

Institutional Reform Success Indicators in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Reformation of higher education (HE) institutions is fundamental in improving and strengthening its academic institutions of HE independence. Moving on now to consider the present academic community must undergo a process of change to improve the teaching, research, management functions, and operations of the institutions, which are incremental in a sustainable manner. In essence, there are many indicators of success that have been identified in studies conducted for other industries. The major trend currently observed is the reformation of the HE institutions in major countries mimicking the for-profit industries to make them more competitive. This paper integrates and advances pertinent factors that enable an effective and successful reformation process from the Asian HE perspective by reviewing relevant reformation literature on the matter. This systematic review has developed three (3) core themes relating to the importance of leadership, policy development and governance, and autonomy, which regards higher institutional practices from within the Asian region reviewed. And to conclude, the internal factor is dominating the indicators for HE reforms success. This finding seeks to offer future research to be extended from established institutions from other developed countries as a comparison when planning and implementing change initiatives at the institutional level.

Keywords: Institutional Reform, Success Factors, Higher Institution, Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Reform of HE institutions is a process of improving and strengthening its academic institutions of HE independence through the medium of academic programs. It is now understood the reforming process focuses on enhancing the skills and capabilities of the graduates for the nation's capacity building of the human capital for economic and social expansion, performance, and routines while protecting the hereditary disciplines and bodies of knowledge (Janssen & Estevez, 2013; John P. Kotter, 2015; Maassen et al., 2017; Mees & Smith, 2019). The process of institutional reform has altered institutions' overall functioning and have had varying impacts on success. Thus far, it is believed by some experts that the reform process is common observations throughout many countries, whereas others feel that there was no alternative but to reform the system. Certain universities have been more

successful than others in their implementation of change, whereas some fail to do so (Korsakienė et al., 2017; Kotter, 1995; Nyhagen et al., 2017). Due to the global evolution and innovation in teaching and learning, the growth of new academia caused dramatic reform to the functions and performance of HE. Many researchers discovered that the external and internal factors significantly impacted sustainability for the profit-oriented sectors. This observation in literature collected from scientific research leads to the conclusion that higher institutions emphasize different factors that determined the success of the reform process. Therefore, this paper provides a better understanding to address the question: What are the pertinent factors that enable an effective and successful reform process in the Asian HE perspective?

BACKGROUND

Higher education reforms in many Asian countries are striving to attain the capacity to produce knowledge to improve economic and market competitiveness (Varghese & Martin, 2013). HE institutions need to create an innovative way of teaching and learning practices continuously. Relevant and up-to-date innovative research has to bridge the gap between the current practice theories and practices. Reformation is a movement from a current and generally fragmented university governance structure to a structured and highly competitive global educational facility (Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2016). The reformation process's essence is a redefinition of the relationship between the university, the state, and the market (Lee, 2008). The emergence of a university as an active player in building national capacity is now the main agenda in most countries' national development plans, including Malaysia (Zhu & Zayim-Kurtay, 2018).

As indicated previously, teaching and learning institutions have been regarded as key national assets and measures. However, the approaches are continuously being introduced to safeguard this asset. The reformation process focuses not only on enhancing the organizational structure but also on economic growth, technological and social development, and acts as a key performance indicator for others (Bloom et al., 2016; Mayende & Wanyoike, 2016). Various factors influence organizations' rate and quality of change, be it externally or internally (Rizescu & Tileaga, 2016). Others mentioned that institutional change leaders work within culture while challenging their comfort zone to create rooms to reform (Dajani & Mohamad, 2016). Taking into consideration, this paper aims to provide a better understanding of adapting the reform process, integrating the most pertinent factors into consideration.

