

# Institutional Perception on East Asian Regional Framework of Cross-Border Higher Education: Analysis of the JICA-RI Survey for Leading Universities\*

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## Abstract

Set against the backdrop of increasing economic interdependence in East Asian region, the idea of “regional integration” is now being discussed as a long-term political process in the region. As in the field of the international economy, de facto integration and interdependence exist with respect to the internationalization of the higher education system in East Asian region. In this context, East Asian region is still exploring the directions of the regional framework, including what countries and sub-regions should be within this framework.

Based on the results of a comprehensive Japan International Cooperation Agency Research Institute (JICA-RI) survey of 300 leading universities in cross-border higher education, located in Southeast Asia (ASEAN member countries) and Northeast Asia (China, Japan, and Korea), this paper examines how East Asian leading universities perceive the different regions as the partners of their cross-border activities and how the universities prospect the degree activity with different partner regions for their cross-border

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activities. The objective is to contribute to the conceptual understanding of internationalization and regionalization of East Asian higher education from the perspective of partner regions, and to contribute to policy discussions for future regional framework of higher education. The finding indicates that in general Southeast Asian universities perceive its own region as the most active partner region, and Northeast Asian universities also perceive its own region as highly active partner region. Furthermore, Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian universities perceive each other as active partner regions.

Key words: cross-border higher education, regional integration of higher education, East Asia, cross-border activities, regional framework

## I. Introduction

In the context of globalization and internationalization of societies and economies, the trend of regionalization is also emerging. According to Knight (2008a), “an unexpected result of globalization is the growing importance of regions” and regionalization of higher education is observed in many parts of the world, not only in Europe where the most evident regionalization initiatives have been taken for last two decades, but also in other regions such as East Asia. In examining the current development and transformation of East Asian higher education from the perspectives of the institutional and governmental-led internationalization process, the “East Asianization of East Asia” or increasing economic interdependency within the region is also confirmed with regard to the cross-border activities of higher education. Intra-regional student and faculty mobility and university partnership-based cross-border activities are increasing rapidly and have shown the de facto integration of higher education in this region (Author 2009). Postiglione and Chapman (2010) also argue that while the dominant pattern of previous collaboration between Asian and Western universities is going to continue, the emerging pattern of Asian-to-Asian collaboration is prospected to increase. Policy discussions to promote East Asian regional cooperation in higher education are also progressing and becoming increasingly vigorous. Governments, higher educational institutions, international organizations, and international university associations are now all discussing the construction of a new East Asian collaborative higher education framework as well as fostering the cross-border activities within East Asia. Altbach (2009) also argues that

internationalization of higher education has reached prominence at regional levels and a focus on regionalization is seen in Asia looking at various regional initiatives. To make such policy processes more effective, it is important for policy makers to be aware of the current status and perceptions of institutions on internationalization and regionalization. However, other than the International Association of Universities (IAU) studies in 2003 and 2005, few empirical data-based analyses are available to systematically describe the perceptions of Asian higher educational institutions on cross-border activities in the region.

This paper aims to contribute to the conceptual understanding of internationalization and regionalization of East Asian higher education from the perspective of partner regions, and to contribute to policy discussions for future regional framework of higher education. This uses original data from the survey conducted under the research project of the Japan International Cooperation Agency Research Institute (JICA-RI) titled, "Analysis of Cross-border Higher Education for Regional Integration and Labor Market in East Asia."

This research aims to identify a functional region or regions for future regional and inter-regional cooperation framework of higher education that can facilitate cross-border activities of higher education institutions in Asia, focusing on the sub-regions of Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia and their relationships with other regions of the world. More specifically, this research tries to address the following questions.

- How do East Asian leading universities perceive the different sub-regions for the partners of their cross-border activities? Are the current levels of activity of sub-regions viewed as likely to increase or decrease in the future?
- Are these universities' perceptions of partner regions different by types of cross-border activities?
- What countries and sub-regions should be included for the future functional regional framework on higher education? Is the sub-region of Southeast Asia (ASEAN 10 countries) functional region for regional cooperation framework in higher education? How about the sub-region of Northeast Asia (China, South Korea and Japan)? Is East Asia (Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia) a functional region for regional cooperation framework in higher education? For East Asia, what other regions in the world are active

partner regions in higher education? What regions and sub-regions in the world should be included or partnered to construct a functional regional and inter-regional cooperation framework?

By answering the research questions, this paper aims to contribute to the conceptual understanding of internationalization of East Asian higher education from the perspective of partner regions, and to contribute to policy discussions for future regional framework of higher education.

