A Bibliometric Analysis of Higher Education Studies in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

This study is the first bibliometric analysis of higher education studies in Southeast Asia. It is aimed to identify the high-impact authors, journals and institutions and investigate the research trends of the field. CiteSpace is used to form a holistic picture of the area. It is found that university students' mental and psychical health is gaining increasingly attention and the research methods are likely to be diverse. Such methods as field study and interview are employed to make the research more comprehensive and thorough. The current study hopefully provides insights into the prospective research foci and renders a reference for scholars interested in higher education studies in Southeast Asia.

Key words: Higher education studies; Southeast Asia; CiteSpace; Bibliometric analysis; Area studies

1. INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia, encompassing 11 nations, stands out as one of the most diverse regions globally. It comprises ten member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), along with Timor-Leste, which is not a member. Higher education has emerged as a key area promoting ASEAN integration, experiencing rapid growth and increasing internationalization over the past decade, which have also drawn scholars' attention around the world. Precious studies mainly center around the such topics as higher education regionalization (e.g. Chou, 2017; Dang, 2017; Jacob, 2018; Pohlenz, 2019; Zhang, 2024), China's higher education outreach in Southeast Asia (e.g. Zhe, Zeng & Cui 2021; Li & Wn 2023; Zhu & Yang 2023; Zhu & Yang 2024), systems of higher education (e.g. Hallinger, 2010; Postiglione, 2011; Welch, 2020), higher education internationalization (e.g. Symaco, 2013; Kueoda, 2015; Barkin, 2018; Yodpet, 2022; Nobuko, 2024) and so on. Nevertheless, though numerous fruitful results have been achieved, these studies cannot provide an objective picture of the higher education in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, it is rather challenging for scholars to adopt the traditional review method to collect and investigate quantitatively the research trends of a certain area. Higher education, as an integrated cross-disciplinary field, is supposed to be examined to form a comprehensive knowledge map of the field.

On the other hand, "bibliometrics" encompasses a diverse array of academic disciplines, embodying perspectives from both the micro and macro levels (Raan, 2005). The advantages of bibliometric methods are outlined herein. Firstly, the research findings are grounded in statistical quantitative profiling and robust databases, often encompassing vast collections of peer-reviewed articles across diverse disciplines. Secondly, this visible network analysis approach can be employed to investigate the scope and categorization of academic fields by pinpointing influential authors and publications, as well as significant clusters of research within ongoing scholarly endeavors. These insights are pivotal for identifying research hotspots and trends, while also providing deepened understanding of nascent and emerging research areas. Thirdly, in contrast to the qualitative methodology, this research approach is more readily applicable to scholarly domains characterized by extensive publication volumes, particularly in studies examining inter-document relationships. Through analyzing the papers, it is intended

to offer useful guidance for scholars interested in higher education in Southeast Asia.

2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data

The Web of Science (WoS) was utilized to procure an extensive array of international scholarly literature pertaining to higher education studies in Southeast Asia. The extracted records from WoS encompassed comprehensive and detailed documentation, including authors, publication years, affiliated institutions, and originating journals, with both complete records and cited references being preserved. The search was primarily directed towards keywords, headings, and abstracts to identify pertinent theories and research within the specified domain. Ultimately, a total of 12,857 valid studies were obtained through the utilization of WoS.

2.2 Methodology

Developed by Dr. Chao-Mei Chen, CiteSpace is a widely adopted application coded in Java, as detailed in Chen (2006) and Chen, Ibekwe-San &Hou (2010). In this study, CiteSpace, a user-friendly graphical tool that facilitates an exhaustive analysis through the introduction of a keyword co-occurrence network, is utilized to generate a visual representation of knowledge encompassing various variables such as nation, organization, author, publication, clustered keywords, and citation bursts. The bibliometric analysis presents certain methodologies and parameters pertinent to the identification of knowledge maps. Additionally, each node in the visualization signifies a project (such as countries, institutions, journals, authors, and keywords), while a link represents a cross-reference or co-occurrence between nodes, as elucidated in Chen et al. (2015).The following keywords were used to analyze the period from 2014 to 2023: higher education, "Southeast Asia" and encompassed eleven countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam. A careful manual review of the results obtained confirmed the accuracy of the search strategy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Publication output

