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Cross-Regional Higher Education Collaboration amid Industrial Transformation: Guangdong–Taiwan Cooperation Mechanisms and Pathways for ASEAN Extension

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Abstract

Industrial transformation is pressing higher education to renew curricula, experiential learning, and regional engagement simultaneously. This conceptual policy study examines Guangdong–Taiwan collaboration and its extension to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through a synthesis of recent research on university–industry cooperation, regional higher education, student mobility, micro-credentials, and digital transformation. Five mutually reinforcing mechanisms emerge: coordinated governance, competency-oriented curricula, cross-regional project learning, joint research translation, and integrated quality and digital support. Shared competency standards and authentic industry assignments can connect teaching with innovation, while professional project management can reduce the costs created by institutional differences. ASEAN extension should be differentiated by national capacity, co-designed with local partners, and advanced in stages so that curricula, credentials, faculty roles, and workplace learning remain locally relevant. The framework links talent development, industrial upgrading, and regional cooperation within one institutional model.

Keywords

Higher Education Reform; University–Industry Collaboration; Guangdong–Taiwan Cooperation; ASEAN; Industrial Transformation

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, green technologies, and platform production are shortening knowledge cycles and changing how firms organize work. Higher education must consequently develop digital collaboration, interdisciplinary analysis, practical problem-solving, and learning across organizational and cultural

settings. Enterprise participation in curriculum design, mentoring, and assessment can strengthen these capabilities [1, 2]. Guangdong contributes large industrial systems and varied application settings, while Taiwan has accumulated expertise in precision manufacturing, engineering education, industrial design, and services for smaller firms [3, 4].

This complementarity has generated exchanges, joint courses, competitions, research partnerships, and industry-oriented colleges. Even so, many initiatives still depend on temporary funding, personal ties, or single events; curriculum renewal, enterprise assignments, credit recognition, intellectual property, and outcome diffusion remain weakly connected [5].

The challenge becomes more complex in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), where regulation, language, industrial demand, institutional capacity, and student services vary considerably [6–10]. The article therefore asks how Guangdong–Taiwan cooperation can support industrial transformation and how its mechanisms can be adapted, rather than simply copied, for ASEAN settings.

2. Research Design and Theoretical Foundations

2.1. Research Design and Evidence Organization

This conceptual policy study combines structured literature synthesis with comparative institutional analysis. It reviews teaching-oriented university–industry cooperation, regional innovation and higher education networks, cross-border education and mobility, micro-credentials, and digital transformation. Together, these fields clarify the actors, resources, institutional constraints, implementation processes, and developmental outcomes relevant to cross-regional cooperation.

The evidence base mainly covers English-language peer-reviewed studies published between 2021 and 2026 in journals indexed by the Social Sciences Citation Index, the Science Citation Index, or Scopus. Priority was given to research with direct relevance to Guangdong, Taiwan, or Southeast Asia and to studies that explain how cooperation operates, not merely why it is desirable.

The literature was first coded around governance, curriculum and practice, joint innovation, quality assurance, digital support, and regional extension. It was then reorganized along a formation–operation–diffusion sequence. The article does not estimate the effect of one programme; it develops mechanism-based propositions that connect identified problems with responsible actors and observable results.

2.2. Higher Education–Industry Collaboration and Regional Development

Teaching-focused university–industry collaboration places authentic enterprise knowledge inside curricula, practice, and assessment. Studies from India, Europe, and China suggest that autonomy, industrial participation, and diverse cooperative arrangements can improve graduate competencies, although sustained engagement requires clear incentives and organizational support [1–4]. Its regional function is

broader: universities contribute through research platforms, transfer offices, intermediary organizations, and public resource networks [11–13]. Greater Bay Area university ties are also becoming more strategic, but institutional differences and core–periphery structures continue to shape access to shared resources [14].

Industrial relevance must nevertheless remain compatible with wider educational goals. Evidence from vocational education and mining in Chile shows that firms can strongly influence curricula, yet excessive dependence on a narrow occupational profile may weaken adaptability [15]. Guangdong–Taiwan projects should combine disciplinary foundations, transferable skills, authentic tasks, guidance, and reflection. Work-integrated learning is most useful when students can explain, evaluate, and transfer what they have learned [16, 17].

