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ABSTRACT

Asian universities are facing problems of maturing institutions. Having built up their resources, they must now find means of sustaining these resources and of matching their capacities more closely to Asian needs. This process is complicated by the status of many Asian universities as hybrid institutions largely based on Western models. As useful as these models have been in the formative years of Asian higher education, they have not proved entirely sufficient to the special requirements of higher education in Asia. This essay focuses attention on the role of educational cooperation between Asian and U.S. institutions in the present and immediate future, and attempts to provide a sense of the collective contribution of the participants of the 1974 Institute of International Education conference. (JMF)

Issues in
International Education
Report No. 3

The Changing Role of Educational Cooperation in Asia

An Asian-U.S. Dialogue

IIE
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Education

Issues in International Education

The publication of this series of papers reflects the Institute's continuing concern with the critical issues in international education. In recent years this concern has been expressed particularly through the Institute's sponsorship of the International Councils on Higher Education, which bring together chief executives of universities in the U.S. and other regions of the world for examination of topics of shared interest. Essays prepared as subjects for discussion at these conferences will form a portion of the series, which will draw upon other resources as well.

The past two decades have been a period of enormous growth in education throughout the world. As the role of education has increased in dimension, the choices involved in educational decision-making have increased in complexity and in social impact. It is hoped that this series will contribute to the ongoing debate on the issues of international education through examination of alternative viewpoints and through the publication of new information. As international education in our era has broadened its scope beyond traditional activity to include developmental assistance and other concerns, the range of topics covered in the series will reflect this breadth of interests in the field.

Papers in this series are prepared under the direction of the Office of Planning and Analysis, the program planning and development arm of IIE.

The Changing Role of Educational Cooperation in Asia

An Asian-U.S. Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

In August, 1974, a group of university presidents and educational leaders from the United States and the nations of the Asia-Pacific region met in Hong Kong under the auspices of the International Councils on Higher Education (ICHE), an activity of the Institute of International Education. The Hong Kong meeting was the fifth in an annual series of conferences organized by ICHE under a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation of New York.

Both IIE and the Luce Foundation have been increasingly concerned over the direction that U.S.-Asian relations have taken during the past several years. Examining these relations from the perspective of the United States, it has seemed to us that fundamental causes of our problems lie in a widespread ignorance of Asia in the United States and in a dangerously superficial awareness of what is really happening in that part of the world.

In attempting to come to grips with a problem of this magnitude, it has seemed to us that a concerted effort on several related fronts is needed to deepen U.S. understanding of the Asia-Pacific region. One means to accomplish this end is the development of new relationships with Asian leaders in all fields, and particularly with leaders of the educational community.

The establishment of the Council on Higher Education for Asia and the United States reflected a conviction that the future development of the Asian nations will be based to a great extent on the thinking and action of the intellectual leadership in Asian universities. The Asian council is the most recent in a series of similar councils organized by IIE to establish linkages between educators in the U.S. and other regions of the world. The Council provides a vehicle for a regular exchange of ideas and plans, and for the development of action programs. Its meetings are designed to deepen the participants' understanding of each other's societies and to encourage a regular dialogue on the concrete issues facing institutions of higher education as they become more deeply involved in the problems of national and regional development.

The Hong Kong conference devoted particular attention to relationships between education and development and to the role of educational cooperation between Asian and U.S. institutions in the present and immediate fixture. The report which follows focuses attention on the latter topic of educational cooperation, and attempts to provide a sense of the collective contribution of the conference participants to an examination of the subject. It is not a summary record of deliberations, but rather an essay based upon both the background papers which were prepared for the conference and the discussions on these papers.

We wish again to extend our thanks to the Henry Luce Foundation of New York, the generous grant of which provided the bulk of the funding for the conference. Mrs. Martha Wallace, the Foundation's Executive Director, was an active participant in our deliberations. We also wish to thank the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong, both of which acted as local hosts for the conference. Special thanks are due to their vice-chancellors, Dr. Choh-Ming Li and Dr. Rayson Huang.