The identification of contemporary annual trends in publishing output serves as a valuable instrument for assessing the various stages of development, the cumulative accumulation of knowledge, and the degree of maturation within the field of higher education studies in Southeast Asia. As is shown from Fig. 1, the research concerning higher education studies in Southeast Asia shows an increasing tendency, from 428 studies in 2014 to 12719 in 2023. A plausible factor contributing to the notable expansion of the field in 2019 is the heightened focus on interdisciplinary areas. The scholarly output in this field can be broadly categorized into two distinct eras. The first era, spanning from 2014 to 2018, witnessed a modest number of publications pertaining to higher education in Southeast Asia and exhibited slow growth rates, suggesting that this area of study was still in its nascent stage. The second era, encompassing the years from 2019 to 2023, observed a significant surge in the annual number of publications related to higher education in Southeast Asia, indicating a heightened interest and a substantial increase in research activity in this domain.
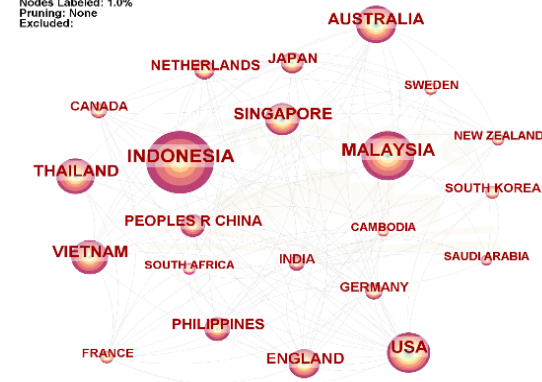
Figure 1 Number of publication in higer education studies in Southeast Asia
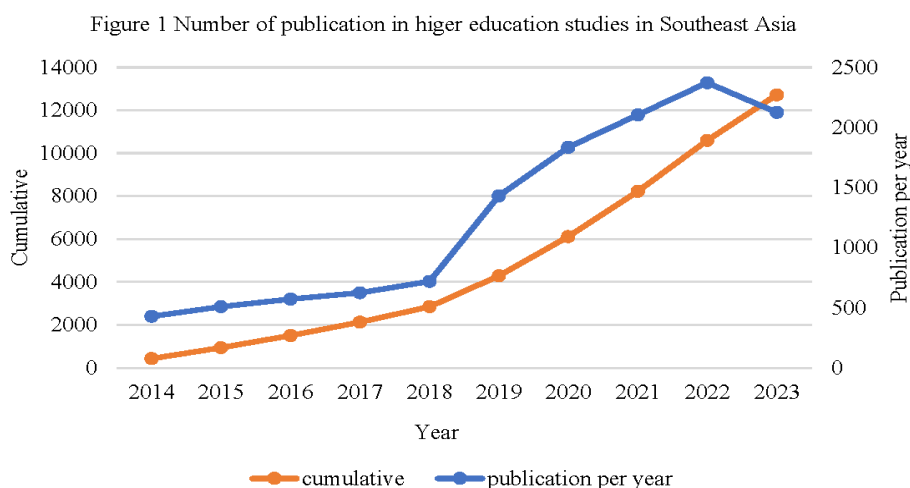
Figure 1
Number of publications in higher education studies in Southeast Asia
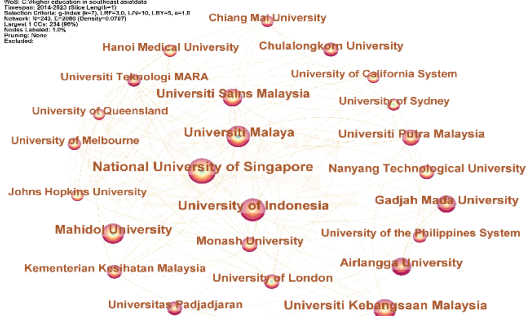
3.2 Analysis of countries and institutions

Analyzing the spatial and geographical distribution of countries provides valuable insights into the distribution of articles within the field. Figure 2a illustrates the network of national collaborations for higher education studies in Southeast Asia, where the size of each node corresponds to the number of articles published by the respective country; larger nodes indicate a higher volume of publications. It is worth noting that the importance of each node is also reflected by its degree of centrality. As is evidenced from Figure 2a, the centrality progression is as follows: South Africa> Switzerland > China > India > France > Canda > … > India. South Africa holds the highest centrality score of 0.07, indicating extensive collaboration with multiple countries such as Vietnam, China and India. The figure further demonstrates a significant level of collaboration among various countries, which may offer implications for scholars pursuing further research endeavors.