2.3. Cross-Border Cooperation, Micro-Credentials, and the Analytical Framework

Cross-border higher education is shaped by market demand, regulation, cultural distance, partner capability, and established economic ties. Branch-campus studies show that host institutions affect entry modes and programme growth [6], while ASEAN research identifies funding, information access, curriculum compatibility, qualification recognition, and student support as persistent constraints [7–9]. Evidence from Taiwan further shows that language, psychological, and campus services must be differentiated for international students [10].

Micro-credentials and digital platforms can make cooperation more modular, but credibility depends on transparent outcomes, assessment, employer participation, and credit conversion [19–22]. Digital transformation likewise requires alignment with organizational strategy, faculty capability, and data governance [23, 24], while platform dependence raises questions about control over educational data [25]. Figure 1 brings these elements together through institutional guarantees, knowledge co-creation, mobility, and regional translation.

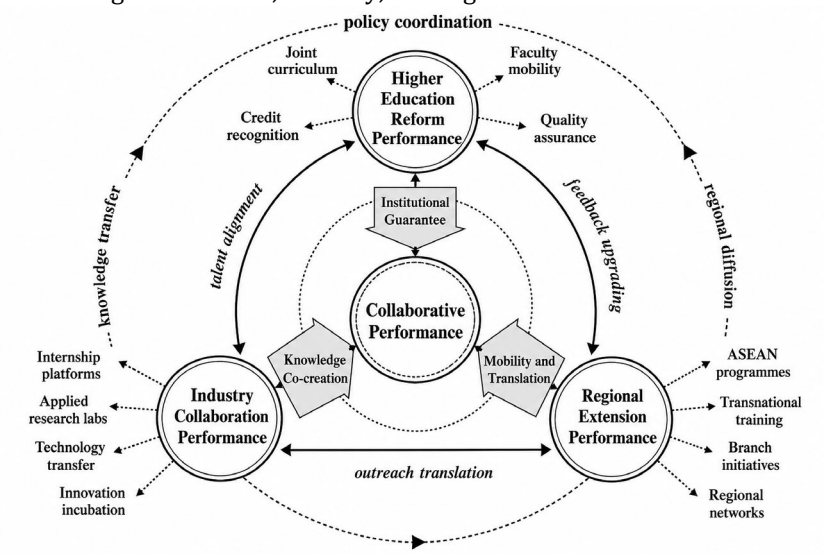


Figure 1. System-Performance Framework of Guangdong-Taiwan Higher Education Collaboration for Industrial Transformation

Regional expansion is embedded in wider political and economic relationships. China's educational outreach in Southeast Asia, and the connection between international education and trade, indicate that cross-border programmes depend on institutional reputation, partner trust, and local development priorities [18]. ASEAN universities and firms must therefore participate in defining problems and organizing delivery.

3. Foundations and Key Challenges of Guangdong–Taiwan Collaboration

3.1. Resource Complementarity and Institutional Tensions

Guangdong offers extensive supply chains, major technology firms, numerous smaller manufacturers, and varied production and service settings. These resources generate authentic problems for project learning, internships, applied research, and technological validation. Taiwanese universities and technical institutions add experience in engineering practice, precision production, quality management, industrial design, and cooperation with smaller enterprises. Connected effectively, these strengths can accelerate curriculum renewal and focus joint research on identifiable industrial needs [3, 4, 13, 14].

Complementarity does not remove institutional friction. Contact hours, faculty evaluation, accreditation, budgets, project approval, and intellectual-property arrangements differ across organizations. Participation is also uneven: research universities lead advanced inquiry, applied universities address regional engineering problems, vocational institutions deliver technical training, leading firms provide complex projects, and smaller firms reveal widespread transformation needs [5, 14].

A stable network should assign these roles under common standards. Dedicated project staff and a joint committee can maintain records on courses, mobility, enterprise tasks, funding, and ownership, reducing repeated negotiation and excessive concentration in a few flagship partnerships.

