

The first decade of the Asia Academy of Management

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Abstract This paper briefly reviews the history of the Asia Academy of Management, the official sponsor of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*. It is suggested that establishing the Asia Academy of Management is a response to the new challenges of the academic institutional environment, both in Asia and in the mainstream management research community. Judging from the achievements in terms of reputation in the region, publication citations, school rankings, and internal organizational development, this new venture has added significant value to the global academic community. The challenges facing the Asia Academy, however, include the need to attract more interested parties to actively involve in its activities, more genuine cooperation among Asian and non-Asian institutions, and a need to affirm the contributions of Asian management studies.

Keywords Asia Academy of Management · Asia Academy · Asia · Asian management research

The Asia Academy of Management (Asia Academy), as an international affiliate of the Academy of Management, was established to encourage management research, education, and knowledge dissemination in Asia and on Asia. The mission of the Asia Academy is to assume global leadership in these areas. Its objective is thus to encourage contextualized management research with Asian relevance towards contribution to global scholarship. Importantly, this organization is called the *Asia Academy*, not *Asian Academy*. This means that it is not just for Asians, but for

I would like to thank the Editor-in-Chief Mike Peng for his invitation for giving me the opportunity to reflect on the first decade of the Asia Academy. I would also like to express my gratitude to my fellow colleagues who worked so hard to get this new organization going, specifically, Garry Bruton (current President), David Tse, Larry Farh, Chi-Sum Wong, and Hang-Yue Ngo, as well as Shirley Tang, Fiona Leung, and Ronney Chim at the Asia Academy Secretariat.

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scholars of all stripes and ethnicities interested in and committed to advancing management research and education that is of relevance to Asia.

The Asia Academy was founded in 1998. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Asia Academy and is the best time to review what we have achieved in the first decade. It also offers us the opportunity to look into the future. I will first examine the brief history of the Asia Academy and examine its contributions so far. Then I will venture into the contributions of the Asia Academy for management research and education in this region in the future.

History

Undoubtedly, forming and running the Asia Academy is an entrepreneurial activity. Like many new ventures, it was started with casual chats among good friends. During some academic meetings back in 1996–1997, several colleagues had the feeling that we as management scholars residing in Asia and working on projects related to Asia should have something to offer to the field.¹ Individual efforts such as publishing in first tier journals and running workshops were ways to promote the generation and dissemination of knowledge, but they were not the most effective way. We believed that gathering together all interested colleagues and leveraging their wisdom would be a feasible and effective way to promote Asian management research and education.

Roughly about the same time, the Academy of Management was also having a discussion on how to globalize itself. Its leadership was eager to leverage on scholars interested in Asian studies to inject fresh ideas into management research. Thus, an opportunity arose for the birth of a new academic organization devoted to make relevant contributions to the global academic community. We—the group of Asian colleagues and leaders of the Academy of Management—started the collaboration of forming a new organization for advancement of management theory, research, and education of relevance to Asia.

With the urge to look for ways to form an association of academics to enhance Asian management research, several key management scholars therefore decided to have some discussion among all interested parties. A meeting was held at the Caucus of the 1997 Academy of Management in Boston. During the meeting, a total of over 70 interested scholars engaged in solid discussion of how to form an association, as well as ways in which we can contribute to the community. An organizing committee was then set up with one single task—making the organization happen. The committee was chaired by Chung-Ming Lau and David Tse, and included several other colleagues from Asia and the USA.² It was also resolved to have an inaugural conference held no later than 1998. Thus, in the next summer (1998) at the San Diego Academy of Management meeting, the basic framework of the Asia Academy of Management

¹ Those involved in the initial discussion included David Tse, Chung-Ming Lau, Chi-Sum Wong, Kam-Hon Lee, Kulwant Singh, Shige Makino, Kwok Leung, and Anne Tsui. The discussion was later joined by other colleagues from the USA—Michael Hitt, Ming-Jer Chen, and Joseph LC Cheng.

