

The Quest for World-class Status: *Challenges and Prospects for HE in Asia*

Professor Ka Ho Mok

Vice President and Chair Professor of Comparative Policy
Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Lingnan University

Top 10 Liberal Arts Colleges in Asia
(Forbes, 2015)



Contents:

◆ Major HE Development Trends

- *Massification of HE*
- *The Quest for “World-class” Status and Impact on University Governance*
- *Challenges for Labor Market and Employment*

◆ Implications for Education Equality/Quality and Repurposing University Education

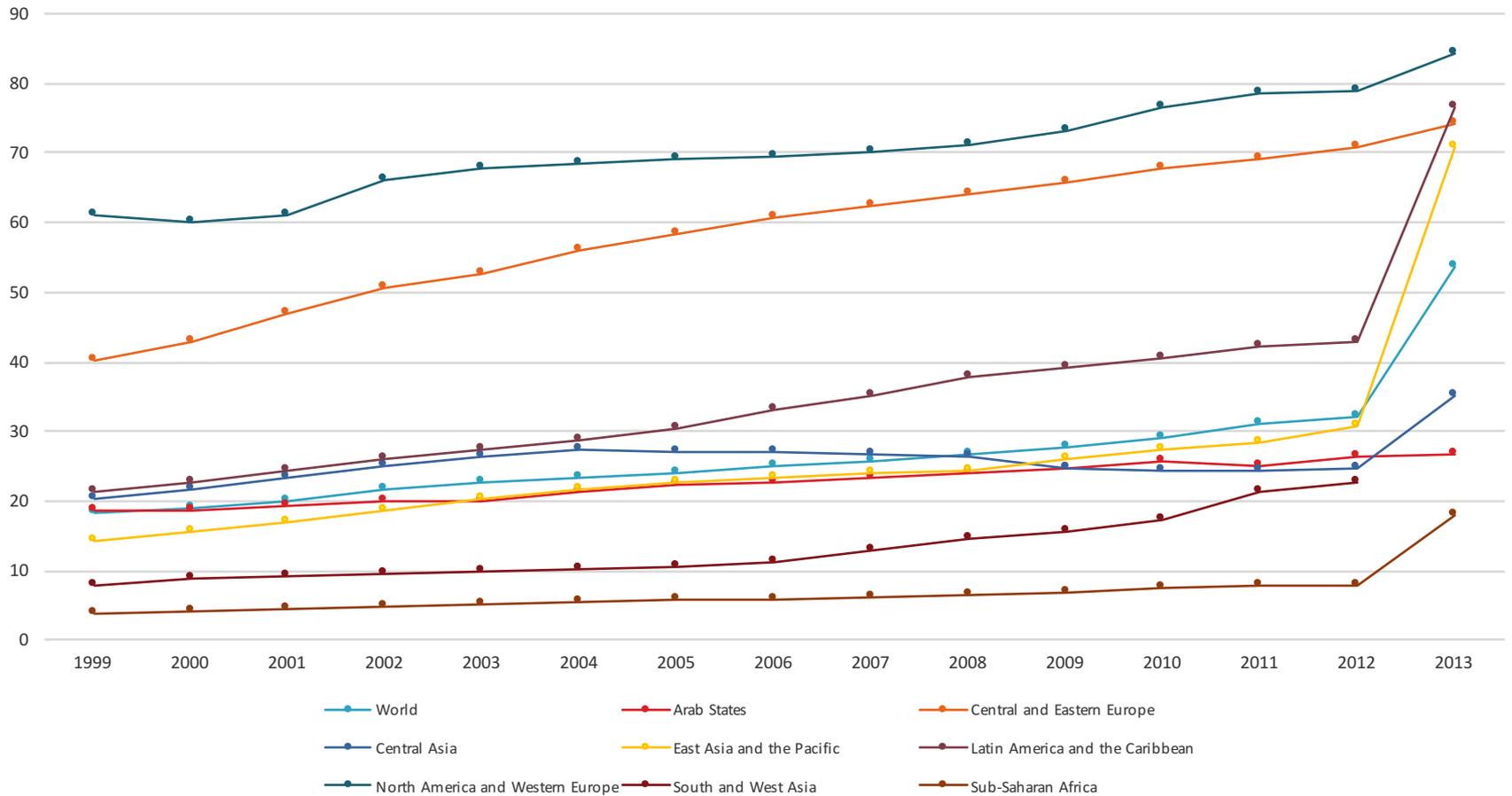
◆ Implications for UK Universities



