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HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT: FROM CONFLICT TO INTERDEPENDENCE THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING

ABSTRACT. Institutional leadership and management are two entirely different, yet intimately intertwined, aspects of the overall effective functioning of a higher education institution (HEI). This paper is intended to (1) define and differentiate between the two concepts, (2) critically discuss their importance and vital interdependence, (3) discuss circumstances that can create conflict or compatibility between these concepts, (4) critically examine models of strategic planning and suggest a better approach to this process, and (5) offer suggestions for the improvement of both leadership and management in the context of co-existence within a redefined strategic planning environment.

Introduction

The concepts of leadership and management of higher education institutions (HEIs) are often confused and misunderstood, and therefore rigorously debated within the academic community. (Bergquist 1992; Cohen & March 1983) While the intellectual rhetoric can stimulate thought-provoking discussions and contribute in meaningful ways to the academic dialogue and literature, it does not always serve to promote and enhance institutional functioning. Many areas of study in higher education suffer from the great divide between empirical inquiry and real world applications. In many ways, the continuum from theory to practice with respect to leadership and management in HEIs is dichotomous. This disconnect undermines our ability to formulate effective strategies for understanding these concepts in terms of how they can be made more effective.

It is generally held with little disagreement that leadership is a process for influencing decisions and guiding people, whereas management involves the implementation and administration of institutional decisions and policies (Bennis & Nanus 1985; Gayle, Bhoendradatt & White 2003; Peterson 1995). There are, however, many other less universally agreed upon attributes of each concept that can mitigate against their effective co-existence (Cohen & March

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1983; Larsen 2003; Yammarino & Dansereau 2001). It can be argued that leadership and management cannot be addressed as discrete and autonomous entities. A meaningful understanding of both concepts can only be reached when they are examined in relation to one another. The symbiotic interdependence of leadership and management in higher education is an important element in understanding either concept (Clark 1998; Millett 1989; Peterson & Mets 1987). Each depends on the other for support and to provide the institution with the multifaceted decision-making, policy development and administrative roles necessary to function effectively. For this compatibility to exist, both concepts must be clearly understood by all involved parties, and those individuals engaged must possess the personal skills and tools necessary to implement their contributing roles as leaders and managers. (Moore 2001; Nanus 1992).

Strategic planning has generally been considered to be one of the tools of higher education for several decades. Over time, new models continue to emerge (Austin 2002; Ball 2001; Cope 1987; Dooris 2003; Goodstein et al. 1993; Hayward & Ncayiyana 2003; Keller 1993, forthcoming: McNay 1997; Norris & Poulton 1991; Peterson 1992, 1999, 2004). However a historical examination of implementation efforts reveals more institutional failures than successes (Birnbaum 2001). While numerous models exist that attempt to distinguish themselves from the others, it is the contention of the authors that the models have far more commonalities than differences when one moves past the differentiating jargon and examines their essential elements. It is further posited that poor implementation strategies are far more frequently the cause of problems than the particular model utilised (Newman & Larson 1997; Rowley & Sherman 2002). There are many acceptable methodologies for establishing priorities and strategic direction for an institution. The greater challenge is orchestrating policies, actions and diverse constituencies in a way that produces desired results. Thus it is suggested that the knowledge and skills of leaders and managers is far more important to planning success than the particular model chosen by the HEI. Finally, a case can be made for the position that, despite the many planning models that emphasise it, transformational, culture-redefining institutional change is not always what an HEI should pursue. Most change in higher education is appropriately incremental, not transformational. It will be argued that simplified and flexible planning processes, implemented through the complimentary roles of leaders and

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managers with necessary planning expertise, may provide the most productive higher education environment for advancement and progress.

Management and Leadership: Conceptual Frameworks

Strategic management

When referring to the concept of management, contemporary discourse more often addresses *strategic* management. It seems in current times fashionable to preface many nouns in the lexicography of higher education with the term 'strategic'. As a result, the term has been grossly overused and blatantly misused in much that has been written. Thus, for purposes of this paper, some clarification is offered. The integrated components of strategic management form the essential ingredients for institutional prosperity and success. In its broadest sense, it can be defined (David 1996, p. 4) as: "The art and science of formulating, implementing and evaluating cross functional decisions that enable an organisation to fulfil its objectives".