² The organizing committee members were: Chung-Ming Lau, David Tse, and Kenneth Law from Hong Kong, Carol YY Lin from Taiwan, Kye Chung Song from South Korea, Tadao Kagono from Japan, Kulwant Singh from Singapore, RD Souza from India, Shouyang Wang from the People's Republic of China, and Ming-Jer Chen and Anthony Butterfield from the USA.

was endorsed. It was also decided to have an election of the first group of founding officers before the inaugural conference to be held in Hong Kong at the end of 1998. The basic objectives of the Asia Academy were set and this attracted quite a number of scholars within and outside of Asia who were interested in management issues relevant to Asia. The Asia Academy, however, was not established to compete with the key players in the world, but to create an academic community to serve as a *bridge* between mainstream and Asian research.

Activities

Conferences

Conferences provide a platform for people to interact and exchange ideas. The Inaugural Conference set the tone for the development of this new born organization.

The conference was held in December 1998 in Hong Kong, hosted by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, with Kenneth Law as the program chair and had over 150 participants. The theme of the Inaugural Conference was “Does Asian Management Matter: Regional Relevance with Global Impact.” This theme was chosen to signify the interests of researchers and scholars in the unique Asian management practices that result from the cultural roots of Asian societies and the economic, social, political, and technological forces that shape them. It was in line with the thinking that Asian management has profound impacts on management research and practice worldwide as well.

Several renowned scholars were invited to deliver keynote speeches, including John Child, Michael Hitt, Geert Hofstede, Kin-Chok Mun, and Chow-Hou Wee. The head of Management Science Division, National Science Foundation of the People’s Republic of China, Siwei Cheng, was also present to share his experiences in management research. As a result of the conference, selected papers were published in a book with the title *Asian Management Matters: Regional Relevance and Global Impact*, which covers Asian culture and management, globalization of Asian firms, strategic management in Asia, and human resource management in the region (Lau, Law, Tse, & Wong, 2000).

The Second Conference was held in December 2000 in Singapore, hosted by the National University of Singapore with the theme of “Managing in Asia: Challenges and Opportunities in the New Millennium.” This conference was also well attended with over 200 participants. It continued to attract researchers and scholars from all over the world to present insightful findings on Asian management. The Third conference was held in December 2002 at Bangkok, with Chulalongkorn University as the host. The conference theme was: “Innovating Asian Management in the 21st Century.” The fourth and fifth conferences were held in Shanghai and Tokyo, hosted by Fudan University and Wasada University in December 2004 and 2006, respectively. The most recent conference in Tokyo had a record high number of participants of close to 300 people. The sixth conference, to be held in Taipei in December 2008, will be hosted the first time not by a university, but by a new born academic organization—Taiwan Academy of Management, which is even younger than the Asia Academy. In fact, inspired by the success of the Asia Academy, a

group of Taiwanese scholars formed the Taiwan Academy of Management in 2006. This can be seen as one of the fruitful outcomes of the Asia Academy.

These conferences are not only a time for exchanging ideas and meeting new friends at the individual level, they also provide an opportunity for more cooperation among Asian scholars and institutions. This is seen as critical for the promotion of Asian management research.

Official journal

While conferences provide face-to-face interactions, journal articles allow a much wider and in-depth academic discourse. After debating the options of launching a new journal or partnering with an existing journal, the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* became the official journal of the Asia Academy in January 2002 (Singh, 2002). The *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* has a long history (see Lee, 2007 and Lim, 2007 in this issue). Since 1983, it had been published by the NUS Business School at the National University of Singapore. When the Asia Academy became its partner and official sponsor, the journal had been in existence for nearly 19 years. The journal is highly regarded by many global researchers interested in Asian management research. By combining the strengths of both the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* and the Asia Academy, the journal is now a significant publication outlet of serious and rigorous management studies relevant to Asia (Delios, 2005; Lau, 2002a; Peng, 2007). This collaboration represents a major step forward to advance Asian management research, which is also in line with the global trend (Bartunek, 2002).

During the last five years of partnership, a series of exciting work has been done. Some initiatives are continuation of the excellent editorial efforts of Kulwant Singh (Editor-in-Chief from 1999 to 2003), and some are due to the new initiatives of Andrew Delios (the first Asia Academy appointed Editor-in-Chief from 2004 to 2006) and Mike Peng (first non-NUS-based Editor-in-Chief who will serve from 2007 to 2009).

