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HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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Southeast Asia consists of ten countries as reflected by the member states in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. These countries have marked differences in terms of size, economic wealth, political ideologies, and educational traditions. Brunei and Singapore are very small states as compared to Indonesia, which has a huge population and a wide geographical area. Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are newly industrialized countries and Brunei is an oil-rich country. Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam are in a state of transition—moving from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, from an agricultural economy to an industrial economy, and from a socialist regime to a more democratic system. All these countries except Thailand have a colonial history, and their education systems have been very much influenced by their colonial heritage.

Despite the diversity, higher education systems in Southeast Asia face similar problems and challenges. All these systems have budgets to balance, standards to maintain, faculties to satisfy, and social demands to meet (Postiglione & Mak, 1997). Among the less developed countries, the higher education systems are chronically under-funded but face escalating demand for access; further, the faculty are under-qualified, the curricula are under-developed, and the students are poorly taught (World Bank, 2000). Many of these systems are undergoing restructuring under the influence of global trends in higher education reforms in the areas of funding, resources, governance and curriculum development.

This chapter will analyze the historical development of higher education in Southeast Asia and examine the trends and policy challenges in a comparative perspective. It will explore issues relating to access, funding, and accountability as well as the changing academic profession and regional cooperation. The development of higher education in this region can be broadly divided into three main periods, namely: (i) the colonial period, (ii) the early independence period, and (iii) the contemporary period. It is argued that higher education is greatly influenced by its historical past, nation-building efforts, and current global trends. The analysis of the realities and challenges facing higher

education in this region will show that there is an interplay between national needs and global trends.

Historical Development

During the pre-colonial days, only a few countries in this region had some form of higher education, usually established by religious bodies. In Vietnam, education in Confucianism was established at the Temple of Literature (Huong & Fry, 2004), while in Indonesia, non-formal Islamic education was carried out in the mosques (Buchori & Malik, 2004), and in Thailand, higher learning took place in the palace, temples and communities (Sinlarat, 2004). However, higher education in its modern form is a Western implant brought to the shores of Southeast Asian countries by colonial rulers—with the exception in Thailand, where it was voluntarily adopted (Altbach & Selvaratnam, 1989).

Western influences on higher education in this region are complex and varied, involving the Dutch in Indonesia; the British in Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia, and Myanmar; the French in Indochina; and the Spanish (and later the Americans) in the Philippines. Thailand is the only country that has maintained its independence from colonial rule; however, its rulers were strongly influenced by Western ideas and have voluntarily adopted Western models of higher education. The Soviet model of higher education was very influential in Vietnam and Cambodia during the 1960s and 1970s. In the contemporary period, it is the North American (and to an increasing degree, Australian) influence that is becoming more dominant in this region. According to Watson (1989), Western models of higher education can be divided into four types:

(i) the West European Model—government controlled and funded, with selective, competitive and elitist institutions, and admissions based on merit;

(ii) the Centralized Model—also government controlled, selective and competitive, but highly political in course content, with admissions based on political and social class requirements;

(iii) the North American Model—encouraging both the development of both public and private sectors of higher education, and promoting open access to all who have successfully completed secondary level education; and

(iv) the Combination Model—bearing the hallmark of flexibility and embracing different features of the other models.

It is important to note that the influence of a particular model may be strong during a nation's colonial period, and that over the years many countries have adopted different models at different points in time. A study of the development of higher education in Malaysia and Singapore shows that what exists today is a hybrid of British and American models (Lee, 1989; Tan, 2004). In Thailand, the French and British models were closely followed until World War II, after which the American influence became particularly strong (Watson, 1989). In Vietnam, it was the French influence during the period from 1945 to 1954, the Soviet influence from 1954 to 1975, and American influence in the period after 1975 (Huong & Fry, 2004).

Despite these and other important variations, it is possible to make some broad generalizations when tracing the development of colonial higher education in Southeast Asia. First, the colonial language was used in universities. Second, the governance structure, the organization of the academic profession, the research system, the curricula and textbooks were all based on Western academic models. Third, many of the academic staff were from the metropolitan regions of the country. Fourth, except for the Americans, all the other colonial powers were initially reluctant to set up higher education institutions in the colonies because of their subversive potential. It is worthy noting that "the colonial universities were the seedbeds of the downfall of colonialism and of the emergence of independent nations" (Altbach, 1989, p. 9). However, due to local pressure and the need to train professionals to support the colonial administrations, higher education institutions were established to cater to the elites in each of the colonies. These elements of colonial heritage shaped the development of higher education in this region. Even in Thailand, the Western impact has been strong (although it is not an impact based on a colonial relationship). Thai rulers were strongly influenced by Western ideas as they strove to modernize Thailand. The decision to develop the first university, based on the French model, was taken by the Thai monarchy as a means of training people for government service (Watson, 1989).

