



KOREA



2023 Trend Report

# Higher Education & e-learning in ASEAN



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# e-learning in South Korea before and after the pandemic

Kang Yee Sun / Korea University



South Korea implemented e-learning before the pandemic to improve grades. However, online learning during COVID-19 proved challenging, particularly for younger students who struggled to concentrate without parental support. Despite efforts to improve e-learning platforms, there were widening achievement gaps among students, highlighting decreased concentration and academic performance at home.

## 01

### ► Background of E-learning in South Korea

South Korea, a nation with high technological advancement, has adopted e-learning long before the pandemic. With the 'algorithm system' in great advance, it helped students to learn efficiently even after school. Thus, 'smart home-school material' market has increased in popularity. Aim of e-learning before the pandemic was to analyze every students' tendencies and learning behaviors and teach them accordingly with would improve their grades. With various developed e-learning platforms, student would be able to increase their academic ability as well as catching up on areas that they were not sure in school.

### ► Students struggles with unprecedented online learning

Although e-learning was adopted in Korea from a long time ago with the largest private education market, online public education with COVID-19 struggled numerous students. The younger the students, the harder to concentrate. A lot of parents had to be next to their child during classes. One parent stated that, "It is impossible for my child to take online classes without me around. It would be better if the semester did not begin at all." A lot of parents were overly stressed due to the amount of help the children needed. This was not the only concern of the parents, the biggest concern was that there is lack of communication between the educators and students.



## ► Achievement gaps widen as remote learning continues

Even one year after the COVID-19 outbreak, e-learning has continued. A lot of report apparently showed the achievement gaps between the middle school students in 2020 than in previous years. According to a study by Seoul Education Research and Information Institute involving 382 middle schools in Seoul, the proportion of students with grades between B and D dropped greatly. With key subjects' grades dropping greatly, the Ministry of Education is putting a lot of effort into enhancing the Korea Education and Research Information Service's e-Learning site. Unfortunately, no matter how much investments are going into the e-learning system, the student's concentration at home dropped greatly.

## ► New Implementations to e-Learning during and after the pandemic

With disasters and emergencies over the last three years, South Korea has learned its lesson. South Korea has suffered from education disruptions with increasing learning inequality. Thus, the government has applied several strategies to protect learning from students. The system of e-learning was great but a lot of students protested that it was hard for them to dedicate to their studies due to other factors.



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# Driving Educational Advancement in Korea: Reforming Regulations and Embracing Innovative Models

#OnlineEducation #EnglishTeaching  
#MinervaSchoolInspired #LifelongLearning

Mr. Wooyong Shin / Yonsei University



In an effort to advance education in Korea, two significant developments have taken place. Firstly, a committee under the Prime Minister's Office has recommended revising regulations to lower education requirements for non-Korean English teachers in online education, aiming to foster international growth for online education companies. Secondly, the Ministry of Education has approved the establishment of Taejae University, a cyber university inspired by Minerva School's innovative approach. Taejae University aims to provide flexible and lifelong learning experiences through online education.

## 01

### Promoting Equity and Global Expansion: Reforming English Teaching Regulations

A committee formed under the Prime Minister's Office has proposed a revision to regulations regarding the education requirements for non-Koreans teaching English online. The committee, consisting of five members, has recommended that the Ministry of Education amend its enforcement ordinance, which currently mandates that private academies, known as "hagwons," must hire English teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher.

This requirement has been criticized as discriminatory, as it does not apply to Koreans who can teach English at hagwons with an associate degree. Until 2004, both groups were required to have a four-year degree. The committee's decision is in response to demands from online education companies, which argue that the existing requirement limits their ability to expand internationally.

These companies point out that their competitors based outside of Korea often connect students with university students who have a higher education level, such as juniors or seniors from prestigious institutions like Harvard in the United States. Such programs attract students from around the world, including Korea.

The committee, after considering the complaint, agreed that the requirement should be revised for online education. However, they emphasized that the rules for in-person education should remain unchanged. They believe that online classes are easier to monitor and thus



provide better protection against inappropriate teacher behavior. In-person classes, on the other hand, require a more cautious approach due to the greater influence teachers can have on students.

The committee stressed that while the education requirements may be eased for non-Korean teachers, the screening and management of teachers' qualifications should not be relaxed. They called on hagwon owners to strictly adhere to the rules outlined in the Hagwon Law and related enforcement ordinances, with the ministry supporting these efforts. The committee also suggested that the ministry streamline the application process for overseas applicants seeking English-teaching positions.

If the ministry decides to relax the requirements for foreigners, the committee believes it would stimulate the online education sector and create more opportunities for Korean students living in less-developed regions, where access to private education, especially English language education, is limited. The ministry has expressed its willingness to consider the committee's recommendations and will review the outcomes of the meeting before making any revisions to the relevant regulations.