Massification of HE

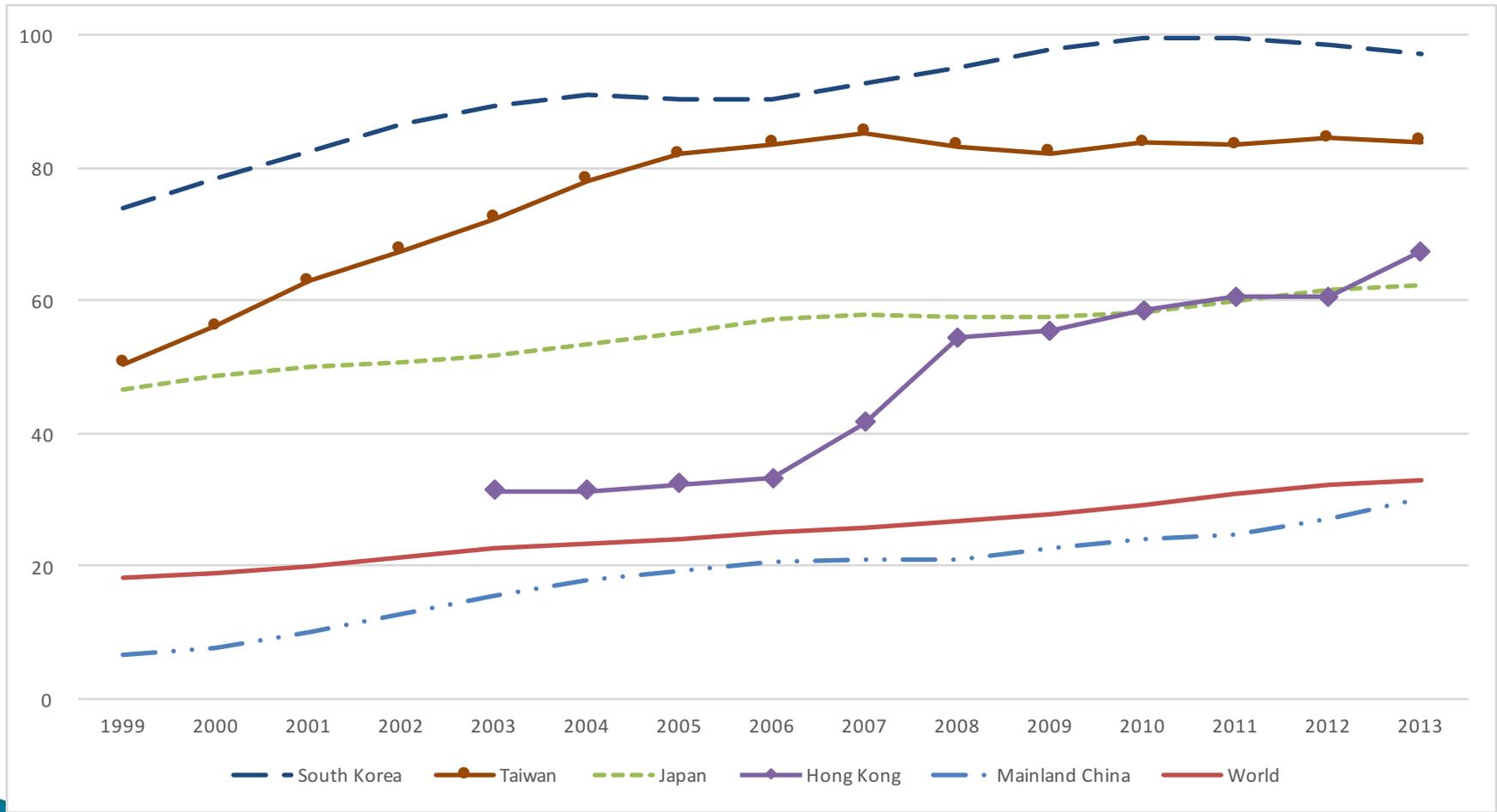
- The development of higher education (HE) in most Asian countries during the last two decades is a remarkable success story. Recognizing HE is an important ingredient in the economic and social development of their country, the governments in this region offer strong support to meet the enormous need for highly skilled technical, professional, and managerial leaders.
- The HE systems has changed from elite to massification and even to post-massification in the Asia-Pacific region like their western counterparts since 1980s (Hawkins, Mok & Neubauer, 2014).

