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Editorial Comments

This edition of the *International Journal of Higher Education Management (IJHEM)* contains nine thoroughly researched and scholarly articles. Conforming to the Academy's editorial policy, they have been selected such that the basic objective of dissemination of knowledge both applied and theoretical is adhered to. These articles speak volumes of the current dynamic within the higher education sector. Leadership and management teams are facing multiple challenges and increased demand as never before. Where once there was a degree of uniformity about the types of offering, now shifting expectations and demands from various stakeholders means that higher education institutions are not only having to manage scarce resources with greater skill, but need to be cognizant of unprecedented levels of scrutiny. At IJHEM we are fully committed to a robust selection process and from the outset seek to ensure that this academic journal makes a positive and purposeful contribution to the understanding of issues affecting higher education management. I wish to salute the successful contributors for their endeavours and feel confident that others will find this journal both engaging and worthy of considerable thought.

The first article in this edition is entitled: *Education Reforms and Development in Japan Language and Culture Education for Global Competitiveness* by *D. Wilkinson.* Those familiar with Japan's history will be aware that for a considerable period of its history Japan consciously chose to shut itself off from the wider world. Japan's policy of *sakoku* (isolationist foreign policy) came to an end following the intervention of Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy in the mid-nineteenth century and the signing of the Convention of Kanagawa (1854). Having been largely hermetically sealed from events further afield throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century Japan gradually opened itself up to external influences and in some cases readily embraced them. Wilkinson's paper is a timely reminder that whilst Japan has changed beyond recognition in some respects there is an increasing awareness that the homogeneous nature of its society and a tendency towards introspection has hampered Japan when it comes to higher education. For all Japan's economic success in the decades post-1945 this paper elucidates the fact that there are a number of trends that have caused misgivings about the country's ability to compete long term, namely a falling birth rate, an ageing population and a perception of poor proficiency when it comes to use of the English language. We are reminded that a university education is not an end in itself and these days must be viewed with regards to employability

and skills that a graduate bringing to the world of work. Higher education institutions are very familiar with the charge that they are not educating students to meet the needs of the business community, but it would appear that Japan has serious concerns as to whether its current approach is delivering the results that it needs.

In highlighting the issue of the study of English, Wilkinson and his extensive literature review makes it clear that embracing English as the language of globalisation is not as easy as it might seem. Elsewhere there is a realisation that competitive advantage is tied up with offering degree programmes in English; in France for instance a number of highly prestigious institutions have chosen to follow the English language route, a decision which has caused considerable angst and in some quarters dismay and anger. This paper makes clear that the a number of stakeholders including the national government, business and even universities themselves recognise that a problem exists and as a consequence have begun a series of initiatives aimed at equipping Japanese students accordingly. The fact that Japan will host the 2020 Olympics would appear to have concentrated minds further and the steps taken by Soka University provide a fascinating insight into the difficulties faced and the measures taken. The author makes clear that Soka University is not alone in endeavouring to address a range of issues, yet the fact that it is a private education institution reminds us of the importance of being both relevant to the needs of students and to the wider society. Linguistic competitiveness, certainly for an entire nation cannot rest solely with the efforts of the private sector and thus it is important for us to appreciate what Wilkinson mentions in regard to such an ambition being a national effort, one that involves providing not merely leadership, but appropriate funding and resources.

The second paper is entitled: *The efficiency of a University Teaching and Learning Training Program (UTL) on Developing the Teaching Competencies of the Teaching Staff at Al Iman Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University* by *Alrowaithi* and *Al Saleem.* Saudi Arabia's higher education sector has undergone a period of unprecedented growth in recent years, with a particularly interesting aspect of this expansion being the increase in the number of young women furthering their studies. The Arab World is not alone in having at times appeared to have neglected the preparation of those pursuing the path of teaching and lecturing and thus this research affords a timely opportunity to explore an issue of relevance to all who are desirous of an effective higher education sector. Traditionally students have often been viewed as empty vessels to be filled with the knowledge and wisdom of those charged with educating them, this approach has often been compounded by certain cultural norms and expectations, a fact that none of us can afford to ignore. The fact that this research takes as its focus female teachers and lecturers is significant and this alone raises a range of questions around the issue of gender, perception, societal expectations and local context.

