Regionalising higher education in Asia-Pacific and a network capital paradigm for teaching and research in comparative education

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Given the increasing obsession with ranking world universities worldwide (Shanghai Jiao Tong's Academic Ranking of World Universities; Times Higher Education World Rankings), higher-education authorities in Asia-Pacific are reconsidering their mission, function, organization, and finance. Demographic data in most of the region's countries reflect a marked shortfall in the supply of institutions being developed to meet future student demand. Student and staff mobility are also on the increase, but often one-way and outside of region. Moreover, because of highly differentiated, deregulated educational systems, teaching and research quality are frequently poor. Developing a standardized, regulated, unified labor market system similar to that advised in the Bologna Accord is said to be unattainable; an alternative approach, using a proposed educational free-trade zone through formalized agreements among nation states, is also questionable. A new strategy must be considered. Reviewing other regionalised educational systems, this study considers the feasibility of a regionalised network within Asia-Pacific of academics and scholars who might choose to work together, to develop a framework for international cooperation. Among other considerations, this study suggests providing operational expression and support toward improving research quantity and quality in the region. An analysis of data on international university cooperation points to a shift from developmental assistance to an increase in such cooperation. This paper further suggests that it is now appropriate for an innovative approach to developing comparative education.

Key words: higher education, international university cooperation, network capital, regionalisation, Asia-Pacific

Introduction

Global economic integration, employment and education are increasingly viewed as economic 'growth' imperatives that, when considered as a whole, are receiving some serious attention in the early twenty-first century. The Global Financial crisis of 2007/2008 has highlighted the interdependence of domestic economies in international financial markets. It has been demonstrated that reliance and dependence on specific economies of certain Western nations is fraught with danger and that political and economic leadership by any one nation cannot be sustained. Reinhart and Rogart (2009: 466) highlight that nation-states generally tend to retreat from globalising efforts in order to deal with internal loci of control when faced with economic crises, citing problems with decreases in asset markets, employment, and increases in debt. This places greater control of international reserves such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to wield their influence on the nation-state, as they often inject monies into international markets to 'float' economies in times of need---usually

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under tight conditions---including those that are regional (e.g. Asia during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998-1999). "International reserves held by monetary authorities (typically in the Central Bank, Treasury, or Ministry of Finance) are part of national wealth, and were originally important for countries with fixed exchange rates that wanted to avoid costly adjustments to disturbances in the external sector of the economy" (Dominguez, Hashimoto, & Ito 2011: 2).

In the case of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998-1999, emphasis was placed on currency devaluations and contestation by international reserves on how to respond to long-term versus short-term financial contingencies but with greater transparency. During the Global Financial Crisis of 2007/08, however, emphasis was placed on loan defaults and an eroding public trust in markets worldwide.

The point to make here is demonstrate how highly complex and fragile the international marketplace is, how diverse the main players are in responding to circumstance, and how no one leader has control. Responses to future crises will obviously depend upon the nature of the crisis. Despite nuances, new regionalisms have emerged to mitigate and share risks in the form of a collective territorial-whole, but their approaches to growth differ considerably according to interpretations of territory and territorial politics (Jonas 2012). Jonas contends that New Regionalisms are---in effect---regions, metropolitan regions, and trans-regional entities that operate as independent 'actor spaces' which drive growth (Jonas 2012: 266).

Economics and Education

If the overarching emphasis is on growth and, in particular, economic growth, the liberalisation of free trade contributes to developing new and emerging markets. Yet when analysing global economic integration with the competing elements of employment and education, each is often viewed separately, leading to vulnerabilities and oversight in skilled migration, knowledge management, increases in student and staff mobility (particularly out of region), and global sustainability. As a result, there

are proponents to a movement identified as post neo-liberalism with 'flexicurity' as the new and emerging economic trend which focuses on capabilities.

Flexicurity, first coined in Europe, refers to the developing, supporting, and re-tooling the 'capabilities' of citizens to maximise their labourforce---or general social---participation over their lifecourse, as captured in the notion of transitional labour markets (Carney & Ramia 2010: 37). While Peters (2011) argues correctly that education is the basis of an open society and Jarvis (2007) contends that increases in student and staff mobility are elements of exercising education as an individual right, there are gaps in the literature linking education and employment at international levels. This suggests that while nation-state indicators reflect domestic education outputs with employment and the development of human capital, more research is necessary in researching the link between education and employment at international---and specifically international regional---levels, as the human capital has extended well beyond the nation-state.