Figure 1 Expansion of HE by Region (Indicated by Gross Enrolment Rate) (1999-2013)



Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Database, retrieved from <http://data.uis.unesco.org>

Figure 2 Expansion of HE Enrolment Rate in Selected Asian Countries/Areas (1999-2013)



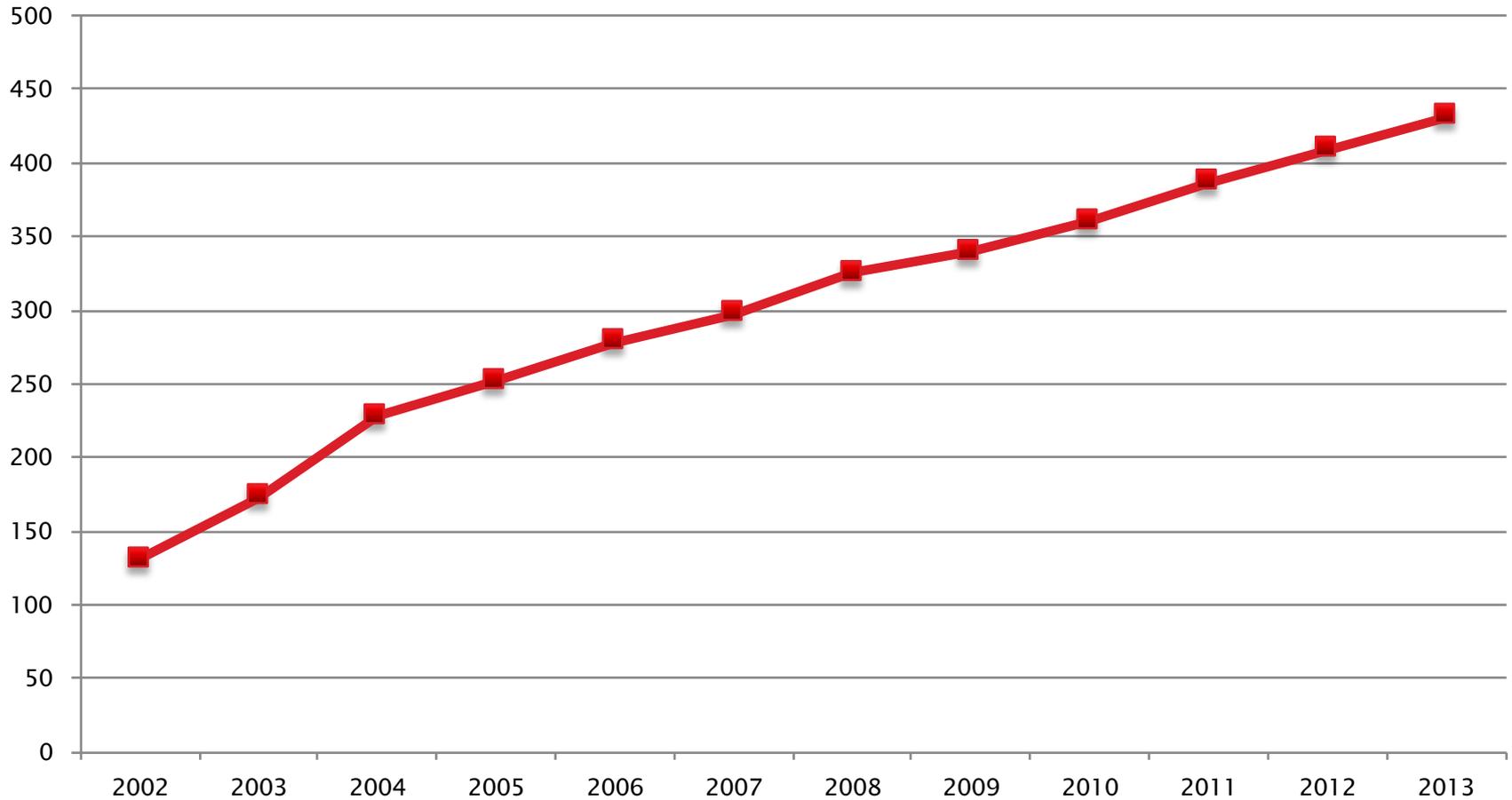
Source: UNESCO Data Base. Retrieved from <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>.