Alrowaithi and Al Saleem were certainly ambitious in endeavouring to see whether the UTL they examined should be applied nationally. Whilst some might raise questions over the size of the study, the core focus is relevant to all educational institutions, not just in Saudi Arabia but throughout the globe. The issue of the "chain of influence" is an important one and those in leadership and management roles all need to ensure effective training, the question is how do we go about measuring effectiveness and quantifying its outcomes? This research does at least attempt to explore some of these issues. It findings are revealing, especially when we examine the role of self awareness, appraisal, security and professional support. In discovering that the asking of questions was only moderately impacted by the training program I found myself wondering what ownership the participants in the training had on the training itself and whether they had been afforded the opportunity to shape future training sessions. Further insight into local cultural conditions and the role of gender, especially in a leadership and management capacity would have added to this research. Whilst invariably a case can be made for expanding or rolling out training it would have been useful to discover something of the practicalities in this regard and whether those delivering and receiving the said UTL program were satisfied with the time and resources allocated. We all would do well to reflect on the support provided to those at the sharp end of working wonders via teaching and lecturing and whether locally or nationally can benefit considerably by re-examining our own programs and their effectiveness.

Those in leadership positions in higher education have never been keener to gain insight into market segmentation, a topic which if addressed effectively can not only increase student footfall, but potentially help an institution consolidate its areas of expertise as well as enhancing its reputation. The third paper in this volume: *Teaching Market Segmentation: The Eight Step Process* by *Guzman* offers not only a logical means of enabling students to understand market segmentation more effectively it provides a useful template for management and leaders endeavouring to understand their target clientele. The author makes clear that he; "seeks to update the segmentation curriculum", this is in itself a laudable aim, assuming of course that there is a general consensus that the curriculum is not fit for purpose. Emphasis is placed on collaborative and heuristic learning, a feature that is as important to the world of work as it is to academia. One of the greatest challenges faced by those responsible for designing and managing any academic programme is to ensure that it is relevant, practicable and able to be assimilated and applied in real life situations. In explaining the various steps of the said process one of the merits of this method is its clarity and accessibility of the language and examples deployed to explain them. When explaining Step 5 - Operationalizing the selected variables the author talks of the process not being an exact science, the same is true of Higher Education Management. The

fact that we are dealing with human beings and not automatons goes a long way to explain the variables that have the potential to challenge research findings and implementation processes.

The world of education requires reflection, re-evaluation and the desire to find improvements, for if we fail to test, appraise and develop we surely stagnate as a society. What has been presented in this Eight Step Process is an attempt to offer an improvement aimed not only at engagement and comprehension, but also in application in the world beyond the classroom or lecture theatre. Guzman reminds us that we must not sit back and be content with the *status quo*, but should work assiduously to ensure that we equip students with the necessary skills, insight and understanding to move from the theory to implementation. As in all such formulae the ultimate test of their effectiveness lies with those who use them and thus let us hope that over time evidence is garnered that will enable a measured and thorough examination of whether The Eight Step Process enhances the teaching of market segmentation and helps optimise its understanding and application.

The fourth paper of this edition: *Financial Management of Higher Education Institutions with reference to Financing, Pricing, Accounting Standards and Gaps in Practices in Universities and Colleges* by *M.M. Gandhi* tackles head on one of the fundamental challenges facing education for the foreseeable, namely funding. Whilst education is viewed as a societal good, one that has been able to be measured with varying degrees of success the fact that resources are not limitless raises questions about foresight planning, efficiencies and the allocation of resources. Gandhi makes it clear that India as the world's largest democracy and as the country that has the largest education sector is faced with the prospect of having to address the issue of burden sharing. In common with most other countries India has realised that the financing of higher education from the public purse (i.e. from general taxation) in the medium to long term will not be sustainable. Whilst India's expansion of the higher education sector since Independence has been impressive the author now believes the point has been reached where there will need to be some form of; "shifting the financial burden to the individual domain from the social domain". Many countries have already begun to journey along a similar path and as a consequence faculties, departments and courses have been assessed for their economic viability and many discontinued with the resultant loss of jobs, expertise and choice. The profit and loss approach to higher education is enormously controversial and raises important questions as to the exact purpose of education and research within society.