Cross-border higher education provision also merits consideration, as it serves as the vehicle for offering educational placements in various capacities beyond one's country-of-origin. Through inter-institutional partnerships, exchange programs, satellite (branch) campuses, twinning arrangements, joint degree programs, continuing education, corporate programs, international consortia, and distance education, the changing landscape of higher education is transforming itself beyond the nation-state and for good reason. The university must consider its mission for survival, even if it means setting a path distinct from others. Notwithstanding the differentiation which cross-border higher education provides, there are those institutions, which have chosen to combine their academic distinctiveness to build capacity and forge new and deeper levels of international collaboration. Knight 2013 developed a generic conceptual model to research the primary spheres of influence in regionalisation of higher education based on functional, organizational, and political approaches. She argues that there are various levels of depth when exploring cross-border higher education provision,

Figure 1: Mapping Knight's Levels of Higher Education Activity in terms of International Regionalisation
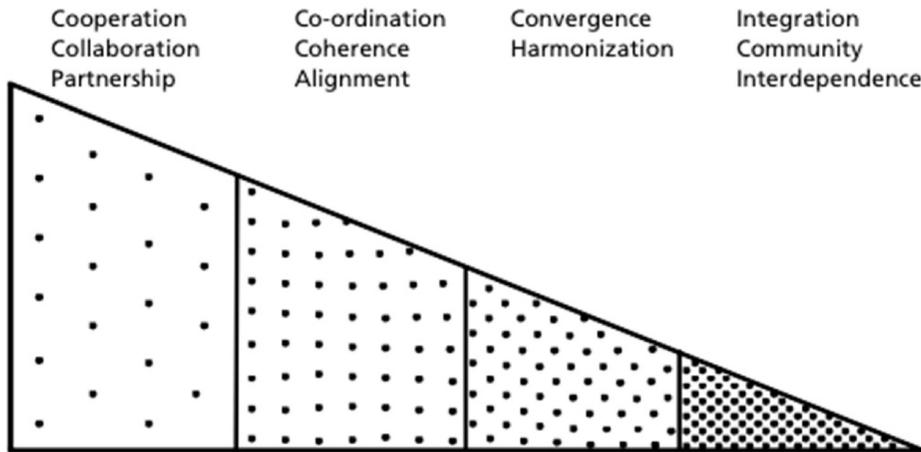
but that there is an overlapping interplay between function, organisation, and politics when developing international partnerships. Figure 1 displays Knight's definition of higher education regionalisation terms:

The conceptual figure displays the level of activity from initial contact where international cooperation is forged into a partnership to a more defined existence that incorporates international integration, interdependence, and a meaningful sense of community. While Knight emphasizes levels of activity that help to point to ways forward, she does not necessarily speak to need. This discussion suggests that because of profound shifts in cross-border activity and other extraneous forces such as demographic shifts and global competition for jobs, there is an increasing need to involve regional integration, education and employment collectively.

The Milken Institute, a U.S.A. think tank that concentrates on social and economic research, makes the point that investments in educational training—particularly higher education—will increase regional prosperity depending upon levels of attainment (DeVol et. al 2013). While U.S-centric, the research makes recommendations for future economic growth that applies to other nation-states. They propose as follows:

- Make higher education more affordable
- Make higher education more accessible
- Increase higher education graduate rates
- Strengthen coordination between higher education and industries
- Promote research and development. (DeVol et. al 2013: 59-61)

While 'education as investment' is generally embraced as a popular Western-based concept, there are aspects that appear somewhat disconcerting when it comes to investing in education for the sake of regional prosperity. According to Varghese (2012), developmental aid by Western-based nation-states appears to decline significantly when austerity measures are enacted to counter national economic downturns and, when at the same time, budget cuts tend to hit public higher education in particular. This is because many entities have implemented funding formulas that are tied to institutions meeting key academic performance targets. Despite the importance of the 'university' in imparting and advancing knowledge (Denman 2005; 2012) for the greater good of society, there is very little opportunity for universities to mitigate damage to declining public finance and support by a nation or state. Ramping up research quantums in an effort to improve institutional rank may be perceived as a way forward, but when such research and ranking assessments change according to what is perceived 'of value' (education), the emphasis appears displaced, focusing on institutional enhancement rather than improving quality (Currie 2008).

Enrolments

In this discussion, student enrolments increased during the Global Financial Crisis, suggesting that an individual's prerogative is a major influential factor in 'upskilling' to avoid unemployment or, to a lesser degree, a diminished standard of living. According to Denman and Dunstan (2013: 16), tertiary enrolment projections for China are expected to increase from 33,960,000 in 2011 to 53,436,000 in 2020. If these estimates are close to the mark, institutions in China---and within the region---will not be able to accommodate student demand. Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Philippines, and Vietnam will experience similar issues where student demand will outstrip supply.

