

Internationalization of Education in Asian Countries: A Comparative Study

MOCHIDA, Kengo

Faculty of Human-Environment Studies, Kyushu University : Professor

<https://doi.org/10.15017/7364810>

出版情報 : 国際教育文化研究. 2, pp.15-24, 2002-03-30. 九州大学大学院人間環境学研究院国際教育文化研究会

バージョン :

権利関係 :



Internationalization of Education in Asian Countries: A Comparative Study

Kengo Mochida

Introduction

This paper is based on a study carried out in a research project entitled 'Comparative Research of Internationalization of Education in Asian Countries' ⁽¹⁾. In Japan internationalization of society has been a big social trend and at the same time an aim to be achieved during the last couple of decades of the twentieth century. It continues to be so in the first decade of the twenty-first century. It has been regarded that internationalization of education should be an essential element in this trend. With this background it is very important to clarify what trends concerning internationalization of educations are and how the idea of internationalization of education is being discussed and what reforms or policies for internationalization of education are being formulated and implemented in Asian countries. These understandings are necessary to promote international educational exchanges between Japan and other Asian countries.

With this recognition in mind this research was designed and carried out. The purpose of the research was set as follows: 'To make analysis on policies, systems and practices for the internationalization of education in the levels of primary, secondary and higher education in China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines and Singapore.' Thus this research is a comparative study of eight Asian countries and territories to grasp general trends of internationalization of education in Asia. After the World War II the fundamental purpose of education in most Asian countries has been establishing of national identity. In many Asian countries policies for this purpose have been implemented. However with the advent of the 21st century the need for strengthening of internationalize their education has been particularly emphasized in several countries. For example in Korea there have been strong voices for globalization of education. In Thailand the consciousness for 'global village' has been encouraged. Thus how to further internationalization of education has become one of the important tasks to be tackled in many Asian countries. It is expected that during the 21st century there will be more expansion of educational and cultural exchanges between Japan and other Asian countries. In this circumstance it is very important task to examine how Asian countries are tackling this problem in terms of comparative education.

The research is consisted of two parts to achieve the purpose above. The first is to examine policies, systems and practices for the internationalization of education in each

country and territory. In this part what policies have been formulated and implemented , what arrangements in educational systems have been made and what have been practiced in schools were considered. The concept of internationalization of educations is very diverse and it may be conceived very differently according to different countries and territories. Thus in this study it is aimed to make clear concepts of internationalization in each country and territory by examining educational policies and reforms.

The second is a questionnaire survey of views of primary and secondary school students on internationalization of society and education and also various international exchanges. With this survey we tried to grasp views of school students at present and to compare.

This is an international collaborative research in which distinguished members of the CESA took part in as collaborators. They are Professor Gu Mingyuan of China, Professor Lee -Byung Jing of Korea, Professor Mark Bray of Hong Kong, Professor Shen-Keng Yang of Taiwan, Professor Paitoon Sinlarat of Thailand, Professor Isahak Bin Haron of Malaysia, and Professor S. Gopinathan of Singapore. I would like to express my deep gratitude for their kind cooperation which made this research possible in this occasion.

Policies and Systems for Internationalization of Education

In this part I would like to outline briefly main characteristics of policies and systems for internationalization of education in each country and territory.

China

In China the term, internationalization of education, is not being used widely yet and the understanding of meaning of the term is not penetrated in general. However in recent years among researchers in education the internationalization of education is started to be recognized as an important goal to be achieved, though it has not been presented as a policy task.