This paper shines a light on the disparities between the expansion in student numbers, in India's case an increase of 600% over the last three decades and the fact that the numbers of faculty members has only increased by 400% over the same period. Little wonder then that there

is a perception of deteriorating standards, with considerable discussion ensuing as to the reasons for such a decline, assuming that the said decline has existed. Gandhi nails his colours firmly to the mast when he states that the higher education system in India is in a; "critical state – resistant to change" and his opinion; "in danger of becoming irrelevant". Whilst he lays out reasons given by others for this supposed decline, he fails to explain his own trenchant criticism. Equally on the issue of loans to developing countries the author states that one of the conditions for such loans was a 10% cut in investment in higher education, yet there are no sources quoted or referenced to support this. The reader is given a useful insight into how successive Indian administrations have endeavoured to address higher education. Change or the need for change has not been helped by the fact that there are multiple layers when it comes to funding and what is more education funding has become highly politicised and thus hotly contested. Furthermore the issues of transparency and auditing would appear to be matters of concern and therefore Gandhi advocates a measure of restructuring, something which could well prove a monumental task, particularly in India where bureaucracy and inertia are often seen as reigning supreme. To those unfamiliar with the Indian higher education sector it would be unwise to generalise and for all the wealth of challenges that exist there are a number of innovative and exciting initiatives that illustrate India's ability to excel in a domain it holds dear.

In theory higher education institutions should be at the forefront of data collection and data mining, but in reality there is often a culture of resistance when it comes to optimising information systems. The next paper: *The Use of Education Management Information Systems in Higher Education Institutions: An Empirical Investigation of the Effect of Degree of Interactivity* by *El Said* highlights something of the opportunities currently available and the reluctance of some to adopt and utilise the technology currently available. In recent decades we have witnessed in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) a gradual recognition that attitudes and approaches need to change, that said if one examines the spread of the likes of Top Quality Management (TQM) the process in many countries has been painfully slow. Bodies such as the Universities and Colleges Information System Association (UCISA) have come in to being in the United Kingdom, but El Said is clear that an absence of appropriate technology or a lack of adequate resources continues to hamper greater usage of Education Management Information Systems. In addition generational differences and the prevailing mindset amongst leadership and management must be significant factors, as there are many who are not only fearful of technological change, but who also find it difficult to comprehend its potential and thus are reluctant to prioritise introduction and sanction the funding streams required. This research provides some fascinating insights and its findings have lessons that are relevant far beyond the institutions that were included. One aspect that resonated with me in particular was with regard

to perception, as this is often plays a key role either in the ready adoption of processes or the marked reluctance to embrace change. In my experience (and I believe that I am far from being alone in this respect) are often seats of reactionary opinion and thus bulwarks against change. The subject of technology, its relevance, purpose and effectiveness often engenders fear and thus is resisted by individuals regardless of their ideological standpoint.

This research makes use of number of highly respected models and thus is given added weight. Whilst we are told that more females than males participated it would have been interesting to discover whether there were any differences in the findings in regards to gender. Equally, the age range could well be telling, as it is reasonable to assume that younger participants might well be more open to deploying new technology. The findings certainly have much to tell us and raise questions about how higher education institutions set about not only collecting data, but ensuring that it is interpreted in a judicial and impartial manner. Sadly, there are those who fear that the primary objective behind data collection is to use it to justify departmental closures and carry out job cuts. El Said has certainly produced a stimulating piece of research that provides food for considerable thought.

