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***A Critical Study of Thailand's Higher Education Reforms.* By Rattana Lao. Oxon: Routledge, 2015. Pp. 209.**

This book provides a critical analysis of Thailand's higher education reforms by furnishing readers with a rich historical account of its higher education system and associated policies. It does this by conducting an in-depth examination of the catalysts for reform. The book outlines instruments emerging from a culture of borrowing that have resulted in several policies that address globalization, autonomous universities, research excellence, internationalization, university rankings, and quality assurance. The book divides the analysis into chapters focusing on each of the above policy instruments and details the historical development and progress of the reforms and their impact on the Thai higher education system.

The main thesis of the book is based on the framework of policy borrowing. It highlights three main areas — politics, economics and the culture of borrowing — in Thailand's higher education system, to the extent that these features influence the adoption of foreign models for reform. Politics of borrowing delineates the process by legitimizing policy solutions and building a coalition for reform. Economics of borrowing emphasizes aid dependency on the Western powers, both in terms of financial pressure and assistance of reform. The culture of borrowing defines the rationale behind Thailand's adoption of foreign higher education tools and models upon the backdrop of increasing massification, diversification and decentralization. By focusing on the culture of borrowing and on external influences on the development of higher education in the country, the book relies on a trajectory of external forces putting pressure on the Thai system and the latter's struggle for adaptation, rather than viewing the reforms as a result of primarily internal developments.

Upon the projection of the culture of borrowing, the book clearly expounds on key historical features and factors contributing to reform, starting with the transition from a centre-

periphery development model to a more dynamic system involving stakeholders in the market. In Chapter 4, the book chronologically highlights the shift towards the establishment of autonomous universities which came about as a result of the emergence of the financial crisis. The subsequent chapter on the emergence of internationalization in higher education elucidates the two concurrent forces of international movement pushing towards increasing multilateral and bilateral arrangements on academic cooperation. This trend has also been reinforced by the internal economic demand for language proficiency as the main learning outcome among graduates. Both trends have been mutually welcomed by the central agency — the Office of Higher Education Commission (OHEC) — and the higher education institutions themselves. The following chapter explains the impact of the international and internal ranking of Thailand's higher education reforms and the policy towards enhancing research excellence. The policy innovation of the Thai state in promoting research among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through the centres of excellence and national research universities has been linked to the state-induced policy of levelling up the country's research and development quality. The final chapters focus on the development trajectory of the system's quality assurance policy from a voluntary option in the early 1990s to a legal obligation in the 2000s. With multiple quality tools and mechanisms, including internal quality assurance through the OHEC, external quality assurance through the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) as well as the guidelines in Thailand's Qualification Framework, HEIs in Thailand have been put under unprecedented scrutiny which has caused them to change their views of quality assurance from a voluntary to compulsory and eventually, a competitive process. The book argues that the factors contributing to the emergence of a full scale quality assurance policy — as one of the major higher education reforms — are not only national but also regional and globalized.

Considering that there is very little English literature on reform in Thailand's higher edu-

cation system, this book can be rated as one of the most comprehensive commentaries on the subject. The major strength of this book lies in its detailed historical account of the Thai higher education system. The book picks up key policy innovations and attempts to rationalize the policy reforms by integrating national, regional and global contexts into its main theoretical premise of policy borrowing. The book is strengthened by the author's access to key policymakers and leading technocrats whose accounts and opinions regarding the development of higher education are informative and reliable sources of information. However, by highlighting each policy innovation — which mirrored attempts to modernize higher education through reform by both the central government and HEIs — the book tends to be biased towards a centralized top-down policy analysis, thus emphasizing the pivotal role of the state and its satellite agencies to the emergence and success of reforms. In reality, the reform of the Thai higher education sector also owes a fair amount to a combination of stakeholders, including employees and students. This especially seems to be the case with issues regarding university rankings and quality assurance. Another source of analytical deficit in this book which, had it been addressed, might have made it more solid is the analysis of the interplay between the state — through the government agencies such as OHEC or the independent regulator such as the ONESQA — and HEIs. As a matter of fact, HEIs in Thailand have developed a distinctive character as independent actors with the leverage and freedom to steer their institutional courses. Therefore, in order to fully understand the causes and implications of reform in the Thai higher education sector, one also needs to make sense of the power play between these two actors. Finally, a minor point of weakness which may strike readers in the field is the book's emphasis on an elite group of first-tier HEIs. Thailand's HEIs are actually divided into several groups which may be affected by and respond to the shifting nature of global, regional and national reform differently. Focusing only on the elite group may not be realistic or lead to the wrong conclusions

about the culture of borrowing in the Thai higher education sector.

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Innovation Networks and the New Asian Regionalism: A Knowledge Platform on Economic Productivity. By Hans-Peter Brunner. Glos, U.K. and MA, USA: Edward Elgar and Asian Development Bank, 2016. Pp. 208.

Political debates about globalization have focused on offshore outsourcing of manufacturing and services. However, the debates neglect important changes in the geography of knowledge, such as the emergence of innovative networks and economic productivity leading to a rapid integration of dispersed engineering, product development and research across borders. This new form of innovation networks has led Hans-Peter Brunner to write this thoughtful and well-researched book. He attempts to explain the linkage between national markets and regional cooperation and integration (RCI), which contributes to medium and long-term productivity growth.

The author looks at how RCI policy instruments can be used to identify regional integration drivers. He has done this through analysing the experiences and success stories of RCI initiatives in the Baltic Sea Region and proposes similar initiatives in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asian Economic Community (AEC). He suggests a knowledge toolbox known as the ASEAN Regional Economic Integration Observatory (AREIO) to tackle productivity slowdowns and create what he terms an innovation-cluster-ecology.