

A note on educational performance of economics graduate programs in East and Southeast Asia

Koji Okazaki*

College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Chung-Hua University, No. 707, Section 2, Wu-fu Road, Hsinchu City, 300-12, Taiwan, ROC

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Abstract

This paper considers educational performance of economics graduate programs in East and Southeast Asia by examining the highest educational origins of the regional contributors in the top five journals between January 1995 and July 2005. Evidence proves that East and Southeast Asian graduates represent 13% of the contributors, have a 10% share of the regional aggregate AER-equivalent-length pages, and American doctors are dominant. Educational productivity of East and Southeast Asian economics graduate programs is thought to be equal, at best, to that of the middle-ranked ones in the United States top-50 schools.
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1. Introduction

What performance levels have Asian economics schools achieved? Performance of economics departments or economics graduate programs has two categories: faculty research performance and educational performance such as research productivity of graduates. Faculty research performance is significant in assessing departments or graduate programs, and has been examined domestically or worldwide by many scholars. Jin and Yau (1999) made an East and Southeast Asian ranking on faculty research productivity and compared it with that of the United States universities. Coupé (2003) and Kalaitzidakis, Stengos, and Mamuneas (2003) offered worldwide rankings. These three articles suggest that faculty research performance of the top schools in Asia is comparable to that of European or North American universities.

Educational performance is also important to a great number of people, especially to current or prospective students and university administrators, and has been considered by several papers. Hogan (1973), Hogan (1986), and Collins, Cox, and Stango (2000) analyzed research productivity of the United States economics schools graduates by counting pages in the top economics journals. Hogan (1973) and Hogan (1986) examined three journals, and Collins et al. (2000) made an analysis of both a set of 36 journals and a smaller set of five journals. Laband (1985) and Laband

* Tel.: +886 3 518 6845; fax: +886 3 518 6640.

E-mail address: koka@chu.edu.tw.

(1986) took not only a quantitative factor but also a qualitative one of citations into account, and scrutinized research productivity of the US economics departments graduates by analyzing a set of 27 journals and a set of 24 journals, respectively. Pieper and Willis (1999) took a different step from them, and ranked educational performance of economics graduate programs by calculating the graduates' shares of full-time economics department positions. Thus many efforts have been made for evaluating educational performance in the US economics graduate programs. However, no attention has been paid to that of economics schools in Asia.

The purpose of this paper is to examine educational performance of economics graduate programs in East and Southeast Asia from a few aspects. This study intends to compare it with that in the United States, and to show the relative research performance of East and Southeast Asian schools graduates. This paper will also demonstrate one of the reasons why many students in East and Southeast Asian countries desire to go to the United States to study economic science.

The next section gives an explanation for the method that is used for the analysis, and presents data for the highest educational origins of the distinguished economists in the region. It also offers publication data on research productivity of East and Southeast Asian economics schools graduates, and roughly compares it with that of the US economics Ph.D.-awarding schools graduates. The last section makes concluding remarks.

2. Method and data

The methodology of this study is similar to Collins et al. (2000). American Economic Association (2007) identifies 8807 members with their highest education. Of the 8807 members only three persons are East and Southeast Asian doctors that have worked outside the region as university faculty, which hints that almost all of university faculty with East and Southeast Asian Ph.D.s have worked in the region. For this reason, probably it would not cause a big problem to pay attention merely to the contributors in East and Southeast Asia, and this paper makes an examination of the regional contributors in top journals. In order to make a rough comparison with data in Collins et al. (2000), this paper defines the set of five journals employed in it as the top journals, and selects the period January 1995 to July 2005 for the sample publication term, which is of the same length as in Collins et al. (2000).¹ Then, we seek for the contributors affiliated with East and Southeast Asian universities at the time of publication, and the pages of their articles in the top five journals.² In this study articles include comments, confirmations, contradictions, notes, replies, review articles, and short papers. And, we investigate their highest educational origins by various sources.³ This study recognizes “course doctors” in Japan as the highest education; however, it does not regard dissertation doctors as the highest education. This is because we have to complete Ph.D. programs to receive course doctorates, whereas it is not always necessary to study at doctoral programs in order to acquire dissertation doctors. In other words we can procure dissertation doctor degrees without reference to our education. We sort aggregate AER-equivalent-length pages by the country of educational origin and by the graduate school in the region where the contributors received their highest education.⁴ In calculating adjusted pages, we divide pages of a coauthored article by the number of coauthors, and if a contributor has n affiliations, $1/n$ of the pages are allocated to each affiliation. Lastly, we compare per capita normalized pages of East and Southeast Asian graduates with those of the US economics doctors presented by Collins et al. (2000).

Examining hardcopies of the top five journals between January 1995 and July 2005 proves that 86 scholars belonging to East and Southeast Asian universities published their single-authored or coauthored articles. Table 1 shows the countries where the 86 contributors received their highest education.⁵ It also supplies total AER-equivalent-

¹ The five journals in Collins et al. (2000) are *American Economic Review*, *Econometrica*, *Journal of Political Economy*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, and *Review of Economics and Statistics*. We have mixed concepts on quality journals or top journals, however, these five journals are contained in many of the sets of quality or top journals. We can safely observe that substantial economists agree on these five journals.

² Pure research institutes such as Academia Sinica in Taiwan are excluded, because faculty obligations of pure research institutes are different from those of university faculty.

³ Main sources are China Economics Network, hardcopies of the five journals, contributors' individual websites and papers, the website of National Diet Library in Japan, and university websites.

⁴ Dusansky and Vernon (1998) opens AER-equivalent-length factors to the public, and this study makes use of the factors. This study does not take quality factors into consideration, since quality factors based on impact factors can be changeable every year.

⁵ The table on the 86 contributors' highest education, institutional affiliations at the time of publication, and the pages of their articles in the five journals is available from the author upon request.

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