Strategic management is a holistic process with many components that must effectively interact and function together. These components include (but are not necessarily limited to) institutional culture; strategic planning; leadership; institutional research, resource allocation and financial management; personnel and human resources management; research and scholarly activity; student and campus support services; academic support services; internationalisation; and external relations. Strategic management is more often involved with the interrelationships and equilibrium between these components so that one reinforces the others, rather than the implementation of major change initiatives. This is not intended to minimise institutional change and transformation. Culture-altering change is needed only infrequently. However, its importance at those moments cannot be overstated and the need for institutional leaders to be able to implement it is critical.

One can view strategic management from both positive and negative perspectives (Mintzberg et al. 1998). It serves as a mechanism to provide direction to an institution and at the same time has the potential to propel an HEI on a perilous course into uncharted waters. It helps coordinate organisational activities, but taken to excess can create 'groupthink', where the choreography is overdone.

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To borrow from the lexicon of Complex Adaptive Systems Theory, replicating (attempting to perpetuate) the present *status quo* will force an institution to fall behind and out of equilibrium with its external environment, while advancing too rapidly will thrust it into chaos. The adaptive institution must live on the edge of chaos (Waldrop 1993). This creates a delicate balance between stability and instability that must be orchestrated by strong leadership.

Leadership

Leadership is a complex process consumed by the complications of timing, circumstances and individuals. The perfect scenario of the right person, at the right time, in the right situation, with the right followers is an idealised circumstance written about often in the literature, but seldom realised in the real world. Leaders and their styles can come in many forms. Institutions can and do vary enormously in their missions, circumstances, cultures and historical heritages. External environmental factors can, and do change at a pace today that can best be described as exponential. All of these intricate variables come together in each unique institutional situation to define the circumstances that exist. Thus, a simple formula for leadership does not and never will exist. Our penchant for defining, categorising, compartmentalising and over simplifying such complex interactions must give way to a more open and flexible analysis of the necessities for effective leadership in a HEI. Absolute certainty is only attained if one knows nothing or everything about the subject under consideration. Such is not the case here.

Regardless of the circumstances, motivations and origins of the leaders in place, their perceptions and skills will be the primary vehicle that advances or fails to advance the institutions. It is at this same moment in time that simple and that complicated.

Numerous scholars have attempted to define leadership for many decades. The different definitions reflect the theoretical insights of the models that emerged across time. The time spectrum shows a theoretical evolution that advanced from trait theories, to behavioural theories, followed by contingency theories to transformation and transactional theories. For a cogent historical summary of these approaches, the reader is referred to Bargh et al. (2000). Other dominant theoretical models of leadership, such as visionary leadership theory and leader member exchange theory (Bass 1998; Schriesheim, Castro & Coglier 1999), offer some additional context.

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Visionary leadership, which currently receives considerable attention, has been defined by Neumann and Neumann (2000) as having the three essential ingredients of vision, focus and implementation skills. Their study of these three variables on 279 HEI leaders identified eight leadership types in descending order from most to least effective:

- Integrator
- Net Caster
- Focused Visionary
- Focused Performer
- Prioritiser
- Dreamer
- Implementer
- Maintainer

The authors maintain that the truly visionary, strategic and transformational leader is the Integrator, who effectively integrates vision, focus and implementation. The Net Caster lacks the proper focus and sprays the agenda with an undisciplined array of ideas. The Focused Visionary sees the bigger picture and focuses in on the priorities, but lacks the expertise to implement a change agenda. Those lacking vision but possessing the other components are termed Focused Performers. A lack of vision and implementation skills results in the designation as a Prioritiser. With only an undisciplined vision, one is categorised as a Dreamer. The inability to demonstrate vision or focus, leaving only implementation skills, is termed an Implementer. Finally, the leader devoid of vision, focus or implementation expertise is classified as a Maintainer. Their findings provide evidence in support of their hierarchy of leadership styles and effectiveness. From Integrator to Maintainer, the data showed a continual decline in institutional effectiveness from one leadership style to the next. These findings would suggest that institutions in search of a new leader should weigh these factors as important to their future prosperity.