Several special issues were published over the last few years. All of them attracted the attention of excellent scholars who contributed quality articles to those topics. The special issues published are:

- “Corporate crisis and turnaround in Asia” edited by David Ahlstrom and Garry Bruton in 2004 (21:1)—see Ahlstrom and Bruton (2004)
- “Networks in Asia Pacific business” edited by Tina Dacin and Andrew Delios in 2005 (22:4)—see Dacin and Delios (2005)
- “Conglomerates and business groups in the Asia Pacific” edited by Mike Peng and Andrew Delios in 2006 (23:4)—see Peng and Delios (2006)

Two more special issues are now in progress:

- “Knowledge management and technology strategy in Asia” targeted for 2008 publication, edited by Yuan Lu, Eric Tsang, and Mike Peng.
- “Varieties of Asian capitalisms” targeted for 2009 publication, edited by Michael Carney, Eric Gedajlovic, and Xiaohua Yang.

In addition, the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* also published several key reviews and perspectives, which not only summarized what has happened in the field on major topics relevant to Asian research, but also provided provocative ideas

which have stimulated excellent exchange of intellectual interests. For example, the comments made by Mathews (2006) on Dunning's eclectic paradigm have developed into a good debate on how the eclectic paradigm can be applied to firms from emerging economies (Dunning, 2006; Narula, 2006). A recent piece by Meyer (2006) on the self-confidence of Asian management research has also sprung into a number of dialogues on where Asian research should be going (Au, 2007; Hofstede, 2007; Meyer, 2006, 2007; Puffer & McCarthy, 2007; Yang & Terjesen, 2007).

To summarize, the Asia Academy's official journal *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* not only gives researchers interested in Asian issues a visible and influential outlet to publish their studies, it is also a platform for researchers to debate and generate new scholarship.

Professional development workshops

Since the conferences were held only every two years, there is a need to increase the frequency of interaction among scholars interested in Asia. Thus, as the Academy of Management's international affiliate, we make use of the Professional Development Workshop (PDW) time to provide more services to the academic community with a focus on Asian research. The workshops feature panels on how to improve research with sharing from experienced scholars. There is also time for reports of projects in progress such that people can obtain feedback and even opportunity to collaborate.

The Asia Academy as a new venture

The forming of the Asia Academy is a response to the new institutional environment. Its birth can be viewed from several perspectives in organization theory. Using a research metaphor, the Asia Academy is very similar to an emerging economy. The organization has to prove its value to established players or competitors in the field (predominately Western mainstream scholars and institutions) and has to search for resources to increase its value to the market.

The academic institutional environment has also been changing globally in recent years. This has helped the Asia Academy as well. Besides an increase of the number and quality of business schools in Asia, there is now a higher demand for rigorous management research and publications about Asia, not only from journals in mature economies (such as the USA and Europe) but also within emerging economies themselves. This is because in this age of globalization, new knowledge about the world—about Asia in particular—is very much needed. There is now more emphasis on management issues related to Japan, China, and India as they are the key players in the global economy. Thus topic-wise, there is a higher demand for more Asia-focused studies.³

³ For example, the *Journal of International Business Studies*, the flagship journal in the field of international business, is launching its first special issue focusing on a particular region. Not surprisingly, it chose to focus on "Asia and Global Business." This special issue is guest edited by *APJM*'s Editor-in-Chief Mike Peng (together with Rabi Bhagat and Sea-Jin Chang, both editorial review board members of *APJM*).

Within the region, many Asian schools are recognizing the need to connect with the established players in the global market. Making a contribution to academic pursuit is the obvious way to make connections. For example, institutions in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan are more concerned about the academic publication of their faculty members. With a growing economy, more resources are available to accomplish the work. The environment is therefore more favorable to attract and retain scholars to engage in quality Asian research studies. Thus, there are both demand for and supply of talented people and quality studies in this new institutional environment.

