

A Proposal from APU: A University Consortium for Asia Pacific Studies : UNICAPS

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On July 24 and 25, 1999, about 30 participants gathered at the city of Beppu, Oita Prefecture, in Japan from 11 cities, 11 universities and from three continents and one big ocean which constitute the great Pacific area. Currently, the Asia Pacific region is suffering from a severe economic crisis. At the same time, each government promotes sincere efforts for their recovery, nationally or locally. There are actually several cases of advancement for the solutions of the problems even though there will need to be further measures and remedies for this region in order to overcome the current economic difficulties. These efforts will not only solve the obstacles that we face but also bring us a clearer perspective for sustainable development in the 21st century.

At the international conference on global education under the sponsorship of the Ritsumeikan Center for Asia Pacific Studies, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University which will be established in April 2000, participants exchanged their views on the role of a university for sustainable development in this area. All the participants agreed on one of the most important functions of a university, human resources development. The Asia Pacific area particularly needs human resources and leadership at various levels and fields. Not only a linking of these resources, but also the vision of a global network, is necessary in nurturing leaders. Thus university linkages should be promoted further beyond individual or bilateral efforts towards multi-lateral and comprehensive cooperative relations.

In 1998, UNESCO promulgated its world declaration on higher education for the 21st century, *Vision and Action*, in Paris. It recommended among other things the reform of higher education in response to social needs, widening of higher education opportunities and the promotion of international cooperation in higher education. Partnership among universities will be the key to global education.

At the Beppu Conference, participants discussed how universities and other higher educational institutions could develop cooperation both in education and research. Various examples and models of exchange and cooperation in the Asia Pacific areas were introduced and presented during the three-day meeting. The participants came to firmly believe that, based on existing mechanisms and schemes among universities in this area, further development and schemes should be incorporated and enhanced for multi-lateral and multi-faceted cooperative partnership among universities. At the conclusion of the meeting, we would like to make the following two proposals:

1. Promotion of global education with the linkages of universities.

The aim of global education is to educate students with international views who will be able to play an active role locally in their own regions, and who will be able to contribute internationally with a deep understanding of local problems. In the Asia Pacific region, for instance, it will be very important to promote education for the understanding of regional peace and sustainable development, the various and multiple characteristics of the region, and the features of human networking in this region. Joint research activities will also be necessary in addition to the related educational cooperation.

Secondly, in order to implement global education, information technologies and distance education schemes should also be utilized. Information technology will be a crucial factor in inter-university education. Systematic development and administration of measures for distance education, teleconference teaching, etc. should be studied and implemented.

Thirdly, global partnership of universities should be encouraged as a mechanism for the promotion of global education. Globally active resources can only be produced under appropriate training and by utilizing suitable teaching materials and tools. Leadership and creativity should also be encouraged. Opportunities for practice and internship in industry and international agencies will prove to be an integral part of global education.

Fourthly, student participation and mutual understanding will be very important in global education. A mutually cooperative and learning environment and language, culture, and religious education will also be necessary. Student participation in research and activities and international opportunities should be encouraged.

2. University Consortium for Asia Pacific Studies (UNICAPS).

An organization and measures will be needed for global education. Such an organization will become a clearinghouse for individual programs and schemes. A long-term vision as an organization will also be required. At the conclusion of the international conference on global education, we would like to propose the establishment of such an international institution, which will be known as the University Consortium for Asia Pacific Studies or UNICAPS. The function of UNICAPS will be further studied in subsequent meetings but the following functions will be promoted initially:

- (a) utilization of distance educational facilities;
- (b) joint research activities on the study of global issues in the Asia Pacific area;
- and
- (c) structuring international and regional networks through inter-university networks.

The University Consortium will be an active forum for universities and other

higher educational and research institutions. Members of the Consortium will be independent from each other and from national or local government. Finally, the Consortium will maintain the basic tenets of the university as a higher educational institution: education, research, and service in the Asia Pacific area.

