education Establishments." It was established in **2013** and has a history of more than ten years.

At present, the cooperative institution offers **three majors: Ship and Ocean Engineering, Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation, and Electrical Engineering and Automation**. The current student body at the institution exceeds **1,200 students**.

The qualification standards for faculty members are presented in **Table 4-2**. Among the **84-teaching staff** at the institution, **38 are foreign teachers**, accounting for **45.23%** of the total.

TABLE II: FACULTY STATUS OF THE JOINTLY ESTABLISHED INSTITUTION BETWEEN THE LUDONG UNIVERSITY AND ULSAN SHIP AND MARITIME UNIVERSITY

Content	Total Faculty Members	Foreign Faculty Members
Major	Total Faculty Members	Foreign Faculty Members
Ship and Ocean Engineering	28	13
Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation	26	12
Electrical Engineering and Automation	30	13

Ulsan Ship and Maritime College, Ludong University

The Ludong University and Ulsan Ship and Maritime University have collaboratively developed three training pathways for student development. As shown in Table II, under the 2+2 and 3+1 models, students may voluntarily apply to study at Korean universities. If the students meet the degree conferral requirements through mutual credit recognition between the two institutions, they can obtain a

bachelor's degree from both Ludong University and Ulsan University.

This cooperative institution places great emphasis on international cultural literacy in student training. It actively adopts advanced educational management models and teaching systems from foreign institutions. In addition, the program offers dual foreign language courses in Korean and English to enable students to access more international education opportunities and to foster the cultivation of globally competent talents.

Although Ludong University, in collaboration with Ulsan Ship and Maritime University, offers the "2+2" and "3+1" learning models, not all students are able to complete the full four years of study abroad smoothly. Language proficiency limitations and economic pressures are major obstacles. Currently, the China–Korea cooperation at the undergraduate level is limited to only three majors: Ship and Ocean Engineering, Mechanical Design, Manufacturing and Automation, and Electrical Engineering and Automation, leading to academic concentration and limited choices for students.

Moreover, due to differences in the teaching systems between Korea and China, certain courses face challenges in terms of curricular alignment and credit recognition, requiring students to make additional efforts to adapt to different educational models. Some students struggle to provide feedback on foreign curriculum experiences, and there is a lack of systematic pre-departure training.

Analysis of current issues and causes in China–Korea cooperative institutes

In this study, through the analysis of three cases, it was found that China–Korea cooperative education still faces numerous problems. The current issues and their causes can be summarized as follows:

First, the problem of language and cultural differences. There are significant differences in cultural traditions, educational philosophies, and teaching methods between China and South Korea. These differences are particularly prominent in the actual teaching practices of cooperative institutes and directly affect the effectiveness of instruction. Although most cooperative institutes currently offer Korean language programs before the start of regular classes, the short duration and limited content fail to meet actual needs. As a result, students struggle to use Korean fluently in academic and everyday settings. Some classes are conducted in English, but the language proficiency of both students and instructors often does not meet the required standard, further exacerbating the issue. For example, Korean instructors' English pronunciation or expression habits are often difficult for Chinese students to understand. Moreover, some Chinese students have a weak English foundation, which prevents them from fully engaging in class discussions and interactions. While Korean education emphasizes active participation and group discussions, Chinese students are more accustomed to passive learning styles, such as listening to lectures and taking notes. These differences lead some Chinese students to struggle with adapting to Korean classroom styles, resulting in a passive attitude that negatively impacts their learning outcomes. Furthermore, Koreans tend to behave

quietly in public spaces, while Chinese people often prefer lively group activities. This cultural contrast can sometimes cause misunderstandings. Due to cultural barriers, Korean and Chinese students often find it challenging to communicate in daily life, and many Chinese students tend to socialize only with fellow nationals, missing opportunities to build friendships with Korean students. Since cooperative institutes often lack sufficient multicultural activities and communication mechanisms—such as orientation events and cultural exchange workshops—the effects of cultural integration are limited.

Second, issues related to **curriculum design and credit transfer**. While Korean institutes focus on practical and teamwork-based learning, Chinese universities emphasize theoretical frameworks. This creates additional adjustment challenges for students transitioning between systems. In majors such as law and medicine, differences in national standards and regulations hinder deep collaboration, and students are unable to benefit from multinational learning experiences fully. Some courses completed in one country may not be recognized in the other due to differing evaluation criteria. For example, Korean universities operate on a semester system with performance-based assessment, while Chinese universities place more emphasis on final exams, making credit recognition more difficult. Some students are unable to transfer credits during cross-border study periods and are forced to retake similar courses, resulting in wasted time and resources and increased academic pressure. Most China-Korea cooperative programs are concentrated in popular fields such as business, management, and IT. At the same time, disciplines in humanities, arts, and social sciences are relatively scarce, limiting choices for students interested in those fields. The lack of interdisciplinary and targeted programs, such as courses in intercultural management or East Asian regional studies, diminishes the academic appeal of the cooperation.

