The topic of this paper is “trends in higher education” and this covers a wide-ranging territory—from different types of tertiary institutions to the various issues they all face. Discussing trends, change, and movement in higher education is a daunting task; as one of my colleagues at UCLA once observed, “Universities and cemeteries are difficult to move—and for some of the same reasons.” Yet forces are at work that are demanding that they do move, change, and adapt.

In this brief paper, I would like to comment on some of these trends in public higher education based on interviews and policy analysis primarily from recent research trips to Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, as well as my own personal experience at UCLA and in the UC system. Given the pace of change in this sector these observations will be dated by tomorrow if not today. However, this is the educational sector I know
best having spent the better part of 35 years in it, and of it, and studying it.
This is not to say that other sectors are not equally important, and in fact,
may be more important surely to larger numbers of individuals
(Education For All, basic education, lifelong learning) but it is difficult to
argue when you get around to the question of what drives what, that
higher education institutions (hereafter, HEI) at least in most nations in
the Asian region (and perhaps in the US and Europe as well) drives much
of what happens or does not happen at the other levels. If a student’s
goal is to attend Peking University, Taiwan National University, or Hong
Kong University the students and parents must think early on about what
to do about schooling at the precollegiate level and the exams that occur
each step of the way toward admission to these prestigious institutions
that lead to the most successful professional positions in each nation.
Educational officials at all levels must also think clearly about curricular
guidelines for the precollegiate level, assessment instruments, and teacher
training policies. The situation is not much different in California if
one’s goal is to attend UC Berkeley or UCLA, or one of the prestigious
Ivy League universities.

So, what are some of the tensions, contradictions, and trends in HEI
not just in Asia but also the US, Europe and many other parts of the
world I am less familiar with? One might ask the question another way: Is the contemporary university as we know it an endangered species?” The answer is probably yes—is this a good thing or a bad thing? Well, we can leave that to the future and to the discussion that is taking place in the literature as this paper is being written.

The main issue for the 21st century in higher education in most parts of the world including Asia is how it can adjust to a rapidly changing environment. Universities as we know them were not built to adjust rapidly to change; if anything, they were built to resist change. Being from California and Hawaii, we might use a sports metaphor and note that in the US and I think Asia, most colleges and universities are like surfers, poised on their boards waiting for the next big wave to sweep them toward the beach (in California, we call it Title Wave III); some are going to be wiped out; others have their heads turned toward the swell planning to ride it the best they can once it comes; others, more daring are paddling out toward the wave, with plans to not just be swept along but ride it the way they want to; few if any are sitting on the beach sunning themselves.

It is only natural for me to look back on my own personal experience in higher educational change at UCLA where I have spent over 30 years,
quite apart from my formal study of higher education reform in Asia. For over 20 years I participated in the middle and upper levels of academic administration at UCLA, as chair of a large education department and dean of international studies. I witnessed the shift in the California economy from the boom years of the aerospace industry to the end of the cold war and the subsequent recession, a series of fiscal cutbacks that cost the university millions of dollars of state funds (none of which has been restored) and watched the UCLA budget share shift from 80% public, 20% private financing, to just the opposite. Most of this change occurred ten years ago and now a similar pattern is becoming apparent in other settings such as Asia.

In the United States and in Europe one might identify two major belief systems as to what higher education is all about. One view sees the university primarily as a cultural institution, the familiar and comfortable ivory tower where ideas and academic endeavors are prime. The other view sees the university as a public service institution with a responsibility to those who fund it, to society at large, and where accountability to society is prime. And of course there are those who would see that it should do both in a balanced way. What seems to be clear, however, in the US, Europe and Asia, is that a shift has occurred
toward the service end of the spectrum, toward a more contractual model and away from the democratic, egalitarian model; toward what many are calling the "New Managerialism" (Berdahl, p. 14). This new public management approach is a mix of procedural freedoms and responsibilities with more utilitarian goals, more state guidance or steering than state control (Salmi 2002) (in the UC system we refer to ourselves as a "state assisted" university, others talk about the supervisory state). Market mechanisms have been strengthened and decision-making decentralized, public enterprises have been the focus of privatization efforts and the notion of a corporate identity for higher education has been introduced, closely coupled with sophisticated fund-raising and development strategies and bureaucracy.