An effective leader must possess the uncanny ability to view situations and challenges from multiple, and sometimes contradictory perspectives in order to encompass the full array of options for decision-making and policy development. Rothenburg (1979) coined the term "Janus thinking" to explain this phenomenon in a study of the creative achievements of famous people from the arts and sciences. The term is based on the Roman god, Janus, who was

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portrayed as having two faces looking in different directions at the same time. Thus, Janus thinking is characterised by two contradictory thoughts, both accepted as true, occurring simultaneously. Rothenburg posits that creative individuals can accommodate the simultaneous operation of these illogical and antithetical alternatives and as a result, conceive integrated and creative outcomes. While logic would dictate that two opposites must be dichotomous and mutually exclusive, Janus thinking suggests this flexibility of thought provides the necessary backdrop for the creativity and problem-solving ability visionary leaders must possess. While Janusian thinking in individuals and Janusian characteristics in institutions may seem on the surface to be irrational, they are a part of the complex recipe for visionary leadership. Continuity and change, specialisation and generalisation, pro-activity and reactivity, and other seemingly contradictory elements are part and parcel of the adaptive HEI and of the visionary leader's repertoire.

The literature also reinforces the point that leadership cannot be static in an emergent and unpredictable environment, and suggests that leadership functions must involve efforts to ensure team motivation, commitment, and a positive interpersonal climate within the context of change and uncertainty (Klein et al. 2001; Kozlowski et al. 1996, 2004).

Relationships and synergy

Leadership and management are not the same things. Not every leader manages well, and not every manager has leadership capabilities. However, the concepts are sufficiently intertwined that an understanding of their relationship to one another is important. Management is often seen as a relatively structured process for achieving organisational objectives within the parameters of prescribed roles. Leadership is more often viewed as an interpersonal process of inspiring and motivating followers with a focus on long-term institutional aspirations and changes. As stated by Taffinder (1995, p. 37), "Management is complex, fragmented, its activities brief, opportunistic, predominantly verbal; leadership is more so. Management reacts. Leadership transforms. It makes a difference".

Watson (1983) originated his 7-S organisational framework as a means of differentiating management and leadership (See Table I below).

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Watson's position was that managers focused on what he referred to as the 'hard' Ss, while leaders emphasised the 'soft' Ss. This thinking should, perhaps, be carried further. It is suggested here that while management is mostly identified with strategy, structure and systems, leadership is the effective utilisation of all seven factors. This depiction contradicts the position that leadership is a sub-set of management. As Figure 1 illustrates, however, leadership can be subsumed under the broader perspective of strategic management.

As stated by Adair (1986, p. 123), "…you can be appointed a manager but you are not a leader until your appointment is ratified in the hearts and minds of those who work for you".

The leader–manager operates within a complex and dynamic environment. The leadership component requires a focus on the external environment as well as the internal workings of the institution. McGregor (1987) identified four main variables that define the leadership relationship that are representative of many such depictions: (1) characteristics of the leader, (2) attitudes and needs of the followers, (3) the nature of the organisation, and (4) the social, economic and political environment. This internal/external focus is essential for effective institutional planning. Bensimon (1989) and Bolman and Deal (1997) suggest leaders with a 'multi-framed' perspective are more effective. Just as organisations have multiple realities, so must leader–managers have multiple approaches. They identify four perspectives (or frames) that can be utilised individually or in combination. The structural frame focuses actions on reasoned, logical and technically correct approaches. The human resource frame centres on empowerment and utilisation of institutional personnel to assist in meeting the administrative agenda. The symbolic frame embraces the rituals, traditions, values and legacy of the

TABLE I

Watson's 7-S organisational framework

Management	Leadership
Strategy	Style
Structure	Staff
Systems	Skills
	Shared Goals

Source: Watson, C. (1983). "Leadership, Management and the Seven Keys," *Business Horizons*, p. 10.