Regionalisation

With international education enrolments projected to increase at a growth rate of seven per cent per annum (Australia-educating globally: online), particularly from countries in the Asia-Pacific region, one would think that universities within the region and beyond would want to capture this market. However, instead of concentrating on individual student recruitment, emphasis is placed upon international association with attention given to regionalising an Asia-Pacific space for educational opportunity.

In this discussion, further attention is given to the international regionalisation of higher education in order to explore the need for regional integration in consideration of different cultural perspectives and economic imperatives. It follows Coleman and Underhill's 1998 suggestion that there may be a cultural lens in the way we view regional integration. They state:

> Asian approaches to co-operation, rhetorically at least, reject the 'Cartesian' emphasis on legalism, formal agreements, contracts and institutions in favour of an emphasis on confidence building, 'hearts and minds' elite bonding, peer pressure and trust. (Coleman & Underhill 1998: 47)

This work precedes but parallels Warleigh-Lack's 2006 research on the 'New Regionalist Approach', which explores the betwixt and between notions of old and new regionalisms (globalisation) and integration theory.   Warleigh-Lack's hypothetical framework offers a sense of structure in understanding the values and ulterior motives for regionalisation.

Figure 2: Tertiary Enrolment Projections in Selected Countries 2011-2020 (1000s)
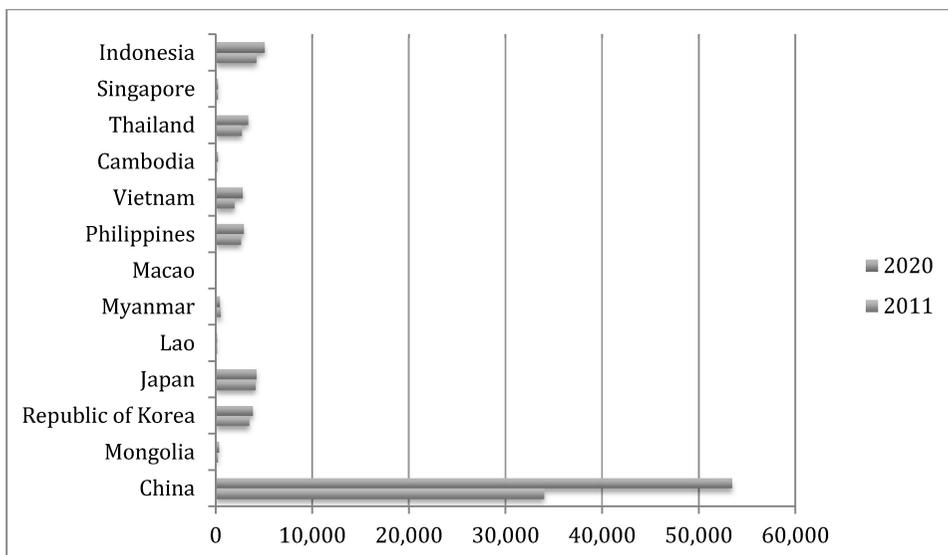
Figure 3: Warleigh-Lack's Hypotheses for Regionalisation

Independent variable	Hypothesis
Genesis	States participate in regionalisation because they perceive a specific common interest in managing the economic and/or security consequences of globalisation that is not shared with states outside the region
Functionality	Regionalisation is a stop-go process dominated by the governments of component states and dictated by their perceived interests, with a tendency towards informal methods of decision-making
Socialisation	Policy learning and joint problem-solving are more apparent than regionalised identities at either elite or mass level
Impact	Regionalisation empowers the component states as a collective vis-à-vis third countries and has significant structural (constitutional) impact on its component states

Source: (Warleigh-Lack 2006: 766).

Regions within a nation-state are not discussed, although that aspect may suggest further research depending upon contextual considerations. Studies on cultural regionalism, for example, predate the notion of regional integration with the emphasis upon maintaining a unitary state (e.g. Belgium) and the two communal-linguistic regions of Flanders and Wallonia (Stephenson 1972: 501). Empires (e.g. Habsburg), imperial dynasties (e.g. Ottoman), unions (e.g. Soviet Union) are also not considered, even though they suggest similar instances of nation-state/region building (Wimmer & Feinstein 2010). Due to overthrow, absorption, colonisation, or by means of force, they are not relevant for purposes of this analysis. In its most relaxed definition, regionalisation is considered by many scholars as referring to a voluntary process (see Warleigh-Lack 2011; Hettne & Söderbaum 2010), with its temporality of unfolding action emphasizing the importance and differentiation of structure and purpose. It should not be dictated by an outcomes-orientation, such as an outcomes-based education (OBE) (e.g. International Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO)) and other travelling reforms of policy practice such as funding schemes based on academic performance (Steiner-Khamsi 2006). Regionalisation is not static. It changes due to its temporality of purpose and, at times, structure.

