

New Forms of Managing Distance Education Institutions: Advancing open distance learning in Africa

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I wish to thank the president of the Shanghai TV University and the organizers of global forum for the invitation to speak at this plenary session at this very very important forum. I wish to acknowledge with thanks and to particularly thank the organizers for organizing, as all of us have been saying, what is by all standards, a most agreeable wonderful time here in Shanghai for all of us.

I was given a topic, New Forms of Managing Distance Education Institutions. I decided not to temper with that topic. I do not know why I was given a topic like that, supposed because of being a vice chancellor for far too long. And I have some words of wisdom to offer to those of you, young of vice chancellors than I am. But I have to say quite upfront that in fact as you heard I am no expert in management theories at all. So I will try to offer from my experience, some sense in which I understand managing higher education institutions, I've decided also not to focus too much on distance education institutions. Because I do have a sense of excepting in small ways that managing distance education institutions is no different really from managing higher education institutions in general. I had it in mind that this paper should be in two forms. I had in mind that I wanted to rarely spend the first part of the paper. Rarely reflecting in some principled way what I regard as critical principles in leadership and management of higher education. Then I thought I need to route those principles in some sort of case study, and I thought I would do a case study of the University of South Africa, because of that's a place I know best. But of what I decided, that's not very very good. And some of you might think I'm a very vain character who really knows all about talking about himself and I thought I wouldn't dare to do that to all of you. So I'm afraid you are going to get the first part.

The second part you will get part of this that will be published one day. The term "Knowledge Society" is as elusive as it is deceptive. Similar simple in its evocation of a more of us global society driven by the generative force of shed knowledge and information of curiosity about the unknown and unknowable. And thinking means of tools of unlocking the secret of nature. In truth, It consumes or even ignores a million complex of and deeply embedded its sub-systems of knowledge, cultural dynamics and power relations that have shaped individual societies for centuries and have given form content and meaning to the lives of those inhabited societal spaces.

Oh, as I did that you do not haste to circuit to the real of instantly accessible knowledge and to neatly compartment arise it into digestible and easily exportable and marketable offerings. You may have lost the very essence of the creative force informed by our cultural diversity that is marked our evolution and thriven us to even

greater heights. The unrestricted access to knowledge that resolve fervently desire come that price, often ignored and which I supposed could be termed sameness , maybe in danger of becoming at the other collector-less mass of educational homogeneity. Extolling and chasing after the most recent technological innovations, that we learn change even more deeply prevailing generally western Canons, knowing full will. That it is only the fortunate few , that will derive the benefits for the rest of us. We'd like to expend their energies fruitlessly, pursuing an impossible educational nirvana, which ironically in many cases we find little residents, with the philosophies and cultures of those who must be educated. This is particularly true of education in the African continent and a suspect in much of global surf.

In our striding towards more efficient administration in management of higher education institutions, we have becoming increasingly managerialistic in practice, given the neoliberal free market approach, too governance in most democratic countries, buttressed and embedded as it is directly involving technology. It is perhaps inevitable that higher education has to a great extent or greater to a less extent assume the nature of a beast. They'll become new business, operated and managed according to acknowledge business principles. Our students now are clients and our courseware is a product range. We have commodified education and knowledge. It is in fact a seductive trend for muffling higher education institutions into businesses. We are cruel to ourselves practical detachment. That our companies' decisions base purely on business efficiencies. And in doing so, we stand to lose sight of that creative impulse that exists in the imagination that informs new knowledge and stimulus desire to mantle of future generations into new ways of knowing. We are in danger of losing the mistake of knowledge and the e-source passion and professional pride that accompanies its generation. I take the view collapse contrary to the receive wisdom of WTO in gets. But higher education is a national resource, a common good. It can not and does not exist outside of the development of framework of any society.

The Magna Carta, for example, after by directors of European universities in Buluniya in 1998, expresses the sentiment rather boldly. And I quote that at the approaching end of this millennium, the future of mankind depends largely on cultural, scientific and technical advancement. And that this is built up in centers of culture, knowledge, and research as represented by true universities uncode. Clearly, education has a pivotal role to play in the development of society. Education opens up vista of knowledge and possibility, it equips citizens with life skills, builds character, and unnobles the ordinary, and it builds up people with understanding, and with tools engaged their environment. It connects them with their culture, with their scientific world, and with their future, fundamental to any value that can be extracted from higher education therefore.

Is that higher education institutions (sorry, I'm missing a page) must have the means and the capacity to advance their historic mission in teaching, learning, research, and community engagement , they must be centers of knowledge generation or scientific advancement and innovation. And they must produce the

next generation of refined citizens, and knowledge under pronounce. Higher education institutions must produce citizens with learning sufficient for them to take their places in society, and to make their contribution to their own self-fulfillment and societal advancement. Be on that higher education must contribute to the store of knowledge in our scientific endeavours. That will aid planning and policy, and research and evidence that equip society with their better understanding of itself and the challenges it traces. Above all it must nurture and discern talent, and cultivate the leadership potential that is embedded in all our use. It is also our responsibility to nurture creative and critical talent, and wish rich academics will come. And we must act as role models for any who might be attracted to academic careers. That level of quality human capital is essential for any development of state.