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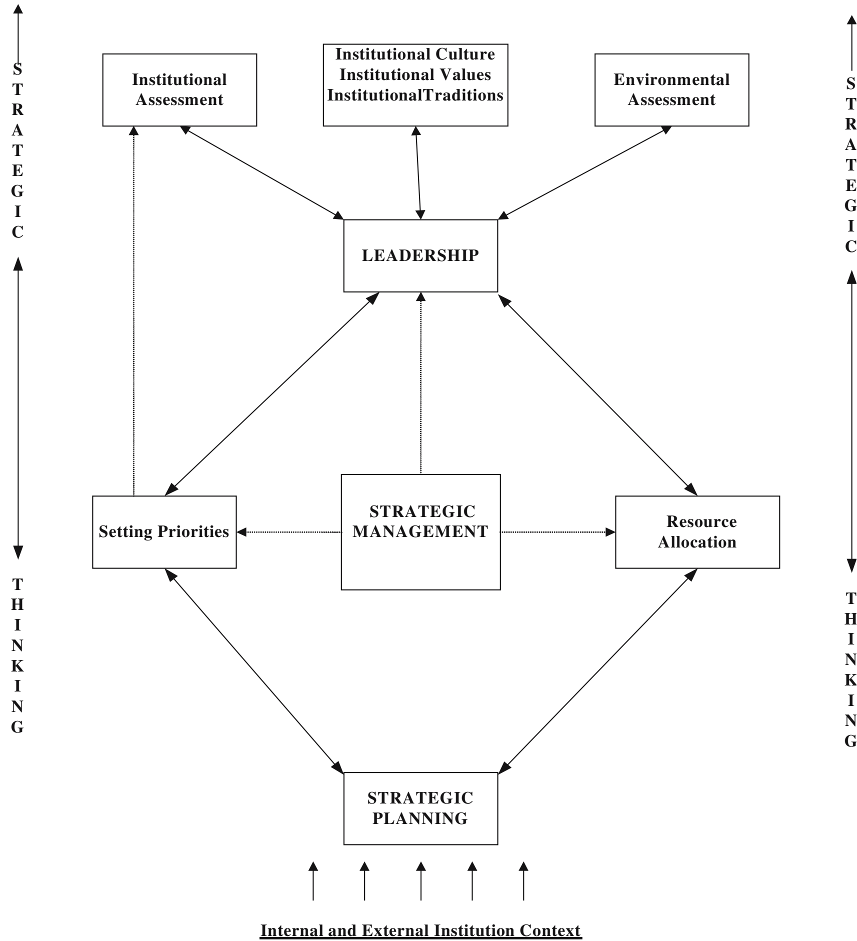

Figure 1. The elements of a strategically managed HEI.

institution as a guiding force in decision-making. The political frame gains importance when confronting competitiveness, financial resources and rapid change.

Their findings generally support the idea that leader–manager effectiveness has a positive predictive relationship with an increase in the number of frames one utilises. The authors also note that the more experienced a leader–manager was, the more frames he or she tended to employ. However, it was found to be very rare for an individual to incorporate all four frames simultaneously into their leadership–management style. Most individuals studied emphasised the human resource frame in the majority of situations, where

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collaborative rather than heroic leadership was called for (Bensimon & Neumann 1993). The second most used frame was structural. In combination, these two frames create a skilful alignment of constituencies and structure that can produce effective and empowering leadership success (Fisher, Tack, & Wheeler 1988). These findings are consistent with the comments by Birnbaum (1992), who defines "exemplary presidents" as able to be influential managers both of the institution and of its interpretation by others in the organisation.

Strategic management creates an environment with consistency, but can also strangle creativity that thrives on inconsistency. With strategic thinking and effective leadership, the negatives can be minimised. Strategic thinking is more than merely alternative nomenclature for other terms. Mintzberg (1994) differentiates strategic thinking and strategic planning by suggesting that the latter involves pre-identified strategies used to create action plans, whereas strategic thinking involves an intuitive synthesis and creativity that puts the institution in a broader perspective. Stacey (1992, 286) refers to strategic thinking as a process of "…designing actions on the basis of new learning".

As stated elsewhere, the authors hold the position that planning implementation, rather than the model being implemented, is at the core of failed attempts. Processes that become too data-intensive, bureaucratic and inflexible actually stifle strategic thinking. One can also suggest a dichotomy wherein strategic planning is data-driven information processing and strategic thinking is creative imagination.

In some ways, the processes of strategic planning and strategic thinking appear contradictory and incompatible. However, examined more closely, the tensions created by these contrasting elements of institutional strategic management are important. Strategic planning creates alignment and structure. However, carried to extremes or without checks and balances, it can become highly inflexible and "lock-step". On the other hand, strategic thinking is a divergent process that serves to disrupt alignment. Thus, it helps to maintain institutional flexibility and adaptability. As Heracleous (1998, 482) states, "Its all about being able to go up and down the ladder of abstraction, and being able to see both the big picture and the operational implications, which are signs of outstanding leaders and strategists".

Thus strategic thinking, far from being incompatible with or an alternative to strategic planning, is a necessary part of overall strategic management, and a necessary ability for effective leadership. It is all about the integration of assessment, culture and values,

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priorities, resources, planning and leadership. All of these essential elements of strategic management weave a tapestry that creates an institutional environment that can support an effective planning process (See Figure 1).