Third, problems in **quality monitoring and resource sharing**. There are considerable differences in faculty quality between the cooperative institutes. In some programs, invited instructors lack professional expertise or deliver outdated content, failing to reflect cutting-edge international knowledge timely. The inconsistency in teaching methods and evaluation standards makes it difficult for students to adapt across different institutions. Research collaboration between the two sides remains formal primarily, and there are very few genuine multinational scientific research projects, limiting students' opportunities to participate in international research. Library and database resource sharing between Korean and Chinese universities is inefficient, preventing students from accessing necessary academic materials, which impacts thesis writing and research quality. Additionally, many programs lack long-term and stable faculty exchange plans. Most instructor exchanges are short-term, making it challenging to achieve in-depth academic and educational collaboration. Korean instructors often lack an understanding of Chinese students' learning habits, while Chinese instructors have limited awareness of the Korean education system, leading to frequent challenges in class coordination.

Fourth, there is a lack of **policy support and innovation in cooperation models**. Although both governments have issued policies encouraging school cooperation, there are obstacles to practical implementation. For instance, student visa application procedures are complicated and time-consuming, sometimes preventing students from enrolling on time. Delays in tuition support and scholarship payments also force some students to drop out or reduce study hours due to financial difficulties. Degree recognition between Korea and China still faces hurdles. Joint degrees issued by some cooperative institutes are not well recognized by specific industries and employers in either country, negatively impacting students' employment prospects. After graduation, students may face duplicate degree recognition issues in both countries, increasing time and financial costs. Most cooperation programs follow rigid "2+2" or "3+1" models, requiring students to complete specific years of study in both countries. Such inflexible models fail to accommodate individual needs. The lack of hybrid education models that combine online and offline teaching makes it difficult to respond effectively to disruptions caused by uncontrollable events such as pandemics.

Finally, the burden of **financial costs and psychological stress**. Korea has high tuition and living expenses, especially in metropolitan areas like Seoul, where prices continue to rise. For families of average income, this represents a significant expenditure. Scholarship and subsidy coverage in cooperative programs is limited and does not fully relieve students' financial burdens. Some students have to take part-time jobs to sustain themselves, which negatively affects their academic performance. The frequent transitions between the two countries' education systems also lead to significant academic stress. Some students find it challenging to adapt to multicultural environments, experiencing psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. However, psychological counselling and adjustment support services at institutes are often insufficient, and there is a lack of professional psychological support teams. As a result, some students studying abroad feel isolated. Graduates of China-Korea cooperative institutes also face challenges in the job markets of both countries. In Korea, they are sometimes seen as "non-local talents" due to language and cultural differences, weakening their job competitiveness. In China, some employers are not familiar with the joint degree system and may label graduates with terms like "Korean master's degrees," which further complicates their employment prospects.

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes Sino-Korean cooperative school cases and selects several cooperative projects, such as the collaboration between Shandong Normal University and Woosuk University, Tianjin Normal University and Sehan University, and Ludong University and Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology, as research cases to explore the significance and challenges of promoting the internationalization of Sino-Korean higher education cooperation. Through the analysis of three cooperation education cases, it is found that cooperative education is

reshaping the boundaries of traditional academic learning while providing students with more practical experience, flexible choices, and globalization-related learning opportunities. Although Sino-Korean cooperative education has great significance for the internationalization of Chinese higher education, several issues still exist. First, due to curriculum setting and credit linkage issues, students' academic burdens are increasing. Some course contents are duplicated or conflicting in the educational systems of the two countries, causing difficulties for students. Second, the language barrier remains a significant challenge for Sino-Korean cooperative education, particularly as some Chinese students face reduced learning effectiveness due to differences in language and culture while studying in Korea. Additionally, the monitoring mechanisms for educational quality are not perfect, and the educational outcomes of some cooperative programs do not meet expectations, which poses challenges for the long-term development of cooperative education.

The following suggestions are proposed to address these issues.