After gaining political independence, all the ex-colonies tried to adapt and further develop the higher education systems that they inherited to meet local needs and national aspirations. A major reform has been to gear higher education toward "nation-building" and similar concepts. In nearly all the countries, there were attempts to break away from colonial influence through indigenization efforts as well as broadening the search for alternative models of higher education. One of the first tasks in this area was to replace expatriate staff with local staff; thus began the Malayanization, Filipinization, and Indonesianization of the civil service as well as the academic profession. With the exception of Singapore and Brunei, all the countries of this region began to use their own national languages in their higher education institutions. There has also been a strong move against cultural imperialism by indigenizing the curriculum and using textbooks written by local scholars. Overall, a variety of attempts were made to adapt university education more appropriately to local culture and ensure its relevance to local needs.

A case in point is Indonesia, which managed to break away from the Dutch model of higher education by using Bahasa Indonesia as the medium of instruction in universities, recruiting local staff instead of foreign staff, expanding its higher education system (even at the expense of quality), developing relevant programs, and developing a harmonious relationship with the state (Cummings & Kasenda, 1989). Immediately after gaining its independence in 1945, the Indonesian government established Balia Perguruan Tinggi Gajamada (Gajamada Center of Higher Learning) and the Indonesian Islamic University (UII) in Yogyakarta. The establishment of UII marked the beginning of the modernization of Islamic education in Indonesia. Today, Islamic tertiary educational institutions are a characteristic feature of higher education in Indonesia, enrolling about 15% of the total number of tertiary students in the country (Buchori & Malik, 2004). Similarly, the development of Islamic universities in Indonesia, Malaysia and Southern Philippines is part of the outcome of the continuing search for alternative models of higher education that are more appropriate to local cultures.

The Soviet model of higher education was adopted at one time to suit the socialist ideologies that prevailed in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The key feature of the Soviet model is the establishment of specialized institutions by separate ministries to train personnel to serve its respective ministry. This model suited the central planning system, incorporating a tradition of guaranteed post-graduation jobs. In the more recent period, the North American model has proven more popular and has been adopted by many countries in this region. Examples include the establishment of a land grant university in the Philippines (Gonzales, 2004); the use of a modular system for undergraduate courses and the North American nomenclature for academic job titles in Singapore (Tan, 2004); the introduction of the semester system, credit system, and continual assessment in Malaysia (Lee, 1997); and the establishment of graduate schools in several countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Unlike the academic traditions in the West, the governments in Southeast Asian countries have considerable power over higher education. With the exception of Indonesia and the Philippines, the government is the main provider of higher education. In many countries, higher education is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (e.g., Brunei, Singapore, Thailand) or the Ministry of Higher Learning (e.g., Malaysia), and there is strong government control over higher education throughout most of the region. For example, the Singapore government plays a dominant interventionist role in controlling and directing major policy decisions concerning their higher education institutions, giving predominance to economic considerations in higher education planning and policymaking (Tan, 2004). In the case of Indonesia, not only does the government consider the role and function of higher education to be a means to support national development, but academics are expected to work harmoniously with the nation's leaders (Cummings & Kasenda, 1989). It is a common practice for university presidents and vice chancellors to be appointed by their respective governmental ministry.

Throughout the region, the state has taken a keen interest in the university because higher education has been called upon to fulfill a great variety of roles. Higher education is often seen as providing future leaders of politics, bureaucracy, the armed forces and the economy; stimulating economic growth and social development; promoting national unity and social cohesion (particularly in multi-ethnic societies); and developing and preserving cultural heritage and traditions (Lee & Wong, 2003).

The traditional roles of universities include teaching, research and service, but in reality many of the universities found in this region are only teaching institutions, and for those that do research the research productivity is very low when compared to their Western counterparts. As Gonzales (1989) points out, "nothing foreign can be transferred without adapting itself to the local environment. Often, form but not substance remains, but the dynamics are altogether indigenous" (p. 117).

