



Concept Note

Higher Education and Innovation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific

2 December 2020

Background

In 2015, Member States of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education through SDG4. In particular, the importance of higher education was highlighted in a key target outcome (SDG 4.3), “By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”.¹ The internationalization of higher education was included as a key strategy to achieve SDG4.3 as it promotes access, increases equity and enhances the overall quality of higher education. It also promotes cross-cultural understanding and tolerance, contributing to global citizenship education and other aspects of the SDGs. These issues are especially timely given the impacts of COVID-19 and complex challenges to sustainable development in Asia-Pacific.

At the start of a new decade, the Asia-Pacific region is not on track to achieve any of the 17 SDGs by 2030.² To accelerate progress, universities are key to generate new knowledge and drive innovation towards sustainable development. Proactive policy interventions and intensive allocation of budgets by the governments in each country are needed to deepen internationalization of higher education, promote innovation in education and research, and activate industry-academia collaboration for global sustainability.

In general, there are close correlations between higher education and innovation. On the one hand, higher education institutions adopt innovation as inputs to enhance the engagement of teachers and students in teaching and learning. On the other hand, innovation is an output of higher education through promoting research and industry-academic collaboration. The correlations between higher education and innovation have become critically important during the global pandemic of COVID-19, which has exacerbated inequities within and across education systems. Going forward, it is necessary for stakeholders to work together on resilient approaches to enhance relations between higher education and innovation.

¹ UNESCO, 2015. [Education 2030 - Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action: for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4.](#)

² UN, 2020. [Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020.](#)

Bearing these challenges in mind, the Tohoku University-Tsinghua University Collaborative Research Fund 2020 program will organize an international webinar on Higher Education and Innovation in the Asia-Pacific Region in December 2020. During the webinar, experts will share strategies and practices in promoting innovation in higher education and research, and activating industry-academia collaboration for transforming innovation towards global sustainability. Specific objectives for the meeting are outlined in the following section.

Objectives

- Review policies and strategies regarding innovation and higher education in the Asia and Pacific region, including progress towards SDG4.3
- Share current practices from three universities in promoting innovation in education and research, and activating industry-academia collaboration for transforming innovation towards global sustainability

Expected outputs

- Understanding of similarities and differences in promoting innovation in education and research, and activating industry-academia collaboration for transforming innovation towards global sustainability in Asia-Pacific
- Discussion on opportunities and challenges for promoting innovation and higher education post-COVID-19

Co-organisers

- Graduate School of Education, Tohoku University (Tohoku University-Tsinghua University Collaborative Research Fund 2020)
- Institute of Education, Tsinghua University (Tohoku University-Tsinghua University Collaborative Research Fund 2020)
- UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, Bangkok, Thailand
- Graduate School of Education, The University of Tokyo, Japan (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A): 15H02623)
- Global Asia Research Center, Waseda University
- Sophia University
- International Exchange Committee, Japan Comparative Education Society

Participants and resource persons

Approximately 50 stakeholders from Asia-Pacific countries, including government officials, researchers and practitioners as well as resource persons will be invited to attend the meeting

Dates

2 December 2020 (15:00-18:00, GMT+9)

Venue

Webinar by Zoom

Language

English will be the working language

Tentative programme

- Opening remarks
- Meeting objectives
- Share current activities from three universities based on each national policies in East Asia (Tsinghua University, Seoul National University, and The University of Tokyo,)
- Open Discussion
- Next Steps and Closing

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