

Introduction to Part IV: Country Studies

This section of the *Handbook* contains a selection of country studies within the Asia region. In our conversations with contributors, the editors shared with them the overall plan of the volume and early drafts of the introductory conceptual material. We then asked them to fashion chapters for their selected country that represented features that they believed to be essential for understanding the overall structure and dynamic of higher education in their designated country. The result was a range of heterogeneity and reached broader than the editors had anticipated, but one which overall contributed to a net benefit. As we reviewed these submissions from the perspective of the editors, however, we came to the conclusion that some “country studies” would in fact, serve better in other sections of the book. For example, contributors of chapters on Cambodia, Japan, and Taiwan chose to emphasize how structures of quality became inseparably linked to the contemporary development of those higher education systems, providing the implicit argument that an accurate understanding of these systems could not be gained absent from this conceptual and intellectual framing. The editors have chosen to include these chapters in the thematic sections of the volume, rather than as country studies.

Conversely, various contributors, asked to provide chapters dealing with regionality or within the context of access, equity, capacity, and quality chose to illustrate their more general topics with detailed country illustrations. In a related matter, given that the overall framework for the volume has been Asia, both as a historical construct and as an entity that has emerged from the various and persistent forces of contemporary globalization, it is perhaps not surprising that China as a subject matter plays a role in this volume that mirrors its relative size, in terms of population, geography, and economic presence. As editors, we have come to believe that this continual interplay between what we have termed “distinctive instance” is inseparable from what we seek to identify as underlying and continually dynamic engagements within the regional construct that comes to be termed “Asia.” At the same time, we made a conscious

effort to include in this section representative contributions from the historical and cultural currents that have characterized what have typically been the prominent sub-regions of Asia: East, South, Southeast, and Australasia. This interplay, we believe, between the distinctive and the “merging emergent” is present in virtually all of the country studies presented in this section.