In particular, the quality of higher education in countries with a large private higher education sector (like Indonesia and the Philippines) is highly questionable, with institutions of varying standards. At one end of the quality spectrum, there are prestigious universities like the University of the Philippines and De La Salle University in the Philippines, and Universitas Indonesia and Gajamada University in Indonesia. At the other end, there are many sub-standard higher education institutions which do not

produce much new learning, and instead focus on a repetition of subject matter already learned and demand little from their students other than rote memorization of notes (Gonzales, 2004). There is very little quality control, and the quality of the graduates ranges from near zero competence in their specialization to a level of global competitiveness, depending on which higher education institutions they graduate from.

In the past several decades, Southeast Asian countries have witnessed a rapid expansion of higher education, resulting in a deterioration in average quality, under-funding, poor and overcrowded facilities, under-qualified academic staff, curricula lacking relevance, the absence of research, and inequitable access. For example, Indonesia and the Philippines now have systems of higher education serving two million or more students, and Thailand and Vietnam each enroll over one million students (World Bank, 2000). In Malaysia, only about 26% of the faculty in public institutions of higher learning have a Ph.D. degree (Hussien, Jantan & Ansari, 2002), whereas among the faculty of 93,884 in the Philippines, only 32% have at least a master's degree, and of this group only 7% have doctorates (Gonzales, 2004). As a result of the increasing number of graduates, graduate unemployment is a common feature in countries like Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia. There is a mismatch between economic needs and university output, resulting in underemployment and brain drain. Every year thousands of Filipino and Indonesian graduates leave their countries to seek employment abroad, especially in the Middle East. Many medical doctors and health service workers from the Philippines work abroad, and few of those with advanced degrees earned abroad return to the Philippines. Despite the rapid expansion of higher education in many countries, there are major imbalances between urban and rural areas, rich and poor households, men and women, and among ethnic groups within these countries.

In view of the current situation, there are both internal and external pressures to change and reform higher education. Local social, political and economic pressures, demographic pressures, the growing demands of a globalized knowledge economy, and the need to meet international standards are all instrumental in pressuring various governments to restructure their higher education systems to suit local needs and priorities. The restructuring of higher education is a worldwide phenomenon, and it is possible to identify some common trends in the restructuring process that took place in many developed countries during the 1990s (Singh, 2001). First, higher education institutions are increasingly being required to demonstrate efficiency, accountability and productivity from various quarters, notably from the state (which is usually the major source of funding for higher education). Second, there has been a decline in the amount of public funds available, requiring institutions of higher learning to diversify their sources of funding by adopting entrepreneurial approaches to higher education and improving cost-efficiency by institutionalizing corporate managerialism. In many countries, higher education has been privatized either by allowing private institutions to be established or by permitting public institutions to engage in revenue-generating activities. All these global trends are influencing Southeast Asian countries in areas related to access, equity, funding, accountability, and quality assurance. New developments and reforms in each of these specific dimensions warrant special attention in order to gain a full understanding of the recent evolution of higher education in Southeast Asia.

Table 1.   Gross Enrollment Ratio at Tertiary Level by Country and Year

Country	1965	1975	1985	1995	2000
Brunei	n/a	n/a	n/a	7	14
Cambodia	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	3
Indonesia	3	2	7	11	n/a
Laos	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	3
Malaysia	2	3	6	11	23
Myanmar	1	2	n/a	6	8
Philippines	19	18	38	30	30
Singapore	10	9	12	34	n/a
Thailand	2	4	20	20	32
Vietnam	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	10

Source. (UNESCO, 2002) and (World Bank, 2000).
n/a = data not available.

Widening Access

As mentioned earlier, higher education in Southeast Asia has undergone massive expansion due to ever-increasing social demand stemming in part from population growth, the democratization of access to secondary education and the growing affluence of many countries in this region. At the individual level, higher education is perceived as an avenue for social mobility, while at the national level, higher education is seen as an instrument for human capital development and for sustaining economic growth, restructuring society, and promoting national unity. In addition, many countries stress the important role of higher education institutions in maintaining their national competitiveness in the globalized knowledge economy.

The rapid and impressive growth in tertiary student enrollments throughout Southeast Asia from 1965 to 2000 can be seen in Table 1. The countries can be broadly divided into three groups with high, medium and low gross enrollment ratios (GERs). Countries with a high GER (30% or more) are Singapore, Thailand and Philippines; countries with a medium GER (10–25%) are Malaysia, Brunei Indonesia and Vietnam; and countries with a low GER (below 10%) are Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. The most impressive growth occurred between 1995 and 2000 in countries like Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. In the Philippines and Indonesia, the absolute number of tertiary students may have increased substantially, but this is not adequately reflected in the GER because of high population growth rates in these countries.