Clearly we already have new forms of management in higher education, and we have no option but to embrace them. And someone between the opposite ends of the above mentioned higher education continue desire the vast majority of higher education institutions trying as best as they can to offer a meaningful and quality education within the contest of increasingly sophisticated and diverse global environment. Given the speed at which global changes currently taking place, the current global financial crisis and the case in point, that one suspects that higher education institutions will have to be increasingly creative and innovative in determining and articulating society's needs and in developing management frameworks that will best serve those needs; one further suspects that increasingly given the global financial constraints. It has to be done in some sorts of financial or other partnerships, if one airs to the above mentioned dynamics. They continue to ever growing demand for access to higher education the world over , especially for people from disadvantage background and communities. The accelerate proliferation of technologies that I'm having a fundamental impact on our societies. The emergence of open education resources and virtual learning are too mentioned but a few. Then it is evident that open distance learning offers a variable option to many nations particularly the so called emerging nations.

Likewise, Universities have to content with the changing demographic of student population. In the area of alightment student not only have aspirations and expectations , they also have demands. They understand themselves to be customers. They have rights. They have opinions. And they are active and engaged learners, likewise students of our time, I also technologically survey, and live and learn and engage with through all kinds of targets. The fact is that the learning environment has changed irretrievably or other irreversibly. The institutions have to respond appropriately in their teaching methods, in constructing appropriate learning environments, in appropriate assessment, in establishing values and ethics. The learner is an active participant. And academic management must take account of the new student, their values, their social world, and a frame of the centrality of the student in the learning environment, frankly, in a right speech and environment with student rights matters and they know it. They demand to be treated in a

manner that respects their human dignity, with opinions matter and will learning become as a facilitative and a neighboring system. That means that the teacher is no longer the all powerful bedder of knowledge and wisdom, and educators cannot succeed in the traditional authoritarian manner. Yes, student still demand accountability from their lecturers.

Managing higher education therefore requires smart achieve of resources, financial, human, technological, intellectual, creativity and innovation, with some are of aggressiveness in pursuing imaginatively the best interests of the institution, the diplomating relations with government, donors and millions of other partners. The political are in managing the power relations within the institution between the various competing interests, and in positioning the institution of the public ground against all competition. Like all management, leadership of higher education institutions calls for the power of judgment on the part of any executive management. Often mistakes are made, but advancement arises from lessons learned from mistakes. I've often maintained that universities have become corporations, so I get on this. Universities thrive on traditions that become and entrenched, and I'm not going away too easily, universities are at best are serve governing collective of peers and their students, for collectively take responsibility for the institution, for the academic reputation and image, its financial capacity, and their academic resource generates. That is the reason the university senate is such a powerful institution.

The art of leadership in such an institution can best be described as four site —keeping always ahead of the pack, guiding, and power of persuasion and influence. I believe that one best achieves in a university by a ream of finance and justice at all times, by treating all colleagues impartially and equally, respectfully and with dignity, and bidding by the rules and implementing policies fairly and consistently. I believe that it is not the office of the vice-chancellor or president of such that evokes for respect in their academic community. What I am afraid is how to earn respect of one' colleagues as a leader and manager, academic and intellectual competence, management with integrity and treating everyone with dignity.

Universities as I said have also become conglomeracy. Higher education is becoming a multibillion-dollar industry. It is no longer an industry that is confined within national boundaries. Its products are marketed across boarders and cultures. And it brings into their academic arena a diverse mix of cultures and traditions. Universities in any event are hardly liked to be wholly financed and sustained from the public purse, governments' dynamics and regulate universities, but their financial contributions have become a diminishing revenue in university budges. Government is a vital partner to universities, however, as a guide of tour of standards and of quality, by setting and enabling regulatory machinery. But their relationship with government will always be sensitive, because universities must guard against invasion of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The finding mechanism therefore must be clear, defensible and predicable. University

vice-chancellors must never be refused to be supplicants, who beg for favors from government. There can be no doubt that uneasy as university systems pretend that the management practices of vital for business of higher education. After all we deal with huge budget; we manage large sums of money and trust to us by donors.

Students pay fees and they are entitled to fair returns. Staffs also have issues of job security and career advancement. We employ a large numbers of staff; we contribute to the economy of our cities wherever large universities are. Plant, property and equipment must be acquired, maintained, renewed, replaced as appropriate. Facilities must be provided. Process of systems need to be put in place. The university is a modern institution. And to the extent it is related to all sectors of society with other institutions. It must keep up with its partners, if it's to benefit from the technology and scientific advancement.

