



## **New Opportunities for Universities throughout Asia - the International Professors Project**

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### ABSTRACT :

This Focus Report introduces the new opportunities for universities and receiving visiting professors through a fairly new grass-roots organization called the International Professors Project (IPP) – the brain-child of Dr Ron Krate in Vermont USA. The IPP is largely email and web-based but face-to-face meetings do take place for committees. The aim of the IPP, somewhat simplified, is to utilize the manpower resources of developed countries to assist in developing countries through international exchange of on-campus professors or lecturers. It also serves both ways to bring professors from developing countries to other regions. As a result, it aims to foster a new concept of a mobile professor who can help all universities worldwide to become more internationalized. Open and distance universities throughout Asia should find these services useful and effective. A lecturer in Asia may find contacts abroad through the IPP and opportunities to travel to teach in other regions, and thereby develop professionally as a teacher. The hosting university could acquire human capital resources, and the host faculty could also develop through these increased face-to-face interactions.

### FOCUS REPORT :

Concerning learning technologies, e-learning is being increasingly used by universities throughout the world creating a convergence between traditional universities and open distance universities, with this convergence mainly from the conventional traditional universities offering courses partially or wholly at a distance through email and web-based technologies. Not only the aspect of distance is becoming blended, but also the aspect of openness and inclusivity : distance education universities are seeing an increasing number of younger students, while conventional universities are enrolling an increasing number of older students. The *raison d'être* or mission purpose of open and distance education universities is therefore becoming less distinct from that of conventional education universities.

Now in conventional face-to-face classrooms, the teacher uses multimedia and web-based technologies. Moreover web-based courses at a distance continue to require a face-to-face initial orientation session, and many open distance courses require or offer face-to-face tutorials and residential weekends. So we are seeing blended technology as well as blended diversity in students.

What we are not yet seeing is blended diversity in the teaching faculty. This Paper looks at several efforts to promote diversity in faculty through faculty exchange and faculty mobilization. Both the two-way exchange and the one-way transfer of teachers are being enabled by web-based technology. In particular this Paper explores and presents the new email and web-based International Professors Project (IPP), at <http://www.internationalprofs.org> . As this IPP has refined its purpose, the concept of an international professor has become more

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defined and distinct from those participating in other currently available programmes. In the IPP, an international professor is a teacher in higher education who has taught in several different foreign contexts for extended durations of several years in each context. Though there are exceptions to this criterion who are active IPP members, this definition does make the IPP clearly distinct from Fulbright scholars who may have taught overseas for only three months, or even not taught at all but undertaken research abroad.

In this Focus Report, various other programmes are briefly described for comparison, and information, followed then by a more detailed look at the IPP. The various other programmes include (in this order below) the Fulbright Program, the JET Programme, the AAOU Inter-University Staff-Exchange Scheme, the Global Partnership Program, and International Professor Exchange. Compared with these other programmes, the reader can see the unique aspect of the IPP in its conception of international professors as ‘academic citizens of the world on university campuses in the developing world ... bringing the cultural sophistication and background needed to address global pedagogical / curriculum issues’ (Krate, 2005 ; Reis 2005 ; Shackman, 2005).

The Fulbright Scholar Program was first established in 1946, and is run by the United States government. It is currently administered by the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES, 2006). Currently the Fulbright programme sends about 800 USA citizens abroad to teach or undertake research in about 140 different countries or regions. The period abroad varies from 3 months to one year. Over the past 60 years, a total of 43,600 USA citizens have studied or taught abroad, and 45,400 overseas academics have studied or taught in the USA.

The Japan Exchange and Teacher (JET) Programme is another fairly conventional mode programme, started by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1986, to invite foreigners to visit for a year or more and generally help a public school teacher of English in

class. The Assistant English Teacher (AET) programme was started the following year by the Ministry of Education in Japan. Currently these programmes are coordinated and run by several ministries and other organizations including the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), the Japan Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) and about 1200 local organizations throughout Japan (CLAIR, 2006 ; MOFA, 2006). The JET Programme is one of the largest teacher exchange programmes in the world involving about 6000 exchanges currently, and with more than 46,000 exchanges to date over the past 20 years, from about 50 countries.

On a much smaller scale, the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) founded in 1987, has about 70 member universities (with a membership including about 40 full-member universities, about 30 associate-member universities, and two individuals). The AAOU has a website and annual conference, and through these the AAOU promotes a few one-way exchanges of professors or scholars, (see AAOU, 2006), called an Inter-University Staff-Exchange Scheme. About six universities currently participate in this programme. The hosting university sets its own criterion for acceptance usually providing a small local-currency allowance for living expenses, and the sending institution usually providing continuing financial stipend and the travel costs. The total number of exchanges to date is not clear, but is less than 100.

NAFSA Association of International Educators has its Global Partnership Program to provide connections for teachers to work abroad (NAFSA, 2006). They suggest three levels of membership – from Global Adviser, through Global Advocate, to Global Associate. They provide face-to-face meeting opportunities at their annual conference as well as web-based listing with search functions. They currently have more than 9000 international educators registered, involving more than 80 countries.

Finally, for comparison and information, there is the International Professor Exchange (IPE) which is a free service provided by the University of North Carolina Wilmington (USA) in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (South Africa) (IPE, 2006). This is basically a web-based notice-board posting up positions wanted and positions vacant. It has about 500 member institutions or individuals from about 50 countries, with more than 150 positions listed as available.

In more detail, the IPP is a busy network of mainly teachers in higher education, but also including postgraduate students. It is believed that attracting such postgraduate students will help them develop internationally. Elsewhere, a similar idea has been proposed for all postdoctoral candidates to have a one-or-two year teaching residency abroad before completing their doctoral degree or immediately afterwards. The concept of an international professor draws then from attracting newly qualified lecturers as well as from well-experienced professors. The IPP is a registered charity under section 501(c)(3) based in Vermont, USA, and relies on private donations through various means for financial security. This registration is maybe related to its structural design. It has a Board of Directors (at least five), with one Chairperson and one Chief Executive. Some of these persons and others help out with the newsletter and webpage. It has a google-groups discussion forum and newsletter at [ipp-news@googlegroups.com](mailto:ipp-news@googlegroups.com). Below the Board level, there are some 10 international professors, and between 10 and 20 international instructors. Then there are a host of fellows - currently there are more than 70 fellows listed on their website, and about 10 international students. Generally members teach at university, or mentor other teachers, or undertake local academic research. The distribution among these roles is not yet clear. IPP Membership is essentially free of charge, and should therefore be effective and useful for most scholars and universities in Asia. The IPP has also instituted a Faculty Support Project to give basic-level financial support to the

exchange teacher and to augment what a receiving university can afford, on a case-by-case evaluation. This support is extended too for teachers in developing countries to afford to stay in their own country – to reduce what might otherwise become a so-called ‘brain-drain’ from poor countries to those richer. The duration of the exchange is suggested to be between 10 months and two years, though this will likely be decided case-by-case between the exchange teacher and the receiving university. One of the functional aspects of the IPP stemming from its early years is the emailing of scholarly papers to poor university libraries in developing countries. While this happens generally in one-on-one relationships, here the IPP has instituted a Library Development Project for building up a resource for the whole library and generations of scholars there. Naturally this still requires the receiving university to sort out its infrastructure to catalogue and provide open access to these works. There are several similar projects providing free exchange of information and free access to electronic archives of books and research papers - such as those of the World-Systems Archive (for details and information on other archives, see WSA, 2006), and the Global Social Change Research Project (Shackman, 2006). The IPP was also featured by Rick Reis in his newsletter *Tomorrows Professor* (Reis, 2005).

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