The increased access to higher education is accompanied by a widening of access, which means higher education is being made increasingly available to socially disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities, women, indigenous people and people with disabilities. Several countries use explicit quotas to provide higher educational opportunities to underrepresented groups. Until 2002, Malaysia had an ethnic quota system (in favor of the Malays and indigenous people) for admission to public universities;

Vietnam gives preference to enrollment in subject areas such as science, technology, agriculture, and teacher training, and to applicants from remote and mountainous areas (Huong & Fry, 2004); and in Thailand, a quota system was introduced in the provincial universities whereby a percentage of the places at the local university were reserved for local or regional students (Watson, 1989). With the exception of Malaysia and the Philippines, access to higher education is a significant challenge for young women. In Cambodia, female students in higher education institutions comprise only about 22% of the total enrollment (Chamnan & Ford, 2004), and in Singapore, the proportion of female students in the National University of Singapore medical faculty has been kept at about one-third as a result of a deliberate government policy (Tan, 2004).

The widening access of education has also brought about a differentiation of higher education institutions. Differentiation can occur vertically and horizontally (World Bank, 2000). Different types of higher education institutions have proliferated vertically, with the traditional research universities being joined by polytechnics, professional schools, technical institutes and community colleges. These different types of higher education institutions have different purposes and cater to the different needs of diverse groups of students. Horizontally, there are different types of higher education providers, including private providers run by for-profit corporations, nonprofit organizations and religious groups. For example, in the Philippines there are chartered and non-chartered public institutions, stock and non-stock private universities and colleges, and sectarian and non-sectarian institutions (Gonzales, 2004). Open universities and regional universities were established in many countries to make higher education more accessible to the people, especially working adults and those staying in rural areas. Thailand has three open institutions of higher learning, including Ramkamhaeng University and Sukothai Thammarthirat Open University, which enrolled about half of the total number of tertiary students in the country (Sinlarat, 2004).

Another new development is the emergence of various forms of trans-border education. Globalization in higher education is truly reflected in the growth of new information and communication technologies, increased trade in educational services, and the emergence of borderless education. Many countries in this region are importers of cross-border education from advanced countries like Australia, United Kingdom and the United States. Cross-border education can take different forms, such as the mobility of institutions, programs, students, and distance education. A very illustrative case is Malaysia, which is both an importer and exporter of cross-border education. To date, four foreign universities have established branch campuses on Malaysian soil. Private colleges in Malaysia have formed partnerships with foreign universities to offer various kinds of transnational education initiatives, such as twinning programs, credit transfer agreements, external degree programs and joint-degree programs (Lee, 2004). Besides being an importer, Malaysian private colleges also export higher education by recruiting foreign students and establishing a commercial presence in neighboring countries like Thailand and Indonesia.

The rapid and massive expansion of higher education in this region brings with it a whole host of problems, such as strains on public funding and increasing concern with regard to the quality of courses, facilities, staff, and graduates. To overcome some of these problems, many countries have initiated higher education reforms to address

issues related to financing higher education and pursuing accountability, efficiency and productivity in higher education institutions.

Financing Higher Education

The widening access to higher education and rising unit costs have caused tremendous strain on national budgets, resources and infrastructure for higher education. Therefore, many governments have no choice but to restructure their higher education systems and seek alternative sources of funding for higher education. In this respect, quite a number of the Southeast Asian governments have adopted the neo-liberal ideologies that gained popularity during the Thatcher-Reagan period of the 1980s. Neo-liberalism seeks to increase corporate earnings and economic efficiency by privatizing public institutions, reducing state regulation and taxation, and rolling back the "costly" welfare state (Carl, 1994). Neo-liberals espouse the superiority of the market, instead of the state, as the allocator of resources. Based on these ideologies, the restructuring of higher education in many countries involves the privatization of higher education, the corporatization of public universities, and implementation of cost-recovery mechanisms.