Demographic conditions affecting regionalisation in political and social contexts

Research treating the regionalisation of higher education from an international perspective has concentrated principally upon regional integration of Europe. Labelled 'Eurosclerosis' in the 1970s (Lombaerde et al 2010), the establishment of the European Economic Community in the late 1950s helped spur this type of research, which developed into the study of 'new regionalisms', prompting worldwide intrigue and engendered widespread interest in terms of political and economic interdependence. However, as most comparative educators are aware, regionalism---in whatever form---must take into account patterns of cooperation, integration, complementarity, and convergence within particular cross-national geographic spaces (Hettne & Söderbaum 2010: 458).

Conceptualising the nation-state as an entity beyond its traditional geographic space is not new. Ohmae (1991/2) was perhaps the first to question the relevance of the nation-state and the advent of regionalisation in terms of economics. Conversely, due to geo-political interests, the United Nations classifies countries by major areas for research purposes, principally for economic and social research.

Figure 4: United Nations Classification of Regions of the World

Major Area	Region	Countries
Africa	*Eastern Africa*	Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Reunion, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe
	Middle Africa	Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe
	Northern Africa	Algeria, Egypt, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara
	Southern Africa	Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland
	Western Africa	Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo
Asia	*Eastern Asia*	China, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Other non-specified areas
	South-Central Asia (Central)	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan
	South-Central Asia (South)	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
	South-Eastern Asia	Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam
	Western Asia	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen
Europe	*Eastern Europe*	Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Ukraine
	Northern Europe	Channel Islands, Denmark, Estonia, Faeroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Isle of Man, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, UK, Northern Ireland
	Southern Europe	Albania, Andorra, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Gibraltar, Greece, Holy See, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Macedonia
	Western Europe	Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Switzerland
Latin America & the Caribbean	*Caribbean*	Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Caribbean Netherlands, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Curacao, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Saint Maarten, Trinidad & Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Virgin Islands
	Central America	Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama
	South America	Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela

| North America		Bermuda, Canada, Greenland, Saint Pierre & Miquelon, USA
Oceania	**Australia/New Zealand**	Australia, New Zealand
	Melanesia	Fiji, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu
	Micronesia	Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau
	Polynesia	American Samoa, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Wallis & Futuna Islands

NB: Sub-Saharan Africa was purposely omitted from the original source, as the countries were already classified in the area 'Africa'.

Source: United Nations, Population Division (2012). World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision. Retrieved 17 February 2014, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Excel-Data/country-classification.pdf

Given shifts in demographic patterns across the world, countries that have a relatively young population as their majority (e.g. many African countries), many are counting on increases in their labour force to promote national growth and prosperity. For countries that have declining youth populations, many are relying on increased productivity to compensate for the loss in labour growth. According to GlobalTrends 2030 (online), there is further evidence to suggest that even in nations where growing labour forces appear healthy, increased global competition---at global or inter-regional levels---is resulting in an increased casualisation of the workforce, pressure on low-skilled labour to accept lower wages or otherwise become redundant and---for more advanced emerging markets---demands in behalf of developing a higher-skilled workforce.

Figure 5: Median Age of Country-Level Populations, 2010
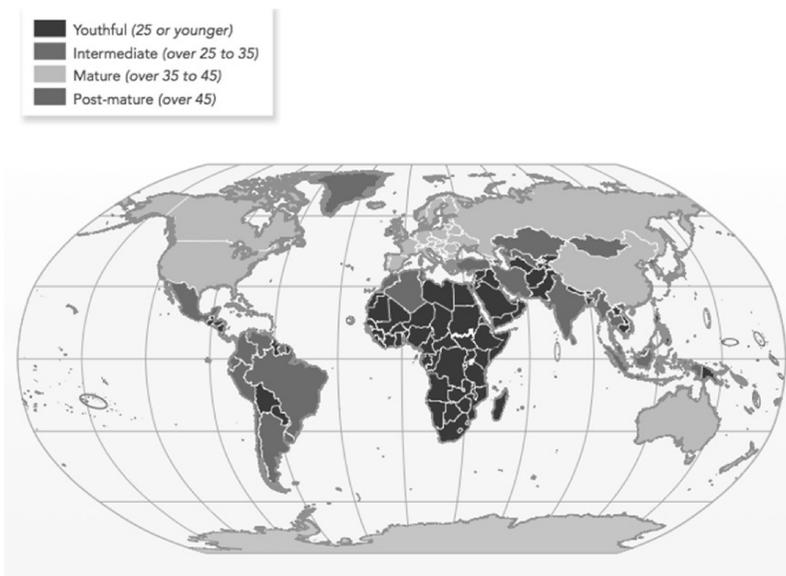
As the majority of the African continent can be identified as youthful (age 25 or younger), there is a heightened sense of awareness that education and employment are of critical importance in reducing---if not eradicating---poverty. The general challenges affecting many African countries are quality of education and dysfunctional, if not corrupt, educational systems. In countries with average ages at the intermediate level (over 25 to 35) and mature level (over 35 to 45), demographic advantages in population will be offset by shortfalls in employment and educational opportunity. If such opportunity is not viable in any given nation-state, there is a significant likelihood that there will be increasing levels of economic mobility (e.g. urbanisation of the workforce to international 'cross-border' migration).