As cited in Tabatoni and Barblan (1998, pp. 16–17), "…a university is a fully established organisation…exactly like a business, a body of public administration,…a museum, a research center, the army…or a charitable organisation. Indeed, once there is a structured group, there is (strategic) management because…managing means leading a collective action, and enabling it to materialise".

Even if perhaps over zealous and generalised, this statement begs the question, How can a social, cultural and educational institution with the magnitude and importance of higher education in some instances justify being the undying defender of the *status quo* and the last bastion of intractable resistance to change? The *status quo* is ephemeral and illusive. Even when an institution attempts to maintain its present state, others pass it by, thus leaving it behind and less well positioned than it previously was. The entire concept of maintaining the *status quo* is a ruthless myth that tradition-laden institutions of higher education must shed themselves of if they hope to cope, let alone prosper, in the future that lies ahead.

The balance of this paper examines strategic planning, reports on some findings and offers an approach that the authors believe more accurately reflects the volatility of the times we are confronting in higher education.

Strategic Planning: From Platitudes to Reality

Voices of strategic planning

Much of the prescriptive literature strongly advocates strategic planning as the key to superior institutional and system performance. This is a process that focuses on strategic and operational goals, objectives and strategies based on organisational policies, programs and actions designed to achieve the institution's aims and desired results. It is argued that it is an extremely important tool for organisational effectiveness (Keller 1983; Peterson 1999, 2004; van Vught 1988). This literature would support the contention that institutions that correctly implement strategic plans are more likely to be successful.

There are a number of criticisms levelled at the use of strategic planning in higher education, many of which are similar to those

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mentioned by practitioners and researchers in the business sector. Authors like Young (1981), Meredith (1985), and Schmidtlein and Milton (1990), refer to and argue against some of those criticisms. Mintzberg (1994) has said that strategic planning can play roles such as providing analysis to managers, helping translate intended strategies into realised ones, and providing a control device, but that it is not effective for the development of strategy. In higher education, much of the criticism of strategic planning derives from the belief that a model arising from military roots and grounded in organisational success as defined by profitability could not translate to the higher education arena where goals may be ambiguous, long-term in reaching fruition and not easily measured, where the organisation is loosely coupled, institutional leaders lack control over major processes, internal and external constraints exist, and resources are inflexible and insufficient (Baldridge 1983; Birnbaum, 1988; Schmidtlein 1990).

Taylor and Miroiu (2002) identify four main reasons why planning efforts fail:

- Pressures and incentives to change are weak,
- Change capacity is inadequate (too many projects) and capability is weak (insufficient skills),
- Cultural resistance is too high, and
- Sponsorship and leadership are wrong (good ideas put forth by the wrong person).

The authors would inject from personal observation in multiple countries another all too pervasive reason for failure. Many HEIs pursue a planning process for the wrong reasons. Some engage in the process because the literature would suggest to do otherwise is a reflection of weak leadership and lack of vision. Others initiate planning to create a façade that will support ulterior motives with various constituent groups; e.g., the public, government funding bodies, donors and governing boards. In many of these instances, the goal is merely to produce an impressive document, rather than to realise meaningful outcomes. When this pseudo-goal is reached (the document is produced), the process is truncated. Interestingly, a great many of these public relations documents end up being voluminous, tedious and thus, ultimately unread by their intended audiences. Fortuitously and without conscious intent, this can work in favour of the institution. If their lofty proclamations are not thoughtfully examined by others, the HEI will not be held accountable for the lack

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of outcomes. Usually, about the time some begin to wonder what, if anything has been accomplished (the typical 5-year planning cycle), a new document emerges with a different set of goals and aspirations and the "process" starts anew. As long as the HEI can continue to recycle the process by replacing the old goals that were not addressed with a new set of goals, it will always be in the advantageous position of stating it is "pre-mature" to judge accomplishments.

The authors suggest there are three most often seen fundamental problems in the successful implementation of strategic planning in HEIs. It is further asserted that these problems are trans-cultural and universal. One is to engage in planning for the wrong reasons. This was discussed above and will not be addressed here. The second is to create a bureaucratic, rigid and cumbersome data-intensive process. The third is to exclude some of the relevant (and often ignored) people who should participate in the process.

