

# International Journal of Higher Education Management (IJHEM)

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## Editorial Comments

This edition of the *International Journal of Higher Education Management (IJHEM)* contains ten 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.

In an age of globalisation that is to some degree fixated with league tables 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. Societal changes coupled with funding pressures are also concentrating minds. Increasingly people are asking questions about ethics, values and the contribution and worth of the higher education sector. Inevitably a degree of soul searching is taking place and there are those who question the path being travelled by some institutions. Whilst it is evident that much remarkable work is being done, in some quarters there are legitimate concerns with regards to the pressures being placed upon students and staff alike, with increased anecdotal evidence that staff are being expected to take a multiplicity of roles. The vast majority of staff, regardless of their position, work with consummate professionalism, but it would be churlish to deny that there is invariably a cadre of individuals in any institution who are resistant to change or who resent change for change's sake. Institutional heads themselves face extraordinary pressures, but would do well to pause periodically to ask where the discernment is in all this? Rudolf Steiner in a lecture entitled: *Man's Being, His Destiny and World Evolution* delivered in 1923 observed with his usual sagacity that; "Every genuine knowledge is born out of sorrow, of suffering, of grief. True, profound knowledge is never born out of joy. True, profound knowledge is born out of suffering." - that said, it is beholden on those who hold positions of responsibility in education to minimise stress and unnecessary discomfort with a view to ensuring greater harmony, well-being and enlightenment.

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: *Exploring Issues in Change Management: Developing a Systems Perspective on the Management of Learning and Teaching Initiatives* by J. Davies. A primary responsibility of those in leadership roles in higher education is to ensure not only the direction that an institution takes, but that those appointed to particular educational roles are adhering to the letter and spirit of official guidelines and rubrics. Naturally, as we are not dealing with automatons such a task requires considerable sensitivity and a degree of judgement that at times would have challenge the fabled Wisdom of Solomon. The relationship between the internal and external dynamic are apparent from the outset of this paper, especially as there is a recognition of the merit that accreditation bodies can play not only in driving forward institutional change, but also as a means of benchmarking and gaining a sense of perspective about current and future activities.

In any form of organization, any form of monitoring, appraisal, assessment, target setting and on occasions discipline can be a cause for anxiety or resentment and academia is clearly no exception. Yet in recognising the importance of the notion of holism this paper proves a timely reminder that systems must be appreciated in their wider context. Of course knowledge and learning hubs committed to nurturing independent thought will always be places where some will question the criteria on which accreditation is undertaken. Here, whilst Davies has chosen not to question the motivation or validity of individual accrediting bodies, he has made a seemingly compelling case for value that accreditation can play in helping facilitate change, that in turn is both institutionally beneficial and essentially adds value to staff and students alike. The recognition of the dangers of a "tick box culture" is important, especially as there is a constant fear that people at various levels of the process may well go through the motions. Here not only is change explored and examined in a cogent manner, it is evident that considerable thought has been given to formulating processes that are endeavoured to restore equilibrium as well as recalibrate so as to minimise the potential for the proverbial spanner in the works.

One area of particular future discussion could be in regards to the issue of perception. Management perceptions in regards to learning and teaching are sometimes not as accurate as they might be and thus bridging the gap between perception and reality is something that warrants consideration. That said, the Final CDL Representation of the Evaluation and Accreditation Process offers some interesting routes forward that demonstrate a sound and logical theoretical understanding coupled with an in-depth appreciation of the systems required to apply the process. Whilst it is just as well to appreciate that context is king, this paper

provides some bold ideas that could well prove useful not only to academia, but to other areas of human endeavour.

The second paper is entitled: *Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom in Teaching to Bilingual students from a Monolingual Perspective* by Jenna Bekken. In an increasingly interconnected world the issue of culture and cultural identity is something that cannot be ignored. Sadly, for all the good work that is currently taking place in almost every field of human endeavour there is evidence of preconceptions and misconceptions that blight human relationships and personal development. This paper is an important reminder of some of the essential that should not only be enshrined in good practise with regards to a culturally responsive classroom, but within excellent teaching. Written with candour and anchored within personal experience, the reader is soon reminded that many practical elements within cultural engagement are centred upon language and the centrality within the culture of an individual's language. Bekken makes clear that a key part of the process is that the educator educates themselves. This is an important point, especially as being an autodidact often enables greater appreciation of the value of knowledge, but also ensures that we do not abdicate all our learning to others.

The Pew Research Centre in the US has compiled a wealth of statistics in regard to Hispanic students, their enrolment rates and educational advancement and thus this paper adds currency to this especially in regard to the importance of enabling students to feel valued. Awareness of the cultural disconnect is important, especially as it reminds us all that however enlightened we might like to think that we are, we all to some extent live in cultural bubbles. Language is a key stumbling block for many, both the educator and the educatee. This paper provides some useful pointers, especially in regard to building trust, finding common ground and shaping a more inclusive education experience. It is very refreshing indeed to have someone underscore the importance of humility, all the more so when the lexicon and iconography can often be extremely derogatory about certain communities. Stereotyping further clouds the issue and further erodes any sense of cultural worth. Anyone familiar with the work of the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education in the UK will appreciate that handling culture and identity issues requires an extraordinary degree of empathy and sensitivity, as well as involving people to invest time free from any hidden agenda.

