

Comparative History and Emergence of Research Culture among Universities in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia

Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education
Assessing and Improving Research Performance at South East Asian Universities

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Introduction

- For many countries in Southeast Asia the research culture has only began to take a firm footing in the past two decades or so.
- Quality research and publication are pertinent points contributing to global ranking. It is this ranking demand that influence the research landscape of many HEIs in Southeast Asia.
- Malaysia's Ministry of Higher Education has put an aggressive effort in the establishment of research universities (RUs) to place Malaysia's HEIs in the world academic map.

Introduction

- Five of the RUs are in the list QS World University Rankings 2017/2018.:
- The RUs are Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia. Amongst these, four are in the top eight of ASEAN's (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) best universities.
- The importance of embracing research culture among academics Malaysian HEIs, especially the public universities, have always emphasized on teaching and educating the masses.



Rank	University	Country
1	Nanyang Technological University	Singapore
2	National University of Singapore	Singapore
3	Universiti Malaya	Malaysia
4	Universiti Putra Malaysia	Malaysia
5	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	Malaysia
6	Chulalongkorn University	Thailand
7	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	Malaysia
8	Universiti Sains Malaysia	Malaysia

Introduction

- Acculturating research has now become the key element in establishing the standard among HEIs not only in Malaysia but also globally. Such excellence comes from R&D which subsequently is the result of research.
- Thailand and Indonesia as members of ASEAN, the regional aims in education have not differed substantially from Malaysia.

HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

- In 1986 when the Intensification of Research in Priority Areas (IRPA) initiatives was launched.
- IRPA programme supports R&D activities in the public sector on areas which addressed the need of Malaysian industry for the enhancement of the national socio-economic position.
- Scholarly publishing was developed in a more formalized way for the purpose of disseminating research outcomes.
- The 1980s saw a lot more excitement in scholarly research among academics as the research culture slowly embodied Malaysia's academia.

HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

- The efforts by the RUs led to many positive outcomes today in relation to the world rankings of these universities. RUs are mandated to carry out extensive research efforts and to publish widely in highly indexed publications.
- The government has continued to provide grants for public universities.
- Full autonomy is given to the five research universities in Malaysia to allow greater flexibility to implement their own measures in enhancing further their research and publication standings.
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HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN THAILAND

- Thailand's research setting, Rungfamai (2013) asserts that teaching was the main function of most Thai universities traditionally but the gradual change from teaching to more research based setting as well as a mixed environment was the product of three core influence:
 - ✓ the move towards embracing western knowledge,
 - ✓ political alliance with the United States to enhance economic development and
 - ✓ the forces of globalisation on Thai education.

HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN THAILAND

- The embracing of Western knowledge laid down by King Mongkut and the establishment of the first University in Thailand by King Chulalongkorn, between the late 1860s and the late 1930s, saw a more structured higher education policies developing historically.
- During this time, Thai students were sent abroad for higher education in different countries globally and these students brought back distinct overseas knowledge to Thailand.

HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN THAILAND

- The establishment of research granting agencies providing substantial research funding attracted the Thai academics to be more involved in research efforts.
- These reforms led to the emergence of entrepreneurial universities where diversified financial base and autonomy for the universities laid the foundations for future development of research universities.
- Implementation of the National Research University project in 2009 became the triggering point for universities to be more proactive towards their research output.
- This has since laid down the paths of academic excellence in research for Thailand.

HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN INDONESIA

- Indonesia on the other hand, the history of higher education commenced with the Dutch East Indies establishment of a medical school to educate the locals in medical education in 1851.
- The development of higher education in colonial period was dictated by limited policies and one of the consequences of the colonial policy in higher education was that only persons from the upper class were able to attend universities.
- Until the beginning of 1940's access of native or indigenous Indonesian students to higher education were extremely limited.

HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN INDONESIA

- Indonesia in general has been slow in adopting the research internalisation efforts among its academics given the constant disagreement that exist between academia, the industry and the policy makers.
- With progression towards structured development, Indonesia has seen its higher education leaders embarking in the process of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education through improved quality, capacity, and relevance of the priority disciplines in the public and private universities.

