Challenges and Opportunities in Asia-Pacific H/Ed.

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## International H/ED enrolments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Enrolments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>377,054 (2015)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>85,000? (but they’re not telling..)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>86,923 (2010)</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>139,185 (2014)</td>
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Shift to the East?

- “The balance of power is shifting. Leading universities across the Asia-Pacific region have seen significant improvements in their positions (2012-2013 Times World University Rankings), gaining ground on the traditional powerhouses of the US and the UK.
- “… top institutions in China, Singapore, Korea and Taiwan have risen up the rankings., Australia, has also had a strong year, in contrast to the US and the UK: a majority of Anglo-American HEIs in the top 200, while still dominant in term of numbers, have lost ground.”
- Australia has 6 in top 100 (ARWU 2016)
But this is nothing new

- Higher learning in Asia combines ancient roots and modern branches: highly diverse, its past still haunts its present, while it also faces an array of newer developments and challenges.
- These roots embrace Confucianism, as well as venerable religious traditions, (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam).
- Confucian higher learning came to life around the same time as the Platonic academy, was formalized in the Tang and Song dynasties more than a millennium later, (curriculum based on the *Four Books* and *Five Classics*), and persisted until the earliest years of the 20th century, in both China and Viet Nam.
- Another example: when Cai, Yuanpei, Chancellor of Peking University (1916-26), set about reforming and modernizing the institution, he deliberately invoked both the *rencai* spirit of the Jixia academy (founded 360 BCE), as well as the Confucian emphasis on self cultivation and moral virtue.
- India too: the spirit of Nalanda, founded 5th century CE in current Bihar, was a once famed Buddhist scholarly centre that at its peak enrolled several thousand students, including from current Nepal, China, Tibet, Central Asia and Korea) is still invoked.
- So the Rise of the East is better seen as the Renaissance of the East, which had major centres of learning more than 2 millennia ago – well before Oxford, Paris, Harvard or Cambridge.
Respecting Teacher, Learning Virtue
Scholars at Abbasid library, Baghdad 1237
Diversity in Asia-Pacific H/Ed.

• But diversity also extends to developmental levels: highly developed systems such as Singapore, middle income states such as Thailand and Malaysia, and poor systems such as Myanmar, and Laos.

• Several systems proclaim lofty ambitions; many more struggle with basic issues of finance, governance, access and equity.

• An enduring debate is over the balance between honouring local traditions and knowledge, and incorporating the best knowledge from outside, largely from the West.
The Onset of the Modern Asian University

• St Paul’s College, Macao, (1594, a Jesuit institution), claims to be the first Western university/college in the East (although its sister Jesuit HEI, St. Paul’s College, Goa was founded 50 years earlier, in 1544, by royal ordinance of King Dom João III.

• Even at that time, an enduring dilemma was enunciated: were such HEIs “… a project of Westernisation”?

• the Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) embodied unparalleled international outreach, a quest for reform ideas, including in education. Iwakura mission, e.g., scoured Europe and America for the most advanced forms of learning, yielding significant reforms in H/Ed. (German system deemed the most advanced, & formed the greatest influence on Meiji-era Japanese H/Ed.).

• Early Western influenced HEIs included private Keio University *(Keiō Daigaku, 喜多義塾大学)*, (evolved from an earlier European style institution *(Keiō Gijuku)* founded in 1858, before Meiji, although only establishing a university department with three faculties, of Economics, Law and Letters) in 1890, Tokyo University *(Tōkyō Daigaku, 東京大学)* (1877) (forged from preceding schools of Chinese and Japanese literature, medicine and Western learning), and Kyoto University *(京都大学)*, founded as the second imperial university in 1897. Tokyo *(Todai)* still seen as the pearl.

• Claims to be China’s first modern university are contested between Peking University *(Běijīng Dàxué, 北京大学)*, 1898 and Tianjin University *(Tianjin Dàxué, 天津大学)*, 1895. *(Shanghai)* Jiaotong Dàxué, 上海交通大学 was established in 1896. Peking generally thought to be the pearl of the system.

• In SE Asia, University Santo Tomas in 1611, named after Thomas Aquinas, was the first such institution in the region. Licensed to grant degrees in Theology and Philosophy in 1619, accorded university status by Pope Innocent X in 1645, and the right to award other degrees in 1680 by Innocent XI. Still a Catholic institution of some consequence, if less well regarded internationally, it has a history longer than Harvard.

