



# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY TRANSFORMATION

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For the past quarter century, Higher Education (HE) has been high on the agenda of Governments and central to the fortune of nations. But there is a danger of believing that planning in HE and University transformation commenced in the 1980s. Such a view underplays the role of previous decades. The process may have developed over time and in response to changing external circumstances but it is fallacy to suppose that it is an invention of the 1980s. However it is true that during the past two decades the concept of planning has taken off with all seriousness in HE Institutions. This same period has seen quite massive changes in direction; in the complexity of systems, in the underlying rationale which has accompanied such changes in the sheer size of the enterprise in terms of students, staff and budgets, not to mention social and economic purpose. The whole education process between the students 'the consumers' and the teachers 'the producers' is a 'team effort' and also that it is not fixed in format since it allows tutor and tutee to vary the nature of HE to optimal effect.

HE is not one thing and it has no one future, it has 'Three Thousand Futures' as reported in the Carnegie Council of the 1970s entitled their last report on the US system 'Three Thousand Futures' (Carnegie Council, 1980). It is not surprising then that the study of higher education itself has broadened and now encompasses

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some 20 different disciplines, ranging from Anthropology through to Women's Studies, each with its own particular paradigms, methodologies and perspectives.

Against this background, the comparative analysis of higher education policy which has always occupied a crucial place in understanding the contextual setting of reform in individual countries, has acquired a new significance as the pace of 'internationalization' itself quickens. This insight is particularly important for Third World Nations, which find themselves dependent on the more central, larger and older academic systems in the major industrialized nations. It is crucial to understand the positions of the Third World Universities in this basically unequal academic and intellectual system.

Particularly India has the third largest University system in the world with more than 12 million students enrolled in its Universities, which is under 2% of the age group in Higher Education (Philip G Atbach, p.no 57, 'Higher Education in the Third World'). Even though there have been major efforts to expand higher education in India, the academic system tends to serve a small and relatively elite sector of the population. Indian Universities are reeling under the strain of doubling or tripling academic systems in a decade or so has been great, both in financial and human terms. In the recent times there has been a significant shift in the direction of the Higher Education Policy in India, in part simulated by Western experts, who argued that the development of Higher Education would lead to economic growth and political stability and in part in response to the demands of indigenous elite, India is now putting substantial resources into post secondary education (James Coleman Ed 1968). Universities in India tend to be linked through historical tradition and contemporary realities with the major academic systems in the industrialized nations - particularly Britain, the United States and France. "Even the Chinese, who attempted during the period of the Cultural Revolution to radically reorient their Higher Education system and to move away from Western and Soviet models and norms, found that their efforts failed and they drastically moved back towards a Western conception of Higher Education" (Susan Shrik; pp. 183 - 217).

But HE everywhere is undergoing a sea change. With complexities and uncertainties now endemic no one knows with any degree of confidence what the 21<sup>st</sup> century holds in store for Universities. How to proceed? One answer stands out: Step by step, learn by experimenting. Let us also remember in the domain of Universities theory cannot aim for exacting one size - fits all. But we can aim for explanatory categories that stretch across the majority of the Universities in the world.

There are many reasons why this should be so: the creation of new economic block; the gradual emergence of a national policy for higher education, the triumph

of the industrial ethnic and the collapse of another, the rise of new economies in Asia, etc. The breakdown of a seemingly established order has ushered in a renewed interest in other models of higher education and in how other nations are going about tackling often similar issues though in different ways.

Universities around the globe have become very complex institutions requiring of their administrative staff professional commitment, the exercise of sophisticated skills and the shouldering of responsibilities at levels scarcely imagined by their predecessors of twenty five years ago. But their role nevertheless remains the same. They do and should continue to work quietly, unobtrusively and effectively beyond the limelight of academic staff. Fielden and Lockwood (1973: 186) declared 'Universities require administrations of high caliber... to provide an efficient service to support the operations and developments of the University... which in turn depends upon the motivation and quality of its members.

The Universities of the world have entered a time of disquieting turmoil that has no end in sight. As the difficulties of the Universities mounted across the globe during the last quarter of the twentieth century, HE lost whatever steady state it may have once possessed. Since expanding demands will not relent, conditions of constancy cannot return. The expansion of student demand continues virtually without end. More students and more different types of students of all ages appear at the doors of Universities and colleges to be diversely and repeatedly educated in a growing array of subjects and programs of educational renewal. Knowledge based enterprises in the economy and society create an expanding and rapidly changing professional labor market for which Universities are expected to provide competent graduates. Governments expect Universities to do more for society in solving economic and social problems, but at the same time they back and fill in their financial support and become unreliable patrons. Most important, the research base of the University world rapidly creates new knowledge and technique, steadily increasing specialties and stretching the range of disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. Universities are based on knowledge but no University or set of Universities can stop or even seriously slow its international growth. Caught in the swell of knowledge production, even the richest institutions find full coverage of old and new fields beyond their capability.