3.2. Breakpoints between Project Activities and Joint Capacity Building

Four connected breakpoints restrict current cooperation. Activity completion often receives more attention than curriculum renewal or student progression; enterprises may offer visits and short internships without placing authentic problems inside assessment; credit conversion may rely on titles or contact hours rather than demonstrated learning; and joint research can remain detached from teaching, prototyping, and application. These weaknesses create visible events without building organizational capacity, while participant counts and agreements reveal little about learning quality, partner continuity, or knowledge reuse [3–5, 15].

Table 1 converts the breakpoints into institutional responses and indicators. Permanent coordination stabilizes relationships; shared competency matrices align curricula with industrial tasks; transparent assessment evidence supports credit recognition; and joint laboratories connect research, student projects, and pilot validation. Quality committees and digital records make improvement visible over time. Funding and exchange volume can support these arrangements, but they cannot replace role clarity, common standards, or credible assessment.

Dimension	Key Discontinuity	Mechanism Response	Observable Outcome
Collaborative governance	Personal dependence; unstable roles and inputs	Three-tier governance, permanent secretariat, entry and adjustment rules	Partner continuity; task completion; coordination time
Curriculum and training	Slow renewal; weak use of enterprise needs in assessment	Competency matrix, modular curriculum, dual-mentor project learning	Learning attainment; employer ratings; renewal frequency
Credits and credentials	Title- or hour-based conversion; weak recognition basis	Explicit outcomes, workload, assessment evidence, conversion rules	Recognized modules; conversion rate; participation
Joint innovation	Research, teaching, and application remain separated	Joint issue pool, laboratories, pilot validation, transfer roles	Joint projects; prototype uptake; student contributions
Quality and digital support	Activity-count evaluation; fragmented platforms	Joint quality committee, learning records, data rules, annual improvement	Improvement completion; platform use; support outcomes

Table 1. Key Coordination Breakpoints, Institutional Responses, and Evaluation Indicators in Guangdong-Taiwan Higher Education Collaboration

4. Mechanisms of Guangdong–Taiwan Higher Education Collaboration

4.1. Multi-Level Governance and Joint Talent Development

Cross-regional cooperation requires multi-actor governance because no organization controls all relevant resources. Government bodies provide policy direction and regulatory coordination; universities and research institutes contribute curricula, faculty expertise, student development, and quality assurance; enterprises and industrial parks supply authentic problems, facilities, mentors, and routes to application. Students and community networks, in turn, provide participation and feedback. Figure 2 presents these actors around a collaborative hub rather than within a single hierarchy.

Governance should be differentiated by level. Strategic coordination identifies priority sectors, annual objectives, and resource commitments; professional committees translate them into competency standards, modules, research themes, and quality rules; project teams implement teaching, mobility, internships, and joint development. Written provisions should cover partner capacity, student protection, data, resources, intellectual property, and adjustment procedures.

Joint talent development begins when industrial tasks are converted into a shared competency matrix. Knowledge, technical skill, communication, and problem-solving requirements are distributed across modules and projects. University and enterprise mentors assess different dimensions, while jointly confirmed outcomes enter learning records, credit decisions, or micro-credentials

[16, 17].