## II. Literature Review

### 1. Globalization, internationalization, and globalization

The impact of globalization and internationalization is expected to increase in prominence on the agendas of national- and institutional-level systems of higher education. Although the concepts of globalization and internationalization refer to two distinct phenomena, they are often used interchangeably. While Altbach (2006, 123) defines globalization as “the broad economic, technological and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable in the contemporary world,” he argues that internationalization is more closely related to specific policies and programs of governments, academic systems, and institutions that deal with globalization. Altbach’s definition of internationalization is consistent with Knight’s definitions (2004, 11), which suggest that “internationalization at the national, sector, or institutional level is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education.” By dividing internationalization into layers, Knight refers to the “top-down” effects that national and sector levels impose on the internationalization process by implementing policies and strategies, and the “bottom-up” effects that institutions enact on the internationalization process; both effects reflect global dimensions. Cross-border higher education can be motivated and initiated by either bottom-up or top-down mechanisms. For example, bottom-up collaborations are initiated by individual universities that build partnerships with foreign universities to open up opportunities for student and faculty

exchanges in the service of improving academic quality. In contrast, top-down mechanisms are often initiated by national governments in their push for the international collaboration of universities with the governments' economic and political incentives (Postiglione and Chapman 2010). To activate internationalization, both top-down and bottom-up effects are required.

In the context of globalization and internationalization, the trend of regionalization is emerging in many parts of the world (not only in Europe, but also in East Asia), and how and where the concept of regionalization fits into this context is another issue. The concepts of the globalization and regionalization of higher education share some similarities in that their effects cannot be controlled by any one actor or set of actors; rather, they are the de facto unexpected outcome of worldwide transformation. The internationalization process of higher education in policies and actions at the national, sector, and institutional levels responds to the trends of globalization and regionalization. As a result, when examining the progress of East Asian regionalization with regard to higher education, it is important to review the internationalization processes from the viewpoint of both governments and institutions (e.g., universities).

## 2. Regionalization in East Asia and higher education

Behind the concept of East Asian regional integration lays a situation where the weight of this region in the world economy is expanding and where, due to the growing interdependence within the region, a relatively more independent economic system that less relies on Western economies is forming (Watanabe, 2004). Discussions on the issues of regional integration have been extensively developed within Southeast Asia compared to other Asian sub-regions since the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established in 1967. ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) was established in 2002 and ASEAN has committed to establishing an ASEAN Community by 2015 (ASEAN, 2009). Discussion of Asian regionalization within the scope of all of East Asia is a more recent development as the ASEAN + 3 (China, Korea, and Japan) summit was established in 1997 and East Asian Summit was started in 2005. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), that has much wider membership of the Pacific Rim nations including US and Canada, is also recently activated

with policy discussions towards regional economic integration such as Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). Considering the trend of trade and investment flow in the world, Lincoln (2004) also strongly suggest that a regional dialogue including the United States, Australia, and New Zealand makes more sense than the narrower alternatives. In the context of evolving regional frameworks, inter-regional cooperation is also developed. For example, the collaboration between Asia and Europe has been enhanced through Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which is a multilateral channel for communication between the two regions. Thus, a multi-layered structure of Asian regional cooperation, framework and integration is evolving and there are several different ways to form "regions", such as Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, East Asia (Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia) and the Asia Pacific. In this paper, we define East Asia as Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia that are consisted of ASEAN 10 member countries plus 3 countries of China, South Korea and Japan as these two sub-regions are considered as the key units for future regional cooperation in the field of economy (Urata, 2005).

In the field of higher education, policy discussions of formulating a regional framework have been also developed in such a different coverage of countries or definition of region in Asia. Looking back the historical development of Asian regional higher education framework of policy discussion and cooperation, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education (SEAMEO) was established in 1965 even prior to ASEAN, and at present SEAMEO consists of eleven countries in Southeast Asia (East Timor is a member of SEAMEO but not of ASEAN). Under the umbrella of SEAMEO, Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (RIHED) was officially founded in 1970, and it is "committed to the promotion of cooperation and development of higher education in the region (SEAMEO RIHED, 2011)." One of the most important programs operated by SEAMEO RIHED is "harmonization on higher education in Southeast Asia," which aims to raise awareness of key policy makers and stake holders and build framework and guideline development in such areas as: regional qualification framework, quality assurance framework, Southeast Asian passport (SEAMEO RIHED, 2011). ASEAN also tries to promote regional cooperation of higher education through establishing ASEAN University Network (AUN) in 1995. All these framework and network have contributed to the process of constructing the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (which covers education).