Planning is complex enough without creating further complexity and confusion. In an effort to be scholarly and comprehensive, academic planning groups tend to establish a virtual labyrinth of convoluted documents, mechanisms, data summaries and procedures. The ultimate outcome is frustration by most and abandoned support by some. In an effort to create proportional representation across the constituent groups within the HEI, professors are usually most numerous in the planning group. It can then become an academic exercise rather than one designed to serve the overall vision of the institution. We suggest a set of critical components, or key elements, that we believe can produce a successful planning process. We also put these factors in perspective with a focus on simplicity and efficiency, rather than the too typical plethora of superfluous glut seen in many institutional planning documents.

Brief overview of strategic planning models

There are a number of strategic planning models that are considered relevant in today's higher education culture. While it could be argued that they are overly conceptual and with somewhat limited applicability to institutional practice, they serve as a foundation that can guide further advancements. There are five dominant models, with perhaps one of the most respected coming from the public and non-profit sector. They are each briefly discussed below. The reader should take notice of the commonalities, irrespective of the nomenclature used, between these models.

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Bryson and Alston (1996) have been among the leaders in contemporary strategic planning. Their concentration has been on the public sector, however their model has been accepted in the arena of higher education as well. They advocate an eight-step process of:

- Initiating and agreeing on a planning process
- Clarifying mission, values, mandates and expectations
- Assessing the external environment
- Assessing the internal environment
- Identifying strategic issues
- Formulating management strategies
- Establishing an institutional vision
- Implementing the plan

Kaufman and Herman (1991) divide planning into four clusters: scoping, data collection, planning implementation and evaluation. The somewhat unique aspect of this model is the concept of scoping, which suggests the HEI must properly define the level of planning that is intended (micro, macro or mega level). Ultimately, however, this defining attribute collapses when the authors state that essentially the planning process would remain the same under all three possibilities.

Norris and Poulton (1991) introduce a five-step model that has similarities to and probably adaptations from the Bryson and Alston model. This model suggests:

- Plan the planning process
- Creating the mission and assessing stakeholder values
- Internal and external environmental assessments
- Creating the institutional vision
- Tactical planning and implementation

Hunt, Oosting, Stevens Loudon, and Migliore (1997), while proposing a model only for private HEIs, address the same central components. One emphasis is developing assumptions based on environmental scanning efforts. This focus recognises that no matter how thorough the environmental scanning process, there will always be irresolvable issues that will require assumptive action. The model also recognises the hierarchy within an effective planning structure that addresses the process from a strategic, operational and tactical perspective, but unlike Norris and Poulton, do not suggest the process is uniform at all levels.

Peterson (1999) developed a contextual model of planning that gave emphasis to the emergence of the post-secondary knowledge

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industry where macro-level change needs to be anticipated and confronted by HEIs. This model is particularly timely in current times, and suggests strategies for redefining, redesigning and reforming institutional roles, mission, vision, academic functions and relationships with other organisations within the higher education arena. It is a credible model for today's reality, but suffers the same problems of translation from the theoretical and conceptual to the practical and applied.

Austin (2002) introduced a new set of terminologies to describe what could be stated much more simply. He suggests the planning process is:

- Triadic, meaning it addresses the individual, the department and the HEI as a whole
- Heterarchical and managed through an emergent structure
- Strategic in the sense that it is a continuous process of data analysis, culture and the exercise of leadership

The model has merit in its emphasis on the role of the individual, the leader and the allocation of resources, but is somewhat convoluted in its development.

Each model provides unique insights and approaches to the institutional planning process, yet each also has many common denominators. The student of higher education planning needs to assume an eclectic approach to the process. First, many worthwhile strategies can be found in multiple models. Second, every institution is unique and must have a model that fits its circumstances. Third, an eclectic merger of the best components of all possible options is always a desirable approach to take.

From these models, a set of common denominators appear in one form or another that the authors would agree constitute essential components of a strategic planning process. They are listed succinctly in Table II below.

Some research findings

Some empirical studies do, however, exist that attempt to examine the extent to which strategic planning processes function in an effective and comprehensive manner. Conway, Mackay, and Yorke (1994) did a content analysis of 83 mission statements from institutions in the United Kingdom. Rather predictable findings resulted. Most statements were idealised platitudes with little institution-specific text.

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TABLE II

Key elements of successful planning

- Leadership
- Vision
- Environmental scanning
- Communication
- Participation
- Flexibility and simplicity

Many were so similar as to be interchangeable. They also reported that only about half of the statements had a focus and perspective that was congruent with the changing internal and external environments of higher education. Lumby (1999) reviewed the planning documents of 53 HEIs in the UK. It was found that 24 HEIs had partial plans and 29 had full plans. The author took note of the inconsistent use of terminology within the plans and, in fact, referred to it as a "semantic minefield".

