Zhong, Z., Coates, H., & Shi, J. H. (Eds., 2020). Innovations in Asian Higher Education. New York, Routledge, First edition.

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This book focuses on education innovation, and is published by The Asian Universities Alliance. It is the second in the Asian Higher Education Outlook (AHEO) book series. It covers six important themes: teaching innovations, doctoral education, online and mobile education, education for sustainable development, social/community engagement, and education futures. Each chapter presents lively and practical case studies on education innovation written by prominent scholars in their expertise/domain. A total of 24 authors and many contributors, advisers, informants and administrators spanning 15 universities of the Asian Universities Alliance (AUA) contributed to this book. The alliance is a collaboration of 15 universities in Asia and the member universities of the Alliance.

More than half of the 24 authors have doctoral degrees and all of them have at least one masters degree. They have a wide range of research interests in higher education and development, which include organisational change, political economy of institutions, corporate social responsibility, online learning and assessment, comparative education, expatriate academics and international doctoral studies, and community-oriented medical education.

As an educator, my main point here is to present the significant developments and achievements of some leading Asian universities. Drawing from experiences of elite universities, we can better understand the uncertainties in the higher education sector, what resources/areas we should develop further, how to leverage talented faculty and students, and to spur ongoing innovations.

This book aims to provide an avenue for leading universities to tell their compelling stories, and showcase their innovative collaboration between academia, government and industry. It also serves as a platform to get member institutions to openly address regional and global challenges related to higher education. In particular, what missions should universities undertake in new age? What skills should university students acquire? What challenges do universities face?

Given its broad relevance, the primary audience is students of higher education in Asia, Europe and the Americas, learners such as policymakers and advisors, people working in roles that require good understanding of higher education in Asia. The tertiary audiences are higher education practitioners and leaders in universities around the world with an interest in Asian higher education. They include academics and higher education leaders, such as deputy vice-chancellors academic, deans, associate deans and heads of school.

This book has eight chapters. Chapters 2-7 discuss six major themes in education innovation in Asian Higher Education. It starts with an overview of five teaching related matters, such as student success, faculty and teaching characteristics, the nature of education programs, teaching through social engagement, and education finances and infrastructure. It then examines the drivers of innovation in doctoral program design, the growing trend of digitalised education, new models of university social engagement, and role of universities in promoting sustainability, and concludes with key opportunities and challenges faced by higher education. Different approaches are deployed, such as desktop study of research literature, document analysis, surveys, observations, interviews, focus groups, expert meetings and conferences.

Chapter 2 focuses on academic excellence by five authors. Based on recent comparable data from 15 AUA member universities and several illustrative case studies, three key findings are formed. Data are collected from multiple sources: university questionnaires, publications, and websites. Findings suggest that AUA member universities have made significant contributions to cultivating high quality graduates, growing the number of postgraduate students and academics by increased investment and training, and enriching student experiences through broad scale reforms in curriculum design, digital infrastructures, multicultural campus and study abroad programs.

Chapter 3 traces the development of next-generation doctorates. Four case studies of doctoral practice from Kazakhstan, Myanmar, Korea and United Arab Emirates are presented. These cases show new forms of doctoral

education which are interdisciplinary, cross-national, and industry-oriented. It concludes with a recommendation that the new doctorate's educational design should focus on both structure and function. The design architecture is developed and validated through theoretical analysis and empirical work. The structure includes three phases, "success", "experiences", and "preparations" (33). The functional side refers to activities undertaken by students and universities. For example, to promote academic and professional successes, students should engage in jobs and build careers, while universities guide, support and engage through alumni activities.

Chapter 4 reviews the expansion of online and mobile learning, and explores its implications on higher education teaching and learning. Insights were drawn from three member universities in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Republic of China, and Thailand. They are pioneers of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the Asian region. One emerging key challenge common to virtual online platforms is academics' lack of interest and experience. In order to further advance digital learning, it is necessary for universities to invest in extended training and development of digital competence for teachers and learners.

Chapter 5 illustrates the emerging roles of universities and the new models of university social engagement in Asia. Other than the traditional mission that focuses on teaching and research, there is a call for the inclusion of the generation of human capital as a second mission. Four in-depth case studies of three theoretical models, mission-driven, needs-driven, and stakeholder perspectives, are presented. The study argues that the success of any engagement models depends on several key elements, such as strong academic leadership and support, integration of social needs into the academic programmes and design, setting up a strategic centre to form coordination and knowledge connectivity with different stakeholders, recognising and rewarding faculty.

Chapter 6 describes a new role of universities in promoting sustainable development goals. A deep-dive case study from the University of Tokyo and illustrative case studies of four AUA members are presented. Findings suggest that the development of stages depends on national and institutional characteristics. Universities in developing countries focus more on green campus operations. Conversely, universities in developed countries have a more comprehensive and wider focus on realisation of sustainable development goals. Findings also reveal that there is limited collaboration among AUA member universities. It concludes with a proposed framework and a roadmap that AUA member universities could deploy to promote collaborative sustainable development.

Chapter 7 presents future opportunities and uncertainties faced by higher education institutions in Asia. The scenarios are generated from a series of workshops organised by two AUA member universities and their faculty and staff and an Alliance-wide survey. Changes are necessary at three levels; micro-institutional, medium-societal and macro-international. Next, case studies of university transformations from United Arab Emirates, Republic of China and Singapore are used to illustrate the responsiveness of some Asian universities to major environmental disruptions.

This is the second publication within a research book series in the Asian Higher Education Outlook. This book focuses on higher education innovation. It covers six timely and important topics that are vital for the sustainable development of higher educational institutions. We know a lot about universities and education learning and development in other regions, such as in the United States and Europe. Asia needs to be studied as well given the sheer growth of Asian universities and their achievements, "yet much of this story remains untold, and unknown" (88).

Several strengths of this book tie to its organisation, content and illustrations. Each chapter has a main theme related to education innovation. It starts with an overview of the topic, followed by exemplary cases, conclusions and recommendations. The length of each chapter is optimal. I most like the case studies included in this book. Cases are drawn from 15 AUA member universities. They are lively, provide insightful ideas and good practices. They also represent a diverse geographic coverage; and one can really see the stages of education development differ between developed and developing countries. One minor point is that there are quite a few repetitions between Chapter 1 and Chapter 8.

All in all, this is a very easy-to-read book that is not filled with complex theories. Instead, it has interesting and practical cases. It can also be a leisure time reading for anyone who wants to keep abreast of innovation in the education sector. I would also recommend this book to parents who have teenagers who are future and current students of higher education.

One afterthought: given the massive changes across the world brought by Covid-19, a second edition of this book might be welcome. Certanly, every university has changed since 2019. Hopefuly, when stories of innovation to meet the new normal after Covid-19 are written, Asian universities will not be overlooked.