While private higher education has a long tradition in the Philippines and Indonesia, it is comparatively new in other countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. The Philippines has 85% of its tertiary enrollment in the private sector—the highest figure in the world—and Indonesia ranks fifth with 62% (World Bank, 2000). In other countries, the state has been the main provider of higher education until recent years, when new private providers have entered the scene. In Malaysia, private higher education has expanded tremendously in the last two decades—the proportion of tertiary enrollments in the private sector rose from 9% in 1985 to 43% in 1999 (Lee, 2004), and the number of private universities has increased from zero in 1995 to 16 in 2004. In Thailand, the Private Higher Education Institution Act was passed in 1979, allowing the private sector to offer degree programs. By 2000, there were 50 private higher education institutions, and most of them were established in the 1980s and 1990s (Ministry of University Affairs, Thailand, 2000).

After the introduction of *doi moi* (economic renovation) in 1986, private higher education institutions (or more commonly known as people-founded higher education) began to appear in Vietnam. By the year 2000, there were 22 people-founded universities and colleges, enrolling 11.4% of the total number of tertiary students in the country (Loc, 2002; Huong & Fry, 2004). The privatization of higher education in this region has helped to ease the budgetary constraints faced by national governments in their effort to widen access to higher education. This move is also aligned with the global trend of commodification and marketization of higher education.

Another significant recent trend has been the reduction of public funding for higher education, as reflected by budget cuts in public universities. This practice was very obvious during the 1997 Asian economic crisis, when the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank required countries to cut public spending before being provided any loans. Consequently, public universities have been required to seek diverse sources of revenue and engage in market-related activities. The global trend has been to change universities into self-sustaining enterprises and to develop the corporate culture and

practices that will enable them to compete in the marketplace. One can find this trend throughout Southeast Asia, exemplified by the "corporatized universities" in Malaysia, "entrepreneurial universities" in Singapore, and "autonomous universities" in Indonesia and Thailand.

In 1998, five public universities were corporatized in Malaysia. After being corporatized, these universities have been run like business corporations. In the effort to create "profit-making centers," these universities have been engaged in recruiting full-fee paying students, seeking research grants and consultancy, franchising educational programs, renting out university facilities, and investing in other business ventures (Lee, 2004). In the case of Singapore, universities were given block grants instead of annual budgets, and in 1991, a University Endowment Fund was established for encouraging the two public universities to attract philanthropic donations as alternative sources of income apart from government grants and tuition fees. The Singapore government pledged to give S$3 (US$1.73) to every dollar raised by the universities. The ultimate goal here has been to lower the government's share of the universities' operating budgets from 75% to 60% (Lee & Gopinathan, 2003).

The Asian economic crisis hastened higher education reforms in Thailand, where privatization or corporatization of government projects and agencies was part of the IMF's US$17.2 billion bailout package. As a result, all public universities in the country were to become autonomous in financial and administrative terms by 2002, implying diminishing levels of financial support from the central government (Atagi, 1998).

In 1999, two important laws were passed in Indonesia addressing changes in the administration of higher education institutions, in an effort to move toward greater institutional autonomy. By 2000, four public universities had been selected to function as "guides" for other universities in Indonesia in developing greater academic and financial autonomy, which involved changes in university funding—such as introducing block funding mechanisms and charging increased tuition fees (Beerkens, 2002). In all these reforms, the state tightens its purse strings and loosens its tight control by allowing higher educational institutions to gain more autonomy.

Besides these major reforms, there is also a worldwide trend toward the introduction of (and increase in) fees in public higher education. Because of financial stringency, the global shift in policy has been from fee-free to fee-paying and the provision of support schemes to students in the form of grants and loans. The rationale behind this policy shift is cost-recovery and cost-sharing. In Singapore, for example, tuition fees in the arts and social sciences were expected to increase to 25% of the recurrent cost (Bray, 1998). In Cambodia, the government has allowed public universities to accept fee-paying students above their quota of non fee-paying students (Chamnan & Ford, 2004). The Malaysian government offers scholarships and loans to students who cannot afford to study in the universities. The government, under the Eighth Malaysian Plan (2001–2005), allocated a sum of US$684.2 million to the National Higher Education Fund which provides financial assistance to students (Lee, 2004).

Distance higher education is also very popular in many Southeast Asian countries because it is seen as a cheap mode of delivery. New forms of distance education have been developed with the advancement of information and communication technologies, such as e-learning, web-based learning, video-conferencing, and virtual libraries.

The Southeast Asian region has a large number of adult learners attending distance teaching universities, and there are a few mega-universities which enroll several hundred thousand students each—including the Universiti Terbuka in Indonesia and Sukothai Thammathirat Open University in Thailand. Many of these distance-teaching universities use both a conventional method—involving printed materials, audio and videocassettes, radio and TV, and face-to-face tutorials—as well as e-learning programs with online instruction.