More recently, the discussion on cross-border higher education in Northeast Asia became active from the start of trilateral summit of China, Japan, and Korea in 2008. In response to the trend of focusing on the collaboration of the three countries in Northeast Asia, a program called “the Collective Action for Mobility Program of University Students (CAMPUS Asia)” is being formulated. The program, analogous to the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERASMUS), had an objective of facilitating student mobility in the three countries with a long-term goal of establishing the foundation of academic exchange in Asia and expanding boundaries by collaborating with the countries in Southeast Asia in the future (KEDI, 2009).

Bridging Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, regional cooperation in higher education has been discussed in the ASEAN plus 3 Summits since its establishment in 1997 but the official ASEAN+3 Higher Education Policy Dialog Meeting started to be organized in 2009 by the representatives of ministries of higher education and leading universities in the region independently from the Summit.

As for Asia Pacific regional framework, APEC was founded in 1989 with 12 economies, and human resource development has been one of the sectors of cooperation. Currently APEC consists of 21 Asia-Pacific economies including some countries in North and South America and Oceania in addition to some ASEAN countries and plus 3 countries. University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) was founded in 1993 by representatives of 18 countries and territories mainly in ASEAN, Northeast Asia, and Oceania and Pacific to achieve enhanced international understanding through increased mobility of university students and staff establishing shared credit transfer system by member universities and colleges in the region. To promote regional cooperation for quality assurance (QA) of higher education, Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN), an international non-governmental organization, was established in 2003 with the membership of 27 QA agencies that deal with the issues of qualification and accreditation in 17 countries mainly from ASEAN, Northeast Asia, and Oceania and Pacific, and became an important foundation to establish regional QA mechanism in Asia with some policy function as it provides advice and expertise to assist the development of new quality assurance agencies in the region (APQN, 2008).

Furthermore, ASEM became a forum of the inter-regional collaboration and policy discussion between Asia and Europe since its establishment in 1996, and its members consisted of 27 European Union member states and European Commission, and 16 Asian countries and the ASEAN Secretariat. These Asian member countries are mainly from Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. Australia, New Zealand and Russia became new members as of the 8th ASEM held in Brussels in 2010. Underlining the increasing demand for higher education cooperation and mobility between Europe and Asia, ASEM develops projects, such as ASEMUNDUS, EU-Asia Higher Education Platform (EAHEP), and Academic Cooperation Europe South-East-Asia Support (ACCESS), aiming to promote the cooperation in higher education between two regions.

Thus, up to date, various and overlapped regional and inter-regional frameworks are being established and operated in a different coverage of countries and sub-regions for higher education cooperation in Asia. Compared to the European region, where the regionalization of higher education is more advanced, the East Asian region is still exploring the directions of the regional framework, including what countries and sub-regions should be within this framework. One of the central issues in the process of these efforts is which set of countries is appropriate and functional. Previous university surveys of IAU presented that Asian universities perceived their own region, that is, Asia in a wider definition, as the most prioritized partner region in their institutional policy or strategy for internationalization (Knight, 2003; Knight, 2006) although the reports do not provide analyses of partner sub-regions of Asia. In the 2003 IAU survey, the most prioritized region for universities in Asia was within their own region, followed by Europe, North America, and the other three regions. The 2005 IAU survey also indicated the same trend that universities in Asia-Pacific ranked their own region as the top priority among six regions.<sup>1)</sup> Other than the IAU surveys, there are some relevant university-level surveys that were conducted within a country to understand the current situation of specific cross-border higher education activities. For example, according to a survey of Malaysian universities' cross-border activities (Sirat, 2009), it seems different by type of activities which (sub-) region is a more active partner. Their

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1) Asia and Asia-Pacific, used in 2003 and 2005 IAU surveys respectively, referred the same geographical area, covering overall Asia Pacific region, and the survey reports did not present their results for individual countries in Asia.



most active partner is Southeast Asia, followed by Western and Central Eastern Europe for the two types of activities (cross-border activities of faculty members and cross-border institutional agreements),<sup>2)</sup> while the largest number of students studied abroad in Northeast Asia and the largest number of foreign students came from Middle East. For Korea, a university survey report presented the number of programs by partner countries for two types of cross-border activities (MEST and KEDI, 2007). By grouping these countries into (sub-) regions, the partner region that has the largest number of activities with Korean universities is North America on cross-border collaborative degree programs and Western Europe on research collaborations, and Northeast Asia is the second popular partner region for both types of activities.