Closing Discussion

[Unidentified speaker]: For the record, I think I must make a statement. I fully agree with the idea of a global partnership for Asia Pacific studies. But I have reservations about institutionalizing the partnership in the form of a university consortium for Asia Pacific Studies at this stage. I fully agree with the idea, short of institutionalizing the organization. As Professor Kim from Pusan National University mentioned, I cannot represent my institution. So, I must say I have reservations about the formalizing the partnership into University Consortium for Asia Pacific Studies at this stage. Thank you.

[Unidentified speaker]: I think what you are trying to put forward here is just the idea of having a consortium for Asia Pacific studies. We do not necessarily at this point have to register our commitment, but it will be of great help to view this as a future vision and consider this time and henceforth as a period of building up relationships via the exchange of information, small meetings, and continuing work; and maybe later on start some small programs together, without necessarily coming up with a more formal institutionalized consortium. Just like the consortium we had with agricultural universities in Southeast Asia, it took us years to build that kind of consortium. It took us about 20 years to really come up with a workable consortium. I am not saying that this consortium for Asia Pacific studies will take that long, but building a consortium composed of seven universities – five in Southeast Asia, one in Australia and one in Canada – is kind of a long process, which started with something like this: meetings, discussions, small projects, small exchanges. Then later on they saw the value of formalizing that relationship because the resources were there, the structure was there, and the commitment was already there. So let us look at this as a vision, something to look forward to, and then look at a period of building up towards that vision.

Professor Hotta: I think we are fully aware as the proposers about the difficulties and non-representative nature of the delegations from each institution. What we would like to suggest is a proposal which you might want to take back with you to your own institution. We can discuss it over the Internet, or in an appropriate forum. And there will be no need to vote on the resolution. We are fully aware of the nature of the discussion.

[Unidentified speaker]: At this kind of stage of proposal, we do not fully understand the content of the consortium. If we talk about a consortium, each institution has some obligations, or something like that. But at this stage, if it is a very weak tie or information exchange, then that is not a problem I think. We should move in this direction. Professor Hotta said more formal approval is necessary, but I do not think so. Such a direction is

now recognized by each participant, I think.

Professor Braddock: Following on from the discussion, I would like to make a concrete proposal, that is: we take this document as a proposal that we have been discussing here during our meetings, that this is a visionary proposal that has come from APU which we all take back to our universities to discuss with our presidents and our international offices and our Asia Pacific studies people. And those responses then we share over the Internet. I think that the vision of cooperating, given that we all have links with APU anyway, is something that can be done via the type of steps that I suggested earlier. It may not have to be those exact steps. But I think we should proceed slowly, take this document back as a visionary statement of principle but not a binding commitment or anything else, and we take it back and discuss with our institutions, and then we feed those responses back. Perhaps we could set up an e-mail list where our responses can be shared among ourselves so that we can all read them at the same time. And while our communications may be primarily filtered through APU, we are also copying them to ourselves. So I think that we can work towards developing an arrangement which will then build on this. But I would like to congratulate APU on the vision in this. I think it is a very valuable vision, and it is one that I certainly will discuss with my President in detail, and I think we are all in the position that at the most we can support the vision, but we have to then start the negotiations. And as it happens, I am sure APU will be able to develop the sort of document that Professor Shirai was mentioning which gives more detailed steps, and we can perhaps maybe having a working party that could in fact assist APU in drafting a more detailed document. The consortium itself – just to address that – does not necessarily need to be a tight, highly formalized consortium. It could be a loose consortium, whereby we agree to just pursue certain goals, and that would be ideal for those institutions where Asia Pacific activity is only a part of their total activities. And therefore that would facilitate degrees of freedom elsewhere. I think whether we are dealing with the entirety or the part is not an issue if we proceed in that particular way.