This overview demonstrates how Southeast Asian countries, like countries in other parts of the world, have sought different ways of financing higher education to fuel the expansion of access. In general, there is a wide variety of higher education institutions throughout the region—in terms of public or private—as well as a mix of conventional and distance learning universities. Public universities have gained more institutional and financial autonomy, but at the same time they are held more accountable and are expected to be more transparent, efficient and productive in their day-to-day management. With this proliferation of private higher education and distance education, there is growing concern over quality assurance, quality assessment and quality management.

Pursuing Accountability

The role of the state in higher education has changed over the years. In nearly all the Southeast Asian countries, the state has expanded its role as a provider to include new protector and regulator roles. As a provider, the state allocates resources to higher education institutions, and as a protector, it takes on the function of consumer advocate by improving access to higher education and by formulating policies to promote social equality. As a regulator, the state monitors the quality of academic programs and oversees the development of higher education institutions through accreditation and program licensing.

With the expansion of private higher education and the emergence of cross-border education and distance education, there is a growing concern about the quality of higher education among stakeholders. Assuring the quality of education is a fundamental aspect of gaining and maintaining credibility for programs, institutions and national systems of higher education worldwide (Middlehurst & Campbell, 2003). This is particularly true in Southeast Asia, as quality assurance has been one of the prime concerns in many countries throughout the region. Quite a number of countries have used legislation to regulate the development of their higher education system and establish quality assurance frameworks to monitor their higher education institutions and programs, although countries like Brunei, Laos, and Myanmar still do not have any quality control mechanisms.

Malaysia uses both legislation and quality assurance frameworks to regulate its higher education system. The Malaysian legislature passed four bills in 1995 and 1996 which have direct impact on the higher education system in the country (Lee, 2004). The 1996 National Council on Higher Education Act put in place a single governing body to steer the direction of higher education development in the country. The 1995 amendment of the 1971 Universities and University College Act lays the framework for the corporatization of public universities, requiring them to be more accountable in the

spending of public funds. The 1996 Private Higher Education Institutions Act defines the government's regulatory control over all private institutions in the country, and the 1996 National Accreditation Board Act led to the establishment of the National Accreditation Board which oversees the accreditation of all educational programs offered by private higher education institutions.

A study by Stella (2004) shows that external quality assurance in most countries of the region is of relatively recent origin. Countries that have a quality assurance framework include the following:

- Cambodia: the Accreditation Committee of Cambodia (ACC), established in 2000;
- Indonesia: the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN), established in 1994;
- Malaysia: the National Accreditation Board (LAN), established in 1996;
- the Philippines: the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP), established in 1989, and the Philippines Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), established in 1957;
- Thailand: the National Educational Standards and Quality Assurance (NESQA), established in 2000; and
- Vietnam: the Quality Assurance Unit, established in 2002.

Quality assurance initiatives may be related to a particular program, an educational institution or the entire higher education system. There are three basic approaches to quality assurance: accreditation, assessment and academic audit. Whatever their basic approach, the quality assurance frameworks found throughout Southeast Asia have several common core elements, such as: (i) evaluation based on pre-determined and transparent criteria; (ii) a process based on a combination of self-study and peer review; (iii) a final decision made by the quality assurance agency; (iv) public disclosure of the outcome; and (v) validity of the outcome for a specific period of time (Stella, 2004). Despite these common elements, there are many variations in quality assurance practices that are designed to serve unique national contexts. However, research has shown that there is very little quality assurance and accreditation criteria for transnational education and e-learning in the region (Jung, 2004).

At the institutional level, higher education institutions throughout the world have been under increasing pressure for greater accountability and cost-efficiency from various quarters, notably the state. These external pressures have led to the adoption of corporate managerialism by higher education institutions to improve accountability, efficiency and productivity (Currie, 1998). Many universities and colleges have implemented management practices from the private sector, such as mission statements, strategic planning, total quality management, ISO certification, rightsizing and benchmarking. Faculties and research units are expected to operate as cost centers and are required to carry out strategic planning and prepare business plans. Cost centers and programs that are not considered viable have been closed down. All these changes in management practices can be seen as a trend of central university authorities acquiring a more powerful role in resource management and in orienting and controlling department activities. Changes in university management have also brought about changes in the working conditions for the academics—the main actors in all universities.

