

Chapter 15

Decision Making and Problem Solving in Higher Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

As it is stated that the economy of a country can never be greater than the education of its people, today parents and several organizations are investing a lot of money in education to better the future of their children and also meet the demands of the several generations to come. Through this process, the level of competition among higher education institutions is too high for them to survive and continuously attract parents, citizens and funders to meet demands of both institutional and community challenges. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to explore the concept of decision making, factors that determine the decision making process, the effectiveness of decision making and problem solving in higher education institutions deemed to be largely chaotic and complex. World over, government and states are investing in higher education to transform their communities in terms of knowledge, skills, culture and economic development.

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INTRODUCTION

As the population grows all over the world, higher education becomes diverse and accessible from every angle in the world to serve society (Craig, 2012), multiple demands and challenges towards institutions of higher education also increase thus provoking decision making to address challenges of real life which seem to be complex (Tucker, 1992). For example globalization, higher speed technological advancement and multicultural dimension call for complex decision making and solutions to problem solving to make life meaningful (Jeongmin, 2009). Managers and administrators at the pivot center and steering level of higher education end up seeking different opinions and ways through which the complexity of demands of the world must be addressed (Jonasse, 1999; 2000). The aim of higher education should be making human life better through decision making and problem solving by giving alternative solutions to challenges faced and arrive at conclusive actions (Gagne, 1980). Through this process, complex challenges are tackled with complex influences that form and shape the decision making processes for both academic and nonacademic departments to overcome a myriad of challenges at all levels (Sullivan Syn.).

For the society to progress, higher educational institutions, must play an important role through provision of the necessary human capital for all fields and the only way to achieve this objective, is through stable environment and continuous sustainable academic instruments with sound decision making and systems to influence the curriculum, content, programs and the means through which teaching and learning can be realized.

It is worthy noting that, the major role of HEIs have is to determine the economic level and social transformation of its citizens through education, research and innovation and this should be achieved through the quality of its inputs and outputs in terms of human capital at all levels (Woom, 2005). Therefore higher education services should be comprehensive in nature so that they embed the quality of teaching-learning, enhance research, innovation, and intensify internalization, co-curricular activities to meet global demands (Chew & Tan, 2007). This can only be achieved through complex quality procedures and processes of decision making and problem solving.

To achieve the above mentioned quality through tangible means, HEIs must enhance complex strategic decision making processes through action plan objectives to determine the future of their states through their inputs and outputs (students). To walk the talk, lies in the hands of the top management leadership, their think tanks and the systems employed to achieve these tasks. In the strategic management approach to decision making, action plan and problem solving, HEIs are always advised to conduct an overall study to redefine the direction and strategy of the

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