In preparing an interpretative essay on the Hong Kong conference, we have sought to reflect the points of view expressed as accurately as possible. The responsibility for any errors of omission or commission is ours.

James F. Tierney
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June, 1975

I. From Assistance to Collaboration

Post-war cooperation between universities in Asia and the United States was founded on a shared perspective of the role of higher education in Asia. Higher education was seen as a leading edge of development, a means of rapid modernization through investment in human resources. It was widely believed that Western models of higher education could be transplanted with appropriate modifications to non-Western cultures, there to create intellectual elites capable of managing new institutions and redirecting old societies. Asian governments made massive investments in higher education, to the point at which the university student population of Asia has become larger than that of any other continent. U.S. universities, with the support of the U.S. government, foundations and other agencies, contributed to this process through educational planning and development programs in cooperation with Asian universities and through the education of thousands of Asian students on U.S. campuses including a high proportion of the present faculty members of Asian institutions. Students from the Far East have represented the largest percentage of foreign students in the United States for twenty years. In 1974 their number exceeded 50,000, over one-third of the U.S. foreign student population.

Although the major emphasis during the past two decades has been placed on assistance to the Asian nations, there have been significant reciprocal benefits to U.S. universities. Their faculties have been offered unparalleled opportunities to build competence in Asian studies, to carry out field research and to build useful professional ties with their Asian counterparts. Generous funding during part of this period permitted the rapid development of area studies centers on U.S. campuses. Both Asian and U.S. students have gained from their contact with each other on U.S. campuses.

Most observers believe that cooperation has had overall benefits for both U.S. and Asian higher education. However, the context in which cooperation takes place has changed. Higher education is still seen as a leading edge of the modernization process; investment in training and research is still a quid pro quo for a productive future. However, higher education has now attained an advanced level of development in much of Asia. Asian universities have accomplished a difficult task in enormously expanding their facilities, faculties and productive capacity in a compressed period of time.

Asian universities are now facing the second-stage problems of maturing institutions. Having built up their resources, they must now find means of sustaining these resources and of matching their capacities more closely to Asian needs. This process is complicated by the status of many Asian universities as hybrid institutions largely based on Western models. As useful as these models have been in the formative years of Asian higher education, they have not proved entirely sufficient to the special requirements of higher education in Asia.

Many Western-influenced institutions are seeking to 'Asianize' themselves- to revise curricula so that they more closely match Asian needs for knowledge and training, to formulate research problems the results of which will be applicable to national development, and to make new institutional arrangements that will permit greater flexibility in serving community needs.

Asian universities are asked by government and by society to serve as both centers of learning and as

instruments of social change. Western models are perhaps most appropriate to the development of the first of these functions. Although the role of the scholar—the seeker after knowledge—is universal, the role of the 'change agent' is not. The change agent role in Asia demands a close matching of university teaching and research with national needs for modernization and development, a process for which Western mechanisms and experience have been an imperfect guide.

This perception has had a significant impact upon the climate of international cooperation in recent years. Asian educators have had enough experience of Western education to appreciate both its advantages and its disadvantages to them. As Asian institutions have developed their own strengths and special capacities, they have begun to seek a more balanced 'collaborative' relationship with Western education that will draw upon Western resources more selectively.

Asian universities are also placing greater emphasis on regional and intranational cooperation, proceeding from the recognition that they share many similar needs in training and research, and that collaboration makes sense as a means of maximizing available resources in facilities and talent. A further impetus to this process has been the growing constraints on the budgets of academic institutions (budgets which are reaching their affordable limits in many still-developing nations), and the diminished funding available from U.S. sources to support international cooperation. (Financial constraint, however, is a two-edged sword, in that a lack of funds if severe enough can preclude cooperation altogether rather than stimulate attempts to share limited resources.)