Institutional change leaders work within culture while challenging their comfort zone to create reforms (Dajani & Mohamad, 2016; Leal Filho et al., 2018; Sporn, 1996). Schein (1996) mentioned that culture is influenced by the institutional environment and is learned over some time. Raj (2010) stated that globalization has affected the cultural institutions, the economy, as well as political impact. The term globalizing or mostly used term internationalizing of higher education is often used interchangeably with terms such as cross-border higher education, borderless higher education, or multinational higher education. It is generally defined as education in which the novices are located in different countries away from the awarding body of HE institutions is based (Carnoy, 2005). It is important to bear in mind that few authors justified internationalization as one of the most influential incentives to alter the global HE system (Knight, 2015; Qureshi et al., 2014; Shahijan et al., 2016). Supe et al. (2018) studied clustered personnel, intellectual, material, financial, and infrastructure resources as the internal factors of HE competitiveness, which is relevant to this study. Leithwood et al. (2004) stated that success factors of institutional reform highly depend on motivation and the capacities of the leadership in the universities/ schools. A close relationship has been demonstrated by Hunt & Chalmers (2017) to support Leithwood's argument is that leadership and management goal is whole-of-university change to get the context right for teaching and learning, and the process of change leadership strategies are conceptualized as push and pull drivers of change. The role is important in setting up the university's policy that becomes a core value that determines the direction (Azman et al., 2016). Lussier (2009) stated that leaders need to develop a support system in the

organization. From the education lens, support from the management is required and this will reflect on the leadership's capacity. Leaders should be able to provide support to their staff in performing their work. At the same time, leaders must ensure the organization's conducive environment that fully supports the incentives and reward system rather than inhibiting teaching and learning.

METHODOLOGY

Siddaway et al. (2019) and Shaffril et al. (2020) mentioned that systematic review aims to identify, evaluate, and integrate findings of rigorous and relevant studies addressing one or more research questions. This particular research was guided by the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses). A qualitative technique was performed using thematic analysis to identify and review the most dominant and common factors reflecting the findings from the Asian region. Scientific articles were selected from the primary databases Web of Science, Scopus, and others ResearchGate, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald, and EBSCO for the search engine and database search and Mendeley reference manager. Research from 2015 to 2019 was selected as this research is considered recent and relevant in reviewing the process for Asian HE institutions perspectives. Search strings on Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald, and EBSCO retrieved 246 articles from the database. The search string is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Search String

Database	Search string
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("transformation" OR "reformation") AND ("higher education" OR "higher education institution(s)") AND "Asian")
WoS	alltitle: "transformation" OR "reformation" AND "higher education" OR "higher education institution(s)" AND "Asian"
Others	"transformation" OR "reformation" AND "higher education" OR "higher education institution(s)" AND "Asian"

Based on the screening process on similar keywords, the search resulted in 43 articles were prepared for the eligibility stage. Of the 39 articles focused on the HE institutions transformation process, 11 relevant articles related to the Asian perspective are ready to be analyzed based on the originality, clearly stated aims and relevance criteria to the present research. Details of the document selection process are highlighted in Figure 1.