According to the UNESCO Global Education Digest 2012 (online), the international student population reached a staggering 3.6 million worldwide in 2010 with significant increases at undergraduate and associate degree levels (World Education News & Reviews 2013: online).

Griswold (2007) contends that globalisation and the internet are smothering cultural regionalism, local and regional identities are becoming increasingly seen as homogenous, and there continue to be cultural differences in the ways regions approach the concept of regionalisation.

Warleigh-Lack's approach to classification seems to reinforce Coleman and Underhill's earlier work. While international co-operation may change over time---due to fluctuations and/or crises in the economy---the unique features that set each apart are structural or opportunistic in purpose or benefit. What appears to compound the complexity of international regionalisation is the diversified interests of the key stakeholders (nation-states, regulatory entities, institutions, the 'public', and students). If one were to focus solely on students---particularly students who are self-funded---analysis of employment trends could serve as indicators of potential mobility, not just mobility within region but also upward mobility in terms of 'upskilling' and 'class'.

Projections in employment by economic class from 2008 to 2013 reflect increases in the middle class in East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific, and South Asia regions.

In a separate study involving 674 international university organisations worldwide, only 98 or 15% were identified as originating from the Asia-Pacific. While much of the data collected were

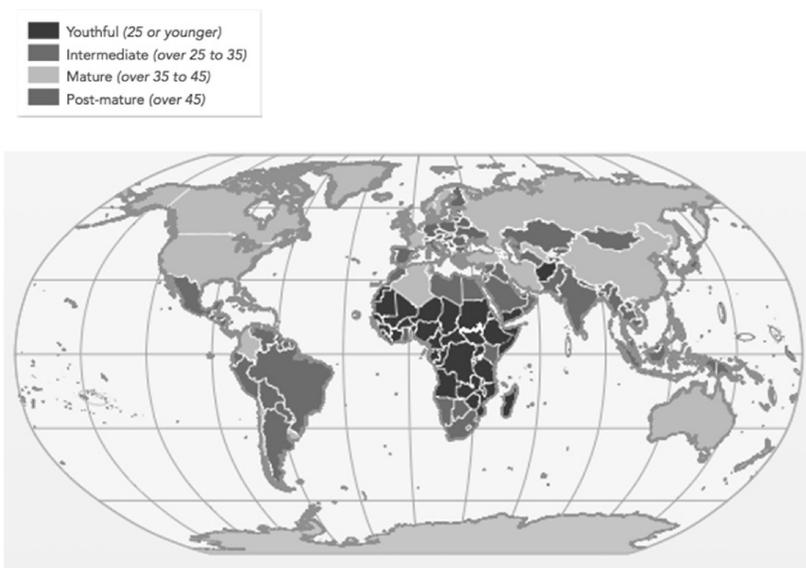Figure 6: Median Age of Country-Level Populations, 2030

Table 7: A typology of regionalisation

Type of regionalisation	Features	Examples
Structured regionalisation	A complex multi-issue entity, using informal politics despite deep institutionalisation. No hegemon exists; substantial power is delegated to the new centre in many policy areas, and is costly to 'repatriate'	European Union (EU); African Union (in aspiration)
Dominance regionalisation	An alternative to a global regime, established by regional/global hegemon to counter threats to its power from other regionalisation processes or states. Focuses on narrow range of issues, with emphasis on trade	North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA)
Security regionalisation	Focus on security issues, either military or socio-economic. May be geographically contiguous or trans-regional in membership	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership; North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)
Network regionalisation	Regional identity-driven response to globalisation. May acquire significant or more limited range of powers, but relies primarily on non-institutionalised or intergovernmental working methods	Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); African Union (*in actuality*); South American Common Market (Mercosur)
Conjoined regionalisation	Strategic partnership of one regionalisation process with either another such process or with key states outside the region, for the sake of economic or foreign policy advantage	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) putative Free Trade Area of the Americas