These are all new ways of speaking about higher education, a new language that was not in use when I joined the faculty at UCLA in 1973. The terms decentralization, accountability, assessment, strategic planning, privatization, autonomy, the service university, branding, corporatization, competitiveness and others, unthinkable back in the seventies when talking and writing about higher education, now slip easily off the tongue. In fact, just last year, a UCLA task force called the "Competitiveness Task Force” completed its work and turned in its report to the Chancellor.
In it, the members of the task force recommend actions that would maintain and enhance UCLA's quality and “competitiveness” as a world-class research university in "an era of shrinking resources". Recommendations include finding alternative revenue streams through self-supporting degree programs, developing strategies for retaining the best faculty through innovative compensation plans, and restructuring the budget and planning process around 3-5 year strategic plans with annual budget management reviews based on performance in relation to the unit's strategic plan. These proposed measures and others like it in the UC system and other US universities, and increasingly in Asia promote two complementary but tension filled goals: institutional autonomy and institutional accountability.

They have been institutionalized in the new “compact” with the Governor of California that guarantees stable funding over the next five years while demanding specific, measurable forms of accountability. For its part, the state of California agrees to provide “adequate financial support” for a five-year period in such areas as basic budget, core academic support, and enrollment funds. Both UC and the state agree on a structure for student fee increases with a goal to minimizing them and linking them to the rise in per capita California income. Additional
funding agreements allow for one-time outlays for infrastructure and other needs. For the first time, the UC system has agreed to commit to achieve specific outcomes that are a high priority for the state. These include maintaining enrollment levels consistent with the Master Plan (space for the top 12.5% of graduating seniors), ensuring appropriate courses and services for the students, providing course articulation for community college transfer students, and maintaining appropriate progress toward time to degree. UC further agrees to various quality measures, student and institutional outcomes (efficiency in graduating students, utilization of system wide resources, student level information, faculty workload information). UC agrees to provide all these data in a single comprehensive annual report to the Governor, Secretary of Education, the fiscal committees of the Legislature, the Legislative Analysts Office and the Department of Finance. This level of commitment on the part of both the state and the UC system, and this level of specificity and reporting represent a dramatic shift in accountability policy and practice (Higher Education Compact 2005).

Note margin differences

In Asia we see much the same thing happening or beginning to happen. A variety of forces and factors have impacted higher education
change and reform in East Asia, especially in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea (Brain Korea 21—Lee 2000) in China, and even in Japan, or so we think. Globalization, the knowledge economy, the IT revolution, the establishment of new privatized institutions (including China where a new privatization law has been put into effect), and the continued expansion of the demand for higher education have all contributed to new forms of university governance and management with an emphasis on efficiency, accountability, more involved stakeholders, strategic alliances, and competitiveness. As several scholars have reported, these trends have swept through the East Asia region and have several features in common (Hawkins, 2001; Mok, 2002; Cheng, 2002). Among these are:

- One is that many of these states realize that they must respond to the growing demand for more higher education with increasingly limited resources and in an increasingly competitive environment. Varying governance strategies involving decentralization, privatization, marketization, commodification, have been adopted and this has demanded new and different ways of looking at university governance largely as a result of declining state capacity. The World Bank among other agencies, has recognized the evolving role of the state as it becomes much more of a guiding than a controlling force. In most
Asian nations experimentation is occurring among state officials to provide a regulatory environment, providing appropriate financial incentives, rules for new institutions, and developing formulas to link resources with institutional performance rather than the macro and micro management of state level ministries that has characterized past state involvement. Furthermore, the idea that tertiary education was a luxury reserved only for wealthy countries has given way to the notion that nations must develop the right mix of basic, secondary and tertiary institutions as a “third way” between central planning and chaotic expansion (Salmi 2002, Mok 2000).

- **Another common feature** is a general change of philosophy regarding public management governance. Ideas such as "reinventing government" and "entrepreneurial government" have found their way into the lexicon of educational public policy officials in many East Asian nations. As public policy reform has occurred so has the notion of accountability so that we hear more about quality control, value for money, audit society, performance society, the evaluative state and so on. In China, for example, sophisticated data envelopment analysis has been applied to assess the research performance of Chinese HEIs. Data such as these are being utilized by Chinese educational officials
to determine core funding and other resource allocations (Ying and Sung, 2000).

- **A third common feature** is the rise of the knowledge economy and its implications for the changing university. Education and research are no longer the sole purview of the formal higher education system but spill over into industry, nonformal enterprises of various sorts and individuals. As can be seen in the charts A and B, life long learning is increasingly taking its place alongside the formal university structure as a sort of parallel university; how this will play out in the future in settings in Asia may well give us part of the answer to the question about the future of the university as we know it. The Open University of Hong Kong and the National Open University of Taiwan are two such examples of the appeal of open and distance learning in Asia (Sherritt 1999).