The availability of data sources and interesting phenomenon also provides the necessary context to do good studies. As Hofstede (2007) points out, solutions to management problems may still be different among countries, despite the trend of globalization. Asian countries are turning into the homes of many multinational corporations, and firms from China and India are expanding into mature economies. Hence, this is an important factor leading to an increase of interesting and exciting studies about Asia. Moreover, the firms and people in Asia are also more open to academic research now, and more and more panel data and statistics are available as the countries have to follow “international best practices” of making statistical data public to gain legitimacy in the global economy. This allows better access to quality data and will result in more and better journal publications.

Therefore, the Asia Academy is helping to shape a new institutional environment. As the institutional environment changes, there are more and more factors favorable to Asian research and generating higher demand for quality studies. The Asia Academy is on the right path to demonstrate its value to the global academic community.

Achievements

With only ten years of existence, it is not easy to assess the achievement of the Asia Academy. Intellectual and academic pursuit may not be easily quantifiable. Nevertheless, judging from some crude indicators, we can say that the Asia Academy has made remarkable achievements in its first decade.

There are more and more people participating in the bi-annual conferences—not only a higher number of people attending, but also a larger representation of countries. For example, in the 1998 Inaugural Conference, about 45% of the 170 participants were from Hong Kong. The others were primarily from the United States and mainland China (15% each), Singapore (10%), and Taiwan (7%). Some others came from Europe and other Asian countries. In the 2006 Tokyo conference, local Japanese attendees were only approximately 25% of the participants, and the rest was quite diverse. Of the 300 or so participants, 15% were from Hong Kong, and 12% were from Taiwan. Approximately 10% came from Europe (including Austria, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Poland, and the United Kingdom). Also, 8% came from the United States, and 6% from Australia and New Zealand. The rest were from different Asian countries, including China, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Philippines, and even Nepal and Oman. In addition, there are also more schools interested in hosting the conferences, and some academic associations are also interested in partnership. We therefore will focus more on developing relevant and high impact

programs for the conferences. So, the Asia Academy conference is not just “another” conference—it is a highly distinctive and attractive one.

The *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* also has a significant impact. More high quality and highly cited articles are published. It is now recognized by an increasing number of schools as a reputable journal. For instance, in the 2007 *Academic Journal Quality Guide* published by the Association of Business Schools based in UK, the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* is placed as a second tier, along with other highly reputable journals such as the *British Journal of Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of World Business*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and *Management International Review*. The same *Guide* places the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* ahead of *International Business Review* and *Journal of International Management* which are ranked as third tier. Only seven journals are in its first-tier list of general management journals.⁴

Of the many articles published by the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, the one by Hofstede (1984) in its first volume has been cited the most, altogether by 42 articles according to the ISI Web of Science (<http://portal.isiknowledge.com>). Maruyama (1984) of the same issue also received 26 citations. A later one, Brown, Rugman, and Verbeke (1989), received 28 cites. Those published later have also relatively high citations, such as Luo and Chen (1997) and Luo, Tan, and Shenkar (1998) which have 14 and 15 cites, respectively. A detailed account of the citations can be found in Pleggenkuhle-Miles et al. (2007). The inclusion of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* in the SSCI in the near future should enhance both its reputation and visibility. With this kind of ranking and citation, it can be said that the journal has a lot of value-added potential to the field.

More significant research output about Asia is seen in major mainstream management and international business journals. It is recognized that most of the authors are scholars related to the Asia Academy. These individuals are primarily residing in Hong Kong, Singapore, and the USA. We cannot say this is due to the influence of the Asia Academy, but it is true that scholars related to the Asia Academy are making significant impacts in their fields.

The Asian schools are ranked high in many instances. For example, according to the University of Texas at Dallas ranking of business schools, eight Asian schools are in the worldwide top 100 list in management publications from the year 1999 up to the date of access (April 2007; <http://citm.utdallas.edu/utdrankings>). The National University of Singapore and the Chinese University of Hong Kong are the two schools ranked in the top 50 (41st and 44th, respectively). Other studies on international business and management and particularly Asian or China research also ranked scholars and institutions related to the Asia Academy very high in their investigations (c.f. Chan, Fung, & Leung, 2006; Quer, Claver, & Rienda, 2007).