These emphases on the Asianization of higher education, on 'collaboration' rather than 'assistance,' and on the advantages of greater regional and intranational cooperation seem likely to be determining factors in the future of educational exchange with and within Asia. George M. Beckmann of the University of Washington, in a paper prepared for the 1974 Hong Kong conference of the Council on Higher Education for Asia and the United States, suggested that it is time to begin a thorough reconsideration of approaches to cooperation after twenty years of interchange. His opinion is widely shared. Educators are both critical of the failures of institutional cooperation in the past and optimistic as to its future.

II. Cooperation: Issues

Cooperation between universities in the United States and Asia has extended across a wide spectrum. U.S. universities have provided technical assistance in the development of curriculum and facilities. U.S. faculty members have served as consultants and as on-the-scene advisers, researchers and teachers in the planning and implementation of new institutions, new academic departments and new research facilities. Schools in the U.S. and Asia have developed reciprocal institutional and departmental ties. A large number of graduate students and faculty have received advanced training in the U.S. which has strengthened their individual professional capacities and those of their home institutions.

Opinions vary among Asians as to the overall success of these efforts. Given the extent and diversity of activities numbered among these relationships, a range of critical opinion is not surprising.

The most critical viewpoint expressed among Asians is that some instances of cooperation have caused Asian scholars to act as agents of foreign governments or to abandon their home countries; have caused them to carry out scholarly activities which are irrelevant to national development and sometimes politically suspicious; have led to duplication of effort, wastage of resources and other

abuses. This view of cooperation as a disguised form of subversion does not seem to suggest a role in the future for scholarly collaboration—at least, not a future to be encouraged. To the extent such conditions have existed, they have demonstrated a lack of awareness or regard for the basic condition of effective cooperation, which is reciprocity in intention and benefit.

A second criticism expressed by Asians focuses on the potential for exploitation and patronization in relationships between scholars. Some Asians feel that U.S. scholars abuse the opportunities for research offered them by Asian institutions by (variously) hogging limited facilities, exporting data without benefit to the Asian institution, not recognizing the contribution of Asian colleagues to their work, publishing and taking credit for research results which overburdened Asian colleagues are too busy to publish, etc.

This view is countered by the position that Asians themselves owe great debts to Western scholarship and have used its resources extensively and that in any case there is no law of the conservation of knowledge. However, this issue is essentially not resolvable on a theoretical level. Its practical implication is that scholars from different cultures must display great sensitivity and restraint in their relationships to avoid even the appearance of patronization or exploitation. This obligation is perhaps particularly concomitant upon the U.S. scholar functioning on the homeground of his Asian colleagues.

Practical obstacles to effective cooperation are created by the differing manpower training requirements of U.S. and Asian societies. For example, it has been recognized for a number of years that advanced training in the U.S. sometimes does not provide appropriate training for Asian scholars in terms of the special needs of their frequently less-developed home countries. This is particularly the case in science and technological fields. Asian universities often lack the facilities of their U.S. counterparts in science and technology, making it difficult for the Western-educated scholar to use his expertise. Asian requirements in these fields are very different from those of the U.S. in any case, particularly in terms of the application of technology to local needs (e.g., the need for technology that is labor-intensive rather than capital-intensive in many countries). In the past, developmental problems of this type have not been considered the leading edge of science in the West, although they present sophisticated problems for the researcher and for the scientific policy-maker.

An issue in which the differing senses of value of U.S. and Asian universities play a role is that of area specialization versus discipline specialization. Some Asian scholars feel that U.S. area specialists tend to lack strength in their home disciplines, and therefore are not as useful as consultants and teachers in Asian institutions as they might be. U.S. scholars recognize the paramount importance of a firm grounding in a discipline, but point out that it is almost impossible to function effectively in an Asian environment without extensive language and field experience.

This issue is essentially a conflict between different scales of value. Both Asian and U.S. professionals agree that strength in the home discipline is basic to performance. However, area specialization may be perceived as a lesser value by an Asian whose culture forms part of the 'area,' while it may assume a relatively greater value to the U.S. specialist whose language fluency and other Asian background is the result of years of intensive study, and whose area expertise is a rarer—and thus more highly valued—commodity in the U.S. academic community.

