

Education in the Asia-Pacific Region:
Issues, Concerns and Prospects 33

Chi-hung Clarence Ng
Robert Fox
Michiko Nakano *Editors*

Reforming Learning and Teaching in Asia- Pacific Universities

Influences of Globalised Processes in
Japan, Hong Kong and Australia



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EDUCATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: ISSUES, CONCERNS AND PROSPECTS

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Series Editors' Introduction

The increasing internationalisation and globalisation of services have brought new challenges to the higher education sector along with the ever-persistent and broadly defined issue of education and quality delivery. From teacher training to pedagogical approaches, reforms have been proposed as to how the sector can meet the demands of modern society.

We can clearly see from available evidence how various governments have repositioned their education policy orientations to equip their citizens with the range of skills deemed relevant to meeting the demands of the times. Along with this, a more fluid flow of knowledge is also documented through increased student mobility and the ever-widening use of information and communications technologies, among others. More than ever before, the contest to education for development has never seen a more diverse and evolving set of measures from society at large and to the learner at the centre of it all.

This book expounds and enlightens readers concerning the myriad issues, influences and challenges of the 'global processes' in teaching and learning reform. Through a range of perspectives provided by contributions, this volume highlights a wide range of issues in higher education ranging from student mobility, new technological practices, the use and role of English language for international communication and challenges in quality assurance and assessment. With case studies from Japan, Hong Kong and Australia, Chi-Hung Clarence Ng, Robert Fox and Michiko Nakano have engaged with, and meaningfully contributed to, the discourse concerning the internationalisation of higher education. As they also point out, the nexus between such 'global processes' and educational practices is vital for a 'better

understanding of current challenges and options available for charting future development'. This book is an invaluable contribution to available literature given steadfast race to quality education which is aspired to by all.

College of the North Atlantic - Qatar
University of Malaya
October 2015

Rupert Maclean
Lorraine Symaco

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Part I
New Contexts for Reforming
Learning and Teaching

Chapter 1

Globalised Processes and Their Influences on University Learning and Teaching in Advanced Knowledge Economies in the Asia-Pacific Region

Chi-hung Clarence Ng, Michiko Nakano, and Robert Fox

Abstract This chapter situates learning and teaching in various globalised processes. We argue that major globalised processes have resulted in the development of a new learning and teaching context in the Asia-Pacific region. Within this new context, this chapter discusses issues and challenges in four important areas: new student groups, technological change, using English as a mode of communication, and finally, assessment and quality assurance practices. We have integrated a brief introduction to the chapters in this book in the discussion of these four focal areas in the new context of learning and teaching.

1.1 Introduction

There are multiple entry points into the debate and discussion of globalisation and higher education. In this book, we focus on learning and teaching as the core business of higher education and explore reformative efforts responding to the influences of globalised processes in three advanced economies in the Asia-Pacific region: Japan, Hong Kong and Australia. This is significant, not just because limited discussion on globalisation has taken a learning perspective, but also because

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scholarly reflection on the linkage between globalised processes and changing educational practices at the university is critical for a better understanding of current challenges and options available for charting future development. Focusing on advanced economies at the forefront of globalised changes will provide insights for universities in other countries within the Asia-Pacific region to engage successfully in reforming their learning and teaching practices.

Globalisation, with its characteristic compression of time and space, is seen as the most fundamental challenge confronting higher education in the twenty-first century (Scott, 2000). As a mega-force widening, deepening, and speeding up all forms of interconnectedness (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, & Perraton, 1999), globalisation is reshaping contemporary higher education in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. Globalised processes such as marketization, massification, and the pursuit of world class status through competitive ranking are currently operative in Asia-Pacific universities and those in other parts of the world. In response, large scale project initiatives such as *Global 30* in Japan and *Brian Korea 21* in South Korea have focused on internationalising and improving learning opportunities and research capacities in order to ensure competitiveness at individual, institutional and national levels. Additional and diverse reformative efforts initiated by reform-minded lecturers and professors are constantly being trialled out in university lecture theatres, tutorial rooms, laboratories and online platforms. These formal and informal reform activities show no sign of abating. The global recession in 2008 did not slow down these globalised processes and begotten changes in high education practices, but has provided further impulse for Asia-Pacific universities to continue their reforms (Postiglione, 2011).

