

APRU Forum

Benchmarking Asia Pacific Universities in the Global Era: Competition and Collaboration

**‘Co-opetition’: leverage for
academic excellence**



I always believe the best way to concentrate the minds of our universities—the administration and the faculty—is through competition in the right way.

(Tony Tan, IAAP, as reported in *The Straits Times*, Feb 5, 2007, H2, ‘The way forward for local tertiary education’)

“the right way”?

- productive
 - ▲ competition as life principle (“will to power”)
 - ▲ ‘free market’ forces
- counter-productive
 - ▲ mistrust, conflict, sabotage....

Collaboration

“Because no single entity can possess all of the competencies it may need to respond to change, the ability to collaborate seamlessly must be a core competence of every agile organization.”

(Steve Ballmer, CEO of Microsoft)

- synergy; sum greater than the parts
- mutual benefit
- create value for good of industry

Some initiatives at NUS

- “no walls“
 - ▲ leverage on relationships to align/integrate/streamline processes & activities
- research collaboration
- exchange programmes
 - ▲ Asia & Australasia (38), Europe & Africa (83), Americas (36)
- co-badging (joint degrees/programmes/campuses)
 - ▲ Singapore-MIT Alliance
 - ▲ joint-degree 4-yr BA programme with UNCCH
- network/alliances (APRU, U21, AUN, etc)

Productive global alliance?

- critical success factors:
 - ▲ vision and will
 - ▲ leadership and 'buy-in'
 - ▲ 'funds and other resources
 - ▲ mutual benefit; complementary strengths
 - ▲ organisational similarity
 - ▲ cultural compatibility

Robust logic; strong value-creation potential

‘Win-win’

- multi-directional knowledge and technology transfer
- system interoperability → high quality collaboration, improved services, lowered cost
- increased attractiveness of ‘product’ and user-friendliness
- prestige of co-identification

“...happily ever after”?

- alliances
 - ▲ equal alliances work only where both partners' continuing managerial involvement needed (Killing, 1982)
- partnerships
 - ▲ weak partners become a drag on alliances and result in friction (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991)
- maturity level
 - ▲ alliances work better in new businesses (Bleeke & Ernst, 1991)
 - ▲ objectives diverge over time
 - “...*the very nature of what constitutes networks changes with time*” (Welborn & Kasten, 2003)

Alliances Can (And Should) Be Measured

Alliance failure rate > 50%

Only 10% of all alliances implement meaningful performance measures, and of those that do, 80% of their executives deem them inadequate.

Andersen Consulting

Source: Business 2.0. Feb 2000

Ranjay Gulati (2001), <http://www.ranjaygulati.com/new/resources/present/lecture2-alliances.pdf>

...MOUs have limited shelf life and are often not actively exploited....Only a tiny fraction of these turn out to have measurable influence on the participating institutions. The amount of work done to get a single collaboration off the ground is sometimes not commensurate with the potential benefits.

(Shih Choon Fong, President, NUS, Address at AAU meeting, April 2004)

Without contraries is no progression. (William Blake)

- group dependence → agreement → stasis;
 - ▲ Basic Assumption theory (Bion)
- Group think'
 - ▲ rationalised conformity
(William Whyte (1952), *Fortune*))

Competition isn't dead, and collaboration alone is not enough to build a business. There needs to be competition since resources are still scarce....

(Jeffrey Phillips, 2006)

- **CI (Competitive Intelligence)**
*“Keep your business friends close,
and your business enemies closer”*

Co-opetition

- strategic partnerships with ‘players’
 - ▲ ‘Vaue Net’
 - Adam Brandenburger (Harvard) & Barry Nalebuff (Yale); Ray Norda (Novell); John Nash: “rational decision makers”
 - ▲ supply chain integration
 - partnerships with “complementors” (e.g. computer hardware & software)
 - cooperative arrangements with “substitutors” (e.g. MedUnite)
- regulated competition

“Benchmarking Asia-Pac universities”

- benchmarking
 - ▲ tracking/comparing current with past performance
 - ▲ measuring progress toward a goal
 - ▲ identifying processes, practices and performance of recognised leaders (“best practices benchmarking”)
 - ▲ assessing where one’s operation is in relation to a direct competitor to determine competitive position (“competitive benchmarking”)

Co-opetitive benchmarking

- common benchmark; compete independently
- ‘divide and conquer’;
 - ▲ niche development; optimise use of resources
 - differing value-adding
 - leveraging situational advantages
 - e.g. Singapore’s strategic location:
 - student and researcher exchange clearinghouse
 - global centre/s for advanced study
 - “we must be first with liberal arts school” (Tony Tan)
 - ▲ product differentiation

‘The NUS Advantage’?

1. inspiring, academically rigorous education

- ▲ knowledge
 - ▲ cognitive skills
 - ▲ wisdom
- } **sharp mind**

2. ensuring balanced & superior learning outcomes

- ▲ mental
 - ▲ physical
 - ▲ emotional
- } **well-rounded personality**

3. vibrant learning environment

- ▲ resource-rich
- ▲ community-linked/supported
- ▲ diverse
- ▲ international
- ▲ enterprise-fostering

global mindset

Benchmarking academic excellence

- criteria
 - ▲ comparable but not one-size-fits-all?
- standards
 - ▲ rigorous but not rigid?
- measurement
 - ▲ contextually sensitive but reliable?

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