

{ ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION }

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# HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

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*Edited by V. Lynn Meek and Charas Suwanwela*



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HIGHER EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND  
KNOWLEDGE IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

*Edited by*

V. LYNN MEEK  
AND  
CHARAS SUWANWELA

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*This book is dedicated to Katri Pohjolainen Yap and the memory of  
Terry Tae-Kyung Kim for their devotion to the ideals of the  
UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Knowledge and Research  
and the work of its committees*

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## FOREWORD

The Asia Pacific region is experiencing a period of rapid and far-reaching economic and social change, driven by an emerging knowledge-based society, accelerating globalization, more market-oriented systems (including higher education), and increasing international economic competition. The emerging knowledge-based society enhances the value of knowledge through encouraging its discovery, dissemination, application, and understanding. Impressive developments are taking place in the application of new information and communication technology. Globalization is bringing about increasing competition among all nations with regard to science, technology, culture, and education, while at the same time necessitating mutual understanding and cooperation. Market-oriented approaches through defining social relationships in terms of supply and demand mechanism are highlighting the importance of economic rationalization, efficiency, relevance, and accountability for higher education institutions and systems. These and related issues are what shape if not determine the character, structure, and direction of higher education, research and knowledge. Over the past 2 years and a bit more, a committee of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge has been attempting to understand and analyze the impact of these issues on the higher education systems of the Asia Pacific.

The objective of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, which was initiated in 2003, is as follows: "To widen the understandings of systems, structures, policies, trends and developments in higher education, research, and knowledge, particularly in developing countries." Within these areas, the work of the Forum is focused on gathering and engaging with existing and ongoing research; identifying research gaps and new priorities; stimulating and facilitating research; bringing to the fore current issues and debates; making available research findings; and disseminating information on policies and practices.

The Forum provides a means for all participating countries to analyze similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses of their respective countries' higher education, research, and knowledge systems on a regional and global basis. There are five regional committees that meet regularly and exchange information and understanding through such mechanisms as seminars, colloquiums, commissioned research, and publications. A global perspective is maintained through the regional committee chairs participating in the annual Global Scientific Committee at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

The Regional Scientific Committee for Asia and the Pacific began its activities in 2003 with the following objective: "To function as an intellectual platform, with some of the central aims being: conceptualizing research areas or topics; engaging in public and institutional debate and discourse; conceptualizing short and long term strategies to highlight research and concerns within the project framework." The first Committee meeting took place in Bangkok in February 2003, followed by the second meeting in New Daly later that year, and the fourth meeting in Seoul in 2005. The third meeting and first Committee sponsored research seminar was held at the United Nations University, in Tokyo, in May 2004. Through these organized and intensive activities Committee members have analyzed a variety of the higher education research and knowledge production problems their respective countries face, individually and collectively. The various Committee meetings have articulated a detailed research agenda guiding the Committee's efforts. This book is based on the efforts to date of the Committee members at understanding and analyzing the higher education, research and knowledge issues of the Asia Pacific region and includes the intellectual contribution and reflections of invited participants in the Tokyo seminar as well. All of this is explained in much more detail in the Introduction to this volume.

Committee members have gained much from their interactions with one another and have greatly extended their knowledge of the higher education research and knowledge issues facing the Asia Pacific region. In the spirit of the Forum, the Committee now feels obliged to share its understandings and the knowledge gained so far with others in the region and Globally. It is for these reasons that Committee members have prepared this publication.

As Chair of the Regional Scientific Committee for Asia and the Pacific I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the two Committee members who undertook the editorial responsibilities for preparing this book, Professor Lynn Meek and Professor Charas Suwanwela. On behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank as well Dr Katri Pohjolainen Yap, former Senior Program Specialist and Project Manager for the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education, Research and Knowledge, for her very hard work and wonderful leadership. Through me the Committee also expresses its appreciation for the services of Terry Tae Kyung Kim, former Assistant Program Specialist, who died far too young. This book would not have been realized without these two persons' contribution to the Committee's work and it is to them that the book is dedicated.

Finally, and on behalf of the Regional Scientific Committee for Asia and the Pacific, I am happy to have this opportunity of expressing my sincere gratitude to all the contributors for their excellent papers. The book will provide a source of significant and creative material on higher education, research and knowledge for a variety of audiences interested in the Asia Pacific.

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