One should introduce the caveat that this is a rather more complex question than can be treated adequately in a brief

review. Area concentration and discipline concentration are obviously not mutually exclusive forms of expertise. Ideally knowledge of an area and in a discipline are mutually reinforcing, and in reality many practitioners approach this ideal. Moreover, the appropriate mix of knowledge of the area and discipline will vary according to the teaching and research interests of the individual scholar, and according to the demands placed upon him by his professional associations, department or institution. The appropriate balance for effective function in a U.S. academic milieu will almost certainly be somewhat different from that in the Asian environment. Bridging the two environments will always demand flexibility on the part of the scholar.

Funding will always be at issue in institutional collaboration, given the reality that funding is a determining factor in establishing and continuing cooperative relations. Academic institutions in both Asia and the United States face severe financial pressures. International programs are expensive to sustain, and must compete with other valid concerns of the university for limited funds. International cooperation often requires long-term support in order to be effective. Such support typically has been available largely from government and international agencies and foundations which are interested in funding specific programs (and the special interests of which may not always match those of the university). Funding terminates as a project is completed, or as the priorities of the sponsor change, or as the character of a government changes, leaving the potential for a continued mutually beneficial relationship between the U.S. and Asian institution unexplored. The negative effects of discontinuity are frequently cited by both Asian and Western scholars.

Moreover, control of funds represents an opportunity to make both positive and negative choices in terms of which institutions receive the benefits of international cooperation. This question frequently arises in terms of the choice between supporting larger and more prestigious institutions or smaller, newer and weaker schools ('elephants and mice,' in the graphic image of a Thai professor). Asians themselves are divided on this issue. Small institutions feel they need greater help than older/larger/more developed universities, and that assistance to 'elephant' universities widens an already broad gap. On the other hand, funders find it easier to assess the capacities of an 'elephant' institution, and have had mixed results in supporting indigestible, unsustainable programs in 'mouse' institutions.

Virtually all the issues outlined above derive in some part from the nature of the relationship between Asian and U.S. institutions, which has largely been one of tutelage over the past twenty years. Suspicion of actual or assumed political motives underlying U.S. assistance, concern about insensitive use of Asian resources, inability to mesh the goals of developed and developing institutions, differing valuations for certain types of knowledge, and disagreement over the proper application of funds all seem negative outgrowths of a tutelage relationship which has had many positive aspects as well in the rapid development of academic institutions and personnel and of educated manpower in general throughout much of Asia.

Many Asian and U.S. university leaders believe problems of this nature could prove avoidable in the future if participants in institutional cooperation can learn from experience, which suggests that collaboration must meet four conditions in order to be fully effective.

1. Clear definition of a shared objective
2. Mutual respect and independence of cooperating individuals and institutions
3. Availability of appropriate personnel and resources
4. Mutual benefit

III. Cooperation: Opportunities

Given the existence of these conditions – with their emphasis on mutuality and balance – collaboration is presented with a number of opportunities, largely related to the change agent role of the Asian university.

Many universities are interested in exploring social, scientific and technological problem areas related to development, and are seeking interdisciplinary approaches to the complex research needs involved. Such problem-oriented research is ideally suited to international collaboration. It provides a clearly-defined objective for cooperation, offering an opportunity to attack large-scale problems and to meet real social needs. Among the scientific areas most in need of such examination areas of mutual concern which could benefit from an international approach are the marine and environmental sciences. Many U.S. and Asian scholars would also like to see more extensive collaborative research into such issues of social policy as the role of technology in effecting social change.

Problem-oriented interdisciplinary research of this type presents some difficulties. It lacks a tradition, it cuts across the usual departmental lines, and in some Asian fields it is difficult to find discipline specialists with the requisite expertise. This is particularly the case in thorny policy or problem-related areas, examples of which might be land reform or the study of the economic role of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. Such difficulties can be overcome, however, and research of this type presents a real opportunity for both Asian and U.S. institutions to combine an attack on substantive problems with research and training in the field.