### III. Method and data source

#### 1. Data source

This paper is based on data collected as part of a university survey that we conducted in 2009/2010 for Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia (China, Japan, and Korea) under the JICA-RI's research project named, "Cross-Border Higher Education for Regional Integration and Labor Market." In this paper, Southeast Asia refers to ASEAN member countries, and Northeast Asia denotes China, Japan, and Korea. China refers to mainland China, excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan for the limitation of survey. The JICA-RI team prepared the questionnaire, drawing on the instruments developed for the international and national surveys (referenced in the previous section), and selected "leading" universities in ways discussed below with collaboration from SEAEMO RIHED. The survey implementation (i.e., the sending and collecting of questionnaires) and data compilation were mainly conducted by Asia SEED (a non-profit organization) in close coordination with the JICA-RI team.<sup>3)</sup>

2) The result of IPPTN shows the number of activities or people (faculty members and students) participating in activities by both partner countries and regions for different types of cross border activities. Therefore, we grouped the number of activities/people by the (sub-) regions.

3) The research design, draft questionnaire and list of sample universities were discussed at a workshop organized by JICA-RI, SEAMEO RIHED, and Asia SEED, on June 30, 2009, in Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop was attended by policy makers and researchers from eight Southeast Asian countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Philippines, and Thailand), in addition

## 2. Target of the survey

The questionnaire was distributed to the 300 “leading universities active in cross-border higher education activities” in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and the two countries in Oceania (Australia and New Zealand), although responses from Oceania are not used for this paper’s research purpose. “Leading universities” were identified by counting the number of times the universities appeared in the three global university ranking sources (World University Rankings 2008 by Times Higher Education-Quacquarelli Symonds; Academic Ranking of World Universities 2008 by Shanghai Jiao Tong University; and Ranking Web of World Universities 2008 by Webometrics) and their status as members of eight regional or international university associations: the AUN, the UMAP, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, the Association of East Asian Research Universities, the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific, the IAU, the International Alliance of Research Universities, and the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning.

We first checked how many and which universities are present in each university ranking source or as members of the eight university associations. Then, we checked how many times the same university was ranked or an association member. To avoid the excessive representativeness of some countries, different criteria were used to select universities from different countries, depending on their macro-level elements, such as the size of the population and the total number of universities. Finally, 21 universities were included based on information provided by the participants at a workshop in Bangkok, resulting in 265 institutions in our intended sample for Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia.

In August 2009, the questionnaires were distributed mainly by e-mail to the senior executive officers such as the directors, managers, or vice rectors who are in charge of the International Affairs Office or the equivalent in the 300 universities. Questionnaires were sent by fax for administrators without email addresses. After sending questionnaires, follow-up activities were conducted for all of targeted institutions by calling and emailing the target senior executive officers. In addition to calling and emailing from Japan, the local consultants,

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to Korea, Japan, China, and Australia. The inputs and endorsements received at this workshop were incorporated into the research project.

stationed in Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, China, and Indonesia, contacted the target universities to increase the response rate. As shown in Table 1 out of the 300 universities, 131 (44%) universities completed and returned the questionnaire. Of 131 universities, this paper analyzes the responses received from 124 universities, of which 41 universities from Northeast Asia and 83 universities from Southeast Asia (59% and 42% of response rates, respectively).<sup>4)</sup> This paper excludes 7 responses from universities in Australia because the focus of this paper is on East Asia.

<Table 1>Number of universities that responded

	Responded universities	Response rate (%)	Target universities
Southeast Asia			
Brunei Darussalam	0	0	1
Cambodia	5	83	6
Indonesia	30	49	61
Laos	0	0	1
Malaysia	16	57	28
Myanmar	1	25	4
Philippines	7	22	32
Singapore	1	11	9
Thailand	9	23	40
Vietnam	14	100	14
Sub-total	83	42	196
Northeast Asia			
China	19	61	31
Japan	17	59	29
Korea	5	56	9
Sub-total	41	59	69
Oceania			
Australia	7	25	28
New Zealand	0	0	7
Total	131	44	300

Source: JICA Survey

4) Although our survey method has a limitation to ensure who actually responded as compared with face-to-face interviews, we consider it reasonable to assume that the responses represent senior executive officers to whom we requested to answer the questionnaires as they were submitted from their names or offices.