- **A final feature** is the massification of higher education and the renewed emphasis on quality control. In Hong Kong, about 30% of the eligible cohort (18-21) is admitted to higher education. In Singapore it is closer to 60% and 70% in both Taiwan and South Korea, and about 11% in urban China (Mok 2001). The rapid increase in numbers has raised several questions about the quality of the higher
education being offered which in turn has lead to a variety of accountability measures in all countries in the region.

Given these trends what are some of the features that will characterize the future of higher education in Asia and other parts of the world?

The challenges are daunting--access, expansion, privatization, distance education, technology, decentralization, globalization, and so on. Higher education in Asia and the Pacific is faced with maintaining its core, and to some extent, conservative values (autonomy, elite status, liberal arts curriculum, commitment to research, teaching without intellectual restrictions, conviction that ideas are important) while at the same time adapting to the new circumstances of globalization. There are several features of this challenge that deserve to be watched closely:

- Differentiation and expanded access: most countries in Asia are seeking to expand access to higher education (massification). Most wealthy and middle-income countries now educate more than 30% of the relevant age group in post-secondary education; many developing nations in Asia have doubled access as well. This trend is continuing, challenging the more traditional research university as other models of post-secondary
education are emerging. How will traditional universities respond to policies focused on expanding access? What are some of the new postsecondary models that are emerging?

- The globalization of research: research has always been at the core of the mission of most universities despite what we say about teaching. Universities are the central source for basic research and increasingly this research is conducted with multi-national partners. Knowledge is becoming progressively more global yet many universities continue to view research as national specific. Education is becoming an internationally traded commodity; this is a real revolution. Education is no longer considered the production of a skill set to allow the student to become an effective participant in society but rather a skill set to be purchased and used in the marketplace or a product to be bought and sold by corporations. In some parts of Asia, there is concern that universities have transmogrified themselves into businesses. There is further concern that globalization results in the loss of skills necessary for an understanding of culture, values, civil society, and intellectual independence. Further complicating matters are new policies that include education as one of the twelve sectors covered by GATS.
GATS and WTO policies designed to “open the doors” for international university partnerships has produced a backlash in some parts of Asia where countries like Malaysia and Singapore are regulating which foreign universities may do business in their countries and China is very cautiously looking at such arrangements. Some view the GATS policies as a new kind of neocolonialism, a new era of power and influence, where multinational corporations, media conglomerates, and a few major universities are the new neocolonialists who view education as a source of commercial gain (Altbach 2002; Knight 2002). In Singapore the recent University of Pennsylvania Wharton Business School venture has been critiqued as being solely focused on the market and making money rather than academic collaboration and intellectual exchange (Salmi, 2002). What adjustments will need to be made in faculties, with respect to the reward structure for promotion and retention, with respect to funding for research, copyright and patent regulations as knowledge becomes more global?

- **Social Mobility**: higher education has often been viewed as a principal source of social mobility and improvement in societies. As universities adapt to global pressures what will be the impact on issues of access and
equity especially for groups such as minorities and women who have traditionally had less access to higher education in many countries?

- **Decentralization**: in most nations in the Asia Pacific region the control and administration of higher education has been highly centralized, usually in a ministry of education of some sort. To respond to the need for rapid change, to become more nimble in decision-making and respond to opportunities more quickly, many national higher educational systems are experimenting with various forms of administrative decentralization. This movement has presented universities with a whole range of challenges, from the need to develop new management and leadership skills, to structural changes in the organization of the university. What are some of the models that are being tested in the Asia Pacific region? What can nations learn from one another as decentralization proceeds?

- **Differentiated Funding**: one of the most significant features of decentralization, and one that therefore deserves a separate section, is the issue of funding for higher education. For the past several decades most nations in the region have developed national systems of higher
education, funded almost entirely by the state sector. Economic and other considerations no longer allow this luxury and one feature of decentralization has been the downloading of the financial burden to the university level. Presidents and chancellors are scrambling to seek new sources of funding from the introduction of tuition (or the dramatic increase in existing tuition, often accompanied by student unrest) to the development of alumni associations and other support groups for fund-raising purposes, to seeking funds from philanthropic foundations, developing industrial and corporate linkages, consulting fees, patent and other income. What are some of the new models of differentiated funding and what can nations learn from one another in this critical area?

