Researching Higher Education in Asia
history, development and future

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This presentation is based on
Contents I

Conceptualization and understanding

• **Introduction & conclusion:**
  Jisun Jung, Hugo Horta and Akiyoshi Yonezawa

• **Insufficient contribution:**
  Hugo Horta

• **Foil to the West?:** Rui Yang

• **Post-colonial neo-liberal Asia:** Jae Park

• **Regionalism, Regionalization:** Roger Chao Jr.
Contents II

14 country case studies

- **Japan**: Akiyoshi Yonezawa
- **China**: Li-Fang Hu, Shuang-Ye Chen
- **Hong Kong**: William Yat Wai Lo, Felix Sai Kit Ng
- **South Korea**: Jisun Jung
- **Macau**: Zhidong Hao
- **Taiwan**: Sheng-Ju Chan, Ting-May Huang
- **Mongolia**: Nyamjav Sumberzul, Shagdarsuren Oyunbileg
- **Singapore**: Michael H. Lee
- **Malaysia**: Norzaini Azman, Morshidi Sirat
- **Thai**: Nopraenue Sajjarax Dhirathiti
- **Philippines**: Christian Bryan S. Bustamante
- **India**: N.V. Varghese
- **Iran**: Abbas Madandar Arani, Lida Kakia, Mohammad Jafari Malek
- **Saudi Arabia**: Abdulrahman M. Abouammoh
Background questions
Internationalization and international contribution of
HE research in Asia?

• **Quantity**: international publication searchable through publication database... is it enough?

• **Quality**: theoretical and empirical contribution to the international HE research community: original? leading? following? different?

• **Identities**: global? regional? national/local? diversified? convergent?
Common set of questions

• Who is undertaking HE research in Asia?
• Where are the key regions of HE research in Asia, and how have they been evolving?
• To what extent does HE research in Asia involve international, regional, national and institutional collaboration?
• Is HE an independent academic field at the national level across Asia?
• Does Asia have research institutes, academic degree programs and nationally based academic journals specializing in HE?
• What kinds of topics are being researched, and what methodologies are being applied?
• What is the relationship between government policy and HE research?
HE has received insufficient attention to make it an independent field of research in most Asian countries.

- A means of planning future policy directions, evaluating policy outcomes and outlining policy implications, rather than as an independent intellectual discipline (Mongolia)
- The governments’ policy priorities lie in science and technology rather than HE (Thailand)
- Limited number of specialised academic programmes, academic appointments, national scholarly associations and core journals (China as an exception)
- The literature that studies in the Asian context – and published internationally – have been produced by only a few individual scholars on a very small number of institutions
HE “community of practice” groups or networks which help guide, regulate and make meaning of our lives, both in work and outside” is vulnerable.

• Researchers: limited national communities
  – Japan and China have long boasted national communities of HE researchers (increase in number and the volume since 1990s)
  – Korean major research universities have very recently recruited HE research specialists education
  – Others: ‘critical mass’ of HE specialists is lacking

• Research institutes: often government-driven
  – Malaysia (e.g. National HE Research Institute
  – China (e.g. Xiamen), Japan (e.g. Hiroshima), Korea
  – Recent establishment in Saudi Arabia
  – Thailand, Taiwan: HE programmes still not independent
• National journals: few exclusively focus on HE
  – **China, Japan**: domestic academic associations, journals in national languages
  – **Korea, Taiwan**: published in journals in education in general
  – **Mongolia**: specific education fields (medical edu)
  – **Saudi Arabia**: biannual since 2004

• Strong link with government: positive in general, but possible over-reliance on governmental projects and undermine the academic freedom and autonomy
  – **Singapore**: globalization as national focus
  – **Malaysia, Thailand, Mongolia**: HE as key policy concern
  – **China**: more than half publication supported by government projects
• Topics under policy driven nature, follows the trend in the international higher education literature, many are country cases – isolated or in comparison
  – Government policy level practical issues (China),
  – System policies (Korea)
  – Policies, institutional activities and higher education reform, higher education evaluation and rankings, internationalisation/globalisation, marketisation and world-class universities (Taiwan)
  – Policy guidance in line with national development priorities, decentralisation, massification, quality and excellence, globalisation, marketisation, internationalisation and entrepreneurialisation (Singapore)
– Wide-ranging and dispersed themes conducted by ‘part-time’ researchers; management, history, philosophy, sociology, curriculum and faculty development and teaching and curriculum development (Thailand, Mongolia)

• Methodologies: increasing varieties → richer, nuanced understanding, new conceptual models base on Asian indigenous HE research
  – Tendency to base higher education research on policy documents produced by the government or secondary data obtained in other countries (Korea)
  – Quantitative, qualitative and mixed-methods empirical research is increasing (East & South East Asia)
Difficult to identify clear trends in the aims, theories and practices of HE research across Asia

- Extremely heterogeneous research contexts due to differences in colonial influence, geographic boundaries, language, developmental stage and policy priorities
- “Asian identity” of higher education research is difficult to define
  - Different with “West”
  - Often based on national values rather than regional values (China, Japan)
  - Various ways in conceptualization, scholarly communities produce knowledge
  - Difficult to integrate Asian values and traditions with Western scholarly norms
HE research communities developed at the national level are too locally rooted, lack the resources required to attract substantial regional and international attention, and are unable to provide an input to the international HE literature.
Publish in English and in international and specialized peer-reviewed HE journals

Gain visibility and global understanding

Much greater engagement with the global HE research communities

Bring Asian views to global research communities
Need to raise awareness, establish an identity for the Asian HE community and increase efforts to target an international audience.

The creation of this identity requires more regional collaboration that has the potential to influence regional policymaking on higher education in Asia

Roger Chao Jr.
We are changing the global views on HE and its research through our regional collaboration!!