However policies related to internationalization of education were mentioned in several policy documents. For example in *Action Plans for the Development of Education for the 21st Century* published in December 1998, measures which include international dimensions to improve the quality of higher education were proposed. In those measures accepting excellent national and international scholastic leaders who are to lead Chinese university departments to raise their levels to the global standard, curriculum innovations, encouraging international exchanges of faculty members and students, international technology aids and international research cooperation, changing the attitudes of faculties and students, cultivating international spirits in universities, and stressing international dimensions of university activities have been emphasized in this plan. Thus in China developing the internationalization of education at least in higher education is being recognized as an important task.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is said to have characteristics of an international city. But promoting internationalization of education per se has not been aimed explicitly in educational policies. Rather the natures of 'cosmopolitan city' and of 'cosmopolitan educational system' have been emphasized. This is shown if we look at several recent policy documents. For example in *Learning for Life, Learning through Life* published in September, 2000 Hong Kong was described as a diverse, democratic, civilized, tolerant, dynamic and cultivated cosmopolitan city. Thus one of the visions of the educational reform was to develop an education system that is rich in tradition but cosmopolitan and culturally diverse.

Needless to say that recognition of cosmopolitan nature of the city and education is based on that Hong Kong has developed as a place where the East and the West meet. This nature is considered to be continued as Hong Kong being a democratic and civilized international city embracing the cultural essence of the East and the West. In Hong Kong education is believed to support and enhance this cosmopolitan nature by promoting international or global outlook among students.

Taiwan

In Taiwan the internationalization of education is presented as an explicit educational policy task. In the fourth report of Educational Reform Commission of the Executive Yuan the internationalization was stated as one of five pillars of educational reform for the 21st century. In that it was stated that with the stimulus of internationalization the people have come to recognize more their own cultures to maintain the confidence and self-respect. For the internationalization of education twofold meanings were defined. One is to promote to understand the nations of the world, their histories and cultures, and to respect traditions of other ethnic groups. The other is to develop strengths of Taiwan, to let the people have love for their country and to disseminate excellent cultures of Taiwan to the world.

Thus the internationalization of education was regarded as an important element for educational reforms in the 21st century. Introduction of English instructions to fifth and sixth grades in primary schools and promotion of further international educational exchanges in higher education are among specific measures to be taken.

Korea

In Korea the term of globalization is as widely used as the term of internationalization. In Korea globalization means that securing the first class standard in the world in terms of politics, economy, society, culture and attitudes of the people in order to develop the nation. In this context globalization of education is an important task to be pursued in every level and

field of education from primary, secondary, higher education, teacher training, science and technology education and adult education. Specific measures for this purpose to be implemented are provision of communication network for primary and secondary schools, enhancement of foreign language instructions, particularly of English instruction. At the level of higher education improvement of the quality, vitalization of international exchanges of universities, globalization of the curriculum, globalization of the standard of faculty and students and encouragement of attracting students from abroad are included. Moreover stressing the improvement of international communication competency and ability to utilize information are specific features concerning internationalization of education as well as increasing the openness of education to dispatch information.

Thailand

In Thailand the term of globalization is being widely used. The basic orientation of educational reforms in Thailand is to reform Thai education fundamentally in order to keep pace with the general trend of globalization. In a report of Committee of Thai Education in the Globalized Era published in 1996 the need for new education in order to train 'global citizens' in accordance with the globalization was emphasized. In the National Educational Reform Act of 1999 it was stated that to implement scrap-and-build type of educational reforms would make conventional Thai education match the global standard. Although there are no specific measures to achieve internationalization of education in Thailand, reforms of educational administration and of instruction methods, encouraging educational technology and others are regarded as important measures to achieve the goal for 'globalizing' education. Thus devolution in educational administration is one of measures geared to the global standard as far as it is in line with the global trend. Internationalization of education is thought to be achieved by the overhaul of Thai education in general.

Malaysia

Malaysia has held up the vision of becoming one of developed countries by 2020 and necessary policies have been implemented to achieve this goal in education. Reform of IT education, maintaining and developing system of elite education, sending students to universities in developed countries, reemphasizing English instructions, and recognition and encouragement of private initiatives at postsecondary level are related to internationalization of education.

