

Book Review: The Search for New Governance of Higher Education in Asia

Edited by Ka-Ho Mok.

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Increasingly, globalization has led to intense competition among higher education institutions to improve their global ranking and to attract international students. Simultaneously, universities worldwide are impacted by fiscal crises that are amplified by international economic conditions. How does a university increase its global profile during a time of budget limitations? This is an issue that every university, everywhere, is currently facing.

In Mok's edited volume, *The Search for New Governance of Higher Education in Asia*, this dilemma is considered within multiple countries' contexts. As Mok describes in the book's introduction, decentralization of higher education systems and the devolution of government management has been a growing trend across Asia, which has, in most cases, resulted in a new governing system for higher education. However, as described throughout the book, the approaches and the effects of this new governance are not uniform from one country to another. Through the examination of the consequences of the new governing system, the authors explore the central theme of whether the "neoliberal approach adopted by many Asian states to transform their higher education systems is still politically appropriate and managerially effective" (4).

The book opens with a discussion by Stephen Ball about the multiplicity of actors now involved in higher education. Ball observes a shift toward governance through network heterarchies, which involves mobilizing all sectors, including public, private, and voluntary, to "solve the community's problems" (14). As universities establish more transnational educational programs and partnerships, Ball calls for the need to analyze the heterarchical relationships of governance that are consequently emerging.

Chapter 2, by John Hawkins, compares parallel trends in higher education institutions (HEIs) in both California and Asia. Hawkins notes that California has significant educational, cultural, and trade links to Asia, which means that many policy trends in California are of interest to policy makers in Asia. In fact, the state of Californian HEIs may be of interest to anyone

involved in policy making because of the extreme fiscal crisis California faces, and the consequential budget cuts to universities, that have continued over the past several years. The chapter explores the notion of higher education as a public good that should be supported by the state, and what that means from a fiscal and governance perspective as compared with the current reality.

Currently, China hosts the world's largest population of higher education students, and in Chapter 3 Rui Yang discusses China's intentional move toward massification of higher education. Since 1999, the Chinese government has moved toward rapidly increasing the number of college graduates, with the idea that a highly educated population can drive China's development efforts. Increased enrollments could also provide benefits to universities through the provision of more tuition revenue. However, an expanding higher education system also presents new challenges that require a changing governing structure. This chapter outlines the social consequences of these policies, and describes what Yang refers to as the Chinese government's inaction in addressing these policies.

The incorporation of public HEIs is also becoming a more common trend, and Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, by Byung-Shik Rhee and Jun Oba, illustrate the challenges involved with implementing this new structure in Korea and in Japan. Japanese national universities were incorporated in 2004, and the plan is that eventually all universities in Korea will also be incorporated. In both cases, the main idea for incorporation is to give "more institutional autonomy to the national universities, and make them directly responsible for their performance" (75). However, the authors discuss the imperative issues of quality assurance and the primary roles of higher education.

The appearance of a corporate culture in public HEIs is analyzed again in Chapter 6, as William Yat-Wai Lo compares newly emerging university entrepreneurialism in Hong Kong and Singapore. Universities in both city-states are now required to compete. Therefore, the curricula are oriented toward the needs of the market. Unlike the cases of Korea and Japan, however, quality

assurance mechanisms have been established and accountability is expected.

In Chapter 7, Morshidi Sirat and A.R. Ahmad describe the Malaysian government's desire to have world-class universities and the efforts made to elevate the status of one institution through an Accelerated Program for Excellence (APEX). The goal is for APEX universities to be globally ranked among the world's top 100 tertiary institutions by 2013, and in the top 50 by 2020. Sirat and Ahmed explore the challenges to actualizing this goal, which include limited financial and institutional autonomy.

Similarly, Taiwan aims to have a top-100 ranked university within ten years. At the same time, however, according to Sheng-Ju Chan in Chapter 8, college student enrollments are swelling beyond the capacity of HEIs to accommodate them, which threatens the quality of education provided. The emergence of private universities and the pressure of market forces demand new governance structures to accommodate Taiwan's current needs.

In Southeast Asia, a desire to expand tertiary enrollment rates is tempered with the reality that no public university can provide enough access. As Anthony Welch discusses in Chapter 9, Southeast Asian tertiary institutions lag behind other universities in the world in all criteria, including the number of patents, publications, and citations, demonstrating that the infrastructure of Southeast Asian HEIs for expansion is very limited. The rise of private higher education to address these gaps poses new challenges that Welch states impose "real limits on governability in Southeast Asian universities" (163).

Although in India higher education is regarded as "crucial to the development of the national economy" (173) in Chapter 10 Jandhyala Tilak discusses that the proportion of the college-aged population enrolled in higher education is a mere 12 percent. Furthermore, although the quality of HEIs throughout the country is inconsistent, ranging from "excellent" to "substandard," public expenditure on higher education has reduced. Tilak proposes an urgent need for quantity, quality, and equity in India's higher education system.

Many of the issues described above are also applicable in the case of Vietnamese higher education, as described by Johnathan London in the book's last chapter. Vietnam lacks an adequately trained workforce to fuel the country's industrialization, and therefore needs "more, better, and more relevant" (173) higher education.

As nations worldwide contend with globalization and market forces, the drive to establish globally competitive higher education institutions and expand tertiary enrollments with financial constraints is widespread. The new governance and financial structures described in this volume provide interesting examples of the challenges facing several Asian governments, as

well as the potential solutions posed. Each of these cases contextualizes the policy decisions that were made and the new challenges that emerged as a result, demonstrating that similar issues may not warrant similar solutions. For this reason, this book has tremendous value for policy makers, higher education administrators, and decision makers facing similar choices elsewhere.

In addition, each of these chapters is very thorough, and the differences between the issues and solutions of one country and another were sometimes subtle, fitting cohesively into the book's theme on new governance of higher education. As a contrast to these cases, it would be very interesting if the book included a discussion from parts of Asia facing different kinds of challenges to their higher education systems and governance structures, such as, Afghanistan, Iraq, and/or countries of Central Asia.

Other themes threading through each chapter are the larger questions of what IS the role of higher education in society, and what level of responsibility does the government have to nurture it? There are no easy answers to these questions, but the authors offer possibilities worthy of consideration.

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