- **Internationalization**: As universities respond to the new global challenges the internationalization of their student bodies, faculty, curriculum and so on will only increase. More than two million students are already studying outside the borders of their home countries. There is an international labor market for researchers, faculty and graduates that is rapidly growing. Knowledge production and dissemination is international in scope and widely available through new media and technology. In the European Union there is a movement toward
common degree structures (harmonization) and mutual recognition of academic qualifications, course credits and so on. What are the implications for the universities of the Asian Pacific region? Will some form of regional cooperation become feasible and desirable similar to the movement in Europe? Educational policy makers interviewed in Asia recognized that there are both national and institutional rationales for internationalization. At the national level it is acknowledged that there remains a strong need for human resource development that is prepared for the knowledge economy and that strategic alliances have shifted from cultural collaboration to economic needs. At the institutional level universities are concerned with their international profile and reputation, brand name and brand recognition. Internationalization may also provide new knowledge and skills for increasing income, for student and staff development and for achieving scientific, economic and technological objectives. What about the language of instruction and research, will English become the new Latin of the 21st century; what will happen to national languages? This is particularly critical in view of the expansion of the Internet and other new media.
• **The Politics of Education**: with the expansion of the internet, e mail, cross national research and student exchange, and the new managerialism what will be the implications for academic freedom and freedom of inquiry? Some in the academy are already questioning whether or not the faculty can maintain academic autonomy amidst these very formidable challenges (Altbach, 2002). Others are concerned about the role of the Internet on student achievement and the possible negative influences on study hours and social development (Chou and Hsiao 2000).

• **Virtual Education**: probably the biggest challenge to conventional higher education is virtual education; now a $280 billion market; it is on the move and Jones University (now serving students in 38 countries) and University of Phoenix (offering a proliferation of “overseas validated courses”) are just the beginning; today more than 60% of all American colleges and Universities offer some educational programs on-line (UCLA, Carnegie Mellon, MIT, Duke, Harvard, Stanford to name a few). John Chambers, CEO of Cisco noted "schools and countries that ignore (virtual education) will suffer the same fate as big department stores that thought that e-commerce was over-rated". In Asia the concern is that only a handful of distance education providers will dominate the market and these will be principally from the west. Currently, seven out of ten
of the largest distance-learning corporations are in developing nations. Local academic institutions find it hard to compete and multinational corporations cream off the most lucrative markets. Educational officials in many parts of Asia find that they are no longer able to control the basic elements of the curriculum, language of instruction, pedagogical philosophies and other key elements of the educational delivery system at the tertiary level. Supporters of this trend, however, argue that an increase in distance learning opportunities will help satisfy the demand for increased access to higher education. Their view is that most Asian countries are in a financial bind anyway, so why not allow HE alternatives? Nevertheless, a number of issues continue to nag higher educational policy makers in Asia: regulation (licensing, accreditation), transferability of credits, quality assurance, professional mobility, culture and acculturation, and the risk of “trade creep” whereby educational policy issues are increasingly framed in terms of trade and economic benefit (Knight 2002)

The focus in this essay has been primarily on the public research university as exemplified by my own institution, the University of California, and in Asia by the large, national universities. The observations made herein
will apply more or less to smaller, undergraduate and liberal arts colleges or other types of tertiary institutions but in general many of them will hold true for most of higher education as we currently know it.

Earlier we asked if the university as we know it is an endangered species and if so what might it look like in the near future. Already it is beginning to take on some new characteristics which give us glimpse into the future. We can see an institution which is experiencing a shift in financial support with the state share declining and the non-state share increasing, leading to various forms of privatization. This has been accompanied by a subtle shift in mission toward “service”. The governance style is much more corporate than collegial, a shift away from faculty governance, while at the same time, experiencing a general decentralization with respect to central government agencies. Nevertheless, with respect to the remaining share of state support HEIs are being required to be much more accountable, in a formal sense, than in the past, what has been called “centralized decentralization” in Singapore, and the “Compact” in California.

As education is more and more viewed as a commodity, conventional HEIs are being challenged by aggressive distance education entities both domestically and internationally. Some are responding by forging closer
linkages with their own distance education units (university extension at UCLA for example) so that the university is poised to offer both traditional degree programs and more widespread on-line degree programs. This model is of great interest in Asia and it is likely we will see such hybrid efforts there as well.

Finally, in the context of globalization, research and development efforts are now cross national in scope to a degree not seen before, student access has been expanded across borders, and trans-national institutional ventures have been launched, sometimes in a welcome environment and sometimes (in the context of GATs) in a less than welcome setting. What seems to be clear is that the “national” university is in a stage of dramatic adaptation to a much more fluid global knowledge environment.

These are but a few of the issues facing higher education institutions and systems in the Asian Pacific region as well as the US as governments and universities seek to respond to the new challenges that are facing them. They will provide ample challenges for future research projects on both sides of the Pacific if not elsewhere.
SOURCES