• Hindu (later Presidency) College in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1817, the first ‘European’ institution of higher learning. Subsequently, the universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi in 1857, that, like the University of London upon which they were modelled, functioned initially only as examination bodies.
Colonialism and the Post-colonial developmental State

- Impact of colonialism on Asian higher education has been both profound and enduring, if by no means wholly positive.
- India, Malaya, Singapore and Burma (now Myanmar) strongly influenced by British colonialism, Indochina more influenced by French ideologies and institutional models, Spain influenced the early higher education in the Philippines, Russia and subsequently the USSR influenced, for a time, China, Viet Nam.
- But the local also re-shaped the global: while some have argued that no Asian university is truly Asian in origin, this fails to acknowledge how strongly local tradition re-shaped, and at times resisted, Western models. Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India at turn of 20th. century, famously proclaimed: 'The East is a university in which the scholar never takes his degree.'
- A common result was the production of a relatively small number of local scholars, whose further intellectual development was tied to the metropole – e.g. Ho Chi Minh in France c. 1918.
- Goals of the colonial endeavour, however, clashed with the nationalist ideals of independent minded students, (such as Ho Chi Minh). Hence, as elsewhere in Asia, the colonial aim of building a local elite strongly affiliated to, and dependent upon, the metropole was by no means always achieved.
Post-colonial developmental State & H/Ed. development

- Many systems achieved independence in the aftermath of WWII (Indonesia 1946, Philippines 1946, Malaysia 1957), although the dilemma of replacing colonial administrators and academic staff with locals, (incl. limited state capacity, and widespread competition for skilled personnel), influenced the development of national H/Ed. systems.

- Thailand, alone of all ASEAN systems, was not colonised by a Western power, although limited European influence was evident before WWII.

- Umbilical cord attaching Philippines H/Ed. to the former colonial power, the USA, remained largely unbroken, whereas Indonesia, e.g., where only 1/3 of faculty were Indonesian (some of whom left to participate in the struggle for independence), presented a different challenge.

- English as medium of instruction persisted in India, but has been a longstanding issue in Malaysia, e.g. Parallelling French Indochina, the aim was to cultivate and maintain a British sensibility, Western knowledge, and British dominance. Dominance of English as medium of instruction a lingering issue in the region.

- How compatible was this with post colonial aims, rising national pride? N.B. Ghandi’s scathing assessment in 1931, in a Chatham House speech, that India was then less literate than 50 or 100 years earlier (as was Burma, he claimed), due to the colonial failure to pay due regard to longstanding local epistemological and pedagogical traditions.

- ‘Developmental State’ concept (state-led development, and rapid economic growth, in E and SE Asia) bears on some of these developments. In East Asia (Korea, Japan, and China, including Taiwan), H/Ed. was, and remains, a pillar of the overall goal of accelerated national development.
Devel’t. of modern H/Ed.in Asia has been largely one of progress and growth, (quantitative and qualitative), notably in recent decades.

But history of recent decades would be incomplete without treatment of its interruption by cataclysmic events.

Cambodia and China provide 2 notable examples of higher education systems being entirely coopted in the service of a utopian ideology aimed at total societal integration.

In each case, the regimes were so fundamentally antithetical to formal H/Ed. that the closure of HEIs, destruction of libraries, museums and laboratories, and persecution of scholars and students, resulted.

1. Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), unleashed as part of a struggle against the ‘Four Olds’ (old ideas, old culture, old customs, old habits), resulted in the effective closure of all HEIs for three years (1966-69), (many for entire decade), with more than five million educated urban youth (shangshan xiaxiang) and many scholars being sent down to the countryside. Many experienced years of painful privation; some were killed or tortured, others committed suicide. Library and museum collections were destroyed. China’s ‘Lost Generation’…

2. ADB estimated between 75 and 80 per cent of Cambodian academic staff and students were massacred, fled or died. Upon Viet. entry into Cambodia in 1979, probably no more than 300 individuals with post-2ndy. Ed. remained; of these, most left as soon as possible. In the notorious ‘S-21’ prison, of approximately 14,000 prisoners, numbers of whom were intellectuals, only around 12 survived.

In each case, subsequent reconstruction and expansion more than replaced the physical losses, but the legacy of destruction of lives, knowledge, and opportunities has been harder to erase.
The Contradictory Legacy of Growth and Modernity (1)