Activity of this kind has become an increasing focus of the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii and of a number of other institutions in recent years. The East-West Center, for example, has cooperated with a number of Asian institutions that have taken the lead in the development of an interesting innovation, the 'appropriate technology center.' The mission of this new type of institution will be to solve problems in the innovation and transfer of technology. It will mobilize scientists (and train them) on specific projects, concentrating the resources of universities, governments and funding agencies. Its research focus will be on the "linkage between macro-planning and micro-implementation" – or in other words, on the working relationships of entrepreneurship, finance, skill level, market forces, and technology that determine the outcomes of planning.

The 'appropriate technology center' is an example of effective international *and* regional collaboration. Asian universities have a strong 'self-help' orientation, and are seeking other ways to join together for mutual benefit. One concern widely shared throughout the region focuses on the dependence of the Asian universities on their U.S. counterparts for advanced training. Educators recognize the benefits access to U.S. education has brought to their institutions, but are also aware that their own training capacity has grown and that training in Asia is a significantly less expensive alternative to an American Ph.D.

In the future, many Asian university leaders foresee the development of regional 'centers of excellence' comparable to the East-West Center and other U.S. institutions that provide certification of academic quality. Recognizing that academic traffic between Asia and the U.S. has often been motivated by the need and desire for credentials, the passport to academic success, Asian educators wish to see certain of their institutions attain the status of Berkeleys or Harvards of Asia. A number of schools are emerging into that role.

The development of centers of excellence in Asia has the further benefit of providing a means of rationalizing the pattern of assistance to less-developed institutions. As noted earlier, international assistance has had mixed results in aiding the development of 'mouse' institutions. Larger, more developed institutions in Asia, however, can 'step-down' assistance, acting as transfer agents in regional or intranational consortia. Such arrangements are particularly useful in the sharing of limited and expensive resources such as computers and libraries. Consortia have operated successful centralized admissions systems. They have also proven to be an effective means of sharing staff, and of developing staff in weaker institutions through the 'gift' of particularly well-qualified junior staff by 'elephant' universities.

Asians are seeking further means of regionalizing collaboration. The two regional organizations of institutions of higher education, the Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (RIHED) and the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL), have actively promoted such cooperation. University leaders have identified opportunities for regional cooperation in the promotion of conferences of educational planners and research planners, through which attacks on common concerns could be coordinated. They believe that the consortium model used in developing 'appropriate technology centers' is applicable to other research needs in such fields as agriculture and health care, and that such consortia may serve as a partial solution to the problems of smaller institutions seeking to develop from a limited resource base. They see the potential for effective exchange relationships as yet undeveloped in sport and cultural activities.

There are real obstacles to the progress of regional collaboration, however. Asian educators have discovered that it is more difficult to develop effective regional cooperation than it has been to create effective collaboration with the West. Lack of tradition, distance and bad communications, funding considerations, and disparities of standards and salaries all play their part in impeding the formation of relationships (distance and bad communications can even play a role in impeding intranational cooperation in some of the more sprawling nations). Some institutions have not been as flexible as they might have been in regulating such activity, giving rise to situations in which professionals have been penalized by their home institutions for outside activities. There is a need for 'neutral adaptations' between institutions in Asia that will permit an easier flow of men and resources.

In some cases the lure of international training itself has militated against regional cooperation. One mechanism for promoting regional linkages, an inter-Asian fellowship program, has found difficulty in competing with the lure of training in the United States. It has not been able to fill the number of fellowships which its funding could support because of lack of interest in the program on the part of potential participants, who apparently have been more interested in pursuing their advanced training in the West.