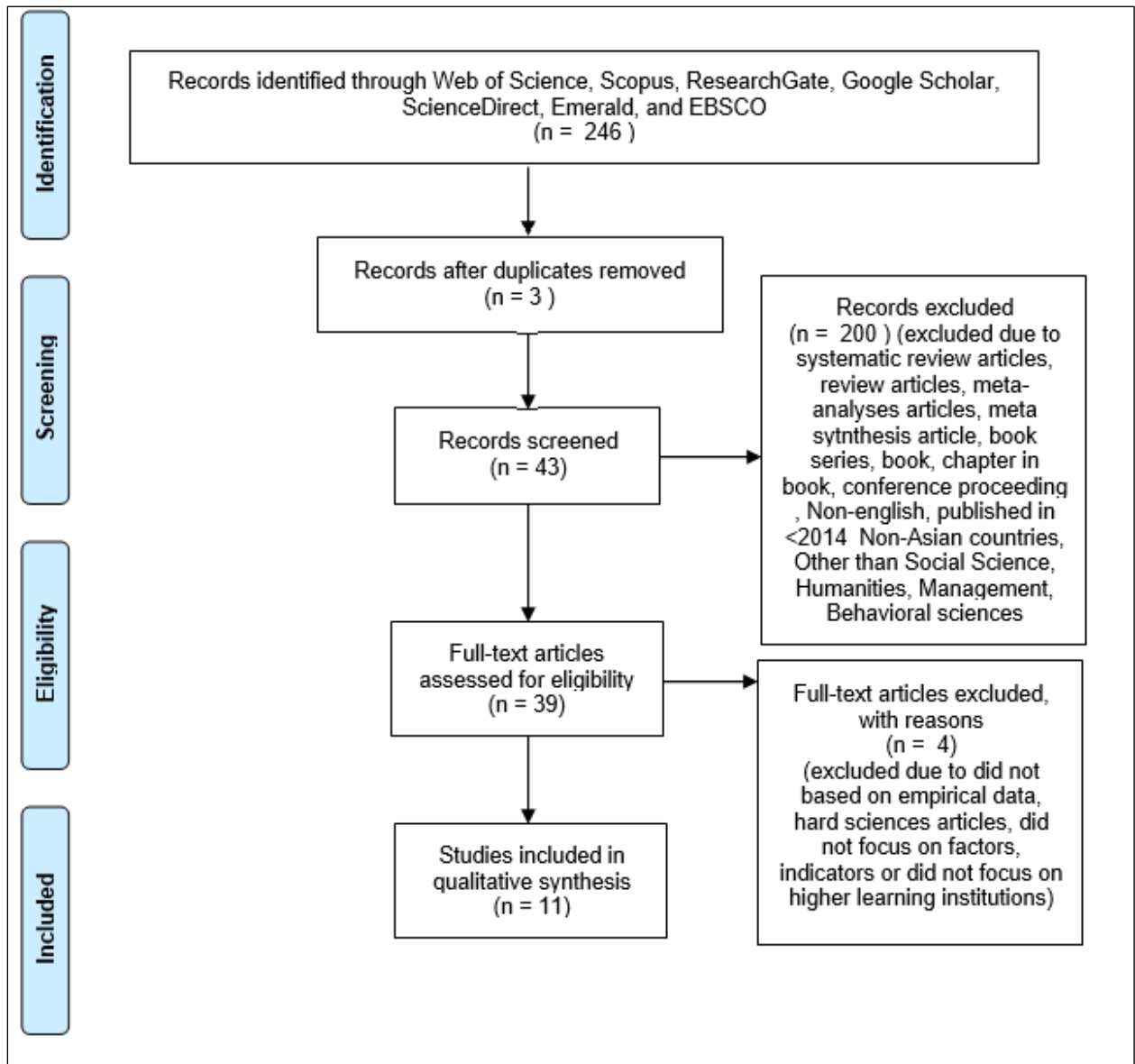


Figure 1: Process of Document Selection

FINDINGS

This study has attempted to systematically analyze the existing reviews on Asian HE adaptation of factors contributing to reformation success. From these findings, the factors are similar rather than different for many countries in the Asian region. The result indicated that Asian HE has engaged in a diversity of practices. Within the scope of this review, seven (7) themes were discovered. Leadership, governance and autonomy, and policy development are the most dominant indicators adopted by most Asian HE. The summaries of the significant findings of Asian countries are further elaborated in Table 2.