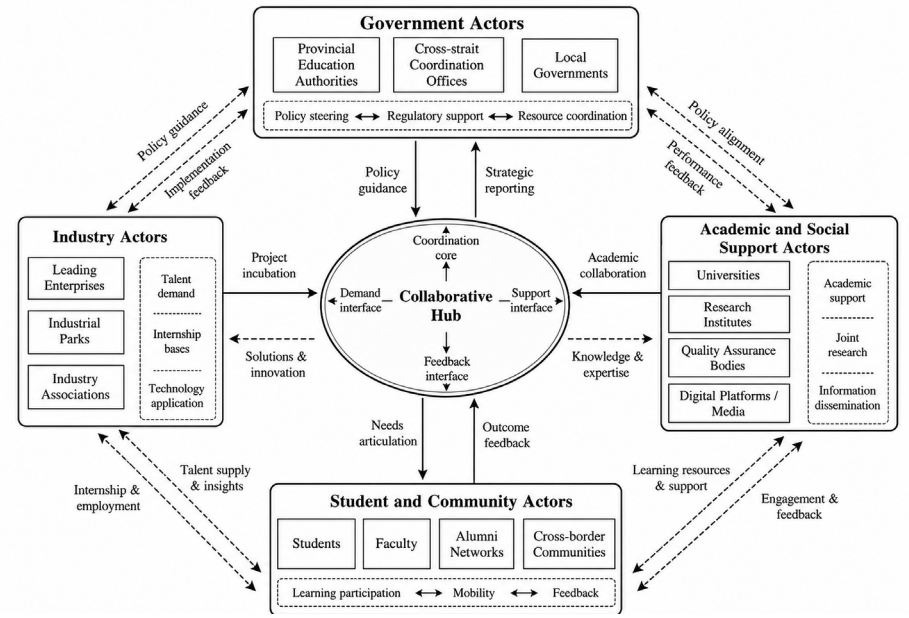


Figure 2. Multi-Actor Governance Structure of Guangdong-Taiwan Higher Education Collaboration

4.2. Integrating Curriculum, Practice, and Innovation

Curriculum, practice, and innovation should operate as a continuous learning sequence. Students complete foundational modules, form mixed Guangdong–Taiwan teams, and address enterprise problems involving production, digital operations, product design, or market development. Proposals are tested in firms or joint laboratories and assessed through reports, prototypes, data analyses, or business plans. Reflection requires students to explain choices, limitations, and transferability. The process links disciplinary learning with workplace application while generating evidence for credit recognition, micro-credentials, and personal learning records [1, 2, 16, 17].

Research and teaching should draw from the same problem pool and infrastructure. Enterprises and sector organizations submit recurring issues that universities classify as teaching cases, student projects, or collaborative research tasks. Validated results can return as cases, laboratory exercises, modules, or applicable technologies. Technology-transfer specialists coordinate commercial and legal matters, and project agreements distinguish prior knowledge, jointly generated results, publication rights, and benefit sharing [11–13].

4.3. Quality Assurance and Digital Support

Quality assurance should cover curriculum design, teaching delivery, assessment, student services, and longer-term development. A joint committee can combine

annual self-evaluation, peer review, enterprise feedback, and evidence from student work. Indicators may include learning-outcome attainment, authenticity of enterprise tasks, equitable participation, curriculum renewal, credit recognition, and later student development. Evaluation should lead to decisions about modules, mentors, partner roles, and resources.

Digital support is valuable when it serves governance. A shared platform may host resources, collaboration, project records, assessment evidence, credit conversion, and student services, but it must allow data portability, differentiated access, and reliable retention. Rules for student data, enterprise materials, and research results should be established before implementation. Digitalization research stresses alignment among technology, organizational strategy, and faculty capability [23, 24], while platform studies warn against vendor dependence and opaque data control [25].

Procurement, curriculum reform, and data management should therefore be planned together. A platform that records decisions, evidence, and revisions can support institutional learning; an additional communication channel with no shared rules will simply fragment cooperation.

5. Strategies for ASEAN Extension

5.1. Country Differentiation and Local Partnership Networks

ASEAN extension should vary with local higher education capacity, industrial structure, and international experience. Strong systems may support joint degrees, advanced mobility, and research; rapidly industrializing economies may benefit more from modular courses, micro-credentials, enterprise projects, and faculty placements; settings with fewer resources may begin with teacher development, basic digital modules, language support, and shared laboratories. Partner selection must also consider programme management, industrial connections, student services, information access, and the capacity to retain knowledge locally [7–10, 18]. Table 2 summarizes these arrangements.