### 3. Contents of the survey

The questionnaire was designed to capture the perceptions of leading universities on their cross-border activities in the following three dimensions: (i) the extent of different types of cross-border activities, (ii) the perceived importance of the expected outcomes from different types of activities, and (iii) the degree of activity with the different partner regions. The questionnaire also attempted to address any changes that had occurred over time (past, present, and future).

Among these three dimensions, we only focus on the third dimension for the purpose of this paper. The respondents were asked to identify the degree of activity of a given type of cross-border activity, using a 5-point Likert scale: ("4: highly active," "3: fairly active," "2: moderately active," "1: slightly active," and "0: not active"), with each of the 11 partner (sub-) regions.<sup>5)</sup> These regions were mainly based on the definition of regions by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED): Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, the Oceania and Pacific region, South and West Asia, Central Asia, Arab States, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Sub-Sahara Africa, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>6)</sup> This dimension was chiefly designed to study the geographic trends of regional partnerships, and mobility within Asia by dividing Asia into five sub-regions (Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, the Oceania and Pacific region, South and West Asia, and Central Asia) and examining regional cooperation within East Asia. Universities were asked to indicate the degree of activity of their overall cross-border activities with different regions as well as of each five different cross-border activities over the different time periods.<sup>7)</sup>

5) The use of Likert scale may cause some distortions on the subjective perceptions of respondents, for example due to a potential tendency to avoid the extreme option of answers and to be moderate. We assume that such a tendency could occur across any questions, and thus focus on statistically significant differences in the means of their answers on the degree of cross-border activities across questions (e.g. by each partner region or between perceptions of current status and future prospects) but not the degree of activeness itself.

6) There are two differences in the categorization of regions between ISCED and this study. First, ISCED categorizes East Asia and Pacific as one region, while this study divides it into Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania and Pacific, excluding Macao(China)andTimor Leste. Another difference is that ISCED categorizes North America and Western Europe as one region, while this study lists North America and WesternEuropeseparately.

7) These five activities are "outgoing mobility opportunities for student," "acceptance of foreign students," "cross-border research collaboration," "cross-border research collaboration," "cross-border institutional

## IV. Findings

### 1. Partner regions for overall cross-border activities

Tables 2 and 3 compare the degree of activity of overall cross-border activities' partner regions between Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. At present, for Southeast Asia, its own region is the most active partner region for overall cross-border activities, followed by Northeast Asia, Western Europe, North America, and the Oceania and Pacific region (see column "Present" of Table 2). Among these top five partner regions of Southeast Asia, the difference between Northeast Asia and Western Europe and the difference between North America and Oceania and Pacific did not reach statistical significance.

For Northeast Asia, however, North America is currently the most active partner region, followed by Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, Western Europe, and the Oceania and Pacific region (see column "Present" of Table 3). Yet, the difference among the top 3 partner regions is not statistically significant. For both Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian leading universities, a large gap exists in the degree of activity as a partner between the top five active regions of partners and the other six regions. For both regions, the top five regions of partners consist of three Asian sub-regions (Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and the Oceania and Pacific region) and two non-Asian sub-regions (Western Europe and North America), which are far more important partner regions compared with the other six regions.

As compared with the past situation perceived by universities, the lists of partner regions in the ranking order of the degree of activity has not changed much for both Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, and their future prospects also indicate a similar ranking of partner regions (see columns "Past" and "Future" in both Table 2 and Table 3). Compared to the past, the degree of activity for all partner regions is expected to increase in the future, and this phenomenon can be observed in both Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. The difference between means of present and future is statistically significant. For example, Table 2 shows that the degree of activity of partner region, Southeast Asia, has increased from 2.22 to 3.72,

which indicates that Southeast Asian universities' degree of activity with its own region has been moderately active, but it is expected to be almost highly active in the future. (See columns "Past" and "Future" in both Table 2 and Table 3)

<Table 2> Degree of activity of overall cross-border activities' partner regions for Southeast Asia