Table 2: Summaries of Themes of Factors by Asian Countries Researched by Authors in the Asian perspective

THEMES	TYPE	COUNTRIES					
		Malaysia	Indonesia	Cambodia	China	Japan	Vietnam
Collaboration	External factors	//					
Globalization		///			/		
Culture	Internal factors	//	/	/	/	/	/
Governance & Autonomy		///	/	/	//	/	/
Leadership		////	//	/	//	/	/
Policy		////	//	/	//	/	/
Financial generation		/	/				

Leadership is the core importance of all major industries, including HE. 6 out of 11 studies mentioned that leadership is required to transform countries into a developed nation (Azman et al., 2016; Harris & Jones, 2015; Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2016; Rosser, 2018; S. A. Shariffuddin et al., 2017; Wan et al., 2018). Consequently, the HE system has undergone multiple rounds of reforms- embarked on a structural transformation of its economy with the agenda of human capital development taking center stage in the reform agendas. HE is critical for developing and producing talented human capital to enable the country to participate in the knowledge-based economy. Most countries embarked on moving the country in the direction of building a knowledge-based economy. Innovation and talent are positioned as the primary drivers of enhanced economic performance. While the drivers of globalization were driving towards such a future, the weights of limited assets, a minimal talent pool, and highly political intervention were barriers in achieving this future.

Policy development is the binding tool and a precondition to HE's successful reform to build innovative human capital quality. Many of the policies undertaken by the government underscore the need to spearhead human capital formation through the development of world-class requirements (Harris & Jones, 2015; Li, 2016). A remarkable amount of financial investment accompanies the need to reform leadership coupled with policy initiatives to develop the world and sustain their position as global players. If these challenges are not addressed, higher education will not be able to move towards this desired future and sustain. It is due to anticipating uncertainty and inconsistencies between the need for reformation in leadership and governance changes and an outdated model that certainly made some sense 30 or so years ago but is no longer relevant to the next decade. Institutional reform in the HE system depends on the education policy and governance strength (Azman et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2014).

The university's education system's design and aspirations of policy development are widely connected to the State policy and institutional policy. Thus, this suggests that universities should be given the freedom to express their capabilities through a leadership approach to drive the university's excellence and the right governance structure's legality. Governance and autonomy are concerned that most countries regard the importance of being autonomous universities because they are expected to participate in regional development and improve regional economic and social development (Rosser, 2018; Wan et al., 2018). However, the HE sector's governance system was said to be highly centralized with bureaucratic reliance on central authority (Inayatullah & Milojevic, 2016). Most countries agree that the university focus has become much alike business entities than educational institutions, which need to be driven by efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and the need to measure tangible outputs (Varghese & Martin, 2013).

Governance reform leads to a leadership process for higher education. It strongly suggested that universities must be allowed to operate freely within the regulatory framework established by the Government policy. Again, strong and effective governance structures, clear decision rights, and effective stakeholder management, and full autonomy should be considered too high performing

universities operationalized into financial and academic autonomy. Full autonomy should be considered too high performing universities to be operationalized into financial, human resource, institutional, and academic autonomy. These outcomes recommend HE to focus on these leading pertinent indicators when putting reformation into its agenda. The holistic internal factors - leadership, governance and autonomy, and policy development are dominating the reform success in the Asian HE perspective. They are inter-connected and should be given more attention and be handle adequately. There are no acclaim practices from most Asian countries that can be referred to as successfully reform institutions interacting with these relationships, yet.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to incorporate all factors identified as reform success in the HE sector. The meta-lesson for the future of HE was clear-cut. Reform success indicators in most Asian HE sector are pretty much dependent on the internal factors, leadership, governance and autonomy, and policy initiatives. With this aim, we present a new narrative guide to reform the education future by creating a new model of autonomous governance, incentivizing and nurtured leadership aspects and policy setting where universities become a place with less bureaucracy and political interference. The internal factors should be the key driver in the future for the HE sector when considering reform. The coordination must follow-through to ensure HE sustainability to become part of a global window with the desired niche area. However, in summary, this work only offers minimal aspects of additional indicators that are previewed from research done from 2015 until 2019 and cover only a part of the Asian region. This research is the first step towards a more profound understanding of other research points of view in other regions, which can be further explored. Future works on how Asian HE would move forward with its reform agenda in general and with observed limitation and how this reform affect overall performance and university ranking is still questionable and could be further research.

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