HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The article reviews the trends in higher education internationally and links these changes to new policy developments in higher education in South Africa. The paper then reflects on the implications of these changes at the institutional level and the way the process of transformation can be managed. Issues touched on include the appointment of managers and the training of managers to better cope with their portfolios. A strategic approach to management is recommended and the notion of creating a learning organisation emerges from time to time. A caution is raised about treating students as customers if indeed they are customers, and the significance and role of leadership in any organization is commended to higher education institutions as well.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has been said to be experiencing a permanent state of change, Vaill's "permanent white water" (Vaill, 1996:xiv). As societal problems and challenges increase, so does society's expectation that higher education (HE) should address these issues and help solve the problems. Somehow though, HE seems not to live up to these expectations. In the USA, Woodward, Love and Komives speak of "growing public frustration" with institutions that are unresponsive, costly and lack accountability (2000:2). The same authors cite a 1998 initiative of the American Council on Education and the Kellogg Foundation to understand transformation, where it was found that "transformational change is deep, pervasive, intentional,

and long-term; it is organic and requires holistic and integrated thinking; and it requires new approaches to student affairs, faculty development, pedagogy, assessment, and community involvement" (Woodward et al, 2000:36).

In South Africa, the most important challenge facing the HE community must be the transformation of the HE system triggered by the political changes of the past decade. This transformation, initiated by the central government and driven largely from the top, originated with the peaceful political transition of 1994 and subsequent attempts by the new government to re-integrate South Africa into the world community (Kishun, 1998). The fact that the government was serious about change in the HE arena became increasingly clear with progressive actions, pronouncements and the publication of a string of important documents. While it is evident that some of the proposed HE system changes are based on worldwide trends, others have a particular South African flavour and are motivated by the desire to overcome the injustices of the past.

Worldwide, numerous developments have taken and are taking place which are influencing higher education systems everywhere. These include, inter alia, globalisation and internationalisation, a reduction in public funding for social purposes and calls for increased accountability for the spending of public funds, new approaches to knowledge management, and an increased focus on quality and the management of quality. These developments have given rise to changes in HE, such as new ways of managing HE institutions (managerialism), the search for alternative sources of funding, focusing on the market and defining the "customer", changes to governance, new approaches to teaching, learning and research, and a re-look at quality systems and accreditation. These developments and trends are ignored by institutional managements at their peril. Most, if not all, it can be argued translate directly into managerial challenges for different levels and groupings of institutional management. If ignored, institutions are likely to face increased marginalisation and possible obsolescence. As Clark (1998:5) puts it, "ambitious universities and universities concerned about their marginality, and even their survivability, cannot depend on old habits of weak steering". He goes on to suggest that institutions, and by implication their

managements, must quickly respond to changing demands and that this requires a "strengthened steering core", which can differ from institution to institution but which must embrace both, central management, as well as academic departments.

In this paper, some international trends appertaining to higher education throughout many countries of the world, as well as specific South African trends occasioned in large measure by changes to HE policy dictated by the education authorities, are discussed. This discussion is followed by some suggestions that might aid South African HE institutions in managing their transformation, and a conclusion.

2. TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

2.1 South African Trends and Challenges

The "new" government's determination to effect transformation in the higher education sector is reflected in a series of planning and policy documents published since the African National Congress (ANC) came to power in 1994. Some of these are: the 1996 National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) report; the Department of Education's (DoE's) White Paper "A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education" (DoE, 1997); the report by the Shape and Size of Higher Education Task Team of the Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2000); the National Plan for Higher Education (DoE, 2001); and the draft document entitled "A New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education" (DoE, 2002).

The key challenge for HE in South Africa as stated in various of the above documents is "to redress past inequalities and to transform the higher education system to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities" (DoE, 1997; DoE, 2001). The principles and values which must be promoted explicitly are: equity and redress; democratisation; development; quality; effectiveness and efficiency; public accountability; institutional autonomy; and academic freedom (DoE, 1997; CHE, 2000). While South Africa cannot escape the impact of global trends and challenges the need to address the inequities of the past

clearly places an added onus on South African higher education.