Rank	Past		Present		Future	
	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean
1	Southeast Asia	2.22 **	Southeast Asia	2.88 ***	Southeast Asia	3.72 **
2	Western Europe	1.97	Western Europe	2.57	Western Europe	3.56
3	Northeast Asia	1.83	Northeast Asia	2.54 **	Northeast Asia	3.43 ***
4	North America	1.66	North America	2.26	North America	3.14
5	Oceania&Pacific	1.50 ***	Oceania&Pacific	2.11 ***	Oceania&Pacific	3.08 ***
6	Central&Eastem Europe	1.03	Central&Eastem Europe	1.55 *	Central&Eastem Europe	2.54
7	South&West Asia	1.01 ***	South&West Asia	1.38	South&West Asia	2.47
8	Central Asia	0.67	Central Asia	1.13	Central Asia	2.26
9	Arab States	0.61	Arab States	1.13	Arab States	2.14
10	Sub-Sahara Africa	0.49	Sub-Sahara Africa	0.97	Sub-Sahara Africa	1.93
11	Latin America& Caribbean	0.38	Latin America& Caribbean	0.82	Latin America& Caribbean	1.86

Source: JICA Survey

Note: 4='highly active'; 3='fairly active'; 2='moderately active'; 1='slightly active'; 0='not active'.

The time differences (present and future) in means are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )

\* $p < 0.1$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\* $p < .05$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\*\* $p < .01$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

&lt;Table 3&gt; Degree of activity of overall cross-border activities' partner regions for Northeast Asia

Rank	Past		Present		Future	
	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean
1	North America	2.74	North America	3.18	North America	3.75
2	Southeast Asia	2.56	Southeast Asia	3.10	Southeast Asia	3.63
3	Northeast Asia	2.49	Northeast Asia	3.07	Northeast Asia	3.61
4	Western Europe	2.33 **	Western Europe	2.98 ***	Western Europe	3.59 **
5	Oceania and Pacific	1.91 ***	Oceania and Pacific	2.49 ***	Oceania and Pacific	3.29 ***
6	South&West Asia	1.48 *	South&West Asia	1.98	South&West Asia	2.80
7	Central&Eastern Europe	1.20	Central&Eastern Europe	1.80	Central&Eastern Europe	2.73 *
8	Central Asia	1.08	Central Asia	1.75 *	Central Asia	2.45
9	Latin America& Caribbean	0.92	Latin America& Caribbean	1.45	Latin America& Caribbean	2.33
10	Arab States	0.77	Arab States	1.45 ***	Arab States	2.28 ***
11	Sub-Sahara Africa	0.54	Sub-Sahara Africa	1.00	Sub-Sahara Africa	1.82

Source: JICA Survey

Note: 4='highly active'; 3='fairly active'; 2='moderately active'; 1='slightly active'; 0='not active'.

The time differences (present and future) in means are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )

\* $p < 0.1$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\* $p < .05$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\*\* $p < .01$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

## 2. Partner regions for each activity

Table 4 compares Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian leading universities' perceptions regarding the degree of activity of partner regions across five different types of cross-border activities. For Southeast Asia, its own region is presently the most active partner region for most types of cross-border activities while "cross-border collaborative degree programs," for which Western Europe is the most active partner region, followed by Southeast Asia, Oceania and Pacific, Northeast Asia, and North America. However, among these top five partner regions for "cross-border collaborative degree programs," only the difference between Northeast Asia and North American is statistically significant. (See columns labeled "Present" across the different types of activities for Southeast Asia).

For Southeast Asia, the top five active partner regions are presently the same across most types of cross-border activities, except for “acceptance of foreign student.” These top five partner regions include three Asian sub-regions (Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and the Oceania and Pacific region) as well as two non-Asian sub-regions (Western Europe and North America). For “acceptance of foreign students,” the top five active regions of partners include South and West Asia.

Overall when comparing the current situation with the future prospects, the lists of partner regions in the ranking order of degree of activity do not appear to change a great deal for Southeast Asia. However, the means of all partner regions increase extensively in the future compared to the present and the differences of the means between present and future are statistically significant in Southeast Asia.

The “leading” universities in Northeast Asia perceive North America, Northeast Asia, and Western Europe, as their active partner regions of which are significantly different from the rest of partner regions for the following three activities; “international/cross-border research collaboration,” “international/cross-border institutional agreements,” and “cross-border collaborative degree programs.” For the activity, “acceptance of foreign students,” Northeast Asia perceives its own region and Southeast Asia as the equally active partners, followed by North America, Western Europe, and South and West Asia, yet Western Europe is not significantly different from South and West Asia. For “outgoing mobility opportunities for students,” North America is the most active partner region, followed by Western Europe, Northeast Asia, Oceania and Pacific, and Southeast Asia while the difference between Western Europe and Northeast Asia and the difference between Oceania and Pacific and Southeast Asia are not statistically significant.