First, Strengthening language support and cultural exchange. The language and cultural differences in Sino-Korean cooperation institutes can be addressed through enhanced language training, support systems, and various multicultural activities. First, the language training course should be extended to six months and divided into beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels so that students can achieve the target language level before formal enrollment. To ensure the effectiveness of the training, language proficiency tests should be conducted after the course. The university language centre and program administrators will participate in this process, distributing online learning resources at all stages of the course. For example, recorded and broadcast courses, online tests, and vocabulary databases will help students integrate their knowledge. Through the online learning platform, students can adjust their learning progress autonomously and review whenever needed. At the beginning of the semester, students from Korea and China with different language levels should be matched as language partners, and weekly face-to-face or online exchanges should be conducted. This will help improve students' language skills and promote multicultural understanding. Korean teachers will receive training on the effects of intonation and expression habits on communication, focusing on using slow English and customized teaching slides. This training should be conducted before the semester starts to ensure smooth teaching. In terms of cultural exchange, the first-year orientation should be diversified with team competitions, cultural experience workshops, and local visits to encourage student participation. A 'Korea-China Cultural Day' event should be organized to celebrate Korean Seollal and Chuseok, allowing students to experience the traditional cultures of both countries. The orientation will be held two weeks before the semester starts, and cultural events will be organized throughout the semester to help students gradually adapt to the new environment.

Second, Optimizing course design and credit docking mechanism. To address issues in course design and credit transfer in Sino-Korean cooperation institutes, it is necessary to strengthen the development of courses such as

multicultural management and regional studies to foster students' global vision and comprehensive abilities. To ensure the course content matches the characteristics of both countries' cultures and educational philosophies, a special curriculum development team composed of Sino-Korean teachers should be established. Although some Sino-foreign cooperation universities have implemented this approach, its effectiveness appears limited. The program development should be completed within two years of operation and gradually expand to related majors to meet students' diverse needs.

Regarding credit transfer and evaluation systems, a joint academic committee should be formed to adjust the evaluation criteria between the two countries' institutes and ensure mutual recognition of academic achievements and credits. This committee should be established before the program officially starts, reviewing credit matching every year and promptly addressing any issues caused by course differences. The committee's responsibilities include formalizing uniform courses, evaluation criteria, and performance conversion mechanisms to ensure students' learning outcomes are reasonably recognized across various education systems. To increase learning flexibility, short exchange programs, online courses, and dual-mentorship systems could be set up in addition to the existing 2+2 and 3+1 models. These arrangements provide students with more choices and meet their personalized needs.

Third, Strengthening quality monitoring of education and resource-sharing mechanisms. Sino-Korean cooperation institutes need to strengthen the quality monitoring of education in terms of both teaching quality and resource sharing. A course evaluation system should be established, where courses and teachers are anonymously evaluated at the end of each semester, and course content should be improved promptly based on feedback. A long-term teacher exchange program should be established to increase the frequency of teacher exchanges and academic exchanges, integrating them into the annual evaluation system. Through the coordination of exchange offices between the two institutes, teachers should be dispatched for at least three months each year to enhance teaching quality and strengthen close exchanges in teaching methods and academic research areas. In terms of resource sharing and scientific research collaboration, Sino-Korean cooperation should be strengthened. The library and database resources of the two countries' universities should be integrated to promote electronic resource sharing, ensuring students have easy access to various academic resources.

Fourth, Strengthening policy support and innovative cooperation models. To streamline visa and financial support application procedures, both institutes should cooperate with embassies to establish fast-track visa channels and provide priority visa approval for students of cooperation institutes to assist with their admission. Furthermore, scholarships and living subsidies should be increased, primarily to support students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in completing their studies smoothly. The scholarship scale and criteria should be updated every spring, and financial support policies should be adjusted promptly to match changing economic

conditions. The recognition of joint degrees is key to enhancing the attractiveness of the cooperation program. Institutes should actively promote agreements for mutual recognition of degrees and communicate with government departments and employers. At the same time, institutes should add flexible degree formats such as dual degrees and credit certification to meet students' diverse needs. This flexibility will allow students to choose the most suitable degree format based on their career development goals and can be widely implemented from the second year of the program.

Fifth, Reducing the economic burden and strengthening psychological support

To alleviate economic pressure, institutes should establish special scholarships in collaboration with enterprises to reduce students' economic burden. This will not only ease the financial strain on students but also encourage more excellent students to choose these cooperation programs. Scholarships should be diversified according to students' specific needs and economic backgrounds to ensure that students from economically disadvantaged situations can complete their studies smoothly. Expanding paid internship opportunities is another important measure to address economic burdens. Cooperation institutes should collaborate with local enterprises to offer paid internship positions for students, providing policy incentives for participating companies and encouraging more companies to engage in internship programs. In terms of psychological support, institutes should establish student mental health centers staffed with professional counsellors to provide personalized counselling and crisis intervention services. The establishment of such centers will help students cope with stress in their academic and personal lives, promptly identifying and intervening in potential mental health issues. Mental health services should be promoted before each semester begins to help students understand the services available and how to make appointments. Regular career development lectures, job fairs, and resume guidance should help students better prepare for entering the workforce.

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