Structural reforms related to governance, financing, and quality assurance are common features in higher education institutions within the region. Periodic review of administrative, teaching and research units is fast becoming an established practice. Subsequently, the scholarly literature on these change phenomena has proliferated in the past decade (e.g. Marginson, 2006; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2001; Mok, 2007). While critical and important, attending solely to matters such as financing and governance reforms and performance reviews will not be sufficient for developing effective learning and teaching practices to take on diverse challenges posed by globalisation and its associated processes. Elmore (2004) reminded us of an important lesson about educational reforms, that is, structural reforms including change in policy rhetoric and regulatory structures may not necessarily lead to improvement in learning and teaching. There is always a gap between policy rhetoric and classroom practices. It is therefore inappropriate to conceptualise the relationship between policy and practice in a linear fashion, assuming that the intended effects will flow through from reformative policies to learning and teaching practices. In other words, focusing on structural reforms will not necessarily lead to improvement in learning and teaching. However, extant literature on globalisation and higher education predominantly concentrates on structural changes without giving due attention to researching the relationship between globalisation, learning and teaching. There is certainly a need to focus on learning and teaching and to understand how current changes and reformative efforts respond to globalised processes and associated changes they bring forth. The authors in this book addressed this

research gap. The conceptual and empirical discussion in the chapters situate learning and teaching reforms within an overarching context of globalised changes and maintain that learning, teaching and assessment practices are not immune from influences originated from the global level.

Writers on globalisation have argued that the advancement of knowledge economies calls for a paradigm shift in learning and teaching that involves reforms of goals, content and practice at all educational levels. The unprecedented demand for changes in learning and teaching at higher education is exacerbated by the exponential rate of changes made possible by the efficient flow of ideas, people and goods by improved technologies and means of transport. At the university level, these flows bring forth new student groups, new curriculum areas and degree programs, and new ways of arranging learning. In addition, these flows are associated closely with the use of new technologies, the importance of English as a *Lingua Franca* in academia, and new ways of conducting assessment and quality assurance. Clearly, these new elements will have significant impact on what counts as knowledge and how it is being created, taught, acquired and assessed through research, learning and teaching activities at the university. The current book is significant in bringing our attention to the influences of globalised processes onto learning and teaching processes in higher education in three developed countries within the Asia-Pacific region. Explicating the link between globalisation and learning reforms in higher education in this chosen context can provide a foundation for reflecting on our past and designing for the future, and offers lessons for other countries within the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

1.2 Three Performing Systems

To reflect on the influences of globalised processes on learning and teaching in Asia-Pacific universities, we have focussed specifically on the higher education sectors in three advanced economies within the Asia-Pacific region, Japan, Hong Kong and Australia. Several considerations have led our attention to these selected places. First, globalisation and its impact cannot be assumed as having uniform impact in every society regardless its economic, cultural and political conditions. Highly developed knowledge economies in the region such as those selected for this book lead the ways in educational reforms in facing challenges brought by globalisation and the evolution of knowledge economies. Hong Kong, Japan and Australia are among the most developed and wealthy countries in the world. According to the World Bank online data, these Asia-Pacific economies enjoy the highest GDP per capita in the region. Expectedly, economic growth and continuing economic development are significant national concerns in these economies. Producing knowledge workers for these advanced knowledge economies is undoubtedly an important justification for reforming learning and teaching in their higher education systems in order to maintain economic competitiveness at both individual and national levels.

Educational systems in Hong Kong, Japan, and Australia are indeed highly competitive at the global level. Students from these advanced economies have been

constantly ranked among those from other top-performing nations in international testings on literacy, science and mathematics. Their higher education systems are equally competitive at the world scale. Many universities in Hong Kong, Japan and Australia are of world-class status and have been ranked highly among the top universities in other parts of the world. In other words, these three advanced economies are being supported by the world's most competitive education systems measured using international comparative testing and rankings.

While globalisation can be seen as posing both threats and opportunities to development, different countries may respond in diverse ways according to their economic strength. Advanced economies such as those covered in this book have taken globalisation as an opportunity for development and reform (cf. Enders, 2004). In response to globalisation, Hong Kong, Japan and Australia, as well as other advanced economies in the region have already conducted comprehensive reviews of their education systems and a variety of reformative initiatives and projects have been implemented within their education sectors to take on challenges and opportunities derived from globalised processes. At the university level in these advanced economies, considerable convergence in learning and teaching reforms brought about by the globalised influences can be observed.

1.3 Major Globalised Processes

While the concept of globalisation is complex, contested and often contradictory (Marginson, 2006; Stromquist, 2007), it commonly refers to increased interconnectiveness of the world in all sorts of economic, cultural, technological and scientific activities. At the higher education sector, major globalised processes including massification and marketization are at work, promoting interconnectedness through the increased flow of students and academics, cross-institutional cooperation through collaborative research and teaching programs, and increased competition for university rankings and market share in international education. On the one hand, massification referring to the rapid expansion of the enrolment in higher education has led to the presence of new student groups drawn within and beyond the national boundary. On the other hand, marketisation begets neoliberal ideas of management and administration that have contributed to privatisation of higher education service, corporatisation of management, and commodification of education. Alongside marketization is the keen competition between universities for ranking in relation to teaching quality and research productivity. Marginson and Considine (2000) have summarised these influences succinctly in the development of 'Enterprise University' where

Money is a key objective, but it is also the means to a more fundamental mission: to advance the prestige and competitiveness of the university as an end in itself. At the same time, academic identities, in their variations, are subordinated to the mission, marketing and strategic development of the institution and its leaders. (p. 5)

Increasingly, it is difficult to understand university policies, practices and their changes without referencing to major globalised processes such as massification

and marketization (Crossley, 2000). Altbach argued that the effects of globalised processes on higher education are direct and largely inevitable (2004, p. 5).