Massification of HE

➤ **Specifically in China as an Instance:**

- In 1996, only 4 per cent of the 18- 22-year-old cohort in China (equally about 3 million students) attended post-secondary institutions, but this figure rose to 24 per cent (equally 27 million students) by 2009 (Carnoy, et al., 2013, p. 48).
- The number of students enrolled in *minban* colleges jumped from 222,32 in 1997 to 557,520 in 2013 (China Statistical Yearbooks and Yearbooks of Ministry of Education, 2002-2014).

Figure 3 Changes in Number of *Minban* Colleges (Excluded Independent Colleges)



Sources: Revised and adjusted based on China Statistical Yearbook (2002-2014), National Bureau of Statistics of China, and Educational Statistics Yearbook of China (2002-2014), Ministry of Education (China).

Massification of HE

➤ **Concerns:**

- The rapid expansion of HE in Asia without careful mapping of graduate employment and changing labour market needs, may create problem for to graduate unemployment and insufficient upward social mobility.

The Quest for “World-class” Status and Impact on University Governance

- Universities in East Asia are increasingly under pressures to compete internationally. Interest in university league tables has become the norm, not only in the UK and Canada, but also in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan and Mainland China (Altbach, 2010; Chan, 2015; Liu & Cheng, 2005; Mok & Hawkins, 2010).
- **Hong Kong: Great Emphasis on Research Performance**
 - Research-led funding (Mok & Cheung, 2011).
 - For government: Several rounds of Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs) since the 1990s.
 - For universities: differentiating roles; identifying specific strengths; developing centres of research excellence.
 - For academic staff: international research; high quality teaching; professional and community services.

The Quest for “World-class” Status and Impact on University Governance

■ **Taiwan: Two Key Policy Targets**

- At least one Taiwanese university ranked in the top 100 universities in the world,
- And at least 15 key departments or cross-university research centres ranked among the top in Asia within the next five years (Lu, 2004).

• **Strategy and Consequences:**

- The “Programme for Promoting Academic Excellence of Universities”
- Increasing attention to University league tables (Lo & Chan, 2006; Lo & Weng, 2005; Research Institute of HE and University Evaluation, 2005).
- Growing importance attached to international publication (Chen & Lo, 2007).
- Stratification of universities (Chou, 2012).

The Quest for “World-class” Status and Impact on University Governance

- **China: “211 Project” and the “985 Scheme”.**
 - Enable selected HE institutions to become “world class universities”.
 - “211 Project”: to develop 100 key universities and disciplines through targeted supplementary funding aimed at improving the quality of teaching and research facilities.
 - “985 Scheme”: to transform China’s most elite universities (i.e., Beijing University (Peking University) and Tsinghua University) to the super-elite of the world class universities.

The Quest for “World-class” Status and Impact on University Governance

➤ **Japan: Flagship Universities Project**

- Aim to developing a few major Japanese universities into “world class universities”.
- Reposition Japanese universities in the rapidly changing global environment.
- Allocate additional resources to promote internationalization.
- New initiatives to support international collaboration and student exchange (Furushiro, 2006; Yonezawa, 2007).

➤ **Concerns:**

- These policies may intensify differentiation among Japan’s universities.

The Quest for “World-class” Status and Impact on University Governance

➤ **Singapore and Malaysia:**

- Identify major global universities and invite them to set up their branch campuses in the city-state.
- Attempt to attract leading academics to collaborate with local scholars (Gopinathan & Lee, 2011; Mok & Tan, 2004).
- Similar situations can be found in other Southeast Asian societies like Malaysia:
 - Restructuring the university system along the lines of “neo-liberalism”
 - Make Malaysia a regional hub of HE.
 - More overseas academics appointed to the system and international collaborations with overseas institutions in terms of research and teaching has received strong support from the state (Mok, 2007).