Universities are caught up in grand contradictions: with less money, do more and more, maintain as always the expanding cultural heritage, the best of the past, but quickly and flexibly develop new fields of study and modes of thought; relate to everyone's demand because all are "stake holders". Modern Universities today have become "over extended, under focused; overstressed, under funded" (Vest, 1995). Pushed and pulled by enlarging, interacting streams of demand, Universities

are pressured to change their faculties, and modernize their increasingly expensive physical plant and equipment - and to do so more rapidly than ever since traditional fields of study are bypassed, others fall into disarray. With the humanities now highly vulnerable critics contend that Universities do not know where they are going, even that they have lost their souls. We can be sure that if Universities are not to lose their bearings while exploring new possibilities and adding new activities, they will need not only to maintain but also to reconstitute many of their traditional offerings.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Universities are expected, among other things, to turn out scientists and engineers, foster international understanding, provide a home for the arts, satisfy divergent tastes in culture and sexual morals, recast the penal code and train equally for the professions and for a life of cultural contentment in the coming Era of Leisure. Such Universities shall be known as 'Innovative University' or 'Focused University', and this will have much appeal - gentler in overtones, it also casts a wider net. But it needs a drastic transformation from its previous image. Now one can more appropriately group some processes by which some modern Universities measurably change themselves.

University transformation, for the most part, is not accidental or incidental. It does not happen because several innovative programs have to be established. Today Universities are too bottom - heavy, too resistant from the bottom - up. Rather transformation occurs when a number of individuals come together in University basic units and across a University over number of years to change, by means of organized initiative 'through the behavior of employees at all organizational levels' (Leonard - Barton, 1995, p. 28) and how the institution is structured and oriented. Collective entrepreneurial at these levels is the heart of the transformation phenomenon.

Universities need foci that help them solve the problem of severe imbalance and to define anew their societal usefulness. They need to find sustainable niches in the ecology of knowledge industry that becomes more international and more dispersed among institutions outside formal HE. The difficulties are huge.

Groups, large and small - central and departmental - of faculty and administrators (and sometimes students) can fashion new structures, processes and orientations whereby a University becomes biased toward adaptive change. Academic groups can also help ensure that academic values will guide transformation. A re-examination of strategy for transformation is warranted.

Many questions arise at this point. How can the modern Universities stimulate and truly educate high-quality 'young' in the 'life long learning' skills of sound analysis

and critical thinking? Will the Universities be failing future generations talented undergraduates who need their intellectual resources best served in their careers and in turn society, and anyway just what is Higher Education? How do Universities by means of entrepreneurial actions, go about transforming themselves? Five elements constitute an irreducible minimum - A strengthened steering core, an expanded developmental periphery, a diversified funding base, a stimulated academic heartland, and an integrated entrepreneurial culture. These five elements of transformation become just that by means of their interaction. Each by itself can hardly make a significant difference (Lindblom, 1959, 1979; Redner. Ed. 1993). That is 'cumulative incrementalism' (Stopford & Baden-Fuler, 1994, p. 523). The following are the elements of a 21<sup>st</sup> century University:

### **The Innovative or the Focused University**

- Academic Excellence and the Imaginative Generation of Revenue.
- Achieving Operational Strength
- Comprehensive Research University
- Outreach to industry-income from Plurality of Sources
- Department with Rating-the Heartland
- Standing on its Own Feet by Earning its Way - Broadening the Financial Base
- Developing an Entrepreneurial Culture

#### **1. The Strengthened Steering Core**

Traditional Universities have long exhibited a notoriously weak capacity to steer themselves. As their complexity has increased and the pace of change accelerated, that weakness has become more debilitating, deepening the need for a greater managerial capacity. Now they need to become quicker, more flexible and especially more focused in reactions to expanding and changing demands. They need a more organized way to refashion their programmatic capabilities. A strengthened steering core becomes a necessity. We see that core can take quite different shapes. But it must embrace central managerial groups and academic departments. It must operationally reconcile new managerial values with traditional academic ones. A unique combination of the two - a 'centralized decentralization' (Henkel, 1997, p. 137).

#### **2. The Expanded Developmental Periphery**

Enterprising Universities should reach across old University boundaries to link up with outside organizations and groups. In one form these units are professionalized outreach offices that work on knowledge transfer, industrial contact, intellectual

property development, continuing education, fund raising and even alumni affairs. Today we have only to realize that Universities' willingness to work with industry is not a pact with the devil. Instead industry's patronage, along with other second and third stream sources of income and program service, has become a crucial part of institutional viability. In another larger and more basic form they are interdisciplinary project oriented research centers that grow up alongside departments as a second major way to group academic work.

### **3. The Diversified Funding Base**

All the Universities worldwide are faced with the problem of how to handle their immediate cuts and then especially how to face a future in which mainline funding is likely to continue to falter. This harsh step caused deep shock and far-reaching anger in academy. But slowly realization is dawning on everyone of us that either we expand our financial base or we shut our shops. This has also sharpened the idea that the Universities need to generate new income by 'Fund raising - we should not go begging for money' - but to actually earn it. Every 21<sup>st</sup> century University should have 'an earned income policy' - then go on to implement the policy to generate enough income. If the UGC goes on making cuts, or hold back on future funding increases, then additional income would have to be major. This points strongly toward entrepreneurial action. The gathering of funds would have to be done yearly; it would have to be systematized and administered; it would undoubtedly require some risky funding of new units, and it would require many, if not all, departments to behave in new ways.