## Implications

1. Expanded opportunities for non-Korean English teachers: Lowering the education requirements would create more teaching opportunities for non-Koreans who possess relevant skills and experience but lack a bachelor's degree, leading to a more diverse pool of English instructors.
2. Increased competitiveness for Korean online education companies: Relaxing the regulations would enable Korean online education companies to compete more effectively internationally, as they would have the flexibility to adopt innovative models, attract students globally, and strengthen their market position.

## 02

### Taejae University: Pioneering a New Era of Cyber Education in Korea

The Ministry of Education has approved the establishment of Taejae University, a cyber university. Taejae University, founded with a donation of 300 billion won by HanSam Honorary Chairman Cho Chang-geol, has garnered significant attention for its pursuit of the Minerva School's educational approach. It will officially commence operations in September.

Taejae University has adopted Minerva School as its role model. Established by entrepreneur Ben Nelson in 2012, Minerva School operates without a physical campus. Students participate in classes online and engage in dormitory life while traveling to different countries. They also collaborate with international companies and non-profit organizations on projects to develop their skills.

The Ministry of Education approved the establishment plan for Taejae University in 2022, and the school established the Taejae Academy Corporation and received approval for establishment from the University Establishment Evaluation Committee this year.

Taejae University is scheduled to open in September, with a plan to admit a total of 100 freshmen across five departments: Innovation Foundation, Humanities and Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, and Business Innovation.

Cyber universities have been operated as "remote educational facilities for lifelong education" based on the Lifelong Education Act. Since 2009, existing universities have been converted or newly established as cyber universities. Currently, there are 19 cyber universities, including the 11 converted universities and one newly established university in 2009, with nearly 90,000 registered students (excluding 130,000 non-quota students) studying at these institutions.

## Implications

1. The establishment of Taejae University as a cyber university reflects a growing trend in the education sector towards innovative and technology-driven learning models. By adopting the educational approach of Minerva School, which emphasizes online classes, global engagement, and project-based learning, Taejae University aims to provide a unique educational experience. This implies that there is an increasing awareness of the value and effectiveness of online education and the potential it holds for offering flexible, accessible, and globally connected learning opportunities to students.
2. There is a recognition of the need for accessible and flexible educational platforms that can meet the diverse learning needs of individuals at different stages of their careers. It reflects a broader shift towards embracing lifelong learning as a means to adapt to a rapidly changing job market and foster personal and professional growth.

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# Transforming Education: South Korea's Initiatives for Equity and Autonomy in Higher Education

#Ministry of Education #Private Education  
#Suneung #Deregulatory Measures

Mr. Wooyong Shin / Yonsei University



The Ministry of Education in South Korea has announced a comprehensive plan to reduce private education costs for students and grant universities greater autonomy. The plan involves eliminating "killer questions" from the national college entrance exam to level the playing field. Additionally, universities will have more freedom to manage their curricula and offer interdisciplinary programs. Students will be able to change majors, and online degree courses will be more accessible.

## 01

### Ministry of Education Introduces Comprehensive Plan to Promote Equity and Reduce Costs of Private Education

The Ministry of Education introduced a comprehensive plan to reduce the costs of private education for students. The first step involves establishing a committee led by public school teachers under the ministry's guidance. This committee will be responsible for adjusting the difficulty level of the Suneung, the national college entrance exam.<sup>1</sup>

The committee aims to restore fairness to the test by eliminating "killer questions" that have been included in previous exams. These questions were considered excessively difficult and were not covered in the standard school curriculum, leading students to rely on private academies for better preparation and higher grades.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lee Ju-Ho, of Korean Ministry of Education emphasized the ministry's commitment to taking action against the market of private education that profits from students and parents by providing these killer questions. Additionally, the government is considering legal measures against those involved in selling Suneung questions to private institutions.

While there are concerns that removing killer questions will make the Suneung easier, Minister Lee reassured that the test will still differentiate students based on their achievements. The ministry also plans to create a learning environment where students can engage in self-study using EBS, an educational broadcaster, and have access to expanded free courses and additional after-school teaching services.



South Korea experienced a significant increase in private education spending, reaching a record-high of 26 trillion won (\$19.9 billion) last year. The majority of this spending was on English and mathematics preparation for the Suneung. To address this issue, the ministry plans to involve public school teachers in determining the exam questions and provide free college counseling services for high school students.

Moreover, the ministry aims to enhance equal opportunities in college admissions by closely monitoring university admission exams and ensuring that the questions align with the materials taught in class. Additionally, extracurricular activities will be made more accessible for elementary school students, and the curriculum for children aged 3 to 5 will be revised to facilitate a smooth transition to elementary school.

The ministry intends to absorb the demand for private education within public education by expanding sports and fine arts programs, improving facilities, and collaborating with private organizations. It will also address improper operations in private English academies for young children through partnerships with education offices.