The reason of current global crisis in the financial markets is of relevance to university. It is no doubt due to the fact that universities are major investors, and they are also borrowers of capital from the banks. We are hit by the credit crunch, a time we experience cash flu problems. And we are fluctuated with our interests' rates that affect our budgeting processes. We are like any other business in that regard. We all know that academic colleagues are very scaring about what is come to be known as a new managerialism. What this means is that the universities have learned management practices from business. And they applied them to universities' situations and critically and often inappropriately. There is a view that the universities are not appropriate places for the application of the modern business management practices. They do not fit into academic institutional cultures, because it is said they undermine academic traditions. They reduce the influence of academics in the management and in the direction of their disciplines. They separate management from academics. They often bring in people it is suggested who know nothing about disciplinary, about academic disciplines. And such, they tend to be out of discipline insensitively to violate the secret principles of academic freedom. They subject academics to processes of accountability. That it is alleged have no places in their academy, so the argument goes.

But the reality is different. It isn't interests of university as a whole that there is a leadership and management that coheres and that guides and that can behave accountable. The university's sustenance, its reputation and image depend on the industry and diligent of its academic staff in teaching, research and community engagement. These days it matters most whether students succeed in their studies or not that academic staff maintain a rigorous research output, that academics are involved in public policy and engagement, because it affects the bottom line and the core business of the university. Before-mentioned management therefore has become a necessary part of university management.

It is equally important that management and governance mechanism are accountable and consultative. And their decision making must eventually be effective, and must advanced the mission of the university. No decision making processes need to be interminable. Neither must decisions that have to be made

beheld to wrestle by some vested interests that one often finds at universities, nor should voice of the minority ultimately thought progress. Universities are often undermined and discredited by decision making processes that get no way. New forms of management in higher education are necessitated. But the new demands of technology of expertise required, to manage a large institution of new tools for understanding and utilizing human resources with their constraints and opportunities, of information management and of business intelligence, of necessity universities are becoming diverse places of quanti-station and opportunity, of creativity and egotism, of political power play and ingenuity, of cultural and intellectual contestation.

At the end of the day, a university has to be a place of overall pursuit of excellence and continuous improvement of quality in all its service and products. For all that, a vice-chancellor must depend upon the expertise of his or her colleagues. He must once carefully selected, trust them, support them, guide them in the exercise of their duties, and must endeavor to retain skills for the good of the institution. As vice-chancellor one must be able to be rely on one's colleague and finance, ICT, information and communications, league and human resources, research academic matters. The vice chancellor must receive all demand, regular preference, must ask partners' questions, test advice against policy, chart the way forward and ultimately take responsibility. As vice chancellor, one can not afford to be hands off. At the same time, it is not possible to micro-manage a large institution, otherwise one could get swam in the minuet of operational detail. As one vice chancellor one must be aware of management in leadership by consultation. That means that one should be available to make sure the vital institutional structures and status, must test opinion at all times, see concessions and communicate, communicate, communicate. This communication process includes consultation with chairperson of the counsel aboard of the university. As the deliver of governance and policy in this institution, with other governance structures, like senate and student representative counsel. The vice-chancellor, as the leader of institution, must also be visible. The vice-chancellor must be visible on behalf of the institution in the public debates of education and other society of issues, must be visible among colleagues and peers, vice-chancellors and presidents, must participate actively in the higher education sector, and contribute to us shape in policy. Must be visible within the institution in seminars, in debates, and in walkabouts; must make people in situations formal and informal, must converse with the students on the lift whatever they may be. It is imperative that the vice-chancellor must cultivated collaborative relationships with his or her fellow vice-chancellors, it engenders confidence and creates good will, make no mistake. The university also functions by creating good will among all sectors of the university community, and with society at large. Whatever forms of management adopted though, it is crucial that creativity and innovation should never be frustrated or throttled by bad management. In order to do so, the university must adopt the learning organization model. At the heart of this is an ablement of experimentation

of testing, of discovery. Every person in the organization should operate from a learning parody, thick advancement of the ideas and test them with colleagues that every manager must discuss with colleagues how a learning environment may be cultivated and entrenched. And every individual should develop his or her own individual learning processes within the organization. And that quality as a process of continuous improvement should be embedded in the culture of the organization. Learning becomes a critical part of institutional advancement.

May I leave you colleagues with two pieces of advice? The first is that please subscribe to the Harvard Business Review, and keep it at hand as you point your management practice and design strategies. Second, subscribe to AGU (American Graduate University) course that wonderful resource on managing ICTs and higher education for the practitioner in a modern connected or networked higher education environment. These I have found to be worthy companions for the modernist manager in the higher education.

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