Whether this need to redress and transform has been fully realised and accepted at institutional level or whether it at this stage is primarily centrally driven by the education authorities, is something only time will tell. There can be little doubt though, that HE institutions wanting to continue to dip into public coffers for funding will have to demonstrate a willingness to actively pursue the above values and principles. Lip-service is unlikely to be condoned.

More specifically, institutions are going to be expected to contribute to the achievement of system goals spelt out in the National Plan (DoE, 2001), such as: providing "increased access, irrespective of race, gender, age, creed, class or disability …"; redressing "past inequalities" with respect to both students and staff; "… addressing regional and national needs in social and economic development"; "building research capacity"; and building "regional collaboration between institutions". The National Plan also outlines six specific outcomes to be achieved. These include an increased participation rate, increased graduate outputs, a broadened social base of students, increased recruitment of students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), changed numbers of enrolments by field of study, and enhanced cognitive skills of graduates (DoE, 2001). To achieve all of these system outcomes, the education authorities will require the active support and collaboration of HE institutions, who will have to co-operate if they wish to avoid coercive measures.

Examples of particular targets and benchmarks in the National Plan that cannot be realised without such institutional co-operation include firstly, an increase within the next ten to fifteen years in the participation rate in HE from the present 15% to 20%. Secondly, certain benchmarks for increased graduate output rates stated in the plan will have to be met, although it is emphasized that these increases "must not be at the expense of the quality of academic outputs". Indeed, it is made quite clear that notwithstanding the quality assurance task of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), institutions are required to establish and develop their own quality assurance mechanisms. The need to

focus on academic development or foundation programmes is also highlighted as a priority in the quest for improved output rates.

In order to meet the broadened social base outcome, institutions will be expected to actively recruit "non-traditional students, i.e. workers, mature learners, in particular women, and the disabled". The need to recruit students from the SADC region, which results from the SADC protocol in terms of which member states must allocate a maximum of 10% of their student places for students from other SADC countries, will also require attention. Moreover, the Department of Education will endeavour "to shift the balance in enrolments and outputs between the humanities, business and commerce and science, engineering and technology … from the current ratio of 49%: 26%: 25% to a ratio of 40%: 30%: 30%, respectively". Although the detail of how this is to be achieved is not yet entirely clear, it must be assumed that at the very least institutions will be expected to play an active or supportive role in achieving these benchmarks set by higher authority.

Then there is the reality of a government-induced reduction of HE institutions from previously 36 to 21 (Macozoma, 2002). Through mergers and the dissolution of Vista University the numbers of universities and technikons will be reduced and two new types of institution, the "comprehensive institution" and the "institutes for higher education (for Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape) will be born. While not all institutions are equally affected by these changes, those that are, will be certain to face major new challenges and opportunities. These challenges will revolve around the smooth integration of campuses, programmes, faculty and students into newly formed institutions. In some of the agreed mergers which are coming, the management efforts required to ensure relatively smooth and trouble-free transitions, are likely to be considerable. Institutional managements will probably have to pay a great deal of attention to involving staff members in these changes. One recent case study (Viljoen & Rothman, 2002) expressed concern that staff members at a particular institution did not believe they were involved in managing transformation. The authors concluded that managers of the institution required training in "transformational leadership, participative management and management of diversity" (2002:9).