Source: (Warleigh-Lack 2011:760)

Figure 8: Changes in Employment by Economic Class, Selected Time Periods and Regions
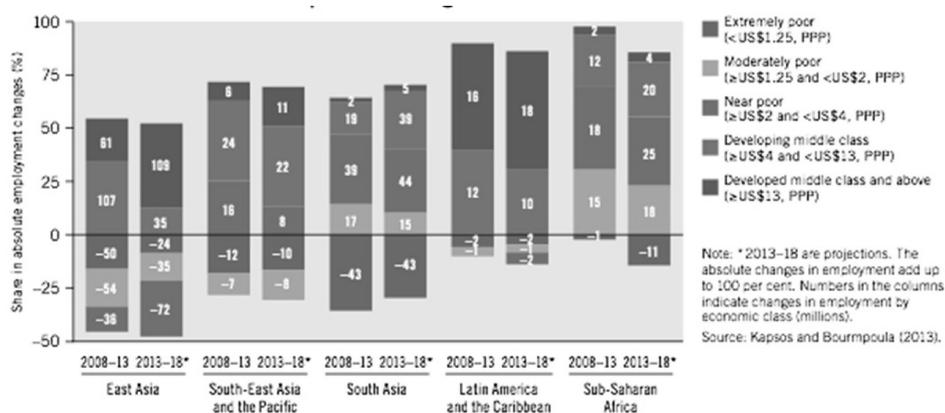
Source: (ILO's Global Employment Trends 2014: 31),

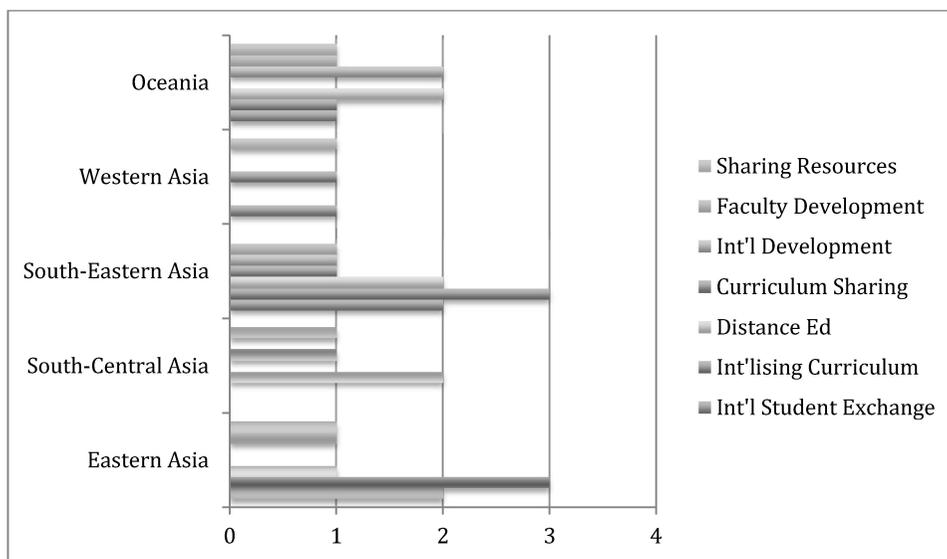Figure 9: International University Organisations Identified in Specific Regions and Organisational Purpose

Table 10: Independent variables of regionalisation

Genesis	Functionality	Socialisation	Impact
Why do nation-states participate?	Who leads, how and why?	Impact on senses of identity (at elite and mass levels)	On global economy
Why do nation-states continue to participate?	Who makes day-to-day decisions? With which decision rules?	Transaction flows (social, cultural, economic)	On democracy in the component of states
What are the stated purpose and objectives of the regionalisation process?	What role, if any, is played by non-state actors?	Popular support (legitimacy)	On influence of the component states (both on each other and vis-à-vis third countries)
	Is the regionalisation process stop-go, linear, reversible, or static?	Increase in trust (elite; mass)?	Are certain policy styles/ types imposed or made impossible? Is there any policy learning (exchange of models/ideas, or convergence to new norm?)
	Do the actors involved also collaborate outside the regionalisation process? If so, how and why?		Are the structures/ constitutions of the component states changed?
	What mixture of informal and formal mechanisms?		Does the regionalisation process take on more states over time?
	Implementation and enforcement mechanisms		
	Performance (output)		

Source: (Warleigh-Lack, Alex 2011:763)

collected in the mid to late 1990s, the emphasis of the research concerned structure of the organisation and organisational purpose. Figure 6 identifies international university organisations according to region and purpose.