Table 2. Differentiated Cooperation Arrangements for ASEAN Extension

Cooperation Type	Conditions and Indicative Markets	Priority Programmes	Implementation Focus
High-capacity co-creation	Strong higher education and international capacity; Singapore, Malaysia	Joint research, joint programmes, advanced mobility	Shared standards, research networks, qualification and credit recognition
Industry-demand driven	Fast manufacturing or digital growth; Thailand, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Philippines	Micro-credentials, industry projects, internships, faculty practice	Job-demand analysis, local firms, modular delivery
Capacity-building support	More limited resources and internationalization; Cambodia, Lao PDR	Faculty development, basic digital courses, shared laboratories	Low-cost access, language support, local faculty growth

Projects can follow a tripartite design. Guangdong universities and firms contribute large-scale industrial settings and market-oriented problems; Taiwanese partners add technical-education and curriculum experience; ASEAN universities and enterprises identify local demand, deliver teaching, and support students. A

three-party academic committee and industry advisory group should supervise implementation, while local faculty move gradually from joint preparation and co-teaching towards independent leadership.

Academic design alone is insufficient. Scholarships, accommodation, language preparation, internships, career services, and accessible information affect mobility and student resilience [8–10]. These services must develop alongside the curriculum if programmes are to reach learners with different cultural and institutional backgrounds.

5.2. Phased Expansion and Risk Governance

Expansion should move through piloting, deepening, and network formation. Pilots can use short project courses or micro-credentials in one or two sectors to test demand, curriculum fit, student support, and partner execution. Successful initiatives may add semester exchange, enterprise internships, faculty development, joint research, and transparent credit conversion. Regional curriculum hubs, research platforms, or multi-country enterprise networks should emerge only after these arrangements become stable. Progress between stages should depend on learning outcomes, local faculty growth, partner contributions, and evidence that industrial needs are addressed without weakening educational quality [6–10, 18].

Risk governance must accompany every stage. Agreements should cover regulatory approval, language and culture, data and intellectual property, funding continuity, student safety, and dispute resolution; critical courses, platform functions, and faculty roles need feasible substitutes. Monitoring should feed results back into partner selection, curriculum design, and resource commitments. Expansion is justified only when local capability, educational quality, and institutional trust grow alongside enrolment and geographic reach.

6. Discussion

This article connects university–industry collaboration, regional higher education cooperation, and cross-border extension within one development logic. Its central claim is that scalability depends on modularity and institutionalization together. Competency units, project courses, research tasks, and micro-credentials can be recombined across settings, but flexibility remains credible only when responsibilities, quality standards, data permissions, and benefit arrangements are stable. Secretariats, curriculum committees, technology-transfer staff, and quality bodies convert differences among education systems, organizational routines, and enterprise demand into manageable tasks [3–5, 19–25].

The comparative advantage of Guangdong–Taiwan cooperation therefore lies partly in intermediary capacity. Industrial scale and technical-education experience matter, yet their value depends on organizations that can translate between curricula, institutional rules, and local markets. This capacity becomes especially important

when ASEAN partners must adapt modules and assume growing responsibility.

Educational development remains the governing purpose. Industry participation can improve relevance and employability, but excessive specialization around one firm or technology may reduce adaptability [15]. The competency framework consequently combines occupational skill with digital literacy, communication, problem analysis, cross-cultural learning, and reflection [16, 17]. As a conceptual study, the article cannot rank individual mechanisms; future project-level research should track learning outcomes, partner continuity, curriculum renewal, local faculty growth, employer response, and the conversion of research into educational resources.

7. Conclusion

Industrial transformation requires stable connections among industrial demand, talent development, research, and regional innovation. Guangdong–Taiwan cooperation has complementary resources, but durable performance depends on coordinated governance, common competency standards, cross-regional project learning, research translation, and integrated quality and digital support. ASEAN extension should be differentiated by country conditions, co-designed with local partners, and advanced through evidence-based stages. These arrangements allow curricula, credentials, faculty roles, and workplace learning to respond to local industries while preserving wider educational goals.

The framework is an institutional pathway rather than a universal programme package. Its propositions should be tested with longitudinal evidence from Guangdong, Taiwan, and ASEAN initiatives, including course records, student outcomes, enterprise participation, faculty development, and technology-transfer results. Comparative analysis could identify which combinations of governance and educational design work under different conditions. Continued evaluation and gradual transfer of responsibility to local partners are essential if cross-regional cooperation is to support industrial upgrading, human development, and regional connectivity over time.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During preparation, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) for structural organization, language refinement, and figure prototyping. The authors reviewed and edited all output and take full responsibility for the final content.

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