(a) Map of countries

(b) Map of institutions

Figure 2
Network analysis of countries and institutions in terms of higher education studies in Southeast Asia:

Table 1
Top 15 countries in terms of higher education studies in Southeast Asia from 2014 to 2023

Rank	Publications	Centrality	Countries
1	3870	0	Indonisia
2	2402	0	Malaysia
3	1613	0.01	USA
4	1406	0.01	Thiland
5	1335	0.01	Vetiam
6	1221	0.01	Singapore
7	1058	0.01	England
8	912	0.01	Philippines
9	861	0.04	Peoples R China
10	560	0.02	Japan
11	477	0.02	Netherlands
12	299	0.02	Germany
13	266	0.03	Canada
14	263	0.01	India
15	247	0.05	South Korea

Table 2
Top 10 institutions in terms of higher education studies in Southeast Asia from 2014 to 2023

Rank	Publications	Centrality	Countries
1	645	0.05	National University of Singapore
2	528	0.03	University of Indonesia
3	459	0.04	University Malaya
4	436	0.02	University Kebangsaan Malasia
5	397	0.04	Mahidol University
6	332	0.03	University Sains Malasia
7	319	0	Airlangga University
8	315	0.04	Gadjan Mada University
9	217	0.01	University Putra Malasia
10	226	0.04	University of London

As evidenced from Table 1, Indonesia, which stands as the preeminent nation in terms of academic paper production, generated 3,870 articles, outpacing Malaysia with 2,402 articles and USA with 1513 articles.

Figure 2b depicts the integration of multiple institutions, forming institutional clusters within the realm of higher education studies in Southeast Asia. Table 2 enumerates the top ten institutions in this field, highlighting notable contributions from universities across various countries. Specifically, National University of Singapore (645 articles), University of Indonesia (528 articles), University Malaya (459 articles), University Kebangsaan Malasia (436 articles), Mahidol University (397 articles), University Sains Malasia (332 articles), and Airlangga University (319 articles) have made

significant impacts. Notably, University College London and University of Oxford, with a centrality score of 0.09, and University of Groningen, with a centrality of 0.07, exhibit high levels of centrality, indicating their substantial contributions to a diverse array of articles and their extensive collaboration with other institutions.

3.3 Analysis of author cooperation networks

Authorship constitutes a pivotal aspect in gauging research proficiency and evaluating the progression of an academic discipline. A thorough analysis of the geographical dispersion of authors, along with an examination of the nature of collaborations—whether they were external or internal—provided valuable insights (Glanzel, 2004). Furthermore, Figure 3 offered a compelling visualization of the collaborative network among authors, based on a comprehensive dataset of papers contributed by diverse authors.