Table 1 Different Schemes in Promoting World-class Universities

Country/Region	Project
China	“985” and “211” project
Japan	Flagship Universities Project; “Global 30” Scheme; Competitive Funding Allocation Method (the 21st Century Centres of Excellence; the Global Centres of Excellence; the World Premier International Research Centre Initiative)
South Korea	Brain Korea 21; World-Class University Initiative and the BK 21 Plus Project
Taiwan	Programme for Promoting Academic Excellence of Universities; Five Year – 5 billion Excellence Initiative; Development Plan for World-class Universities and Research Centres for Excellence
Singapore	“World-Class Universities” Programme
Hong Kong	Comprehensive Education Reviews; Role Differentiation Exercise; Positioning Hong Kong as International Key Player in HE; University Merging and Deep Collaboration; Research Assessment Exercises; Teaching and Learning Quality Process Reviews; Management Reviews and University Governance Review

Source: Cheng, Y., Wang, Q., & Liu, N. C., 2014; Mok, 2005.

The Quest for “World-class” Status and Impact on University Governance

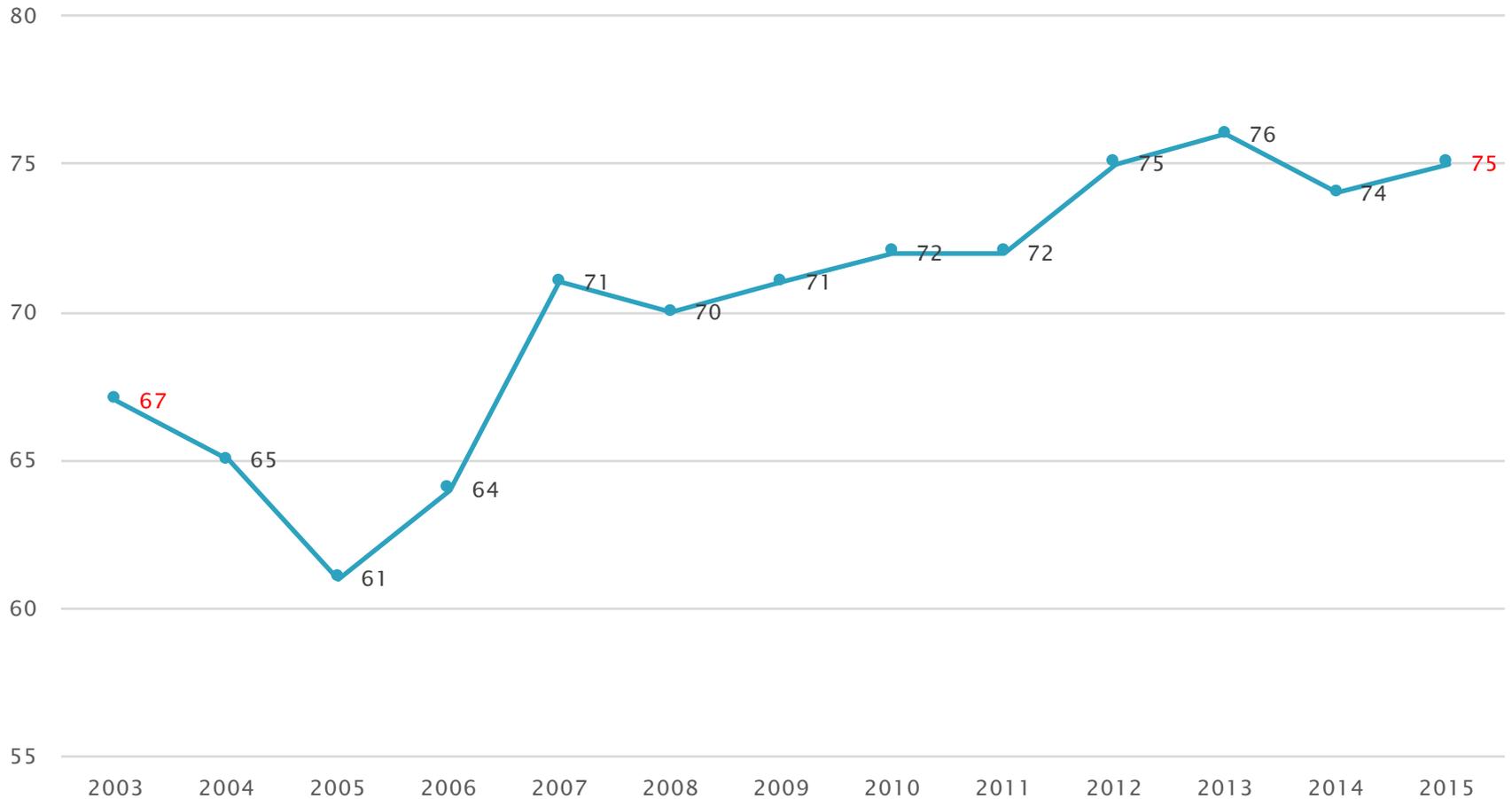
- The results of these efforts to quest for world-class status are evident by in recent international university benchmarking exercises.
- **Times HE University Rankings (2015-2016):** nine out the top 10 universities in Asia ranked among the top 100 universities in the world. Five of them featured among the top 50 in the world –National University of Singapore (26), Peking University (42), University of Tokyo (43), University of Hong Kong (44) and Tsinghua University (47).
- **QS World University Rankings:** Asian universities maintain a relatively high ranking as ranked Top 100 in the world between 2010 to 2015.
- **Shanghai Jiaotong Academic Ranking:** the rise of Asian universities in the global university league in the last couple of years.