The Changing Academic Profession

As universities expand, the direct power of academics over the structure of governance has been limited by a new layer of professional bureaucrats who have significant power in the day-to-day administration of the university (Altbach, 1991). The emphasis on accountability has required academics to submit to more fiscal control, pressure to increase productivity, and more rules and regulations as well as rigorous assessment procedures. For example, in Singapore academics are compensated on a performance basis rather than on seniority, and in Malaysia the academic staff are required to sign "personal performance contracts" with their respective heads, with annual salary increments based on performance. The penetration of the corporate culture into higher education institutions has required academics to behave like entrepreneurs and to market their expertise, services and research findings. The corporate culture may have brought about increases in institutional autonomy, but it also demands more accountability on the part of the academics. It places increasing emphasis on performance and competition. This can cause a cleavage between academics in the natural and applied sciences (who are constantly subjected to the pressure of being engaged in entrepreneurial activities) and those in the social sciences and humanities, who perceive the social value of their research being undermined by university authorities. As a consequence, the academic culture loses its collegiality and becomes more bureaucratic and hierarchical, with a concentration of power at the top (Lee, 2002).

The academic culture is quite weak in this region, for there is hardly any research going on in many of the universities in the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos—in each case, for various reasons. First, the academic staff is either bogged down with teaching or they lack the facilities and resources to carry out research. Second, many of the academics do not have a postgraduate degree, so they are not trained to do research. Third, the academics are so poorly paid by their institutions that many of them have to take on a second job in order to survive economically. However, in the more developed countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, there have been significant scientific research contributions in some specific areas, including marine biology, forestry, tropical medicine, and agricultural crops such as rubber, cocoa and rice.

Academic freedom in some countries—like Singapore and Malaysia—is quite limited when compared to other countries, with restrictions on what can be researched and what the academic community can express to the public. There have even been cases of censorship of research findings which are deemed to be politicaly sensitive by the powers that be. For example, the Malaysian government has used legislation to gag both the dons and students from participation in shaping public discourse and national debates (Lee, 2002). As for academics teaching in the cross-border education programs, they have even less academic freedom because what they teach is not determined by themselves but by their counterparts overseas.

In the past, academics in this region have had both tenure and civil service status, but with the restructuring of higher education, academics were removed from the civil service in some countries like Thailand and Indonesia. It is common to find appointments of academic staff on a contractual basis, lacking the job security and prestige of

the traditional professorship. In general, academic remuneration in this region is comparatively lower than developed countries—with the exception of Singapore, which has a very competitive salary scheme to attract global talent to work in the country. There is some inter-country flow of academics in this region, like Burmese medical doctors teaching in Malaysian universities, Malaysian academics teaching in Brunei, and Indonesian academics working in Malaysia. This inter-country flow of academics is one of several examples of regional cooperation that can be observed throughout Southeast Asia.

Regional Cooperation

The amount of regional cooperation in higher education in this region is quite extensive, as reflected by the number of international bodies and inter-governmental organizations that were established for this purpose. First, there is the Southeast Asian Minister of Education Organization (SEAMEO), founded in 1965 as a chartered international organization with the purpose of promoting cooperation in education, science and culture throughout the region. Under SEAMEO, the Regional Center for Higher Education and Development (RIHED) was established in Bangkok, Thailand to provide programs in training, research and development, information dissemination and policy analysis in higher education among member countries.

The UNESCO Regional Bureau of Education for the Asia and Pacific region is also based in Bangkok, Thailand, and has established a network of networks in the region, linking up cooperative entities such as the University Twinning and networking scheme (UNITWIN), the Associated School Project Network (ASP Net), the Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE), and the International Project on Technical and Vocational Education (UNEVO). One of its main roles is to ensure quality and standards in higher education through capacity building and standard setting. UNESCO is very active throughout the region in providing professional training on quality assurance approaches and methods and in facilitating mutual recognition of degrees, diplomas and certificates among countries in the region.

Another Asia-Pacific regional body is University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP), established in 1993 under the initiative of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries to increase the exchange of university students and staff through cooperation among countries in the region. UMAP's objectives are: (i) to identify and overcome impediments to student mobility; (ii) to move beyond bilateral to multilateral arrangements; and (iii) to develop and maintain a system of granting and recognizing academic credit (Smith, 2004).