2.2 Globalisation and Internationalisation

The concept of "globalisation" is commonly thought of in an economy and business context. It has been described as "the complex integration of capital, technology, and information across national boundaries in such a way as to create an increasingly integrated world market …" (Salmi, 2001:2). Countries and firms have no choice, but to compete globally. One may approve of globalization or not, but it is a fact and every country, every business organization and every working person are affected by it. Globalisation is clearly also a major present-day factor in higher education (Scott, 1998; Kishun, 1998; Salmi, 2001). Woodward, Love and Komives, citing Duncan, maintain that higher education is affected by the "forces of globalisation economic and financial, technological, political, and sociocultural" (Woodward et al, 2000). Yet, according to Deem, there appears to be little unanimity thus far about the effects of globalisation on educational policies (Deem, 2001:9-10). She has found that theoretical analyses of globalisation have revealed multi-faceted responses by institutions. In HE institutions, these responses might include organisational and cultural changes, funding changes, new ways of providing education, or attracting new groups of students.

Deem differentiates between globalisation "the global spread of business and services as well as key economic, social and cultural practices to a world market, often through multi-national companies and the internet" and internationalisation "the sharing of ideas, knowledge and ways of doing things in similar ways across different countries" (Deem, 2001:7). Kishun (1998:64) asserts that educators have little choice in regard to globalisation, whereas they are free to make specific and deliberate decisions with respect to internationalisation. Distinguishing between globalisation which emphasizes homogeneity, and internationalisation which emphasizes diversity "becomes critical in developing and sustaining collaborative programmes of mutual benefit with international partners" (Kishun, 1998:64).

The historically disadvantaged institutions in South Africa could help meet the country's needs and benefit from collaborative partnerships with international (as well as national and regional) institutions, in that such partnerships could assist them to become important Mode 2 knowledge generators. Mode 2 knowledge refers to knowledge "that relates to social rather than commercial relevance" (Subotzky, in Kishun, 1998). Kishun seems to agree with Subotzky when the latter expresses concern over what he sees as the Ministry of Education's "uncritical acceptance of the globalisation agenda" (Kishun, 1998:61). He also states that "engaging in international competitiveness does not imply uncritical submission to the forces of globalization" (Kishun 1998:68).

One result of growing globalisation is the increased attractiveness of educational qualifications with international recognition, "especially in management-related fields" (Salmi, 2001:6).

2.3 Reduction in public funding of higher education

A major trend in many Western countries has been the reduction in public spending for public services (Deem, 2001:9). In America, this "fiscal nightmare" began in the 1980s (Woodward et al, 2000:2). Keller (1997:4) refers to the "continuing crisis of state budgets", while Duderstadt maintains that demand for public funding of HE has outstripped supply. Costs simply have escalated too fast, partially because of the "knowledge- and people-intensive nature of the enterprise" and partially because HE institutions are not renowned for their ability to contain costs and increase productivity (Duderstadt 2000:3).

This trend is also evident in South Africa, where for example the National Plan refers to financial constraints and does not anticipate any significant increase in government expenditure on HE, because of other pressing social needs which also require funding (DoE 2001:1.3 & 2.2). Earlier, Kishun also referred to the need to rely less on government funds (1998:60).

While the reasons for this decrease in public funding are many and varied, the fact that it is happening and is likely to continue to happen, must represent one of the most daunting challenges to individual HE institutions, both in South Africa and elsewhere, who must learn to "make ends meet" by looking for other sources

of income and cutting costs. It is little wonder then, that this trend alone probably accounts, at least in part, for many of the other trends that can be observed in higher education worldwide, including marketing focus, managerialism, emphasis on quality and outcomes orientation.

2.4 Marketing orientation

According to Deem (2001:9), "publicly funded institutions are themselves expected to enter or create a marketplace, adopting the practices and values of the private sector in so doing." Woodward et al see old distinctions between education and business, profit orientation vs. non-profit orientation, and students as clients, customers or consumers, as diminishing, if not disappearing; what matters primarily is to respond to the market (2000:4-5). The shift away from traditional (full-time) students towards other types of students, including part-time students, working students, stay-at-home students, mature students, weekend students, etc. has been mentioned by Salmi (2001: 5).

