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## UNESCO/IIEP Online Forum on

# Governance reforms in Asia: How to make university autonomy work?

18 November to 6 December 2013

**Deadline for registration: 8 November 2013**

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## Information Note

### The topic

Within the context of expanding and diversifying higher education systems, also increasingly exposed to global pressures, the issue of governance reform has received major attention in the Asian region as well as in other parts of the world. Governance reform is expected to align the governance structure and processes with the rapidly changing realities of higher education.

Granting increased university autonomy has been a major reform strand in the area. It is expected to enhance the organizational effectiveness and efficiency of HEIs, allow them to improve their local outreach in terms of the training offer and research focus, and to operate more closely to the market and thus facilitate the generation of extra budgetary resources.

### IIEP's prior work on university governance

As part of an interregional project on the effectiveness of governance reforms, IIEP analyzed the nature of autonomy and its effects on selected higher education institutions in five Asian countries: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan and Viet Nam from 2009 to 2011. The countries selected for the research were chosen to provide an interesting variation in terms of political systems, levels of economic and higher education development and distribution of authority in the higher education system. The research used a combination of documentary and statistical analysis combined with qualitative interviews conducted with key decision-makers at the national and institutional levels and a questionnaire survey among academic staff on their perceptions.

## Objectives of the Online Forum

The Online Forum intends to disseminate the findings from this IIEP case study research with a view to engaging policy-makers at the national and institutional levels into a discussion on the conclusions. A Policy Brief has been developed with the main findings and will be used as a resource for the Online Forum together with the draft publication drawn from the research.

The Online Forum will also be an opportunity for an open discussion among national policy-makers and institutional leaders on how to make university autonomy work for the benefit of the quality and relevance of higher education.

## Content of the Online Forum

The Online Forum will centre on the following three sets of questions:

**Topic 1:** What measures have been adopted in your countries to enhance the autonomy and the accountability of higher education institutions? What is the new balance between autonomy and accountability?

**(18 to 22 November 2013)**

University autonomy is a broad concept which covers many different realities. The IIEP research used the conceptual distinction between substantive and procedural autonomy. Substantive autonomy provides institutions with the authority to take decisions and operate with authority on their own goals and programmes under their purview. Procedural autonomy implies freedom in administrative aspects without the real authority to take decisions on substantive priorities, but greater authority to implement them.

The IIEP research revealed that most measures introduced under the five governance reform measures actually focused on procedural autonomy while the substantive autonomy was generally curtailed by new accountability measures.

The Online Forum will discuss those detailed measures which have been adopted in different countries and on the balance between autonomy and accountability in the countries of participants.

**Topic 2:** What have been the desirable and undesirable effects of increased autonomy for HEIs? Were policies adopted to deal with possible undesirable effects of autonomy?

**(25 to 27 November 2013)**

Increased autonomy has led to manifold changes in the case institutions. Effects comprise the development of new study programs, generally better articulated with local labor markets, enhanced university-enterprise linkages and enhanced income from such activities. There were also undesirable effects, such as imbalanced development of departments within the university, diversion of energy of academics to new activities and an overall increase of the workload and internal conflicts.

This Online Forum will discuss outcomes of increased autonomy and undesirable effects observed in the participating higher education institutions as well as how to prevent these.

**Topic 3:** What are the factors at the national and institutional levels which make increased autonomy work best for the quality and relevance of HEIs?

**(2 to 6 December 2013)**

Several lessons could be learnt from the IIEP case study research on university autonomy. They relate to the coherence of the national policy framework, a sequenced introduction of autonomy and piloting in a selected number of HEIs, and the importance of university leadership to make the best use of autonomy as well as institutional policies to prevent undesirable effects.

This Online Forum will discuss whether these factors are applicable to other contexts and whether participants have experienced them as well.

### **The participants**

The Online Forum on *Governance reforms in Asia: How to make university autonomy work?* will be an opportunity to share experiences and discuss findings presented in the IIEP Policy Brief, with policy-makers at the national and institutional levels. They would typically be policy-makers such as , secretary generals and directors of higher education in Ministries of Education, heads of higher education buffer organizations, leaders of higher education institutions, vice-rectors, deans and vice-deans and their direct collaborators.

### **The moderator**

The moderator of the Online Forum will be Michaela Martin, IIEP Programme Specialist.

### **Deadline for registration**

The deadline for registration is **8 November 2013**. Interested persons can find the registration form at the following web link: <http://new.iiep.unesco.org/index.php?id=1383>, or contact Michaela directly by e-mail.

More information on the Online Forum can be obtained from:

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