Analysis of this data reveals specific intentions related to international education. Further research is necessary to determine how these organisations have changed over time and whether their organisational purpose has been modified, abandoned, or refined. Surveying the literature treating international university organisations that are currently operating in the Asia-Pacific, it is apparent that international student exchange has intensified as has international education development. However, international educational assistance is shifting to focus on international university co-operation, suggesting a need to further understand how regionalisation works within certain jurisdictions. Warleigh-Lack (2011) identifies the variables of functionality, socialisation, and impact of regionalisation in order to understand rationales.

Inter-regional co-operation in the Asia-Pacific

Cross-border provision of higher education has the potential to increase participation rates of students, improve the prospect of socio-economic development and productivity and, in developing countries in particular, offset costs where public support may not be sufficient to sustain 'quality'. Figure 11 illustrates the fact that if cross-border higher education were offered in tandem with domestic education of a given country, further benefits would be made available in the form of new ideas, improved quality, increased cultural understanding, and larger social networks.

Figure 11: Global-North Perspective of Cross-Border HE Provision
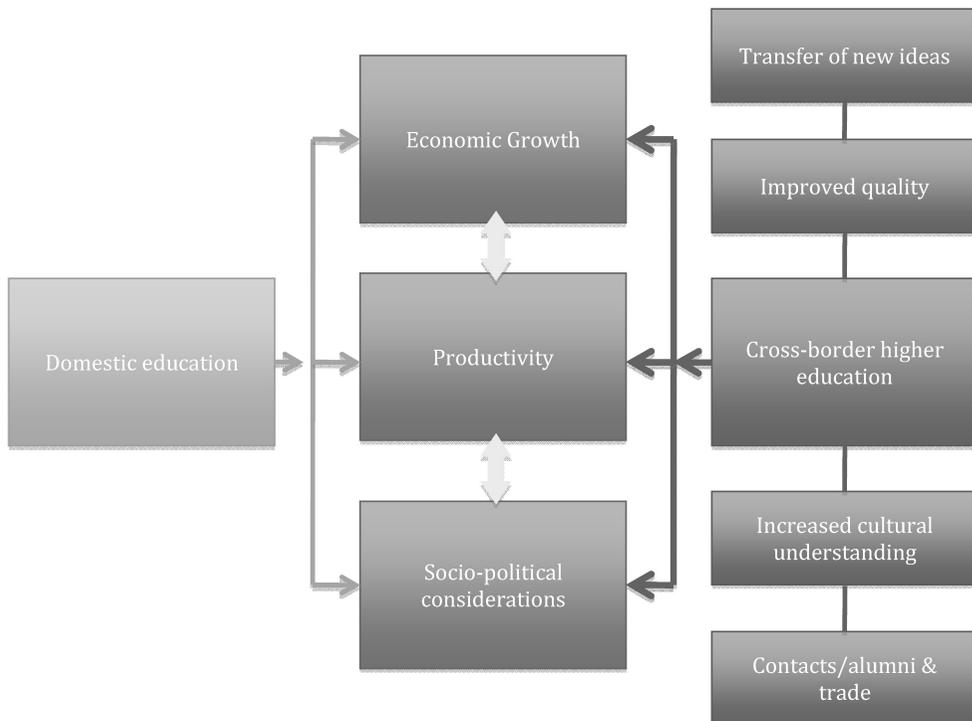
Modified version of APEC and International Education 08, The Key Ideas (1.1). Report for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace, Centre for International Economics, Canberra and Sydney

Major challenges related to a Global-North paradigm include the presupposition of specific norms, expectations, and measures. The paradigm is based on the premise that education is valued as an investment in economic terms as well as social standards. Schriewer expands this notion, indicating,

> Along these lines, analyses of the 'internationalisation of social science knowledge' were right to point out that all 'national' or 'regional' societies increasingly experience processes of change fuelled by scientific progress, technology, and market driven economic activity; that they face largely comparable social problems attendant on these processes; and that, consequently, they share a similar demand for utilizable knowledge and 'rational' explanation. (Schriewer 2004: 351)