Northeast Asian universities also list the same top five active partner regions across most types of cross-border activities at present, except for “acceptance of foreign students,” which has South and West Asia as one of the top five active regions of partners. Like Southeast Asia, when comparing the current situation with future prospects, the list of partner regions in the ranking order of degree of activity do not appear to change a great deal for Northeast Asia. Furthermore, the degree of activity for all cross-border activities is significantly higher



in the future compared to the present in Northeast Asia.

The top five partner regions for the “leading” universities in both Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia are the same across the different types of cross-border activities, except for “acceptance of foreign students,” in which South and West Asia are perceived to be a more active partner region than North America or the Oceania and Pacific. Thus, in terms of accepting students, for both regions’ leading universities, the top five active regions of partners include four Asian-sub regions, indicating that they accept many Asian students.

<Table 4a> Degree of activity of each cross border activity’s partner regions; Southeast Asia

Acceptance of foreign students						
Rank	Present			Future		
	Partner regions	Mean		Partner regions	Mean	
1	Southeast Asia	2.47	***	Southeast Asia	3.61	***
2	Northeast Asia	1.81	**	Northeast Asia	2.99	**
3	Western Europe	1.48		Western Europe	2.70	
4	Oceania&Pacific	1.42		North America	2.66	
5	South&West Asia	1.33		Oceania&Pacific	2.66	*
Outgoing mobility opportunities for students						
Rank	Present			Future		
	Partner regions	Mean		Partner regions	Mean	
1	Southeast Asia	2.34	***	Southeast Asia	3.51	***
2	Northeast Asia	1.79		Northeast Asia	3.10	
3	Western Europe	1.74	*	Western Europe	3.03	**
4	North America	1.43		North America	2.76	
5	Oceania&Pacific	1.42	***	Oceania&Pacific	2.68	***
International/cross-border research collaboration						
Rank	Present			Future		
	Partner regions	Mean		Partner regions	Mean	
1	Southeast Asia	2.13	**	Southeast Asia	3.39	**
2	Northeast Asia	1.89		Northeast Asia	3.19	
3	Western Europe	1.78	*	Western Europe	3.00	
4	North America	1.49		Oceania&Pacific	2.81	
5	Oceania&Pacific	1.47	***	North America	2.80	***
International/cross-border institutional agreements						
Rank	Present			Future		
	Partner regions	Mean		Partner regions	Mean	
1	Southeast Asia	2.46	***	Southeast Asia	3.51	***
2	Northeast Asia	2.09		Northeast Asia	3.21	
3	Western Europe	2.00	**	Western Europe	3.15	*
4	North America	1.68		North America	2.93	
5	Oceania&Pacific	1.64	***	Oceania&Pacific	2.85	***

Cross-border collaborative degree programs				
	Present		Future	
	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean
1	Western Europe	1.73	Southeast Asia	2.89
2	Southeast Asia	1.65	Western Europe	2.75
3	Oceania&Pacific	1.31	Northeast Asia	2.74
4	Northeast Asia	1.30 **	Oceania&Pacific	2.63
5	North America	1.02	North America	2.49 ***

Source: JICA Survey

Note: 4='highly active'; 3='fairly active'; 2='moderately active'; 1='slightly active'; 0='not active'.

The time differences (present and future) in means are statistically significant (p<.01)

\*p<0.1 in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\*p<.05 in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\*\*p<.01 in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

<Table 4a> Degree of activity of each cross border activity's partner regions; Northeast Asia

Acceptance of foreign students				
Rank	Present		Future	
	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean
1	Northeast Asia	3.00	Southeast Asia	3.64
2	Southeast Asia	2.90 **	Northeast Asia	3.62
3	North America	2.44 ***	North America	3.38
4	Western Europe	2.08	Western Europe	3.26 ***
5	South&West Asia	1.97 **	Oceania&Pacific	2.82

  

Outgoing mobility opportunities for students				
	Present		Future	
	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean
1	North America	2.83 **	North America	3.50
2	Western Europe	2.60	Western Europe	3.43 *
3	Northeast Asia	2.48 *	Northeast Asia	3.20 **
4	Oceania&Pacific	2.10	Southeast Asia	2.90
5	Southeast Asia	2.05 ***	Oceania&Pacific	2.88 ***

  

International/cross-border research collaboration				
	Present		Future	
	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean
1	North America	3.00	North America	3.69
2	Northeast Asia	2.83	Western Europe	3.57
3	Western Europe	2.83	Southeast Asia	3.46
4	Southeast Asia	2.66 ***	Northeast Asia	3.37 ***
5	Oceania&Pacific	1.94	Oceania&Pacific	2.97

