

REASSESSING THE NATURE AND DYNAMICS OF STUDENT MOBILITY WITHIN ASIA PACIFIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE PLAN

- I would like to begin today by reviewing some familiar facts and ideas about regional higher education mobility
- I would like then to suggest how some familiar push/pull factors are operating within Asia Pacific higher education mobility
- I wish then to transition into what I believe may be the emergence of two major new factors that will transform our current notions of mobility and may well set the stage for the future of Asia Pacific Higher Education Mobility
- Throughout this, given the focus of this meeting, I would like to encourage us to think about how Japan may react to such factors and in order to address them in new and creative ways.

THE DYNAMIC OF PUSH AND PULL FACTORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT MOBILITY

- Push and pull factors act as reciprocals of each other.
- Historically the Asia Pacific region tended to be dominated by push factors—institutional capabilities overall were in relative deficit with those outside the region—primarily the US and Europe.
- Those seeking higher education gains were motivated to move outside the region (the push) to obtain values and outcomes only to be obtained externally (the pull).
- The past two decades have framed Asia Pacific mobility by (a) creating powerful pull factors within the region and in doing so (b) reducing the effect of push factors, and (c) creating a “mobility circuit” within the region for large numbers of students.

QUALITY AS A SIGNIFICANT MOBILITY FACTOR

- Quality within higher education is powerfully ambiguous—everyone seemingly wants it, but it is notoriously difficult to define, measure and obtain.
- Quality Assurance lives within this ambiguity and seeks to provide both sensible measures of quality, and structured certifications that embody it.
- Ranking has arisen as a practical default to less reductionist modalities...and has come to be the dominant “currency” that serves as the primary pull factor influencing mobility. (And as such in many instances it serves as a surrogate for both cost and presumptive value-gained.)
- Over the past two/three decades several countries are models of being able to “structure” their own higher education systems around building “strong quality pulls” as a means to finance significant aspects of their higher education system: most notably Australia and New Zealand.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND CAPACITY

- Demographic dynamics of many Asian countries have served to structure the dynamics of mobility.
- In the early demographic expansion period, which also coincided with relatively limited overall quality higher education, large youthful populations created powerful push factors.
- Rapid expansion of HE capacity within the region has coincided with slowing reproduction rates, leading to over-supply of capacity, which motivated various governments (Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and increasingly China) to increased investments in HE to generate greater pull capability.

IMPORTANCE OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION

- As these demographics gain, they reinforce national and regional efforts to strengthen the overall pull nature of the region—leading to efforts to create “common academic currencies” such as mutual recognition, e.g. recently Japan and Korea joining Australia, New Zealand and China in the Tokyo Convention.
- The Convention’s role is “promoting fair and transparent practices in cross-border mobility and recognition across, formal and non-formal leading countries in Asia and the Pacific”
- Such agreements become “boundary conditions” for promoting and sustaining regional mobility.

TARGETED GOVERNMENT-INITIATED PULL FACTORS

- China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia., and Taiwan are distinguished by explicit policy efforts to promote higher education quality expansion—and to induce mobility—by generating high profile university programs in STEM fields and combining such efforts with explicit outreach and engagement with their private sector technology sectors.
- Others have established “education hubs”—most notably Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia—and sought explicit “joining” of local educational talent and capacity with “world class” universities.
- In both sets of cases strong governmental incentives have underwritten them.

MATURE DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH—THE FUTURE

- Countries with fast growing economies, populations and growing middle-classes may come to dominate future economic growth in the region: e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam.
- Some see the overall Asian middle class likely to increase from 600 million in 2010 to more than 3 billion by 2030—representing 66% of the world's total middle-class population.
- One outcome of this is to see regional mobility as poised for significant expansion over the next 12-15 years.

JAPAN'S ROLE

- Given the focus of this meeting: “Student Mobility in the Asia-Pacific Region and Japan’s Role,” it would be useful to consider these transformations in push/pull factors in the context of:
- A) What Japan has done over the past two decades to promote mobility and,
- B) What it can do in addition—perhaps by exploring less conventional methods of promoting mobility—to improve its stated goal to expand its pull factors.
- This issue, hopefully, can be a repetitive theme in the various discussions that are to ensue.

TWO CONFOUNDING FACTORS TO THE CURRENT PATTERNS OF PUSH-PULL IN ASIA

- Immigration and Anti-globalization
- As we all know, events in Europe and the United States have brought forth various arguments and policies that suggest the world may be exiting the signature period of globalization that has characterized the past three plus decades—and which has been the underlying context for Asian student mobility.
- Some see these prevailing globalization dynamics weakening, and with that so may be some of the forces promoting global mobility.
- The explicit "anti-immigrant" dimension of this globalization shift affects student mobility as well. While initially primarily it has focused on Muslim countries...but also in various circumstances is taking on "anti-Asian" characteristics as well. (E.g. the Trump concern with student "engagements" being a way into so-called "chain migration").