Four dimensions can be discerned in these policies. First, in the international exchanges there is multifaceted and omnidirectional nature. Second, various kinds of schools are promoted. In addition to existing ethnic schools and religious schools, new advanced model schools are provided to train persons who will be needed in the future. Third, English

instructions have been neglected to become independent of colonial policies, but with the progress of globalization a pragmatic measure of enhancing and developing English instructions has been implemented. Lastly, there is a trend of internationalizing of educational standard in order to improve quality of education in which improvement of the standard of education is pursued with agreements concerning contents of education are being reached in accordance with globalization and deepening of international exchanges.

Philippines

Elements of internationalization in education can be detected in the trend of educational reforms itself. One of main tasks of educational reforms of the 1990s is lengthening of duration of schooling by adding one year to either primary or secondary education. This task has been presented in context of the competition with ASEAN countries which means that educational policies are beginning to be influenced by countries other than the U.S.A. In this sense educational policies in Philippines has entered a new phase of pursuing the global standard.

Singapore

There are several international aspects in educational reforms in Singapore. First, educational reforms themselves are deeply related with trends of reforms in other countries. In formulating educational policies the government looked at policies in England, the United States, Germany and Japan and introduced elements of their policies into its own. Second, training persons with information processing competence and capacity for self education which are the keys for future economic development has been stressed. In this regard a switch from memorization and efficiency to problem solving, creativity and flexibility to develop individual potential fully was also recognized. Third, time for IT education is to be increased to cultivate thinking and application capacity and communication competence

A major characteristic of education in Singapore compared to other Asian countries is that English is primary language of instruction in schools. In Singapore this is regarded as one of advantages in education with the progress of globalization considering that other countries are making great efforts to improve their people's English competency.

Views of Primary and Secondary School Students on Internationalization

In this part I would like to report on results of our questionnaire survey of views of students on internationalization of society and education. Our samples are fifth and sixth grades of primary school students and lower and upper secondary school students in eight countries and territories.

Number of samples are about 100 for each level of education in one country or territory. We have got about 300 samples for each.⁽²⁾ The questions are concerned with the following items: (i) overseas experiences (ii) contacts and exchanges with foreigners (iii) views on exchanges with foreign countries (iv) views on learning of foreign languages (v) views on internationalization.

Among these items here I would like to comment views on exchanges with foreign countries, views on learning of foreign languages and views on internationalization.

Views on Exchanges with Foreign Countries

We asked students views on exchanges in economy, sports, exchanges in culture arts and entertainment and education. The countries with which students wish to promote economic exchanges most are: China-Western European countries, Korea-Western European Countries, Taiwan-U.S.A., Hong Kong-Western European countries, Philippines-U.S.A., Malaysia-ASEAN countries, Thailand-Japan, Singapore-ASEAN countries. On economic exchanges with Japan Chinese students showed the least favorable attitude, but Thai students expressed the most favorable attitude toward Japan which appears to reflect strong economic ties between them. As students in Malaysia and Singapore indicate students in ASEAN countries place high priority on economic exchanges in this region.

As for exchanges in sports the result is: China-Western European countries, Korea-Western European Countries, Taiwan-U.S.A., Hong Kong-U.S.A., Philippines-U.S.A., Malaysia-U.S.A., Thailand-Western European countries, Singapore-Western European countries. This seems to indicate the present situation of world of sports in which major sports are dominated by players of the U.S.A. and Western European countries. For exchanges in culture, arts and entertainment the result is: China-Western European countries, Korea-Western European Countries, Taiwan- Western European countries., Hong Kong-Western European countries., Philippines-U.S.A., Malaysia-ASEAN countries, Thailand-Japan, Singapore- ASEAN countries. As also shown Western countries and the U.S.A. are major countries which students would like to have exchanges except in cases of Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

What about their views on educational exchanges? The country which ranks first for each country and territory is: China-Western European countries, Korea-the U.S.A., Hong Kong-the U.S.A and Western European countries, Philippines-the U.S.A., Malaysia-Western European countries, Thailand-Western European countries, Singapore-ASEAN countries. As shown here Asian students ranked Western European countries and the U.S.A., as in other fields, as major countries for educational exchanges, though Japan is placed relatively higher positions compared to other fields.