Organization-wise, we have set up necessary procedures and systems as an international organization now. We have moved from an infant stage to being a more mature organization. The Asia Academy is a registered not-for-profit organization in Hong Kong governed by the Hong Kong legal system. The Secretariat is housed at

⁴ These are the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Business*, *Journal of Management*, and *Journal of Management Studies*.

the Department of Management of The Chinese University of Hong Kong which provides stable and dependable support to the Asia Academy through a team of dedicated staff. As far as internal governance is concerned, the Board of Governors has been restructured so that there is a wider representation of people from different regions. The length of service of officers and board members are also redefined so that there is better succession planning. All in all, the infrastructure of a global academic organization is now in place.

With the above indicators, such as publication and school rankings, conference attendances, and development of the organization, I conclude that the Asia Academy is strong, healthy, and growing. It is making its way for a significant global impact.

Challenges

In discussing the challenges lying ahead, I would like to outline several key issues to which the Asia Academy, and perhaps the academic community as a whole, needs to pay attention.

We need to cast a wider net to attract more interested parties to join us. Let me state it one more time: This is the *Asia Academy*, not *Asian Academy*. That is to say, it is not limited to Asians only. It is for all those who have an interest to study management in an Asian context (or more broadly, an Asia Pacific context, given the “P” in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*). It is also for every scholar and every school in Asia as well as for every non-Asian scholar and non-Asian school that is interested in developing a knowledge base on Asia, not just those who aspire to become top notch researchers or research schools. There are many Asian and non-Asian schools that have the interest and the need to know more about Asian management. We need to venture into the deep and get hold of them.

We need to search for more ways to make a larger impact to the global academic community as well as the community of practitioners. The *Asia Pacific Journal of Management* is for sure an important outlet for academic and scholarly publications, but there are many more ways to reach and impact others. The Asia Academy needs to do some soul-searching exercises to come up with effective ways to contribute to these constituents.

People are critical, but not sufficient. Many high quality scholars with a genuine interest in developing Asian management are here now, but we need more resources, especially financial resources and corporate support. Many major program research and cross-cultural studies are found in Western community, with huge support from government and corporations. Asian schools are still not that active in pursuing this route. In order to do significant research and have a higher impact on management practices, we need corporate support from Asia. Although this is an institutional constraint set by the Asian environment, we have to change this environment.

In addition to the support from industry and government, there must be more coordination and collaboration among Asian schools and with non-Asian schools. There are many “boundaries” set by Asian schools in the past that have created unnecessary hurdles for Asian scholars to collaborate. With a more globalized community, this has to be removed. There should not be any more parochial ventures. Genuine collaboration among Asian schools is needed. The Asia Academy is now

serving this role. We act as the middleman to link up individual researchers and hopefully, institutions in the future.

Moreover, Asian studies cannot be just represented by scholars from Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, Korea, and the USA alone. We have seen more active involvement from our colleagues in China and India, but we have to reach out to other parts of Asia, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Vietnam, and other emerging countries.

More importantly, the mission of the Asia Academy is to push the frontier of management research, with particular relevance to Asia. There are some discussions on what Asian management research is and what our contributions would be (Hofstede, 2007; Lau, 2002b; Meyer, 2006). Research studies either asking an Asian question or using Asia as a sample are equally good. Some good research questions and theoretical frameworks for studies in emerging economies have been proposed in the literature (Hoskisson, Eden, Lau, & Wright, 2000; Wright, Filatotchev, Hoskisson, & Peng, 2005). However, specific lines of studies about Asia have not yet emerged. The debate around Meyer (2006, 2007) in fact is a good start to ask what and how we should do this line of research in the future (Ramaswamy, 2007). The Russian studies (Puffer & McCarthy, 2007) may be a good example, but there may be some other ways that we can contribute (Yang & Terjesen, 2007). The Asia Academy is dedicated to facilitate this process.

The understanding of Asian management would be enhanced with all those efforts mentioned above. The practice of Asian management would also be moved to new heights with new knowledge. So, we are making significant progress. However, we still have a long way to go. Fortunately, the odds are on our side.

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