A propensity for collaboration among authors, frequently with a limited cohort of co-authors, leads to the formation of distinct author communities. Table 3 delineates the top ten most productive scholars and their respective institutional affiliations spanning the period from 2014 to 2023. Notably, Subramaniam Mythily emerged as the leading figure in terms of publication output. Other notable authors who have made substantial contributions to the progression of higher education studies in Southeast Asia through their diligent efforts include Abdin Edimansyah, Chong Siow Ann, Latkin Carl A, Ho Roger CM, Laksono Agung Dwi, Laksono Agung Dwi, Ho Cryus SH, Bach Xuan Tran, Wulandari Ratna Dwi and Peltzer Karl.
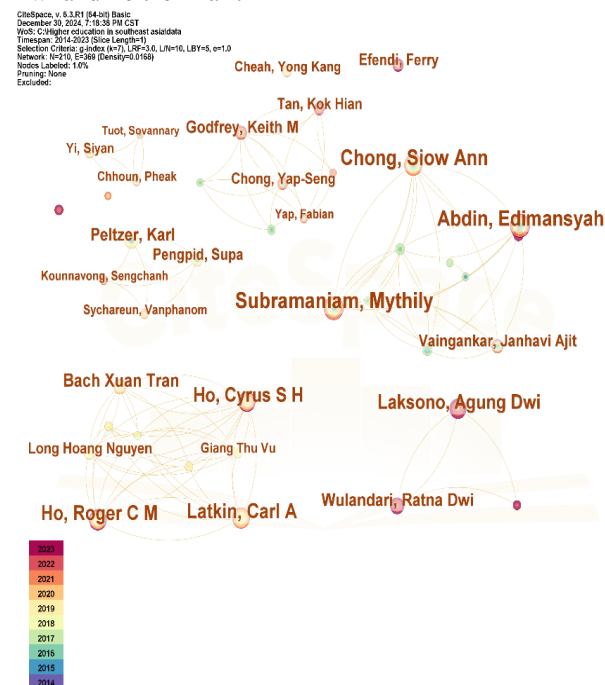
Figure 3
The top ten most productive authors in higher education studies in Southeast Asia from 2014 to 2023

Table 3
**Top ten most productive authors in higher education studies in Southeast Asia from 2014 to 2023**

Rank	Count	Author	Institution	Country
1	60	Subramaniam Mythily	Nanyang Technological University	Singapore
2	51	Abdin Edimansyah	Inst Mental Hlth	Singapore
3	48	Chong Siow Ann	Nanyang Technological University	Singapore
4	42	Latkin Carl A	Johns Hopkins University	USA
5	39	Ho Roger CM	National University of Singapore	Singapore
6	36	Laksono Agung Dwi	National Research & Innovation Agency of Indonesia	Indonesia
7	36	Ho Cryus SH	National University Health System	Singapore
8	26	Bach Xuan Tran	Johns Hopkins University	Vietnam
9	24	Wulandari Ratna Dwi	Universitas Airlangga	Indonesia
10	23	Peltzer Karl	Ton Duc Thang University	Vietnam

4. HOTSPOTS AND EMERGING TRENDS

The keywords of an article can to a certain extent reflect the area's research foci. Therefore, the analysis co-occurrence and centrality of keywords helps to discern the cutting-edge direction (Chen, 2016). Because such terms as Southeast Asia and higher education are employed as key words, they are set to be invisible while generating the visualization map. As is evidenced from Figure 4 and Table 4, "impact" tops the list and "health" "prevalence" "management" "knowledge" "risk" have also drawn much attention. Centrality indicates the influence of the keyword as well as its link with other keywords in this area. It is obvious that "impact" tops the keywords list in terms of count and centrality, revealing its effect on the development of higher education in Southeast Asia. Then it is followed by "health" "management" "knowledge" "performance". As such, it indicates the most discussed topics as well as their link with other areas.

Burst keywords are those words that are often cited during a specific period and therefore reflect one certain area's research foci. Table 5 shows the 20 most-often cited keywords. The most cited keywords from 2014 to 2018 involve prevalence, United States, mortality, developing countries, risk factors, population, country, health, children, Singapore and HIV. The most popular topics in recent years include behaviors, family, burden, health care, health literacy, university students and symptoms, among which health literacy (2020-2023), university students (2021-2023) and symptoms (2021-2023) represent the emerging trends in this area. The research tendencies are as followed:
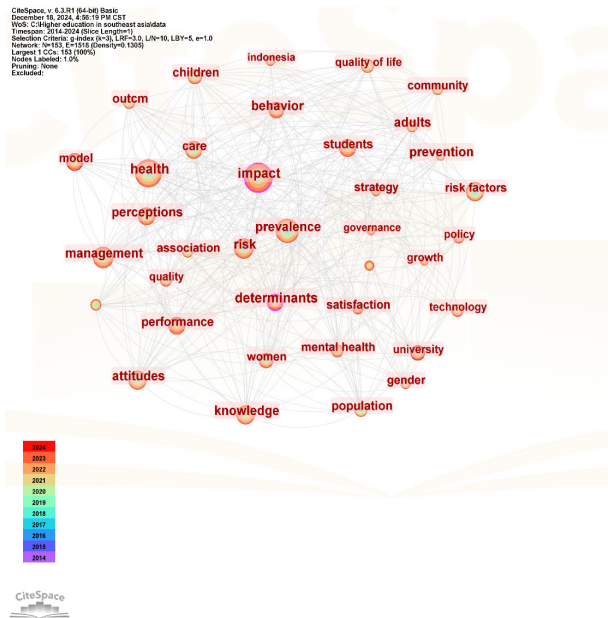
Figure 4
Co-occurrence of keywords