- Recent growth and maturation of H/Ed. systems throughout Asia, has been very differential, and not without associated tensions and challenges.
- Overall, Asian H/Ed. has undoubtedly attained a greater presence, and not merely in quantitative terms.
- No longer a locus of exoticism, or perhaps a source of hard-working graduate students to populate Western HEIs, recent decades saw growth in quality, and increased differentiation both within and among diverse Asian higher education systems, including the degree to which individual Asian systems integrated into what became the global knowledge system.
- Globalisation processes, + rising regionalism, increasingly challenged nat’l. H/ Ed. systems, yet Asian gov’ts have often proved unwilling to loosen the reins over HEIs, nor yield much ground to global considerations.
- E.g. from 1999 to around 2004, Chinese enrolment growth rates were between 25 and 35 per cent, annually. This led to serious strains on resources, including accomm., libraries, staff etc.
- Privatisation a related effect of the increasing inability or unwillingness of national governments to adequately finance this growth. It took 2 forms: (a) growth of private systems outstripped that in the public sector (although not in the Philippines, Taiwan, Japan and Korea, where it was already larger than the public). (b) parallel trend effectively privatised public sector HEIs, to differing degrees. Led to rise of parallel programmes, (‘Extension’, ‘Executive’ or ‘Diploma’) for high fees. Entry standards low, or absent. Numerous allegations of Corruption in India, China, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand: enrolling more students than the set quota, misleading advertising, charging wealthy private students extravagantly high fees to allow entry into public HEIs (Jalur Khusus, or ‘special path’ in Indonesia), collusion with state officials, altering students’ grades to allow entry, and inadequate financial transparency. In Afghanistan, and elsewhere, new private sector HEIs sprang up, some of dubious quality. In Myanmar, private HEIs existed in practice, although not in law.
- Persistent issue: extent and quality of regulation of the H/Ed. sector, including at times burgeoning private HEIs, in a context of strained state capacity, and limited transparency.
The Contradictory Legacy of Growth and Modernity (2)

- Further longstanding legacy issue has been the problematic attempt to synthesise East and West. *Zhong xue wei ti, xi xue wei yong* (Chinese [ethical] knowledge for essence, Western knowledge for practical use), also evident in Meiji attempts to glean the best of Western knowledge while retaining Japanese core values.
- In growing no. of systems, ambitious agendas included goal of establishing ‘world class’ HEIs.
- Malaysia dubbed the *Universiti Sains Malaysia* (USM) an APEX university, (provided with added resources, and heightened expectations it would leap into the ranks of international research universities within next years). UMs HIR programme..
- Viet Nam established ‘Model’ universities, in partnership with more established systems such as the US, German, or French.
- Singapore, (much the wealthiest system in SE Asia), adopted two-pronged approach: investing substantially in its own domestic HEIs, while also attracting branch campuses of some major HEIs from the US. (but NB not all survived…, UNSW).
- Global obsession with ranking and League Tables → widespread pressure to publish in English, in ‘top’ journals; produced mixed results. China, the most overtly stratified H/Ed.system, deliberately selected c. 40 leading HEIs for additional resources, and associated expectations. Spectacular rise in institutional rankings, as well as scientific output, despite ongoing problems with corruption.
- Massification and privatisation entrenched inequalities. In many Asian systems, public H/Ed. dominated by middle class and urban youth, leaving talented poor with recourse only to either private HEIs, or overseas HEIs, (if scholarships available). Expanding private sector widened opportunities, but too often to poor quality HEIs, with limited curriculum, (Business, IT and selected languages). So the poor pay more for inferior quality?
Conclusion

• As Asia’s econ. rise continues, with economic growth rates - Japan excepted - well above those in North America, Europe, or Oceania, the much touted ‘global knowledge economy’ sites H/Ed. as pillar of devel’t.
• As several Asian economies move beyond manufacturing sustained by cheap labour, they increasingly confront challenge of avoiding the so-called ‘middle-income trap’. Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China.. This entailed moving towards greater reliance upon service sector industries, and a more high-tech knowledge based economy, for which H/Ed. was a key pre-requisite.
• Combination of venerable past, sustained respect for education, teachers and higher learning, and a state-led development model in an increasingly global competitive environment, has served selected Asian higher education models well. Others, much less well.
• Limits of state-led development for inst’l. autonomy and academic freedom pointed out by the presidents of both Harvard, and Yale, recently and some domestic critics, as constraining the further rise of Asian universities.
• Significant inequalities persist within and between systems; most institutions, and some entire systems, remained peripheral rather than core. Inclusive H/Ed. remains a goal for Asian higher education systems, although some have made great strides.
• Tantalising promise of a successful synthesis of knowledge drawn from the best of East and West, however elusive thus far, still offers much, but pressure to publish in leading (English language) journals is distorting effort and output. (China examples..). “Publish locally, Perish Globally; Publish Globally, Perish Locally”.
• Regionalism is developing within ASEAN, despite the substantial regional diversity. While committed to regionalism, there remains a gap between ASEAN rhetoric and reality. Cf. Europe, Regionalism at a much less mature stage. Ministries sign up to regionalism, but in practice zealously guard control over domestic system and institutions.
• But there are also strong signs of ASEAN-China regionalism, as well as Australia-ASEAN regionalism, and even Australia-ASEAN-China regionalism. Is a regional knowledge network a real possibility?
• Persistent corruption and regulatory failures, including in Australia, remain an issue, as well as limited state capacity, particularly in states such as Myanmar, Laos. This may well limit scope and scale of moves to harmonise QFs