

The Senior Seminar conducted at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT) from March 24-26, 2014 was oriented by the following concept paper to which all participants responded

The Changing Roles and Purposes of Graduate Education in Asia Pacific Higher Education

Deane Neubauer and John Hawkins, APHERP

Introduction:

It has become commonplace to note that one prominent feature of contemporary globalization is the “speeding up of change” (Harvey, 1990). We find evidence of this assertion throughout social life and particularly in those portions of life being impacted by new information and communication technologies. A companion assertion holds that education in general and higher education in particular is stressed by what is familiarly termed the “alignment dilemma” by which is usually meant the lack of fit between the kinds of education and skills required in contemporary economies and those possessed by higher education graduates. We have discussed this issue in various other places (for example in the senior seminar held in Shanghai in November 2012 on 21st century work skills and competencies). We have also noted that the “disruption” movement in higher education takes form in part as an expression of this tension. (In this regard see Christensen, et. al. 2011). In the main, discussion along these lines has focused on undergraduate education.

APHERP will conduct a senior seminar on this subject to be held at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT) March 24-26.

In this concept paper, and in the Senior Seminar for which it is intended as an organizing tool, our attention will be on graduate education. In the following pages we will examine a range of propositions focused on the changing nature of graduate education. Our purpose is to create a frame of reference through which we can examine graduate education in relation to the many functions and purposes it has performed in society as well as initiate an assessment of other developments that it may usefully undergo as a result of the many transformations occurring in higher education, especially in the Asia Pacific region.

Some Contemporary Trends:

The following lists a set of observations about graduate education in the context of contemporary globalization.

1. Interdisciplinarity in M.A. and PhD dissertations is rising worldwide, especially in the Asia Pacific. The key assumption underlying the investments many HEIs are making in transdisciplinary research centers and training programs is “that cross-disciplinary research and training provide a stronger basis for achieving scientific and societal advances than unidisciplinary programs.” (Mitrany and Stokois, 2005).
2. Increased focus on STEM graduate work; especially in Asia. (ICEF Monitor 2012). Throughout the world there is a steadily increasing awareness that societal needs are occurring most rapidly in STEM fields, and that in terms of both employability and the value-added component of higher education and graduate education, qualification in STEM fields is increasingly important as well. This awareness is very strong in Asia (especially in India and China), and it is widely recognized throughout the world that Asia students in general outperform others in STEM related testing at pre-graduate levels.
3. In general one can observe an increase in international competition for the best students at both graduate and undergraduate levels. One feature of internationalization/globalization is that they have generally favored the west at the expense of HEIs in Asia and Pacific. This is beginning to change, as A&P HEIs get stronger (Enders and Jongbloed (eds.) 2007).
4. As indicated above, a major issue in all of tertiary education is workforce alignment with fields of study, which is becoming increasingly an issue in graduate education. Indeed, in some instances doctoral programs are subject to intense criticism because of their length and cost and the difficulties experienced by graduates in seeking employment. In the U.S. this has become an increasing critique of higher education as the proportion of teaching/research faculty hired on tenure track drops and that of contract faculty increases—the result being a “poor return on investment” in doctoral education. These dynamics in linking graduate education to workforce alignment are enhanced in an Asia and Pacific context (Luzer, 2013; Asian Development Bank, 2012).
5. In recent years the public policy sector in various countries has become increasingly involved in promoting collaboration between HEIs, employers and the public service realm to increase the alignment between HE and work. This phenomenon is just beginning to occur in Asia but because of the persistence of the issue, one can expect an increase in the reach and rate of these endeavors (Asia Society, 2011).
6. Regional cooperation is intensifying for graduate work within the Asia Pacific region. This has strong implications for non-Asian dominance of the best graduate students; hypothesis, as Asian HE improves, and “hubs” develop, the best students will stay in the region thus depriving traditional recipient nations of talented human resources (Cheng, Cheung, and Yeun, 2011).
7. In the work of APHERP we often repeat the proposition that events that occur in U.S. higher education are either a forerunner or an outlier. If they are outliers, then they tend to reflect the unique properties of the U.S. as an economy and society. However, as the largest economy in the world and as one that is situated

firmly in the center of globalization dynamics, it is often a forerunner. In this regard, it is useful to review *The Path Forward for Graduate Education in the US 2010*, which is a good summary of where graduate education is going in the US, and as such perhaps a harbinger for the rest of the world, Asia especially. A useful paper would be to test the proposition that this is a forerunner rather than an outlier. (Education Testing Service, 2010).

