The Development of Exchange Programmes in Asia as a mean to regional integration (0200)

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Outline

Growth in the internationalisation of higher education is driving the expansion of tertiary systems and institutions throughout the world. It articulates cross-border collaboration as well as intensifying student mobility (Daniel, et al, 2009; Moor & Henderickx, 2013). According to the OECD's *Education at a Glance*, the number of university students enrolled outside their country of citizenship has risen dramatically worldwide from 0.8 million in 1975 to 4.1 million in 2010, representing a more than fivefold increase in the past three decades (OECD, 2012). While, as a percentage of the total student population, the numbers are still a minority, the increase itself requires response, planning and understanding. Burgeoning middle classes and demand for higher education is driving population and uptake and this increase is seen within borders as well as across them. In addition to international student mobility, there are several types of cross-border tertiary education which involve internationalisation in the home country, including twinning, franchising, joint and double degrees, distance education, exchange programme, branch campuses, the virtual university, and others (Knight, 2007). In short, the landscape of higher education is evolving and the 'traditional' has morphed into 'recently traditional' and is now on the road to something new.

Demand for education is not necessarily on par with affordability and as funding mechanisms continue to change and place pressures on established western institutions, the opportunities for scholarships are harder to obtain, thus forcing an alternative solution for the demand driven model currently in place. A new trend in the internationalization of higher education in the 21st century is the increasing emphasis on regional level collaboration and excellence initiatives. One of the significant developments is "the regional level framework for academic credit systems, quality assurance, and qualifications frameworks as these reforms are based on a closer alignment of systems and policies" (Knight, 2013b, p. 105). The Bologna process in Europe is perhaps the best example of this regional level of educational system reform as it not only increases student mobility but also strengthens economic integration within the region. The discussion as to whether Asia, or perhaps ASEAN, should adopt a similar style approach has been ongoing for the past few years but has largely been hampered by the pronounced disparity between systems and expectations. While a wholesale Bologna approach may not be possible, or indeed desirable, Asia, with its booming economy was propelled by this initiative to attempt to develop different modes of regional integration through the alignment of higher education system and the promotion of exchange programmes. As regions seek to create opportunities for their neighbours, we will begin to see a Gramscian

hegemony of ideas and collaboration. This will be limited by demand, quality perception and traditional views of value. As Asia looks to respond to the shift in student mobility, there are key issues that must be addressed, such as quality assurance, regulatory frameworks, student employability and the transfer of credits. There are also issues that must be considered but little can be done at this juncture; the overwhelming dominance of western institutions, both in global rankings and perception, in terms of perceived quality and value.

To date, most efforts towards enhancing higher education regionalisation have been within South East Asia where there are three Asian organisations aiming at intensification of the integration of higher education systems across the region, including ASEAN, UMAP and CAMPUS Asia. Founded in 1967, the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) covers a land area of 4.46 million km^2, and has a population of approximately 600 million people, which is 8.8% of the world's population. Its main objective is to develop an integrated ASEAN Economic Community, which focuses on a single market with a free flow of commodities, services, investment and qualified quality workforce. It has 10 full members and 1 observer member, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. In 2003, ASEAN decided to launch several mobility programmes in order to strengthen relations and activities among higher education institutions through the establishment of the ASEAN University Network (AUN) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) + / Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development (RIHED) (SEAMEO-RIHED). One of the significant student exchange programmes is the ASEAN International Mobility for Students (AIMS) programme, also called " M-I-T" (Malaysia-Indonesia-Thailand) launched in 2010.

The University Mobility in Asia and Pacific (UMAP) is a voluntary collective of government and non-governmental organizations, which was established in 1994. Currently, it consists of 35 full country members and 514 institutional members. It is expected that, mobility of university students and staff will be increased through the cooperation among higher education institutions. It aimed at enhancing student mobility through three types of exchange programmes in order to achieve a better and international understanding within each of the countries and territories in the Asia Pacific region of the cultural, economic and social systems of the other countries and territories in the region.

Established in 2011, CAMPUS Asia (Collective Action for Mobility Programme of University Students in Asia) is the other regional initiative of a student exchange programme launched by China, Japan and South Korea. The programme was designed to promote student mobility between South Korea, China, and Japan. It was expected to foster the next generation of leaders in Asia by nurturing young talents with a shared vision. With support from the three governments, quality assurance agencies are responsible for the implementation of the programme due to quality concern. Currently, the CAMPUS Asia programme has evolved into a unique programme that promotes dual degrees, creates a new learning model, and develops in-depth discussions of substantial collaborations among consortia despite their differences.

This paper will examine the student exchange programmes of the three initiatives listed above and provide a clear and coherent outline and analysis of the respective programmes, their merits, challenges and objectives. The focus of the paper will be on the analyses and comparison of the exchange program development model, credit transfer schemes, and its impact on student mobility in Asia. Based on Knight's FOPA approaches, the role of these three Asian organizations in higher education and their impact on region harmonization will be discussed as a conclusion of the paper.

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