RE-THINKING GLOBALIZATION

- If we see student mobility as somehow situated within the broader context of globalization, it then makes a good deal of difference as to whether we are right or wrong about its probable course.
- One consideration is to not characterize "globalization" by a small set of political actions and current rhetoric—no matter how "noisy" this may be. A reasonable course would be to try to frame one's speculations and analyses on the many different dimensions of globalization, and seek to have a reasonable theory of change based on such complex data. Perhaps the best publically available is the KOF Index of Globalization of the Swiss Economic Institute.
- Measures a sample of 207 countries over three major dimensions of globalization: economic, social and political. See especially Index of Globalization for Asia.
- But one thing seems clear: The "Trump Ban" and its aftermath will result in more students engaged in intra-regional mobilization in Asia as the US pull-factors decline accordingly.
- A considerable consensus exists that Globalization 2.0 will be Asia-centered and away from Europe and the US

CONFOUNDING FACTOR # 2: AI AND WORK 4.0

- Karl Schwab, Head of the World Economic Forum, has currently organized its activities around the the role of Artificial Intelligence and its broad, dramatic and life-changing effects, frequently referred to as the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” or Work 4.0

SCHWAB:

- “We have yet to grasp fully the speed and breadth of this new revolution. Consider the unlimited possibilities of having billions of people connected by mobile devices, giving rise to unprecedented processing power, storage capabilities and knowledge access. Or think about the staggering confluence of emerging technology breakthroughs, covering wide-ranging fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the internet of things (IoT), autonomous vehicles, 3D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage and quantum computing, to name a few. Many of these innovations are in their infancy, but they are already reaching an inflection point in their development as they build on and amplify each other in a fusion of technology across the physical, digital and biological worlds.” (K. Schwab, 2016, p. 7)

OUR TASK?

- Perhaps some of our discussions can be framed around the varied and complex elements that appear to be embodied within such a dramatic element of social change.
- Three aspects seem of particular interest to us in this forum:
 - The speed and reach of its impact
 - And: its probable effects on higher education in all our countries and within the region
 - And, how these will play out in generating mobility within the region

IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

- “...frequent job changes would require genuine life-long learning and training. In this situation won't the current four-year university system soon be obsolete? How about the present rigidly organized system of major fields, separating humanities and social science from natural sciences and engineering? The inevitability of high job mobility would require both labor market flexibility and new social safety nets for workers. The existing industry-based labor market policy needs to be reoriented toward “protecting workers, not jobs.” II SaKong, East-West Center Alumni Conference, Seoul, Korea, August 2018


ONE INTERESTING PREDICTION

- “A recent McKinsey study of a dozen technologies that will drive economic change in the near future, suggests they may have an estimated economic impact by 2025 of between \$14 and \$33 trillion a year, an amount estimated to make up to one third of global GDP. These include, the mobile internet, the automation of knowledge work, the Internet of Things, Cloud technology, advanced robotics, autonomous and near-autonomous vehicles, next generation genomics, energy storage, 3D printing, advanced materials, advanced oil and gas exploration and recovery, and renewable energy.” (Farnam Jahanian, President, Carnegie Mellon University, 2018).

JAHANIAN'S VIEW

- “As we embrace this tech-driven economy, universities must change too, at a pace unfamiliar to higher education. While we retain our core mission of educating the next generation and cultivating new forms of knowledge, universities must also embrace our ever-expanding role in driving innovation and catalyzing economic development. Our institutions must meet the challenges of the digital revolution head on, and plan an increasingly important role in our innovation ecosystems and economies in four key ways.”

SO.....?

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- Historically higher education institutions have been institutionally conservative and slow to change, and, have been characterized by relatively large and rigid bureaucracies (including government Ministries), which will tend to restrict pressures for change in response to such factors.
 - As these changes impact all our societies, HEIs will be pressed to develop education in new fields just developing for such social changes, and accepting the reality that continuing education will become a reality for workers who find that their jobs will change many times over their adult lives.
 - The average worker in the US currently holds 10 different jobs before age 40 and the number is expected to grow over the next decade. Some research (e.g. Forrester Research) predicts that the young job seeker of today in the US will hold 12-15 jobs in their lifetime. Marker, 2015.
 - These data are from 2015. More recent data estimates may increase this number as it becomes more conventional to “add in” the transformations of Work 4.0 to such current estimates. We need to ask whether the US is “unique” in this regard, or whether it may be an early manifestation of what worker dynamics are likely to become throughout the world.
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AND...

- Perhaps not so obvious is the reality that with social roles, jobs, economies, and ways of living likely to change so rapidly, the role of the social sciences and humanities may come to be re-defined.
- At the very least the recent emphasis in HEIs on reinventing their "value" in the current economic climate with emphases on STEM fields may find that they need to provide equal emphases on the social sciences and humanities with a renewed emphasis on developing useful ways to evaluate such rapid social change.

AND...

- These considerations bring back into focus the whole discussion of "virtual universities" and various increasing modalities of distant and virtual instruction
- Whereas in many existing universities these have had only a minor place in overall institutional behavior, it is worth considering that we may be on the cusp of new modalities of delivering high quality, highly credentialed education through virtual means.
- For example, the Center for 21st Century Universities at Georgia Tech in the U.S. and the work of the Teaching + Learning Lab at MIT. (<http://c21u.gatech.edu>, and <http://tll.mit.edu/>)

CONCLUSION

- The “mobility equation” for Asian Higher Education appears to be at a “shift point.”
- Structural elements that produced the current relative equilibrium of push and pull factors are undergoing transformation in part brought on by the rise of nationalism particularly in the United States and Europe.
- This may create significant changes in the global migration of students and have powerful “secondary effects” within the Asia Region thereby promoting higher levels of within-region mobility.

CONCLUSION

- The quickening pace of the 4th Industrial Revolution may dramatically affect the development and maturation of HE in the region. The future of regional mobility will very much depend on how particular countries react to these structural changes with moves to accommodate them—and in a very timely manner!
- Of critical importance is the degree of flexibility that either exists within such systems, or can be introduced into them, to permit not only rapid and effective responses to these fundamental structural changes, but those that can be effectively accommodated within the existing underlying dynamic of push and pull factors.