## Implications

The comprehensive plan introduced by the Ministry of Education to reduce the costs of private education is the potential for increased equity in educational opportunities. This can provide students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds with a fairer chance of succeeding in the college entrance exam and accessing higher education.

## 02

### Fostering Flexibility and Autonomy: Ministry of Education Unveils Deregulatory Measures for Universities

The Ministry of Education has announced a series of deregulatory measures aimed at granting universities greater autonomy in managing their curricula and providing students with more flexibility in choosing or changing their majors. The ministry revealed a proposed revision to the enforcement decree of the Higher Education Act, which includes provisions for universities to operate their school organizations more freely.<sup>2</sup>

According to the ministry, local universities will have the opportunity to eliminate barriers between departments and colleges, allowing for the establishment of interdisciplinary and free major departments. This move encourages convergence and collaboration across various fields of study.

Furthermore, under the new rule, first-year students will have the option to change their major, enabling them to explore different academic paths. Traditional universities will also be permitted to offer online degree courses without unnecessary restrictions.

In the medical field, the ministry anticipates integrating the two-year preparatory course and the four-year regular course. This integration will allow medical schools to design and operate their curriculum more flexibly within a six-year timeframe.

## Implications

By granting universities greater autonomy in managing their curricula and breaking down barriers between departments and colleges, the measures encourage convergence across various fields of study. This can lead to the development of new interdisciplinary programs and research initiatives that bridge different academic disciplines.

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# Korean Universities Transform International Admissions While Taejae University Launches Global Leadership Program

#KoreanHigherEd #InternationalAdmissions  
#GlobalLeadership #TaejaeUniversity

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Korean universities are revamping international student admissions, emphasizing fairness by eliminating personal statements and study plans. Instead, they focus on academic records and test scores while offering flexibility in Korean proficiency requirements. Meanwhile, Taejae University has inaugurated its first class with a mission to nurture top-tier global leaders through innovative, English-based education rooted in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, gaining recognition as a pioneering institution in global leadership development.

## 01

### Transformations in Korean University International Admissions for 2024: Fostering Inclusivity and Academic Excellence

Korean universities have made substantial changes to their international student application processes for the 2024 spring semester. Notably, personal statements and study plans are no longer required, a move aimed at promoting fairness in admissions. Instead, the focus has shifted to evaluating students based on academic records, awards, and standardized test scores. Some universities have also altered their Korean proficiency requirements, accepting a broader range of language certifications and scores.

Yonsei University, for instance, revamped its grading system for specific programs. Academic records now carry more weight, accounting for up to 60 percent of an applicant's score. Performance-based tests, like music auditions or tryouts, make up the remaining 40 percent. This shift away from performance-based tests is seen in other fields as well.

In addition, some majors and programs are exclusively open for spring admissions, expanding opportunities for international students. Hanyang University has adjusted its Korean proficiency requirements, widening the range of accepted certifications. Scholarships have been updated accordingly, making them accessible to more students.

However, online Korean language tests have been discontinued at several universities as they rely more on official scores. Sungkyunkwan University and Ewha Womans University have streamlined their application processes, transitioning to online submission. Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) has eased language skill requirements for different tracks, offering more flexibility to applicants.

These changes reflect Korean universities' commitment to attracting a diverse pool of international students. The Glocal University 30 project further supports this goal by providing funding to universities seeking innovative education systems. Universities like Jeonbuk National University and Pusan National University have embraced these changes to make Korean higher education more appealing to international students.

## Implications

Korean universities' admissions eliminating personal statements and emphasizing academic records promote fairness and reduce the influence of socioeconomic factors. Accepting a wider range of language certifications and discontinuing online Korean language tests enhances accessibility. This aligns with global trends in creating inclusive and equitable education systems.

## 02

### Taejae University Inaugurates First Class, Pioneering Global Leadership Education

Taejae University, South Korea's pioneering four-year accredited institution dedicated to nurturing future leaders, celebrated its inaugural class of 32 students in an entrance ceremony on August 30, 2023, ahead of its official opening in September. The selection process for this first cohort was rigorous, aimed at identifying exceptionally talented students with the potential to become innovative and empathetic leaders.

The university's core mission is to groom its students to be among the top 1% of global leaders, equipped not only with academic excellence but also with qualities like empathy and critical thinking. This vision is realized through an innovative curriculum that promotes international cooperation between the East and West, using English as the primary language of instruction and emphasizing advanced digital tools and an educational program rooted in Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles.

During their four years at Taejae University, students will experience a unique learning journey, residing in various global cities as part of the Global Engagement Program. Classes, held in English with small class sizes, foster interactive and discussion-based learning.



## Implications

The establishment of Taejae University and its unique approach to education signifies a growing recognition of the need for innovative and globally oriented leadership in today's interconnected world. By focusing on nurturing students to become empathetic and critical-thinking leaders with a strong emphasis on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, the university sets a precedent for redefining higher education.

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