In marketing, a prime requirement is to know your customer. HE institutions adopting a marketing philosophy might be tempted to view students as their customer. Woodward et al caution against this and declare that it is more important to think of students as learners, than as customers. Otherwise institutions are likely to want to satisfy the customer needs of their students, rather than their educational needs (2000:34).

Regardless of whether or not they are thought of as customers, students come to HE institutions to learn. They, it must be assumed, have both a need and a want to learn. Little wonder then that the need to focus on learning is pointed out by various authors (Woodward et al, 2000:2; Salmi, 2001:6; Duderstadt, 2000:3). It may be more important though, for educators to "manage the process" than to control the content of what is learnt (Baxter Magolda, in Woodward et al, 2000).

Of particular interest to South Africa may be the finding reported by Woodward et al (2000:31) who mention studies confirming, "that learning occurs best among diverse people in diverse places and in diverse ways". They also claim that the challenge is to produce life-long learners, not just "graduates" (2000:34), but often the organisational mission emphasizes graduates.

HE institutions, although intimately involved in the creation and advancement of knowledge, are generally poor "learning organisations" themselves. Institutions must become "true" learning organisations, meaning that both students and faculty must accept that no-one can know everything there is to know ("... getting comfortable with not knowing"). Together they share much knowledge enabling them to jointly address organisational challenges.

2.5 New Managerialism

According to Deem (2001:10), researchers who have investigated this concept have found that "global and economic changes have led Western governments to question the funding, management and organisation of public services". In Germany, there appears to be a trend away from the centralised "legal-bureaucratic management of the university system" towards more autonomy and self-management by individual institutions (Johnes, 1999:5).

New managerialism refers to the idea that present business practices and approaches originating in the private sector have found application in the public sector and publically funded institutions, such as HE institutions. These could be practices as commonplace in business as the use of cost centres when budgeting, the encouragement of teamwork, the introduction of goals and targets and control mechanisms to monitor efficiency and effectiveness (Deem, 2001:10-11). Attempts to apply newer management approaches to managing the HE institution, such as re-engineering, total quality management, strategic management, performance management or the balanced scorecard approach, could also be seen to fall under the umbrella of new managerialism.

Not all of these concepts can be easily transferred from business to higher education, e.g. re-engineering terms like "internal" and "external customers" need to be carefully defined (Stahlke & Nyce, 1996:10). These authors point out that

administrative processes in HE are not primary business processes but support processes and that therefore the whole process of re-engineering must be driven by academic rather than administrative goals. They state that "issues such as appropriateness and effectiveness in teaching, learning, and research must count for more than administrative measures like efficiency and profit". Also, different types of HE institutions require different re-engineering (Stahlke & Nyce, 1996:10). No single approach to re-engineering is likely to work equally well for all types of HE institutions: research universities, comprehensive institutions, technikons, etc.

Woodward et al (2000:37) caution against the indiscriminate application of techniques from the business world, such as Total Quality Management (TQM) and Continuous Organisational Renewal (CORe), to higher education: firstly, because studies of these practices in major companies have not confirmed their unqualified usefulness (Birnbaum, in Woodward et al, 2000) and secondly, because the purposes, cultures and intended outcomes of HE institutions are very different from those of business organisations. Modification of these techniques is likely to be necessary, before they will fit and benefit higher education. Woodward et al also maintain that it is a myth that money drives quality. Money plays a role, but other factors may be equally important in having the top-rated programme or academic department (2000:44).

