Chapter 4
Observations through a Keyhole:
The Changing Dimensions of Global Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Global higher education leaders face the most explosive political environment in the history of higher education in the world due to decreased financial resources coupled with increased accountability. As revenues become scarcer, calls for accountability continually increase the five often-competing forces driving change in global higher education. In order to gain a more holistic view of accountability, the authors focus on five major shifts in global higher education: 1) Supply: financing; move from state-supported to state-assisted; 2) Demand: students; by 2020 minority students will be the majority; 3) Delivery: competition; faculty, f2f, online, technology, etc.; 4) Structure: new structures in different locations, internationalization, no longer brick and mortar, brick and click; 5) Productivity: management by objectives and results orientation.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education organizations in the twenty-first century must manage enormous complexity. Three domains of administration are critical for success: (1) Higher education organizations are increasingly less autonomous; (2) higher education organizational environments are increasingly complex; and, (3) higher education organizations are increasingly dependent on technology.

In many countries, the financial capacity to build an internationally competitive research university is not present or desired. As local, state and national governments find it impossible

to meet the financial needs of higher education, universities are forced to acquire funding through many divergent strategies including private donors, increased tuition and fees, grants for research and innovation, cooperation with corporate entities, and recruiting out-of-boundary students for higher fees.

Higher education leaders are striving to adapt to the rapid development and application of technology that has created a global phenomenon. The integration of technology for both instructional and administrative uses has created a schizophrenic atmosphere for higher educational leaders. However, the infusion of technology continues to be one of the major ironies of modern higher education. Technology makes the business of higher education more complicated and competitive each day. Along with increasing global competition, technology is adding complexity and uncertainty to the organizational environment. The increasing global interdependencies and the accelerating pace of change demand more flexible and adaptive higher education organizations. Effective utilization of technology will decrease organizational vulnerability by reducing costs and enhancing adaptability. Higher education leaders have increasing difficulty predicting how to control or use technologies that so profoundly influence and perhaps disrupt higher education. Technological changes typically outpace higher education leaders' ability to integrate those changes. When examining technology within higher education, three background forces are evident: (1) rapid changing of faculty and programs in higher education; (2) more nations will meet the educational needs of their citizens locally, and (3) human resources will become a scarce commodity as knowledge becomes increasingly important. These factors contribute to the fluid and uncertain environment that surrounds much of global higher education. Technology makes the business of education more

complicated and competitive each day. Technological changes typically outpace people's ability to socialize those changes.

Therefore, to compete in today's economic environment, global higher education institutions need to become adaptive businesses, capable of responding quickly to changing customer demands. Continuously changing environments require higher education institutions to continuously reassess their goals and management strategies. The success of these higher education organizations will come from the ability to manage networks of knowledge and to collect, document and analyze data involving complex systems. Thus, the focus needs to be on flexibility, learning and development of new knowledge determined by adaptability instead of specific solutions.

Globalization, a key reality of the 21st century, has profoundly influenced higher education in almost every country of the world. Economic and cultural globalization have ushered in a new era in higher education. For the first time in history, every research university is part of a single world-wide network and the world leaders in the field have an unprecedented global visibility and power. Globally, higher education leaders are being asked to focus on objective measures of performance without consideration for the social values of a degree. At the same time, social scientists and others are engaged in a lively debate about the positive and negative impacts of globalization. One group argues that the forces of worldwide economic integration inevitably lead to diminishing capacity of governments to control economic and social activity within their borders while the other side articulates the innumerable advantages of global interaction for learning and economic development. This integration of the world economy through low-cost information and communications has become one of the most important implications of globalization.

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