Of course, there is no necessary conflict between cooperation in the region and with the United States. Many factors come into play in determining the choices made in such matters, ranging from the comparative financial advantages of different opportunities to their prestige and applicability to the specialized interests of the scholar. It seems likely that at least part of the problem in such cases as that described above is a relatively higher level of awareness of opportunities in the United States. As the strengths of Asian institutions become more widely known, as communications between these institutions improve, and as professional ties develop over time, one would expect conflicts to minimize themselves.

A further problem, and perhaps a casualty of the Asianization process, has been the relative decline in teaching of international languages in Asia. English is the most common international language. Some countries have de-emphasized its importance, while others have tended to teach the written language rather than the spoken. This has created difficulties in communication in a region with so many diverse cultures and languages. One participant in the Hong Kong conference cited as an example an inter-Asian conference he had attended at which not one of the participants was able to discover a common language with the delegate of the Khmer Republic. Many university leaders are convinced that the trend away from the teaching of international languages should be arrested, despite the effort and expense involved, because of the many advantages both within the region and without in being able to use a common means of communication with colleagues.

IV. Cooperation: The Future

The patterns of regional and international collaboration are obviously changing. Both Asian and U.S. educators seem optimistic about its future. It appears likely that U.S.-Asian institutional collaboration will serve a useful role for many years to come. The era of Asian university staff training in the U.S. has not yet ended, but even when such needs diminish there will be excellent reasons for continuing involvement between U.S. and Asian education. Collaboration in research and scholarship will continue to have obvious advantages. Moreover, Asians can provide a unique perspective on the United States for Americans and vice versa. As one noted educator remarked, part of the impetus for the process of Asianization has been the focus on the region qua region, and on its common characteristics, concerns and issues, made possible for Asians through their experience of the U.S. approach to the study of Asia. In addition, Asians have the advantage in U.S. institutions of a neutral environment for the study of the issues which concern them, of access to the most advanced scholarship, and an opportunity to learn from the mistakes and successes of the most diverse national system of higher education in existence. U.S. academics have the advantage in Asian institutions of access to knowledge and resources in non-Western cultures of increasing interest and concern to the United States, and to many fresh and creative approaches to the problems of higher education.

Asians have made innovative use of the mechanisms of institutional collaboration to meet the needs of national development. Not all effective collaboration in the future will require innovation, however. Indeed, both Asian and U.S. university leaders have observed that there are existing resources for cooperation which could be tapped without greatly increased funding. Among possibilities cited are those of joint publication by Asian and U.S. university presses, and the greater use of low-cost radio linkages as a means of holding conferences among colleagues at widely separated institutions.

In the 1980's and beyond it has been suggested that new patterns of higher education may develop in Asia, as universities there continue to explore means of best serving the needs of their mass populations. One interesting suggestion is that the university as it exists today in Asia should assume as its primary function that of being a center of knowledge and research, passing on many of the functions of manpower training to new institutions—open universities/universities without walls/universities of the air. Such a paradigm could act to meet the enormous pressures placed on higher education by population growth in Asia, and would serve to promote a desirable equity in

access to training. The roles of the traditional university in Asian society would be that of knowledge accumulation and dissemination. It has also been suggested that a range of new research institutions may evolve in Asia to meet the enormous needs for the development and application of new knowledge related to the problems of Asian development.

The form which institutional collaboration will take in this environment is unknowable before the fact, but the need to experiment and to seek new ways to solve old problems presents many opportunities for cooperation—given the right balance of money, resources and talent in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust.

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The Institute of International Education was founded in 1919 to promote international understanding through education. It administers scholarship and fellowship programs for the U.S. and foreign governments, universities, foundations, corporations and international organizations, and provides support services to researchers and advisers on developmental assistance projects abroad. Seeking to promote effective educational interchange, IIE offers information and consultative services through a network of offices in the U.S. and overseas and carries on an extensive schedule of seminars and workshops. IIE acts as the parent agency for the International Councils on Higher Education, which bring together U.S. and foreign university heads and other educational policy-makers in a continuing series of conferences.

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