The need for a strategic approach to university management and for strategic decisions is pointed out by Johnes who sees the HE environment becoming very competitive (1999:520). Salmi points out that new forms of competition, for example distance education, are springing up as a result of globalisation and technology. Traditional institutions will face increased competition from "corporate universities" (institutions established to serve one corporation, e.g. IBM, Dow Chemical), up worldwide from 400 ten years ago to 1600 (plus) presently. By 2010 there may be more corporate universities than traditional campus-based universities in the world, with more and more of them serving smaller companies, rather than the very large corporations. A form of unusual competition comes from "academic brokers" who aim to bring "together suppliers and consumers of educational services." (Salmi, 2001:7-9). All

these developments emphasize the need for strategic management in HE institutions. Issues requiring strategic thinking include "governance, organizational structure and modes of operation", whereby traditional disciplines may have to be organised differently: e.g. "molecular biology and biotechnology, advanced materials science, microelectronics, information systems, robotics, intelligent systems and neuroscience, and environmental science and technology" (Salmi, 2001:10). Inter- and multidisciplinary co-operation may well become the order of the day and inter- and multidisciplinary programmes may well be logical outcomes of these considerations and this co-operation.

In the South African context, there may well be additional strategic issues to consider. For example, should we resist the Minister of Education's merger plan, or: should we become a private institution, independent of government funds?

Just how widely new managerialism has found acceptance in the management of higher education and, indeed, will continue to be practised, is not yet clear. New managerialism is probably partially the result of reductions in government funding of HE institutions in a number of Western countries. But, according to Coffield (in Deem, 2001:11), finance may not be "the only driver" of changes in the management of higher education institutions. Other factors in the trend towards new managerialism may well have been: (1) the massification of higher education and the resultant need to cope with vastly increased student numbers; (2) the advent of more competition in the form of distance learning institutions, international competitors, private HE institutions, corporate universities and virtual universities; and (3) the increased complexity of institutions.

Most of these factors can be said to be evident in South African higher education as well. To the extent that they are present in individual institutions, new managerialism presents a challenge, in that it makes managerial skills and competency an imperative for progress, even survival.

It should be noted however, that new managerialism in the sense of professional managers taking over the running of HE organisations has a downside as well. The freedom and power of

academics who now have to answer to non-academics is greatly curbed. The effect this will have on organisational culture and morale is unlikely to be only positive (Deem, 2001: 11).

2.6 Massification and post-massification

Although the beginnings of mass education in the United States can be traced back to earlier origins, it was in the decades following World War II that "higher education expanded from its traditional role of educating the elite … to providing mass education" (Duderstadt, 2000:1).

Many countries have experienced a move to a mass higher education system (Deem, 2001:11). In the USA, the heyday of massification was from 1950 to 1960 (Zemsky, 1998), while the period 1969 to 1974 is seen as the last stage of massification and the years thereafter as the first stages of post-massification. Europe and Japan were propelled towards massification by the revolutions of 1968. In Japan, the change from massification to post-massification will, according to Arimoto (in Zemsky, 1998), inter alia result in the following outcomes: there will be increasing privatisation of higher education; the scale, scope and price of higher education will become more and more dependent on market forces; the quality of higher education will be kept in check through new forms of accreditation; educational outcomes will become increasingly important for ensuring quality and institutional accountability; and, psychological stress within the HE institutions will increase. Likely changes as a result of post-massification, according to Arimoto, include but are not limited to: new demands for academic productivity; changes in student populations; and, changes in pedagogy. Zemsky (1998) mentions another post-massification challenge such as the "price-income squeeze", whereby the trend for costs of education is upward while the returns that result are diminishing. He speaks of students as shoppers who buy their higher education "one course at a time". While Zemsky admits that there are differences between the Japanese and American situations, he feels that Arimoto's framework "comes remarkably close to describing the current condition of postsecondary education in the United States".

South Africa is still caught up between post-apartheid efforts towards massification and the pressures of post-massification as put forward by Arimoto and Zemsky. The National Plan for Higher Education foresees an increased participation rate for the age group 20 to 24, from 15% at present to 20% over the next 10 to 15 years (DoE, 2001: 22-23), an increase of 33%. Some pressures are the result of national education policy. For instance, enhanced academic productivity is implicit in the demand for increased graduate output in the National Plan.