8. Diploma Disease (Credentialization). In 1976 Ronald Dore published a study called "The Diploma Disease" in which he argued "The 'bureaucratization of economic life' in all modern societies is making selection for jobs/careers by education attainment more and more universal." From this he argued that one could predict the flow of "credentialization" throughout an economy, for which the primary indicator was the university degree. At the time he was most concerned about Associate and Bachelor degrees. This proposition holds that the MA is the new BA leading to credentialism, a lack of alignment, the privileging of the symbolic value of graduate degrees etc. This proposition suggests an analysis, particularly throughout Asia, of the "back to the future" phenomenon in which graduate degrees are progressively displacing even BA/BS degrees as occupational requirements. Some (e.g. in Australia) have even begun to argue that this phenomenon is beginning to attach to the PhD as well (Collins, 2002).
9. Post-BA lack of employment and degree inflation: Joshua A. Boldt who has developed a variety of analyses of higher education focused on elements of political economy has recently argued that the relative dearth of post-BA employment contributes in a focused way to the expansion of graduate education as the expansion of MA and PhD education serves to absorb excess labor (Bolt, 2013).
10. One consequence of the rise of higher education tuition...throughout the world...has been the increased debt that students owe when receiving their degrees. In the United States this has become a major political issue with debt having reached a trillion dollars. The phenomenon is intensified when associated with graduate degrees. Again, this is a phenomenon that has begun to expand rapidly throughout Asia as more governments reduce their contributions to both undergraduate and graduate education, and as the role of private education looms larger (Rowan, 2013).
11. The training doctoral students receive is not necessarily what they want, nor does it prepare them for the jobs they take (Walker, et. al. 2008). In the U.S. the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate has generated extensive conversations on the purpose of given doctoral programs and the rationale and educational purpose of each element of the program. Walker et. al. performed much of the work for this project and report on it in the work cited above.
12. Many students do not clearly understand what doctoral study entails, how the process works, and how to navigate it effectively. These findings initially derived from a U.S. study appear to be replicated in Asia Survey results (Nyquist and Woodford, 2000).

13. Satisfaction with graduate education is strongly linked to choice: students want curricula broad enough to give them a choice of careers, they want information to ensure that their choices are informed, and they want the choices they make to be respected (Graduate Assembly, 2010; BGSU 2007).
14. There is an oversupply of Ph.D.'s for academic positions in a variety of disciplines, an unintended consequence of a variety of societal pressures including the increased use of part-time faculty in universities. To date this has been mostly a US phenomenon, but is increasing in some countries (e.g. Australia). Yet, the situation in other Asia countries (e.g. Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos) is one of shortage. Again, this can be viewed as another form of the alignment issue, in this case having to do with the cumulative effects of national histories, policies and support for higher education in general. In situations where shortages occur, this can either be the cause or effect of broader structural issues that affect quality in graduate higher education. (On this situation in Vietnam, see Lan, 2011).
15. Stakeholders in doctoral education have conflicting views about doctoral education, including its purpose, enrollment practices, and methods of training. A matter of increasing concern in the US, this conversation is beginning to occur in Asia. (See for example: Yefonova, 2011 and Wendler 2012).
16. However, there is widespread agreement among stakeholders on an agenda for improving doctoral education, including
 - a. Shortening the time to degree,
 - b. Developing more diversity among Ph.D. recipients,
 - c. Preparing doctoral students for a wider variety of careers, and
 - d. Making interdisciplinary work more integral to doctoral education
 These data are from a US Pew study (Nyquist and Woodford, 2000); how much of these kinds of factors are becoming evident in various Asian contexts? (NSF, 2000)

The Task at Hand

Graduate education throughout the world is responding in one way or another to the many forces acting upon it in various national and multinational settings. The propositions above suggest some of the dimensions of such changes and their implications. The goal of this APHERP senior seminar is to create a more comprehensive frame for an investigation of these phenomena and to suggest linkages across national and regional borders. Participants to the seminar should feel free to select one or more of these topics on which to write, or to develop another and/or related topic.

Each participant to the seminar will be expected to contribute a paper. These will be fully discussed during the seminar (and notes taken). At its conclusion the papers will be developed into a prospectus for publication by a major international publisher. A seminar paper of approximately 4000 words would be optimal. When the papers are

accepted for publication, the editor (s) will contact each contributor with discrete suggestions for revision. Contributors will also receive a copy of all discussion notes taken during the seminar, as these are often very useful to framing those revisions.

The general timeline we will follow will ask you to contribute a working title of the paper by January 31. By Feb. 21 we would want an abstract of the paper. This allows us to develop an effective schedule for the seminar. The paper will be due two weeks prior to the seminar, which in this case is March 10. If you intend to present your paper with a ppt, this would be due to staff one week prior to the meeting, or March 17.