HISTORICAL PATHS OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN INDONESIA

- Amongst the three nations, Indonesia only allocated 0.09% of its GDP for research in 2012 which was far behind Malaysia (0.7%), India (0.85%), or China (1.6%)
- University research is mostly irrelevant to the development of local industrialization which has made it difficult to propagate academia-industrial partnerships.
- There was lack of mutual trust between the two entities where universities see the industry as too profit oriented and lacking idealism, while the industry see universities as ivory towers that are too bureaucratic to provide useful assistance.

EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE

- Economic development of Asia has altered the countries to recognise the importance of an educated work force and that investing in research makes the economies more innovative and competitive.
- With substantial government investment, the higher-education systems in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia expanded rapidly.
- Rules requiring publication in international journals (plus presentations in conferences) as criteria for promotion have been promulgated by many universities in Asia.

EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE: MALAYSIA

- Malaysia has adopted a Western mode of higher education based on the British university system.
- University working practices are shaped by the diverse culture of Malaysian society
- The introduction of world university rankings in 2004 caused shock waves in Malaysia as its universities' rankings indicated a level of quality lower than that perceived at that time by government and others.
- It served as a **catalyst** especially on what type of research we were doing.



EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE: MALAYSIA

- The Ministry of Higher Education started the Research Universities (RU) initiative in 2007 with the main aim of achieving global prominence with university rankings recognised as vital for purposes of benchmarking, confidence building and reputation building.
- Between 2007 and 2013, there was an increase of 3.1x increase in publications; seventy percent of the publications growth was contributed by the five research-status universities.

EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE: THAILAND

- Thai HEIs are relatively new and still growing considerably. Thai higher education institutions are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.
- It was initially reported that the Thai universities had low level of research and development works. The majority of projects comprises mainly on applied research that adapts existing knowledge from developed countries and tries to generate results that are appropriate in the Thai context.

EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE: THAILAND

- The increasing globalisation of technology in Thailand has changed the needs for human resources with regard to knowledge, capabilities and characteristics.
- The first national Education Act 1999 critically affected the higher education system.
- The Ministry of Education introduced in 2004 a Strategic Action Plan to accelerate professional researchers; provide research resources; enhance cooperation with private sectors and encourage joint research projects for commercial purposes; and create research centre for excellence.

EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE: THAILAND

- All Thai universities now have research centres to promote research excellence.
- However, the potential for university–industry relations (UIR) in Thailand is still limited to a few technological fields where universities’ and companies’ capabilities overlap (e.g., agriculture, food processing)

EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE: INDONESIA

- The universities in Indonesia underwent profound changes after the end of Dutch colonial rule in 1945.
- Based on the development of higher education in the world, major universities in Indonesia had to transform themselves into research universities.
- Being the largest economy in Southeast Asia and the fourth-most-populous country in the world, it has the potential to make contributions through academic research and the dissemination of knowledge.



EMERGENCE OF RESEARCH CULTURE: INDONESIA

- In the past four years, Indonesia has rapidly increased its academic publications output with an average annual growth of 15% growing from 538 in 1996 to 5499 in 2014.
- Compared to the size of the economy and population of Indonesia there is a substantial gap between actual and potential research output.
- Initially the Indonesian government gave financial support to public universities only. The private universities had to seek their own funding.
- Currently, the government has started to provide assistance to these universities through a wide range of research funding schemes.

Promoting Research Culture

- The Government efforts on the universities in these three countries have played significant roles to support research initiatives.
- The support that has been introduced comes in various ways: effective leadership; creation of research centres; recognition of research publication; encouragement of collaboration with foreign universities; balanced teaching and research responsibilities and pay that is commensurate with expectations.

Promoting Research Culture

- Communication and sharing of ideas and progress between universities across countries contribute to the development of the research culture.
- Research presence might be enhanced by establishing a strategy for research support and by identifying favoured research topics that reflect the organisational culture of individual countries.
- There is a need for strategic collaborative action on the part of higher education systems, universities, foundations, regional organisations, publishers and scholars.
- Only systemic action coming from these countries together will enable more rapid progress on this front.

Promoting Research Culture

- Having made this tremendous progress in expanding access to HEIs through the research initiatives; Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia are now focused on an even more challenging goal:

To build universities that can compete with the finest in the world.

Thank you for your attention!