Anderson et al. (1999) examined institutional strategic plans at 12 institutions in Australia. On the positive side, they found that different plans addressed social, financial and political contexts, included a discussion of technological advances; were available on a website; and used incentives to get rank and file participation. On the negative side, plans were shown to not have clear and defining characteristics; were not communicated sufficiently to the members of the institutional community; and (most damning) were not explicitly linked to institutional resources.

In Norway, Larsen and Langfeldt (2003) noted the first evidence of institutional strategic planning around 1990. The process was noted as having a positive impact on the clarification of goals at the departmental level. More than 70% of the academic personnel see strategic planning as a key function at the departmental level.

Empirical research on strategic planning in Portuguese higher education is only now taking place and is extremely limited. Recent findings have been reported by Machado, Farhangmehr and Taylor (2004). From interview and survey data gathered in a national study of HEIs throughout Portugal, with a sample that included the HEIs representing 74.8% of all students enrolled in the higher education system, general findings were that

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- Public institutions attempted to engage in planning more than private institutions,
- While 48 HEIs claimed to be using strategic planning, just 24 were found to be using the defining criteria, and
- Only 6 of all the documents received for review from these 24 HEIs were actually planning documents.

It should be noted that 24 HEIs engaged in planning conflicted with the fact that 48 institutions (78.7%) reported they were doing so. It was not possible to determine if these self-reports were intentionally inflated or a reflection of limited understanding of what constitutes strategic planning. Most probably, it was a combination of both factors. (For further analyses of strategic planning in Portuguese higher education, the reader is referred to Machado and Taylor (2004); Machado, Taylor and Farhangmehr (2004); Machado, Taylor and Wilkinson (2003).)

Preserving the past; replicating the present (roadblocks to planning)

As suggested earlier, higher education too often attempts to maintain a stable equilibrium and resist necessary change and adaptation. In nature, geological and biological evolutionary events are sporadic and non-continuous. While the processes that promote and encourage adjustments are in constant operation, they produce only sporadic changes. Consider the continual shifting of tectonic plates resting on the Earth's molten core that only rarely create a major event, or the 130 million year domination of the dinosaurs that was abruptly ended by an asteroid. These are events that produce major change and cause shifts in the equilibrium of existing (and, in the case of humans, possibly complacent) systems. Within the domain of human organisations, there is a cultural tendency to resist change in spite of continual environmental advancement. An analogy might be Ager (1973) explaining the life of a soldier as one fraught with extended periods of boredom infrequently interspersed with brief moments of terror. This can be illustrated with respect to higher education and the external environment in Figure 2 below.

While the environment is in a state of constant and exponential change over time, the HEI is often seen as maintaining (replicating) the *status quo*. Thus, over time, the HEI gets farther out of equilibrium with the external reality it must interact with. In time, this disconnect reaches a point where institutional change becomes

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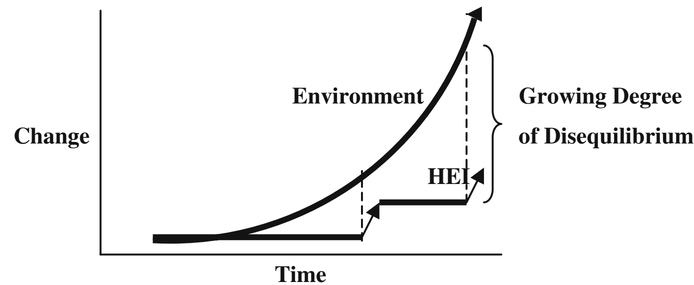

Figure 2. The relationship between environmental and higher educational change.

inevitable and unavoidable. At this point, a crisis management mode of response is generated. In some cases, it is only partially effective and fails to fully align the HEI with its environment. Over extended time, these change deficiencies grow until another ''moment of terror'' is called for. However, inevitably, the disconnect continues to widen until the possibility of an equilibrium-disrupting situation becomes a reality.

Consider as one potential example, the increase in alternate providers of higher educational offerings. While a small segment at this time, they are growing faster than any other. As Lanham (2003, 1) states,

> We are not talking about Yale *versus* Harvard, we are talking about Yale *versus* Microsoft.