Ensuring that relevant curricula, sufficient and competent faculty, and administrative systems are in place that will permit South African HE institutions to continue to enrol greater student numbers over the next 10 to 15 years, presents a major challenge to these institutions. Dealing with the post-massification stresses at the same time can only add to this challenge.

2.7 Knowledge, research, technology and knowledge management

Duderstadt (2000:2) speaks of a "knowledge-based society" and "knowledge-intensive products". He and others refer to the importance of knowledge to economic development (Duderstadt, 2000:2; Salmi, 2001:3). Learning the facts and memorizing specific information is less important than learning to change information into new knowledge and learning to apply that knowledge. What is important is to seek information, analyse it, draw logical conclusions and solve problems. "Competencies such as learning to work in teams, peer teaching, creativity, resourcefulness and the ability to adjust to change are … among the new skills which employers value in the knowledge economy." (Salmi, 2001:6). Woodward et al (2000:3) affirm the importance of knowledge it tends to give wealth, prestige and power but they see it as a means for developing "wisdom", which they define as "knowledge infused with experience, perspective, and content". Higher education must give learners not only knowledge but the ability to be "wise". It is possible to acquire knowledge individually, but "social interactive settings" are necessary for achieving "wisdom" (Woodward et al, 2000:31).

Research, next to teaching the primary activity of higher education, is responsible for higher eduction's role in the generation of new knowledge. Woodward et al (2000:5) refer to the trend away from basic towards applied research, mainly in response to an increasing market orientation of HE institutions and as a result of private sector partnerships. Salmi (2001:3) points out that in many fields there is little difference between basic and applied science and research. He cites molecular biology and computer science as examples. It is also a fact that HE, if indeed it ever had, does no longer have any claim to being the only producer of new knowledge. Salmi reports that "it is estimated that firms devote one-third of their investment to knowledge-based intangibles such as training, research and development, patents, licensing, design and marketing" (2001:3).

Technology is impacting on many spheres of higher education, which is becoming increasingly reliant on it (Woodward et al, 2000:5). In 1996, Stahlke and Nyce still saw technology as playing a minor, adjunct role in the process of teaching and learning (1996:4). In the meantime though, it has made its power felt in higher education in a variety of ways. New technological tools are forcing faculty to take another look at the entire processes of teaching and learning. An example of a pedagogical innovation is a Brazilian example, whereby the dropout rates in mathematics in some medicine and engineering schools have decreased dramatically (from 70 to 30%) after some computer-based programmes were introduced (Salmi, 2001:13).

Other forms of HE such as distance and virtual education depend on various technologies. In the USA, "new universities are designed and constructed without a library building because all students are expected to use computers to access online digital libraries and data bases" (Salmi, 2001:14). Wiring of campuses and internet connectivity are becoming more and more important (Bernstein, in Salmi, 2001:14).

Physical distance between the institution and learner has decreased in importance. This results in increased international competition, because a HE institution in any country can start to offer its programmes anywhere in the world. Formal national recognition and accreditation of foreign qualifications may become relatively unimportant, as long as there is recognition by well-known institutions around the world (such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, etc.) (Salmi, 2001:7).

Duderstadt (2000:2) makes the observation that it is the powerful new information technologies - computers, networks, telecommunications - that are responsible, at least in part, for the evolution of the knowledge-based society. Because the power of technology is increasing a hundred-fold every ten years (Duderstadt, 2000:2), this opens up new opportunities but also challenges for managing the similarly vast increases in knowledge. In a way, we are looking at two distinct but interdependent explosions, that of knowledge and that of technology's power.