Departments should be busy developing research centers to further their own subjects, necessitating the raising of funds from second and third income streams. Such efforts should not be simply left to 'science and technology', where large amounts are most likely to be available. All the departments should basically be self-supporting; 'Washing its own face'.

To fashion a new change oriented character, a University generally requires greater financial resources; it particularly needs discretionary funds. Widening the financial base becomes essential, since virtually everywhere main line institutional support from government as a share of total budget is on the wane. Enterprising Universities recognize this trend and turn it into advantage. They step up their efforts to raise money from a second major source, research councils, by more vigorously competing for grants and contracts. They create a third-stream income sources that stretch from industrial firms, local governments and philanthropic foundations to royalty income from intellectual property, earned income from campus services, student fees and alumni fund raising. Third stream sources represent true financial diversification. They accept and promote the maxim offered by two American observers

as long ago as the 1960s: 'A workable 20<sup>th</sup> century definition of institutional autonomy is the absence of dependence upon a single or narrow base of support'. (Babbidge and Rosenzweig, 1962, p. 158). Diversity in funding, it now appears, can be regarded as a prerequisite for adaptability (Holttta, 1995, p 56). Cross funding becomes 'Financial heart of University Integration' (Massy 1994, Williams 1995).

#### **4. The Stimulated Academic Heartland**

When an enterprising University evolves a stronger steering core, and develops an outreach structure and diversifies its income stream, its heartland is still found in the traditional academic departments formed around disciplines, new and old, and some interdisciplinary field of study. For change to take hold one department and faculty after another needs itself to become an entrepreneurial unit, reaching more strongly to the outside with new programs and relationships and promoting third-stream income. Their members need to participate in central steering groups. They need to accept that individuals as well as collegial groups will have stronger authority in a managerial line that stretches from central officials to heads of departments and research centers. When entire departments and faculties are assertive, see themselves in common situations with common problems, common allies and common enemies, and in need of a common action, a common culture grows, an identity is shared.

Four features reveal much about the involvement of core academic units; the melding of periphery into the core; the extensive building of research centers under departments; the construction of a University wide graduate school; and the introduction of an imaginative and highly attractive research fellowship scheme that reaches across the campus.

#### **5. The Integrated Entrepreneurial Culture**

21<sup>st</sup> century Universities should achieve operational strength and high status as a comprehensive research University at the same time developing uncommon outreach to industry. Academic and practical thrusts should interact to promote a virtuous circle of effects. Financial and research returns from industrial outreach should further academic goals, while an increasingly respected academic base pushed up market in the outreach programs, especially those involving contact with industry.

Enterprising Universities, as in the high tech industry, develop a work culture that embraces change. That new culture may start out as a relatively simple institutional idea about change that later becomes elaborated into a set of beliefs which, if diffused in the heartland, becomes a University-wide culture. Strong cultures are rooted in strong practices. As ideas and practices interact, the cultural or symbolic

side of the University becomes particularly important in cultivating institutional identity and distinctive reputation.

Autonomous Universities should also be the order of the day in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. But it has to be kept in mind that a formal grant of autonomy from patron to institution does not guarantee active self-determination. There is also a danger of autonomous Universities becoming passive institutions. They may live for the past rather than look into the future. They may be satisfied with what they have become and do not wish for more. Autonomous Universities become active institutions when they decide they must explore and experiment with changes in how they are composed and how they react to internal and external demands. They must sense that in fast moving times the prudent course of action is to be out in front, shaping the impact of demands made upon them, steering instead of drifting.

In the transformation of Universities, values or beliefs may lead or follow the development of the other elements. We shall see them in cycles of interaction, themselves developing over time. Organizational values ought not to be treated independently of the structures and procedures through which they are expressed. An institutional perspective is required. The first four of our five elements are means by which transforming beliefs are made operative.

Such transforming work must be done locally, in the University itself. It must extend over years that often become decades. The sustained work calls for collective action leading to new practices and beliefs, steps that are entrepreneurial in character, with much risk-taking and flexible adjustment along the way. When traditional habits are not enough, Universities need to develop "an entrepreneurial response". That is they need to 'invest in Excellence'. Universities should fast learn how to find discretionary income from private sources which could be invested mainly in research.

Today Universities have to be proactive, grounded in an aggressive attitude. We need to stress 'a belief that attack is the best form of defense, or in University language, that optimism, some risk taking and a willingness to attempt new things represent a better policy than caution, cut backs and academic conservatism'. The underlying traditional academic culture cannot be ignored, cannot be pushed aside, it must be put to work and thereby adapted.

A better understanding of the University working system will go far towards creating the management team which is so essential for future success - a success upon which Indian society and Indian economy in particular may yet come to depend as never before in a world of 'Knowledge Industries' where the 'value added' by a sophisticated workforce is crucial to survival amidst intense competition within 'the Global Village'.



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