Please direct all inquiries to Ms. Peggy Higa, HigaP@eastwestcenter.org.

References:

Asia Development Bank 2012. "Improving Transitions from School to University to Workplace." Available at: <http://www.adb.org/publications/improving-transitions-school-university-workplace>. Accessed Jan 14, 2014.

Asia Society, 2011. "National Public Education Support Fund: Singapore and Shanghai". Available at: <http://www.npesf.org/singapore-shanghai>. Accessed January 16, 2014.

Boldt , Joshua A., 2013. "Masters is the new bachelors", *Order of Education*, February 28, 2013, <http://www.orderofeducation.com/degree-inflation/> Accessed January 21, 2014.

Bowling Green State University 2007. *Report of the Results of the BGSU Graduate Student Survey*. Available at: <http://www2.bgsu.edu/downloads/finance/file41283.pdf> Accessed January 18, 2014.

Christensen, Clayton M, Michael B. Horn, Louis Caldera and Louis Soares 2011. *Disrupting College: How Disruptive Innovation Can Deliver Quality and Affordability to Postsecondary Education*. Center for American Progress. Available at: www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/02/disrupting_college.html. Accessed Nov. 23, 2012

Cheng, Yin Cheong, Alan C.K. Cheung, Timothy W.W. Yeun, 2011. "Development of a Regional Education Hub: the Case of Hong Kong." *International Journal of Education Management*. Vol. 25, No. 5. pp. 474-493.

Collins, Randall, 2002. The Dirty Little Secret of Credential Inflation, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 27, Volume 49, Issue 5, Page B20

Education Testing Service, 2012. *The Path Forward: The Future of Graduate Education in the United States*. Available at: <http://www.fgereport.org/>. Accessed January 16, 2014.

Enders, Urgan and Ben Jongbloed, editors, 2007. *Public-Private Dynamics of Higher Education: Expectations, Developments and Outcomes*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Graduate Assembly 2010. "2010 Graduate Satisfaction Survey," Available at: <http://ga.berkeley.edu/files/page/surveyreport.pdf>. Accessed January 18, 2014.

Harvey, David, 1990, *The Condition of Post Modernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.

ICEF Monitor 2012. "Demand for STEM programming continues to rise: countries race to meet it." Available at: <http://monitor.icef.com/2012/11/demand-for-stem-continues-to-increase/>

Lan, Bui Phuong 2011. "Quality as Key in Vietnam's Passage to Education Integration" in Neubauer and Tanaka, eds. *Access, Equity and Capacity in Asia Pacific Higher Education*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Luzer, Daniel 2013. "The Decline of Academic Tenure." *Washington Monthly*. Available at:

http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/college_guide/blog/the_decline_of_academic_tenure.php
Accessed Jan 14, 2014.

Mitrany, Michael and Daniel Stokois, 2005). "Gauging the Transdisciplinary Qualities and Outcomes of Doctoral Training Programs." Available at:
<http://jpe.sagepub.com/content/24/4/437.short>. Accessed Jan. 14, 2014.

National Science Foundation 2000. *Graduate Education Reform in Europe, Asia and the Americas and International Mobility of Scientists and Engineers*. Available at:
<http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/nsf00318/foreword.htm> Accessed January 18, 2014.

Nyquist, Jody D. and Bettina J. Woodford. 2000. "Re-envisioning the Ph.D.: What Concerns Do We Have?" Pew Charitable Trusts. Available at:
<http://depts.washington.edu/envision/resources/ConcernsBrief.pdf>. Accessed January 18, 2014.

Rowan, Rachel 2013. "Student Loans Around the Globe." Available at:
<http://www.tuition.io/blog/2013/06/student-loans-around-the-globe/> Accessed January 16, 2014.

Walker, George E., Chris M. Golde, Laura Jones, Andrea Conklin Bueschel, and Pat Hutchings. *The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wendler, C., Bridgeman, B., Markle, R., Cline, F., Bell, N., McAllister, P., and Kent, J. 2012.

Pathways Through Graduate School and Into Careers. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Available at: http://pathwaysreport.org/rsc/pdf/19089_PathwaysRept_Links.pdf. Accessed January 18, 2014.

Yefanova, Diana 2011. Stakeholder View Congruence on Cross-Border Graduate Double Degree Program Implementation in Australia, Japan and the United States. Digital Conservancy, University of Minnesota. Available at:
<http://conservancy.umn.edu/handle/11299/116052>. Accessed January 16, 2014.