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY SOUTH AFRICAN HIGHER E D U C A - TION INSTITUTIONS

This section deals with a variety of suggestions extracted from both higher education and management literature. The author believes these suggestions might be of assistance to institutions in their endeavours to transform and survive. What seems clear is that HE institutions in South Africa will benefit from enhancing their management skills and their managerial competence. In this connection it may not be all that important whether or not institutions see themselves as succumbing to the demands, quirks (and the fad?) of "new managerialism". What is likely to matter is that institutions, as part of their endeavours to become "learning organisations", make a point of learning how to manage themselves better. Institutional managements may have to embark on a variety of actions. Possibilities of such actions include, but are not limited to: (1) appointing qualified and experienced managers in certain key management positions; (2) providing academics aspiring to leadership positions with opportunities to improve their management competencies; (3) introducing performance evaluation and performance management systems for academics that include managerial performance and goal achievement; (4) ensuring widespread support by faculty, students and the education authorities for

the organisational mission and goals; (5) reviewing existing organisational structures and reporting relationships, in terms of their contribution towards goal achievement; (6) taking active steps to influence organisational culture in a positive way; and (7) installing suitable monitoring mechanisms to ensure progress toward organisational goals.

Other actions that could be contemplated by institutions in their quest for survival are mentioned in the following sections. Some are not as explicit as others. Some are downright practical in nature and should be easy to implement. Others might require careful thought and evaluation before any action is taken.

3.1 Funding constraints

Woodward *et al* (citing some other authors) mention privatisation and down-sizing and entrepreneurial actions, e.g. contracting out services and developing research parks, as possibilities for private funding (2000:4). The same authors believe that what is required is fundamental re-organisation for effectiveness and efficiency, so that productivity can be increased and costs contained (2000:36).   While institutions may opt not to engage on that particular route, there is no reason why pockets of any individual university or technikon could not become entrepreneurial or more appropriately, "intrapreneurial". Intrapreneurship, seen as a process whereby any individual within an organisation sees the need for innovation and does something about it (Daft & Marcic, 1998:183) is clearly an option open to different departments, schools and faculties of HE institutions.

3.2 Strategic orientation

Institutional managements should adopt a strategic viewpoint (Salmi, 2001:20). This could entail embarking on well established business practices like strategic planning or opting for newer approaches like the Balanced Score Card approach. Older models and tools like the Boston Consulting Group's portfolio framework (the socalled BCG Matrix) or Michael Porter's "five forces model" (Stoner, Freeman and Gilbert, 1995:273-275) could prove useful in institutions wanting to review their programme mix or analyse the competitive scene.

3.3 Students

Institutions must guard against the lip service of calling students customers and professing to be student-centered, but never going "beyond the promise of a platitude, because the philosophy is not evidenced in practice" (Woodward *et al*, 2000:34). Students' needs and promises made should guide action, which should include reasonable customer service, for example administrative services after normal office hours but when students are present on campus. Courses should be well planned and the offering thereof pedagogically sound.

Support should be available from qualified student affairs professionals who understand the important issues, such as student learning, multiculturalism and diversity, social issues (e.g. alcohol, drugs, gambling, violence), assessment, financial aid, etc. Woodward *et al*, referring to the American situation, point out that diversity and multiculturalism are stressors for students and cause tension on campuses. The need for "political correctness" stifles conversation and results in the unwillingness to talk about race, sexual orientation and ethnicity (2000:24-25).

Furthermore, institutions should guard against viewing the undergraduate as the only student that matters. Graduate students also have needs: for orientation, for academic skills and advice and for career advice and services (Woodward *et al*, 2000:21).

It can also be argued that in the interests of eliminating any remaining vestiges of discrimination in South African HE institutions, the needs of one group should not be permitted to predominate over those of other groups. This may well require active involvement by institutional managements and clear policies.

3.4 Learning-centred education

Woodward *et al* (2000) point out the public demand for paying attention to the learner. They mention a variety of factors responsible for this, including "the changing mix of students, the changing nature of the workforce, and changing pedagogies".

While the aforementioned authors refer to American higher education, all of these factors would appear to be applicable to South Africa as well. Learning-centred education is seen as a prerequisite for a sustainable society, i.e. a society "that satisfies its needs without jeopardising the prospects of future generations".