Professor Lewis: I just want to add a voice of support to the last comment. I think that is right. I think Professor Braddock's idea is particularly fruitful. I think there is nothing in the statement that any of us would not support enthusiastically. It is a visionary statement. It is a statement of principle and I would remind you of something very smart that Phil Brenner said at the very beginning of this conference yesterday, which is there is a kind of natural progression in the development of cooperation and networking in which a consortium is a final stage rather than an initial one. And to remind you something that confirms this, I would share with you the experience of the only organization – somewhere between a professional organization and a consortium – to which my school, the School of International and Public Affairs, belongs, and that is known as APSIA, the Association of Professional Schools of International Affairs. Its membership consists of

seventeen American institutions plus five or six international ones, including (as our very first international member) Ritsumeikan. It now also includes members from Russia and France, and some others are in the offing. But at the most recent meeting of the organization in May in Harvard, a decision was taken to de-institutionalize APSIA, to disband its central office in Washington, to dismantle some of the rather cumbersome administrative structure that had existed, and instead to make it a more informal venue for sharing of ideas and occasionally more formal cooperation on a project-related basis where a particular issue or problem in international relations – professional education in international relations – arises; that we can tackle that through a specific grant, a specific project or collaboration rather than being burdened as we were both financially and logistically with an institutional structure. So I think the recent comments are very relevant. I would also remind you in terms of our discussions about who we represent in universities, and so forth: if you look at APSIA, its membership is specifically professional programs in international affairs and they have names that are very different. Some are Schools of International and Public Affairs, or Schools of Public Policy. The member from Yale is the Program in International Relations. Similarly here, I see no reason why on the one hand you could not have APU, which has the name of a university and is dedicated to Asia Pacific studies, but also some professional schools of international relations, of Asia Pacific affairs – a kind of flexible definition, but at the sub-university level for the most part. Ritsumeikan APU will probably be the exception there. But I think that is a workable arrangement because involving bureaucrats (lets call them that) at higher level of all our universities is not a productive strategy.

Professor Valencia: Well we seem to be generally agreed that this seems to be a desirable goal, and one to be pursued on a step by step basis, that we should return to our institutions and get feedback, and then perhaps a working group can be set up to thrash out the details. I now give the last word to Professor Hotta.

Professor Hotta: Thank you very much Dr. Valencia. As co-chair, let me say a word of thanks and one last comment. About twelve years ago in Kyoto, Ritsumeikan University was asked by the Kyoto City Hall to revitalize university activity. And since then, Ritsumeikan has been a core institution in establishing university consortia in Kyoto. Now, my guess is that there are around 40 universities and junior colleges in Kyoto to form a university consortium. Dr. Sakamoto is a member of the administration of this university consortium in Kyoto. This is first of its kind in Japan, but I see in the brochure which was distributed by Dr. Fellizar mention of a university consortium enhancing academic cooperation in Southeast Asia, SEARCA. And I received a fax letter just recently from the university consortium in Kyoto saying that it is very interested in extending this Kyoto consortium into an international university consortium, open to interested institutions. Our consortium proposal is not in line with that big solid one: rather, as Dean Lewis

suggested, it must be a flexible organ, a workable organ, and a small organ, and sequential development will be necessary as Dr. Brenner proposed yesterday. So all these proposals and suggestions will be taken up in consultation for the betterment of the proposal in the next forum which will be proposed in the short term, either next year or two years from now. But what is important, I think, and to which all participants agree is to reinforce our existing relations and to enhance these existing relations and solidify them into an organ or institution, either under the name of a consortium or something else. With this brief summary, please let me conclude all four sessions, and I would like to ask Dr. Jido or Professor Sakamoto to give us some concluding remarks.

Professor Sakamoto: [in Japanese] Thank you very much for the two or three days conference which I firmly believe was successful in having distinguished delegations and having such a wonderful exchange of opinions and dialogue. And as you are fully aware, the proposal that was made by APU today is not to be adopted as a conclusive statement, but rather we need to continue discussion about it. I would like you to take back our proposal to your home institutions. and we will be having a similar conference in the fairly near future to discuss it more fully. And also, as suggested, the website exchange of opinions or information about the proposal may be a good idea to continue our discussion. Finally, I thank you again for your participation and for your discussion. Thank you very much.