Table 2 The Increase of Asian Universities Ranked Top 100 in QS and Times University League (2010-2015)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
QS	NA	NA	19	17	17	19
Times	10	9	11	11	11	9

Source: *QS World University Rankings* (2011-2015). Retrieved from <http://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings>; *Times HE World University Rankings* (2010-2015), Retrieve from <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2016/world-ranking#!/page/0/length/25>

Figure 4 The Increase in Number of Asian Universities Ranked in *Shanghai Jiaotong Academic Ranking*



Source: *Shanghai Jiaotong Academic Ranking of World Universities (2003-2015)*, retrieved from <http://www.shanghairanking.cn/ARWU2015.html>

**Table 3 Continents contributing to *HE Policy* (1988–2013)
(percentage between brackets)**

Continent	1988–1992	1993–1997	1998–2002	2003–2007	2008–	Total
Australasia	6 (3)	22 (9)	18 (9)	17 (8)	25 (8)	88 (8)
Europe	102 (44)	81 (33)	87 (45)	88 (43)	153 (51)	511 (44)
North America	48 (21)	52 (21)	42 (22)	47 (23)	52 (17)	241 (21)
Asia	35 (15)	46 (19)	26 (13)	33 (16)	50 (17)	190 (16)
Latin America	18 (8)	16 (7)	10 (5)	3 (1)	2 (1)	49 (4)
Africa	18 (8)	27 (11)	12 (6)	16 (8)	17 (6)	90 (8)
Unknown	3 (1)					3 (<1)

Source: Huisman, J., 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/journal/v26/n4/full/hep201330a.html>

Challenges for Labour Market and Employment

- ▶ The rapid expansion of HE led to issues regarding academic standards and quality of universities in mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan (Mok, 2013), and resulted in graduate unemployment and underemployment in East Asia.
- South Korea: 3 million economically inactive graduates;
- Japan: approximately 38 per cent of Japanese graduates were unemployed eight months after graduation in 2009 and graduate employment has not improved;
- India: one in three young graduates is unemployed;
- China: in 2013 alone only 38 per cent of graduates were issued contracts, with contracts being an indicator of quality jobs (Lauder, 2014).