Table 4
Top ten keywords based on their frequency

Rank	Count	Centrality	Keywords
1	866	0.12	impact
2	737	0.09	health
3	598	0.03	prevalence
4	494	0.09	management
5	463	0.08	knowledge
6	456	0.04	risk
7	433	0.05	attitudes
8	430	0.08	performance
9	378	0.13	determinants
10	361	0.06	students

(1) Health literacy: The current research is conducted to reveal the relations between mental health and educational levels (Chong, 2016a, 2016b; Dang, 2021; Nguyen, 2023; Le 2023). Rajah, Hassali and Murugiah (2019) conduct a detailed literature review of the studies on health literacy in Southeast Asian countries, especially among higher educations. Htay et al (2022) examines the digital health literacy level and satisfaction of information during the pandemic period among East- and Southeast Asian college students from China, Malaysia, and the Philippines. It is argued that supplying online knowledge about COVID-19, delivering health talks or sharing approaches to dealing with meatal health challenge can be a favor to university students. Strengthening students' digital health literacy can promote their critical thinking, which invariably help them to obtain the useful recourses on the internet. Abdel-Khalek & Tekke M (2019) hires

Muslim college students to investigates the relationship between religiosity, subjective well-being, and mental health. Multiple regression analysis reveals that self-rated physical health is a predictor of religiosity in men, while mental health predicts religiosity in women. Individuals who perceive themselves as internally religious experiences enhanced well-being and health. Thus, religious practices could potentially be integrated into psychotherapeutic interventions for Malaysian clients. Dessauvagie, et al. (2022) states that Mental health issues among young people pose a significant challenge to public health globally, affecting approximately one-fifth of university students who suffer from a mental disorder over a 12-month period. In Southeastern Asia's low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), mental health resources are scarce, and universities often lack regularly established counseling services. The author assesses the prevalence of mental health problems among university students in six ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries—Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam—and to identify the factors that influence mental health. It turns out that depression, anxiety, stress and disordered eating account for the mental health problems, which provide implications for promoting university students' mental health and preventing them from being obsessed with mental disease.

(2) University students: It mainly centers around cyberbullying (Alswalqa, 2021), the drivers of e-learning satisfaction (Pangarso & Setoyrini 2023), lecturers' professional identity (Evison, 2021), international student mobility (Apsite, et al. 2023), counseling competency for academic advisors (Choompunuch, et al. 2022), university students' mental health (Laranjo, 2020; Gan, 2022; Wittayapun, 2023) , risk behaviours among university students (Htet, 2020), transnational education (Schulze & Kleibert 2021; Swendal, Nkhoma & Gumbley 2022). For example, Siamoglou et al (Siamoglous, 2021) investigate Malaysian students' attitudes towards eight areas related to health sciences. Romli (2022) put that healthcare education providers are enthusiastic about the application of technologies to university setting, nevertheless, students, as the target population of higher education, are supposed be taken into account, especially their opinions and attitudes towards the technology. A meta-synthesis of qualitative analysis is conducted to enrich the public's knowledge of healthcare students' perceptions of teaching and learning which are based on technology in Southeast Asian universities. Three main themes are examined: (1) cultural factors play a significant role in the implementation of technology-based learning; (2) technology has both values and limitations when used for learning; and (3) technology is an integral part of daily life and presents new educational challenges. While technology can enhance the learning experience,