  

International/cross-border institutional agreements				
	Present		Future	
	Partner regions	Mean	Partner regions	Mean
1	North America	3.08	North America	3.73 **
2	Northeast Asia	2.95	Northeast Asia	3.54

3	Western Europe	2.90		Western Europe	3.50	
4	Southeast Asia	2.72	***	Southeast Asia	3.38	**
5	Oceania&Pacific	2.20	***	Oceania&Pacific	3.10	**
Cross-border collaborative degree programs						
Present			Future			
	Partner regions	Mean		Partner regions	Mean	
1	North America	1.97		North America	2.97	
2	Southeast Asia	1.79		Western Europe	2.88	
3	Western Europe	1.76		Northeast Asia	2.70	
4	Northeast Asia	1.61	**	Southeast Asia	2.61	**
5	Oceania&Pacific	1.15	*	Oceania&Pacific	2.12	*

Source: JICA Survey

Note: 4='highly active'; 3='fairly active'; 2='moderately active'; 1='slightly active'; 0='not active'.

The time differences (present and future) in means are statistically significant ( $p < .01$ )

\* $p < 0.1$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\* $p < .05$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

\*\*\* $p < .01$  in T-test of differences in means between a partner region and one immediately below in the ranking list.

## V. Discussion and reflections on the Findings

By examining how East Asian leading universities perceive the different regions as the partners of their cross-border activities and how the universities prospect the degree of activity with different partner regions for their cross-border activities, this paper addresses the discussion about what regions and sub-regions in the world should be partnered to construct a functional regional cooperation framework, based on the assumption that functional regional framework needs to be established on the basis of an active collaboration among the (sub-) regions.

First, the finding shows the deeper collaboration related to higher education within each of the sub-regions, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia. As the findings generally indicate, Southeast Asian universities currently perceive its own region as the most active partner region, and prospect to have the most active partnership with its own region in the future too. Northeast Asian universities also perceive its own region as highly active partner region, and prospect to have continuous active partnership with its own region in the future. These findings support the current regional policy directions that promote intra-sub-regional collaborations of higher education. ASEAN (Southeast Asia) is committed to promote

regionalization in higher education within its own vision to construct the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community by 2015. In this context, AUN and SEAMEO-RIHED have promoted regional higher education cooperation within Southeast Asia. Very recently in Northeast Asia, three countries of the region initiated the creation of the Asian version of ERASMUS, CAMPUS Asia. These policy initiatives within the two sub-regions in East Asia aligned with our findings that show active intra-sub-regional collaboration of higher education. These ongoing active intra-sub-regional collaborations may lead to the development of a concrete regional framework of higher education for both Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia.

Second, with regard to overall cross-border activities, Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian universities perceive each other as the active partner regions for their cross-border activities. This fact indicates that integrating the two sub-regions may be a functional next step in constructing a regional higher education framework in East Asia. Consequently, with ongoing active partnerships between the two sub-regions, developing a framework that integrates the two sub-regions, often referred to as ASEAN+3, may function as a useful coordinating forum. Although the official ASEAN+3 Higher Education Policy Dialog Meeting began in 2009, the issue of integration (or harmonization) in higher education within the setting of ASEAN+3 has not yet been fully discussed. Nevertheless, many expect an increase in the awareness of the importance of regional framework in higher education among ASEAN+3 countries in the future.

Although the process of the East Asian regionalization of higher education may begin with the ASEAN+3 structure, it may not end there; rather, it may expand to involve strong complementary relationships with other active partner regions. Our finding that North America is the most active (and projected to be the most active) partner for Northeast Asian universities clearly indicates that an appropriate partnership with North America needs to be established in the future dialogue for a regional and inter-regional higher education framework in East Asia. In this process of inter-regional framework, the experience of ASEM dialogue, forum of partnership between Asia and Europe, may present a model for bridging between North America and Asia. At the same time, universities in Australia and New Zealand are also relatively active partners for universities in both Northeast and Southeast

Asia. This indicates the possible inclusion of Oceania in the new framework for functional cooperation.

This study indicates that regional cooperation in the field of education in Asia has developed in the multilayered way, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, East Asia (Southeast Asia & Northeast Asia), and Asia Pacific. In order to see flourish the dream of constructing the Asian regional higher education framework for the purpose of realizing peace and prosperity in Asia, such frameworks should not be exclusive or contradictory with each other, but play a complementary role with one another.

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