Views on Learning Foreign Languages

Recently English instruction have been introduced to primary schools in Korea and Taiwan as a part of measures geared to internationalization of education. In Japan it will be introduced as an element of primary school curriculum from 2002. In many Asian countries English is regarded as a key element in promoting international communication skills. Then what do students think of learning English? The percentages of students who expressed that they would like to learn English very much are: Philippines(69.8%), Singapore(59.2%), Malaysia(53.5%), Thailand(53.3%), China(51.0%), Taiwan(42.9%), Hong Kong(32.1%), Korea(30.4%). In countries where English is used widely the percentage is naturally high, but it is also so in China and Taiwan which suggests that eagerness to learn English will become stronger in these.

What about the willingness to learn foreign languages other than English? In this case Philippines, Singapore and Thailand ranked high indicating that there are relative stronger willingness to learn foreign languages other than English in these countries.

Views on Internationalization

We asked six questions concerning students' views on internationalization. It is expected that progress of internationalization will inevitably make Asian students be conscious of different cultures from their own and it may be interesting to know what students of think of studying different cultures.

About studying different cultures we asked their views in the following questions:

- a. We only have to study hard our own culture.
- b. We have to know our own culture well before studying cultures of foreign countries.
- c. It is equally important to study both our own culture and cultures of foreign countries.
- d. Studying cultures of foreign countries is more important than studying our own culture.
- e. Studying cultures of various ethnic groups equally in our own country is important as well.

The percentages of students who selected "agree very much" or "agree fairly" for question (a) are:Thailand (55.6%), Philippines (52.7%), Malaysia (43.9%), Singapore (34.5%), Korea (29.5%), Hong Kong (27.9%), Taiwan (23.4%), China (8.7%). Students in South East Asia indicate more favorable attitude to this statement than those of East Asia. For question (b) more than eighty percent of students of all countries and territories expressed their agreement with this statement. As for question c. the result is: Thailand (90.8%), Philippines (81.2%), Hong Kong (80.4%), Taiwan (79.3%), Singapore (76.5%), China (74.1%), Malaysia (62.3%), Korea (59.1%). Malaysia and Korea showed the relatively lower

percentage. For question (d) as expected the overall percentage of agreement is the lowest of all the statements. It is only 15.2% in total. Lastly, as for question (e) fairly higher percentage is shown as 81.6% of students indicated strong agreement. The result for each country and territory is: Malaysia (88.4%), Taiwan (87.6%), Philippines (86.6%), China (81.4%), Singapore (81.2%), Thailand (80.9%), Korea (76.5%), Hong Kong (70.1%). Students of multiethnic countries and those in which there are fairly large minority groups showed stronger agreement with this statement, but students in Korea and Hong Kong also showed relatively strong favorable attitude to this statement. It seems that this idea is permeated among Asian students.

Views on ‘Global-minded Person’

We set a question ‘What kind of person do you think is a “global-minded person?” to grasp students’ image of that person. From thirteen statements describing the person we asked students to choose three which best suit to their views. The statements indicate various images of a global-minded person. If we put images in order of percentage of selection by students, the result is as follows:

‘a person who has a command of several languages’	(44.6%)
‘a person who has a lot of information of foreign countries’	(39.7%)
‘a person who can tell about his/her own country and its culture to foreigners so that they can understand them’	(36.1%)
‘a person who considers equally important to understand both his/her own culture and cultures of foreign countries’	(31.5%)
‘a person who thinks seriously global problems, e.g. environmental problems’	(31.0%)
‘a person who admits the differences of foreigners and foreign cultures and try to understand their differences’	(27.8%)
‘a person who thinks it important to resolve conflicts of countries’	(24.1%)
‘a person who has a command of English’	(11.3%)
‘a person who is kind to foreigners’	(8.5%)
‘a person who often goes to foreign countries on business’	(7.2%)
‘a person who often goes to foreign countries for sight seeing’	(6.7%)
‘a person who has studied in a foreign country’	(6.3%)
‘a person who has many foreign friends’	(6.0%)