A network capital paradigm in comparative education

In 2012, a group of comparative educators in the Asia-Pacific met to discuss opportunities for developing a multilateral consortium on comparative education. The principal reason for collaboration was the consequence of the relative importance of preparing the next generation of leaders in educational planning, policy, and management within the region. Given the limited visibility of comparative education as a field of study amongst the group, there was a heightened sense of urgency in consolidating academic strengths and building on 'network capital'. There was interest in developing a degree-based and consortium-sponsored curriculum at the master's degree level and above in response to the increasing needs to advance our understanding of education development challenges in the Asia-Pacific region and to seek viable solutions to regional if not global concerns. This curriculum would uniquely set itself apart from other master's degree programs in education as it involves a year-long study abroad component with a number of inter-institutional partners in the Asia-Pacific region. As it is a specially tailored exchange research program involving a group of nationally recognised universities from within the Asia-Pacific, international student fees

would not apply as students will simply exchange geographic location. This means that students would only have to pay their regular student fees plus transportation and living costs overseas.

At this writing, there are no known master's degree programs of this variety in this part of the world. By promoting collaborative research and developing comparative education as a field of study, the program would utilise the strengths of individual academics from the Asia-Pacific region in an effort to build leadership capacity in comparative education research: refine analytical research skills in masters degree students; investigate international policy reforms; planning, and trends for critical analysis; and identify best practice.

This proposed, highly selective program would be offered as a two-year master's degree by coursework or as a master's research degree (honours), the latter of which would require a year overseas (in a pre-approved program for placement/ supervision and a master's dissertation). Candidates would be considered for admission with the goal in mind of fostering collaborative research in comparative education in the Asia-Pacific region. Applicants would meet specified admissions requirements, which include among others:

- Three years work as a principal, head teacher or educator from K-12, ministries of education, international development organisations, tertiary institutions, or non-government organisations
- Competency in management, overseas experience, and qualitative analysis with the potential of being a leader or manager
- Bachelor's degree from a recognised, degree-granting institution, preferably including coursework in statistics. Prior coursework in statistics preferred
- Demonstrated proficiency in English language (oral and written)

The objective of the program would be to build upon the capacities of staff in educational sectors from within their respective countries. This would be accomplished from a bottom-up approach, developing the competencies, skills, and attitudes necessary to address problems of education,

development, and global issues of mutual concern.

At the end of the program, students would presumably have acquired the following attributes:

- A holistic and interdisciplinary approach to tackling global problems, especially those related to the Millennium Development Goals, educational provision, academic standards, pedagogy, and program implementation
- Improved research skills and independent learning initiative
- Knowledge and skills in specialised areas (educational planning, educational reform, international development, technology transfer, professional practice and ethics)
- Effective ICT use and its application
- Articulation of educational policies and enhanced skills to strategically design plans for implementation within their own institutions, countries, or regions
- Ability to address and conceptualise global issues of concern with an understanding of both implications and possible consequences (Issues including education reform, access, quality, equity, mobility)

The consortium's master's degree program would be taught by mixed-mode (a combination of online and face-to-face teaching) and would involve a collection of representatives from a consortium of institutions in the Asia-Pacific region that have mutually-agreed to exchange research students during a masters student's second year of study. Students would be required to conduct their comparative research to address global/international issues of concern (e.g. transnational education, gender equity, HIV/Aids, non-formal education and training, development, ICT). Academic supervision of masters research students would require that supervisors be assigned from both home and host countries with the aim of broadening international collaborative research in education from within the Asia-Pacific region.

The consortium would be informal, as it would not necessarily require institutional affiliation through MOUs or other formal articulation agreements. While this initiative is still in its infancy (Genesis phase), it is significant that some

fifteen comparative educators within the region consider this form of 'network capital' as vital for the field and a contribution to improving educational standards and systems---perhaps, more importantly, building research capacity in the Asia Pacific. Its establishment will require a concerted effort for all to take ownership of its development nor can it work as a one-way approach.

Observations

The following observations provide an overview of the links between regional integration, education, and employment with the aim of determining a way forward for regionalisation in the Asia-Pacific. Naturally, further research is necessary for linking the establishment of the consortium with regionalisation typologies, particularly as they may develop.

- There is a legitimate justification for researching regional integration, education and employment as a collective whole. While the issues are complex and macro-oriented, they are necessary for determining ways forward for growth, productivity, and sustainability purposes
- Universities are suffering the plight of being perceived as serving the public good of the nation-state, yet evidence seems to suggest that they will need to be increasingly reliant on student revenue in order to maintain financial viability. The importance of understanding demographic shifts in population cannot be stressed sufficiently as well as that of determining courses of action for knowledge management and employment trends
- Regionalisation is and will continue to be culture-specific in its orientation. While processes and policies may be borrowed, used and abused, there is increasing evidence to suggest that there is a cultural lens to how international university co-operation is approached.

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