educators must be mindful of its limitations. Studies conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic tended to focus more on technology and products, with optimistic reports, whereas studies covering the COVID-19 period emphasized life experiences and highlighted the inherent challenges. The success of technology use in learning is influenced by educational approaches, theories, cultural aspects, and the availability of facilities. Barkin (2018) investigates the practice of outsourcing of short-term education abroad through ethnographic studies of universities students in Southeast Asia. It is argued that such kind of professional agencies, though for profit, foster the discourse of going abroad and cater for the imperative need of administrative and neoliberal exigencies. Ragozina & Obdalova (2021) drawing on the case study of teaching Russian to students from Indonesia, illustrate the importance of linguistic diversity and plurilingual education. It shows that such principles as language integration and language arsenal can promote students' second language acquisition. Darojat. et al. (2015) explore the quality and quality assurance applied in three open universities in Southeast Asia which reveals that students' satisfactions are regarded as the first standard to measure the education quality and quality guidelines as the criteria for quality assurance.

(3) Symptoms: depression symptoms (Peltzer, Yi & Pengpid 2017; Yi. et al. 2017; Pengpid & Peltzer 2018; Fletcher et al. 2021; Nochaiwong 2022) and psychical disease symptoms (Minh, 2022). Peltzer, Yi and Pengpid (2017) conduct the analysis of factors concerning suicide attempts among undergraduate students in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. It shows that students with low grades should be given personal attention to prevent suicide and families may be the stressor of undergraduate students' depressive symptoms. Pengpid & Peltzer (2018) explore the university students' eating disorder symptoms in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. A randomly recruited sample of undergraduate university students participate in a cross-sectional questionnaire survey and anthropometric measurements. It shows that students' eating disorder symptoms are influenced by a wide range of factors such as economic status, psychological factors and weight recognition, etc. As such, university students should raise their risk-prevention awareness and deepen the knowledge of eating disorders. Yi. et al. (2017) conduct the cross-sectional study of possible reasons for university students' binge drinking symptoms in Southeast Asian countries. It suggests the necessity of developing or enhancing university health promotion programs that incorporate binge drinking, other substance abuse, concurrent addictive behaviors, and cultural health beliefs specific to each country.

Table 5
The 20 most-often cited keywords

Keywords	Strength	Begin	End	2014-2023
prevalence	27.9	2014	2016	
United States	27.61	2014	2018	
mortality	22.2	2014	2018	
developing country	21.4	2014	2018	
risk factors	19.38	2014	2017	
population	17.78	2014	2017	
country	16.52	2014	2018	
health	13.14	2014	2015	
children	10.59	2014	2018	
obesity	18.64	2015	2018	
Singapore	12.98	2015	2018	
HIV	11.79	2015	2017	
behaviors	12.88	2018	2020	
family	11.8	2019	2020	
burden	10.89	2019	2020	
health care	10.44	2019	2020	
health literacy	11.08	2020	2023	
university students	13.54	2021	2023	
symptoms	10.1	2021	2023	

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Considering valuable status of higher education in promoting Southeast Asian countries' development and the lack of relevant review, there is a great necessity to conduct a bibliometric analysis of the researches of higher education in Southeast Asia. The current research yields some finds and hopefully provide meaningful references for the field.

Firstly, higher education in Southeast Asia is gaining more and more attention from scholars interested in this field. The area involves a variety of topics, such as regional and national higher education, multilingualism and intercultural communication across countries.

As is evidenced from the countries and institutions cooperation network, South Africa occupies a significant role. At the same time, Indonesia, Malaysia and USA are the most prolific nations in the field. National University of Singapore, University of Indonesia and University Malaya tops the list of institutions. Similarly, it is found that Subramaniam Mythily is the most prominent author, followed by Abdin Edimansyah and Chong Siow Ann.

Keywords cluster and keywords burst provide certain insights on the evolving directions of this field. It proves that topics like "impact" "health" "management" "knowledge" "performance" are often discussed by scholars. To put it more specifically, "prevalence" "United States" "mortality" "developing countries" "risk factors" "population" "health" "children" "Singapore" and "HIV" have absorbed most scholars' attention during the past years. However, such keywords as "health literacy" "university students" and "symptoms" are the emerging trends in this area. Another highlight in the research is that a multiple of disciplines are integrated. Since the nature of education is inclusive, higher education in Southeast Asia is extended to in include various topics, such as finance, agriculture, psychology and medicine, which facilitate the ongoing development interdisciplinary research between higher education and other fields.

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