In Hong Kong, Japan and Australia, these globalised processes played out in different ways. In relation to massification, Hong Kong has begun the journey, moving from an elite higher education system to a mass system. With the introduction of the associate degree programs and additional enrolment spaces through adult and distance education, a great number of secondary students is able to take tertiary education. A current issue in Hong Kong is the lack of articulation opportunities and pathways between sub-degree programs and undergraduate degree programs. Japan has built one of the largest higher education systems in the Asia-Pacific region. According to Huang (Chap. 2), Japan has already achieved universal access to higher education. The current challenge is the issue of oversupply of tertiary education places. In Australia, over 70 % of secondary students are enrolled in a university degree. The recently introduced demand-driven enrolment system has contributed to an increase in student enrolment in many Australian universities. The current effort in Australia is to promote university education for minority groups including low SES students and those from Indigenous backgrounds.

In relation to marketization, Australia in particular has taken higher education as a major export industry and has been actively recruiting international students. In 2014, there were 249,990 international students enrolled in Australian universities. The coalition government's newly proposed plan to de-regulating university fee, if approved, will inevitably drive competition and diversity in the higher education sector. In Hong Kong, there has been a discussion to build a regional hub of education to attract international students. Currently, there is an increased flow of cross-border student mobility from the mainland China to this Asian city. Japan has also sought to recruit international students and considers it an important step for internationalising its higher education sector. Alongside these persistent efforts in capturing the market share in international education, marketization of higher education has led to the establishment of overseas campuses of major Australian universities, the offering of offshore degree programs in Hong Kong and Japan, and the development of transnational university networks (e.g. Universita 21) involving major universities from Australia, Hong Kong, Japan and other parts of the world. National initiatives and reforms have been developed in response to challenges posed by globalised changes in these advanced economies, and corporate development plans are commonly found in their universities (Gray & Radloff, 2010).

1.4 New Context and New Models for Learning and Teaching

Massification, marketization and their derivative processes have created a new context for learning and teaching in which the notion of knowledge, and its delivery and assessment needs to be re-established. What counts as knowledge or what type of knowledge is being valued is an important consideration in this new context. In light

of globalised economies, generic skills such as problem-solving skills, critical thinking, collaboration and effective communication are considered significant twenty-first century capabilities that university graduates need to develop in order to remain competitive (e.g. Griffin, McGaw, & Care, 2012). One of the current efforts in reforming university courses and programs in the region is to integrate generic twenty-first century attributes and promote a global outlook as part of graduate outcomes (e.g. Gamble, Patrick, & Peach, 2010; Kember, 2009). This requires not just an adjustment of curriculum design but it also calls for effective learning and teaching practices to promote the development of these graduate capabilities. Appropriate assessment strategies are also required for assessing these learning outcomes. Closely related to this focus of twenty-first century skills is the promotion of different forms of work-based learning in order to prepare students for future work challenges (e.g. Litchfield, Frawley, & Nettleton, 2010). To do this effectively, redesigning curricula, reforming learning and teaching practices, and developing appropriate assessment strategies are critical.

Several inherent properties of this new context of learning and teaching, however, have further complicated these reforming efforts and processes. In addition to rapid and constant changes, this new context is more complex as it involves layers of stakeholders often holding incompatible interests and varied concerns in the process of delivering higher education. University teaching is no longer a matter of the lecturers and is not under their full control. In this new context, marketization brings in new student groups from overseas and local sources. For example, most Australian universities are now serving international students, mature-aged students and those from low SES and other disadvantaged backgrounds. These universities face the persistent challenge of accommodating the needs of these student populations and also facilitating learning and teaching in such a way that diverse student groups can learn and work together. In addition, programs and courses are constantly under review in order to meet both internal and external quality assurance requirements. Effective use of information technologies as part of the learning or teaching tool is not just required for online courses or distance learning programs; it is expected in every course and therefore blended learning or mixed mode delivery has already become the norm. Nevertheless, the challenge of effective integration of information technologies in learning and teaching remains a priority item in the reform agenda. In managing fierce competition for capable local and international students, university administrators, deans and program leaders constantly ask for innovations in curriculum design, learning and teaching reforms, and new assessment strategies. In short, effective learning and teaching within a globalised context is expected to address new knowledge and skills, accommodate diverse student groups, integrate information technologies, maintain high quality and meet both institutional requirements and those of relevant external associations.

On the upside, the expectations and demand for quality education from different stakeholders can be taken as a drive for improving learning and teaching practices. Various researchers have also discussed opportunities that globalised processes can bring along to university education. Nevertheless, this new context of learning and teaching has also brought forth threats and constraints. Marginalisation of teaching