The author also cites an unnamed venture-capital investment report that suggests higher education is one of the most fertile markets for investors in many years. The report emphasises higher education's large size, unhappy customers, minimal technology utilisation and high strategic importance. It concludes by noting existing management's complacency after years of monopoly. In time, this may create a truly equilibrium-shifting scenario that will reap serious negative consequences on the market competitiveness of traditional institutions.

Final Thoughts

Higher education institutions are among the oldest institutions in the world, and are a mainstay in the development and support of economic, social and cultural development for countries everywhere. Throughout time, academic institutions have sought to respond to the

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demands of endlessly changing and evolving environmental conditions of society. Conversely, they are also among the most stable institutions to have existed during the past 500 years. As stated in the *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action* (1998, p. 2), "higher education has given ample proof of its viability over the centuries and of its ability to change and to induce change and progress in society […]". However today higher education is confronted with formidable challenges and must elevate its efforts toward some of the most radical changes and renewals it has ever been required to undertake. These institutions are the object of great public and private investment and therefore have great expectations thrust upon them. The institutions of higher education, as complex social systems, need to interpret the vital needs of contemporary society, to be "innovative" (van Vught 2000, p. 350) as well as to develop the internal structures to meet their new missions.

The higher education sector worldwide is being challenged with issues it has never confronted before. Recent challenges for HEIs include changing demographics, reduced *per capita* funding, increased scrutiny from the public, and internationalisation. Additional challenges include the Bologna Declaration and the European Higher Education Area, a mixed profile in the student population, the emergence of new post-secondary institutions, new competitors, the invasion of market forces in higher education, the global knowledge economy, a technology-driven society, turbulent environments, E-colleges and increasing external demands.

All social institutions have to be prepared for the changes and challenges of a highly competitive and ever increasing global environment that is in a constant state of flux. Institutions of higher education are not exempt from this overwhelming trend. Addressing these changes and challenges has meant finding ways to align organisational capacities with environmental demands and opportunities, as well as a big responsibility for governance and management at the institutional level. Therefore, the global economy of today demands the development of management capabilities, innovative strategies and competitive advantages within the higher education enterprise As the highly respected scholar, Burton Clark (2003, p. 115), pointed out, "developing capacities for change becomes the heart of successful on-going performance".

Some educators have suggested that perhaps the values of the academic culture should not encompass such a concept as strategic

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planning (Birnbaum 2001). While it is recognised that higher education institutions are historically collegial organisations, it is also recognised that the collegial system needs to support accountability and institutional responsibility, or even be more managerial in order to face the challenges of the future. Although it is acknowledge that HEIs are unique, there is also growing acceptance that general management principles and tools need to be adopted to commit to continuous improvement. Strategic management and strategic planning are important concepts that HEIs should pursue in the future.

All of the above suggests that increasing organisational complexity does and will continue to demand higher levels of individual and institutional performance. The contemporary workplace is evolving rapidly and the challenges for higher education to prepare future entrants are staggering. The apparent absence of significant change has brought the criticism that HEIs are not as effective as they could be. The assumption here is that those who work in HEIs, in order to respond to new demands, need to rethink the organisational structure and institutional management model within which they are operating. We cannot meet the increased demands of the 21st century without these efforts.

The higher education enterprise must shed its defense of the *status quo* and develop a far more adaptive, proactive and flexible approach to strategic management. It must also recognise that the growing complexity of the institution necessitates that the leadership delegate more responsibilities and empower more individuals. This in turn means leadership must recognise the need to employ the best and brightest minds possible and to accept the realisation that no one individual can be the final authority on every aspect of institutional operations. Any number of people within an organisation can be found that possess a strategic perspective. The complexities of today's HEI demand that the designated leader call upon these individuals to contribute to the collective process of distributed leadership. As noted by van Vught (1988), HEIs must take personal responsibility for their policies, not as autonomous units, but as integrated organisations with a clear identity and strong leadership buttressed by strategic planning.

The further reality the authors see that must be acknowledged and confronted is that the complexities of modern leadership demand far more than most new appointees to leadership posts possess. Rather than an indictment of those pursuing leadership positions, it is a

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clarion call for professional development opportunities. Too often, well-intentioned individuals are thrust into leadership roles without the necessary skills. This is, of course, quite understandable. Where would a professor gain a working knowledge of institutional budget management or human resource management, as examples? The time is right in Europe and elsewhere for formal professional development experiences to be created that will prepare aspiring leaders for the challenges they will face.

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