It seems appropriate that for our sixth paper we now move from institutional use of information systems to individual student confidence with new technology. *Computer Self Efficacy, Computer-related Technology Dependence and On-Line Learning Readiness of Undergraduate Students* by *Chinaza et al* is a timely study, especially when one thinks about how higher education institutions go about measuring their value-added impact. At the core of this research is self-believe, something which is crucial to personal development. Computer self-efficacy in any society is bound to be influenced by socio-economic factors, chiefly the ability to afford and access technology, as well as gender, where in many societies males are deemed either more worthy of being furnish with new technology, or where new technology is viewed as largely a male orientated domain. As universities and colleges require confident independent learners it is essential that all students regardless of gender or economic background be able to operate efficiently and with discernment. In quoting the research of Shu, Tu and Wang (2011) this paper raises the subject of "technostress", something which this research would appear to show dissipates with greater student ITC usage. Interestingly the findings also show that whilst males appear to have an advantage earlier on, female students readily embrace and use new technology, a point that has clear implications for policy makers as well as those within HEIs endeavouring to ease the transition for freshmen and women. Whilst this research has considerable merit, it would have been interesting to read more about the Nigerian context, not least because as Africa's most populous nation there would appear to be wide regional disparities, something that would surely have a bearing on the nature of research of this nature.

In addition when exploring the issue of on-line learning readiness there would also be differences in areas of study, a fact that itself would be significant, as we appreciate that males and females often prefer to opt for different degree programmes. Those in leadership and management roles can benefit considerably from working to understand the levels students are at upon their arrival and thus it is clear that this cogent analysis of important topic adds to our understanding of an issue that is set to take on an ever greater significance as ITC becomes ever more fundamental to pedagogy and andragogy across the globe.

Our next paper is entitled: *Nexus between Quality of Higher Education and Economic Development: The Indian Story* by *Lobo*. The contribution that higher education makes to national development is a perennial point of discussion. We have already seen in an earlier paper that for a country the size of India its importance cannot be underestimated and yet ensuring value for money is far from certain. Both M. M. Gandhi and Radhika Lobo provide the reader with some idea of the local context, yet even here we see disparities that are both telling and a warning to academics, policy makers and students alike. A case in point when comparing the two papers is with regards to the figures quoted concerning the number of universities and colleges in India at the time of Independence, Gandhi's paper states; "There were only 20 universities and about 500 colleges at the time India attained independence." whilst Lobo makes mention of their being; "26 universities and 695 colleges at the time of independence". India's progress in many respects has been remarkable, but for all this Lobo still reminds us that India has the lowest Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of any of the so-called BRICS economies. Her point about the need to; "harness the energies of youth" is well made and for all the existing strategies the main point of focus would still need to be in broadening access and reducing regional/state disparities. Universities and colleges the world over are in a constant quest to demonstrate their quality and relevance and this would appear to be equally true of the higher education in India. The issue of funding is a complex one, a source of constant anxiety to those in leadership and management. Yet for all the examples of undoubted success when it comes to development there is clearly a feeling of angst, particularly in regards to progress made by China.

The author makes the point that the; "Chinese system is more directly focused on quality", a comment that some might see as somewhat unfair on India, as Communist China has the 'advantage' of total central planning and direction, whilst in India the workings of democracy, regional states and bureaucracy acts as a collective break on rapid change. The enormity of the task must not be underestimated and for those looking for quick and easy solutions, well they are likely to remain elusive. Lobo lays out with clarity a number of challenges and we would do well to reflect on the value of India finding Indian solutions for Indian problems. That said, whilst India may well be facing challenges on a far grander scale, all

higher education providers can empathise with what is taking place and in actuality acknowledge that many of the challenges are universal.

The penultimate paper in this edition comes from the Middle East and is entitled: *The Effect of Emotional Intelligence on Student Achievement from a Faculty Members' Perspective at the World Islamic Science & Education University, Jordan* by Yahaya & *Al Hadid.* Funding and day to day staffing issues often result in those in leadership and management roles losing sight of students at individuals. This relatively small piece of research helps us re-focus upon those that an institution is meant to serve, namely the students themselves. Key to whether students fulfil their potential is the rapport that they establish with teaching staff and thus an exploration of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is always something of value. Educators recognise that self-worth and academic achievement go hand in hand and as a consequence those Higher Education institutions that fail to factor this into their thinking are likely to be less effective. The literature review provided here helps appraise us with current thinking and provides a useful backdrop for the research itself. Here we see a piece of research that benefits considerably from the clarity of the questions at its core.