Besides these inter-governmental organizations, there are also a number of non-governmental organizations that were established by universities and academics themselves. The oldest, the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL), was founded in 1956 to foster the development of member institutions and to cultivate a sense of regional identity by providing regular opportunities for the discussion of academic development and general university development. Over the years, ASAIHL has established various types of fellowships and academic exchange

programs, and has expanded to include universities outside the Southeast Asia region—including countries like Hong Kong (China), Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden and the U.S. (ASAIHL, 2004). Some of the more recently established non-governmental organizations include the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP), the ASEAN Universities Network (ANU), the Asia Pacific Distance and Multimedia Education Network (APDMEN), and the Asia Pacific Higher Education Network (APHEN). Much of the regional cooperation is focused on facilitating the mobility of university staff and students, research collaboration, and the exchange of ideas on institutional management and development.

Future Trends and Challenges

Globalization is a key force behind many of the future challenges facing this region. Indeed, the concept of globalization is a theme which has gained wide currency among educators, policymakers, scholars and professionals as they examine how education systems in different countries have evolved over time. Educational changes in any country are not only affected by its own socio-economic and political development but are also influenced by the process of globalization. Globalization is a multi-dimensional process with economic, social, political and cultural implications for education. This is particularly so for higher education in a globalized knowledge society. Higher education plays an important role in knowledge production and dissemination, and it is often recognized as an essential driving force for national development in many countries. In the context of globalization and knowledge economies, countries need a highly skilled workforce to increase their national competitiveness. There is also the belief that higher education can help make societies more democratic, alleviate poverty, and strengthen citizenship participation and human rights.

The specific elements of globalization that stand to affect higher education directly or indirectly include the growing importance of the knowledge economy, the perception of higher education as a marketable commodity, the increasing trade in educational services, and educational innovations related to information and communication technologies (UNESCO, 2003). All these developments have implications for higher education in terms of quality, access, diversity and funding. However, globalization affects each country in different ways due to each country's history, traditions, culture, resources and priorities.

The future trends in the development of higher education in this region will be quite similar to other parts of the world with continuing expansion, continuing search for different sources of funding, and continuing diversification of higher education institutions. There will also be increased calls for institutional autonomy, financial diversification and quality control in higher education as well as increasing demands from different social groups for access. The global trends will include movement towards a mixed funding model, innovative use of new information and communication technologies, and better management and deployment of limited physical and human resources. As for curriculum development, there will be increasing pressure for relevance, flexibility and adaptability to changes in the society as a whole and in the workplace in particular.

Universities throughout the world, including those in Southeast Asia, face the challenge of no longer being the sole producer of knowledge. At the beginning of the 21st century, there are multiple sites of knowledge production—including corporate universities established by big commercial firms, non-university institutes, research centers, government agencies, industrial laboratories, think tanks, and various kinds of consultancies. According to Gibbons (1998), "the parallel expansion in the number of potential knowledge producers on the supply side and the expansion of the requirement for specialist knowledge on the demand side are creating the conditions for the emergence of a new mode of knowledge production" (p. 33). The key issue is the relevance of higher education in the context of changing knowledge production and changing demands of the workplace, as more Southeast Asian countries become industrialized and move towards a knowledge economy and post-Fordist production. A major challenge for the universities is to carry out teaching and research which is transdisciplinary, ensure flatter hierarchies, and become more socially accountable and reflexive through an expanded system of quality control (Gibbons, 1998). Furthermore, universities are called upon to produce knowledge workers who are problem identifiers, problem solvers, and problem brokers. The challenge is how to apply knowledge that may have been produced anywhere in the world to work in a particular local situation.

A major impact of globalization on higher education is the delinking of the university from the nation-state. It has been argued that "the university is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as a producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture" (Readings, 1996, p. 3). The modern university as derived from the Humboldtian philosophy is an ideological arm of the nation-state which develops and transmits national culture to its citizenry. Culture in this context is seen as the sum of all knowledge that is studied, as well as the cultivation and development of one's character as a result of that study. It is the idea of culture which ties the university to the nation-state. However, the link between the university and the nation-state no longer holds in the era of globalization. The contemporary university has been transformed from an ideological arm of the state into a bureaucratically organized and relatively autonomous consumer-oriented corporation. Therefore, with the declining role of the nation-state and the increasing power of globalization, questions have been raised about the role and social mission of contemporary universities (Kwiek, 2001). According to Johnstone (2001), the challenge is for the university to provide a counterweight against the "de-culturing" and "de-nationalizing" forces of globalization by continuing to play its indispensable role in promoting an inclusive multiculturalism and universal values. Universities in Southeast Asia will have to face these multiple challenges by redefining and reinventing themselves to suit the changing societal needs in the era of globalization.

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