As shown in this result a person who has a command of several languages and with information of foreign countries come first and second, but images of the person concerned with cultural matters or global problems come into relatively higher places. This means that

in Asian students' views 'a global-minded person' seems to have two dimensions . One is concerned with the skills which facilitates communication with other cultures and the other is understandings of both his/her own cultures and foreign cultures.

Let's look at features for each country or territory. In China 'a person who thinks it important to resolve conflicts of countries' is valued highly compared to others.

In Hong Kong traits related with language competence are selected more than others. The percentage of students who selected 'a person who has a command of several languages' is the highest(61.2%) and 21.8% of students also selected 'a person who has a command of English'. In contrast with an emphasis on language competence 'a person who thinks global problems' or 'a person who understands cultural differences' come at relatively lower places which may reflect the nature of Hong Kong as a city heavily oriented toward international economy.

In the case of Taiwan, as Thailand, traits related to cultures and global concerns are valued highly. In Korea 'a person who can tell about his/her own country and its culture to foreigners so that they can understand them' comes first and also 'a person who considers equally important to understand both his/her own culture and cultures of foreign countries' and 'a person who admits the differences of foreigners and foreign cultures and try to understand their differences' are put on higher positions indicating importance attached to cultural matters.

In Malaysia 'a person who has a lot of information of foreign countries' comes first and a person commanding several languages comes next which suggests that language and information elements are valued more in the traits of 'a global-minded person'.

In Philippines, in contrast with others, a person commanding several languages is not placed on higher position and more than half selected 'a person who considers equally important to understand both his/her own culture and cultures of foreign countries'.

Singaporean students expressed similar views as those of Hong Kong stressing the importance of language elements.

Conclusion

By examining policies and systems for the internationalization of education in eight Asian countries and territory we may discern four groups. First, there is a group in which governments hold up internationalization of education as one of major educational policy tasks and are actively implementing measures including introduction and enhancement of English instruction at primary schools intended to achieve the goals . In this group Korea and Taiwan are included.

Second, there are governments which try to match their educational systems to the global standard by improving quality of educational systems in general. Thailand and

Philippines are the case.

Third, there are governments which intend to enhance or increase existing societies' international elements for further internationalization. In this group Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore are included. Fourth, China is focusing on higher education as far as internationalization of education is concerned. But internationalization of education has already become one of important agendas of educational reforms and policies in these Asian countries.

As for views of Asian students concerning internationalization of society and education I would like to comment of the result of our last question. As shown above Asian students regard language competence and having information as well as understandings of own cultures and other cultures as relatively important elements in the traits consisting 'a global-minded person'. Of course there are differences depending on countries and territory indicated in the importance attached to language elements in the cases of Hong Kong and Singapore. However in minds of Asian students elements concerned with cultural differences and global problems are placed deeply in thinking of 'a global-minded person'. Basing on this observation we can be optimistic for the progress of international or intercultural exchanges in the 21st century in Asia.

Notes

(1) This paper is based on a report of the research project entitled 'Report of the Research Project of Comparative Research of Internationalization of Education in Asian Countries' (in Japanese) edited by Kengo Mochida and published in March 2001.

(2) Number of the samples is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of the Samples

	China	Hong Kong	Taiwan	Korea	Thailand	Philippines	Malaysia	Singapore	Total
Primary	100	129	103	99	203	98	113	96	941
Lower Secondary	152	118	102	117	100	100	112	85	886
Upper Secondary	103	111	133	103	100	100	128	74	852
Total	355	358	338	319	403	298	353	255	2,679