Table 4 Youth Unemployment in East Asia (selected countries)

Country/ Area	Unemployment Rate
China (mainland)	Undergraduate 17.6% (two months after graduation) Undergraduates from Rural Areas 30.5%
Hong Kong	Youth Unemployment Rate (15-24) 9.1% Associate Degree 5.8% Undergraduate 3.8% Master or Above 4.2%
Taiwan	Junior High School 3.53% Senior High School 4.11% Junior College 3.11% Undergraduate 5.81% Postgraduates 3.29%
Singapore	Degree holders 2.8% Graduates with Diploma and Professional Qualifications 2.7% Students below-secondary 2.4%
South Korea	Youth Unemployment Rate (under 30s) 8.3%

Source:

China (mainland): MyCOS Data, 2013;

Hong Kong: retrieved from <http://news.takungpao.com.hk/hkol/education/2013-06/1687142.html>;

Taiwan: retrieved from <http://www.edu.tw/pages/detail.aspx?Node=4076&Page=20047&Index=5&WID=31d75a44-efff-4c44-a075-15a9eb7aecdf>;

Singapore: retrieved from <http://www.straitstimes.com/news/opinion/more-opinion-stories/story/growing-concerns-over-graduate-employment-20140905>;

South Korea: Park, 2013, p. 17.

Challenges for Labour Market and Employment

- **Questioned Role of Education in Upward Social Mobility:**
 - A degree does not assure employment, high earnings, and upward social mobility.
 - Haveman and Smeeding (2006) showed the growing income-related gap both in access to and in success in HE in America. In top-tier colleges and universities, almost three quarters of the entering class is from the highest socio-economic quartile. Similar developments can be found in other parts of Asia.
 - The unintended consequence comes with the growing pressure for creating more job opportunity with high-skilled labour with lower economic returns simply of the over-supply of talents under the context of the Global Auction (Brown et al., 2011).

Implications for Education Equality / Quality and Repurposing University Education

- **The massive expansion of HE has not promoted equality in education but further intensified education inequality in Asia, particularly in China.**
 - “The majority of the enrollment growth in coming years will be in two countries, China and India, both of which have massive populations, but both of which also are characterized by very significant patterns of income and social inequality, a characteristic both within urban populations but especially existing between urban and rural populations” (Neubauer & Hawkins, 2014, p. 3).
 - Families with children and from lower socio-economic status in Hong Kong have suffered most from the privatization of education (Mok, 2015).
 - Young adults from middle- or upper-class families enjoy far more HE opportunities (nearly threefold) than those from relatively low-income groups (Chou, 2013).

Implications for Education Equality / Quality and Repurposing University Education

- In short, the massification and privatization of HE have resulted in highly complicated graduate employment and social mobility problems currently confronted by the youth. Therefore, student movements in Europe and Asia, in which anxieties and angers are expressed against the ruling regimes, are unsurprisingly widespread.
 - All the issues discussed above have inevitably affected the academic profession. The rapid expansion of HE in Asia implies that teaching and research is carried out by staff that is less qualified, overworked with heavy teaching load, has to teach large classes, is paid low salaries, and is given little opportunity to provide personal attention to students.
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Implications for Education Equality / Quality and Repurposing University Education

- Asia should be congratulated for its efforts to improve standards in HE, but we should not drive reforms to make changes without placing equally important emphasis on universities achieving excellence holistically (Mok & Nelson, 2013).
- Bring back the humanistic perspective in university governance and transformation is urgently needed. Academics and administrators in Asian HE systems should shift attention toward the quest for excellence not only for efficiency and economic gains but also for human wellbeing enhancement.
- *Questing for “Excellence with a Soul” should become the core business of the Asian academic community;*
- *Rediscover and reinvent the Asian values and traditions to make Asian universities preferred institutions for nurturing caring leaders with global vision and regional perspectives.*

Implications for UK Universities

- The rise of Asia in research grants and opportunities and opportunity for international cooperation;
- The growth of quality students from Asia and implications for student admissions and immigration policies;
- The increase in choices for students from Asia for overseas studies destination and implications for international HE;
- The keen interest in developing transnational HE (dual or joint degrees and joint-venture) in Asia and opportunity for UK universities;
- The growing research capacity of Asian scholars and the intensification of competition for UK institutions;
- The call for internationalization of HE in Asia and opportunity for UK institutions;
- The rise of Asian universities in global university leagues and implications for UK institutions;
- The Chinese government's recent reforms in vocational HE and opportunity for UK institutions;
- The growing interest in developing Liberal Arts Universities and implications for humanities and social sciences disciplines.

Thank you!