Societal norms and expectations are enormously important and thus no study of this nature can afford to ignore the role of hierarchy and religion. Jordan as a patriarchal society that has the teachings of Islam at its heart is bound to have certain codes that shape behaviour. That said, this research elucidates a number of issues that are common to all higher education institutions and therein lies its merit. The issue of gender is a significant one, especially when it comes to perception; males (especially older males) in academia are often seen as holding entrenched views and thus viewed as conservative and even at times reactionary, something that likely to create distance and possibly fear. Such a finding is further complicated by the fact that within Arab societies age is associated with wisdom and thus deserving of respect. The findings concerning the differences between attitudes to those who hold PhDs and Masters degrees are interesting and warrant further examination both with regards to the training and support provided to staff and whether students are encouraged to accord all staff with respect or are inculcated with a culture of deference for those with elite qualifications.

Al Hadid's research is certain to stimulate discussion, but as someone who has himself lived and worked in Jordan for two years, I feel that it raises further questions about societal change. The higher education sector and societies in which they operate are in a state of flux and we need to be alive to the fact that what held true several decades ago may well not hold true now. Even conservative societies are undergoing a period of unprecedented change and thus it

is more important than ever that we work assiduously to appreciate the role and importance of Emotional Intelligence.

The final paper is entitled: *Effective Management of Teaching – Learning and Working Conditions in Vocational Education in Nigeria* by *Ahaiauzu Levi Uche.* Society places considerable emphasis on what it expects from Higher Education institutions, but invariably pays scant attention to how this is achieved. Employment is often seen as an end in itself, yet regardless of one's field of endeavour job satisfaction is generally agreed to be integral to positivity and productivity. When we talk of good working conditions it is important to have an agreed set of norms, and this is as true of the world of education as it is of any other area of employment. Where this paper could be further be strengthened is in regards to seeking define "good working conditions", whether these come from a key ministry, unions or specific institutions. The author points out that there is a paucity of literature on this subject when it comes to Nigeria and this in itself should be a matter of concern. Whilst some naturally point the finger at the Ministry of Education, there could be multiple reasons for such perceived inaction, geographic distance, under staffing, differing priorities can all play their part. Equally, the lexicon often frames the debates and can either result in a polarised stance or one of constructive engagement. Employees often feel aggrieved or ignored, whilst ministry officials become defensive and somewhat prickly. Agreed standards are essential as is a forward plan that invests in staff with a view to measuring outcomes and efficiencies. The 'Us and Them' attitude that poisons relations is something that is both counterproductive for individual institutions as well as for the nation as a whole. What would be helpful would be examples of best practice, as these provide practical templates for others to move forward.

Nigeria in common with other developing nations is experiencing growing pains and it is inevitable that there is frustration with existing structures and mechanisms. This paper makes it clear that there is considerable disquiet on the ground in educational institutions, something that damages morale, productivity and staff retention. It is important that this is not seen as Nigerian problem, in point of fact it is one that is recognised the world over. What matters is that there is acknowledgement that problems exist and that commitments are made to affect positive change that involve all stake holders. This paper highlights some familiar problems, that rather than being ignored deserve to be addressed in a measured and sympathetic manner as part of a national development strategy.

This edition of IJHEM has brought to our attention a range of issues that whilst they may have regional perspectives or focus have a relevance that is universal. When authors themselves reflect on their work it would be helpful to hear more about how they feel their research will benefit others, as well as balancing this with comments as to particular limitations. We all need to be open to new ideas and to seek

fresh perspective and insights, and I look forward to IJHEM continuing to play its role as a means of broadening horizons as well as being a conduit for academic papers that add to the body of human knowledge and understanding.

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