Although the trend has been towards "outcomes-based" in all of South African education, some higher education institutions are likely to be experiencing the need to become learning and learner-centred (and less teacher and teaching-centred) as a formidable challenge.

Woodward et al cite the American Association for Higher Education's learning principles, some of which can be clearly seen to be challenges for institutional managements (2000:32). For example: the "educational climate" has to be right for learning to occur; learning requires opportunities to use what has been learnt; learning is grounded in particular contexts "…and requires effort to transfer specific knowledge and skills to other circumstances…".

3.5 Leadership

The importance of effective leadership is generally acknowledged for all types organisation throughout the world. According to Anton Rupert (1990), there are sixteen major requirements for constructive leadership. Three of these, which seem to the author to have particular relevance for South African HE institutions at the present time, are highlighted here. Firstly, there is courage and boldness: leaders must believe in themselves and take control of the task at hand. Secondly, leaders must display "common sense". This implies balanced judgment, which is the result of "a combination of intelligence and experience". Lastly leaders, especially top leaders, have to have "the ability to see diverse components of a business as a whole and to assess rapidly what is important" they have to be generalists.

Nasser and Vivier (1993) conducted some research in the turbulent pre-1994 era to identify differences between "new generation, counter-trend" organisations which were performing well economically despite the environmental turbulence prevalent at the time, and more traditional organisations which exhibited below-average levels of performance. Not surprisingly, leadership was found to play a critical role in organisational performance under conditions of turmoil, socio-economic instability and future uncertainty. Leadership is emphasised as a team effort, rather than one individual's responsibility.

According to these researchers it is necessary to "inspire with pack leadership", said to be an "almost unique South African (leadership) style" (Nasser & Vivier, 1993:108-109). They describe pack leadership as a "mixture between benevolent dictatorship, cultivated autocracy … and shuttle collaboration". The pack leader believes that teamwork is everything, allows opposite viewpoints to be heard and encourages strong contenders to emerge from the pack. In an effort to create new perspectives, unusual, counter-trend ideas are pursued. On the other hand, the roles of weaker team members are marginalised and divisive behaviour is not tolerated.

While Nasser and Vivier's work focused on creating the right mindset, seen as an important "determinant of survival and success", in new generation business organisations, their findings may well be of interest to new generation HE institutions:

New generation organisation executives provide focus and vision, are by their very nature innovative, will advance calculated risk, promote experimentation and try uncharted territories. They craft unconventional solutions and defy the odds as they drive toward the future. The leaders have positive mindsets, substantial self-confidence and persevere in the face of difficult challenges. (Nasser & Vivier, 1993:154).

A word of caution: effective leadership does not automatically equate with empowerment. Robbins (1996:443) points out that while it is true that empowering leaders must motivate, coach, encourage, provide vision, etc., and while more and more situations require an empowering approach, leadership cannot be shared under all conditions. In other words, in some situations directive, task-oriented leadership is still appropriate.

4.   CONCLUSION

The old adage that "you cannot be all things to all people" is probably as applicable to higher education, as it is to business and other types of organisations. The major challenge for institutional managements, be they central managerial groups or middle level academic managers may well be to find the niche that is most compatible with the institution's or unit's inherent strengths and the opportunities that exist in its environment. In pursuing this goal, South African institutions will have to take into account the course charted for higher education in the National Plan (DoE, 2001) and the new Higher Education Policy (DoE, 2002). Regardless of who within the institution is ultimately deemed responsible for achieving institutional objectives, institutions are likely to have to embrace well-established management principles and practices, including an enhanced focus on leadership, strategic management, exemplary human resource management, meaningful organisational practices and suitable control mechanisms.

To the extent that the required managerial skills and competencies are lacking in institutions, they must either be developed or acquired, or both. Above average management ability will be necessary, not only at central institutional management level, but also at the level of academic departments and supporting functions, such as administration and student affairs. It can only be hoped that in the interests of the country as a whole, South African Higher Education will live up to the challenge.

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