In highlighting the issue around our own relationship to how others communicate we can indeed become aware that most of us fall short when it comes to the ease with which we make assumptions. The point made about "broken" English illustrates this with extraordinary clarity. Is it any wonder that some students and their families are so reticent if they are met with

a wall of assumptions and misunderstanding? The reader will soon discover that this paper has been written with extraordinary verve and candour and is a veritable clarion call to us all to examine our attitudes and means of engagement. The point made about advocacy is a powerful one. Regardless of our current professional standing, we all would do well to reflect on how we might better attune our sense of cultural awareness.

Personal development is part of a life-long process. Whilst there may be a fixation with paper qualifications, it is imperative that we all strive to enhance our knowledge banks and skill sets. The third paper of this volume is entitled: *Institutional Continuous Professional Development as a Tool for Improving Lecturer Performance in Private Higher Education Institutes in Botswana* by Chikari et al. CPD as an idea seems so familiar that it is actually quite a shock to be reminded that in a formalised sense it has only been around for three decades. From institution to institution leaders and managers invariably have differing ideas of what constitutes CPD and it is clear that there is both formal and informal CPD. The point made about the need for local institutions in Botswana to seek to differentiate themselves from and endeavour to get ahead of their competitors is an interesting one. Private educational providers face very particular pressures with regards to monitoring the bottom line, but also must be cognisant of the importance of income generation.

Affective CPD invariably raises questions about leadership, time, resources, focus and purpose. In addition there is always an interesting debate as whether it is provided internally, or supported from outside. Internationally professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development have been at the forefront of championing CPD, but there is a danger that some people overstate the degree of impact it can have. I note with interest that the authors of this paper use the word "panacea", an interesting choice of vocabulary, not least because it implies here that CPD is indeed a cure-all. That said, the findings here would appear to have found support amongst staff for some form of CPD. I for one would have been interested to see further analysis in regard to the role of gender, as this could well have implications for leadership, management and policy. Equally, some interesting questions are raised by the percentages of those who disagreed with the questions put to them.

In stating that; "All schools should be places where both adults and students learn." the authors remind us that learning is not a one way street and thus it is beholden on those in leadership roles to establish mechanisms that facilitate knowledge exchange and help foster personal growth. CPD would appear to have a part to play in this, the question is, to what degree do institutional leaderships prioritise CPD and are teachers and lecturers embracing opportunities to up skill and be alive to new means of personal learning and development?

What is and what is not happening in Botswana probably mirrors much of what is going on elsewhere.

Optimising learning leads into our next paper entitled: *Instructional Design Models - Framework for Innovative Teaching & Learning Methodologies* by *Cordelia Obizoba*. Whilst traditional teaching and lecturing methods may still prevail in many quarters, there is a growing realisation that all subject areas can benefit from new learning tools as a means of stimulating and reinforcing learning. Practical subjects in particular are desirous of cost-effective ways to address need and thus are potentially open to models that help deliver appropriate and measurable outcomes. This paper explores two models in particular; the Dick and Carey Model and the Morrison, Ross and Kemp Model. Whilst no such model entirely has a one size fits all utility, it is evident that some are better suited to certain subjects and institutions than others. Building in formative and summative assessment process is important as is the fact that for some institutions there may well be a dearth of knowledge about such models and the value that they might bring if introduced.

Simulations are a viable option for some institutions, especially those with a particular emphasis on areas of endeavour such as science, engineering and healthcare. It is worth noting what the Society of Simulation in Healthcare views as the primary purposes of simulation: education, assessment, and research and health system integration in facilitating patient safety. This certainly appears to chime with what Deborah Sutherland, PhD, CEO of the Centre for Advanced Medical Learning and Simulation (CAMLs) at the University Of South Florida Morsain College Of Health has stated; "...simulation allows deliberate practice in a safe environment where you get an opportunity to learn procedures or team processes." This paper in its use of the example of a blood diffusion learning activity reinforces this.

The fifth paper is entitled: *Benchmarking as a Means to Gauge and Improve Academic Standards in Higher Education within the Arab Region* by *Lobna Al-Khalifa*. Higher education institutions are having to operate in an increasingly crowded and competitive market and thus it is beholden on them to have systems and processes in place that enable them to see how they measure up against their competitors both locally and internationally. Where once academic institutions were quite content to operate in seeming splendid isolation, globalisation and various league tables and indices has resulted in a reassessment of attitudes, one important response being the development of benchmarking. Whilst this study makes clear that global competitiveness is a key driver, the comment about benchmarking; "being driven by accountability" is an interesting one, all the more so in the light if the sea change in attitudes and expectations following on from the so-called Arab Spring. With benchmarking in the Arab

World being at a nascent stage local institutions are able to draw on best practice from elsewhere and adopt suitable systems that have already been tried and refined. As is often the way with such initiatives, a sizeable number have taken their inspiration from existing systems in the Anglosphere, although it must be noted that expertise and insight is certainly not confined to any particular tradition or part of the world.

The recognition of a need for benchmarking is itself a significant development, one that the author notes in the case of Bahrain is; "to use internal and external reference points". Benchmarking is not without its hazards and it is noteworthy of this research that it underscores two particular challenges with regard to local conditions, namely the existing local structures being a threat to independence and the lack of experience amongst local personnel. It is worth noting that most Arab countries have a sizeable number of students undergoing post-graduate training overseas and these individuals on their return bring with them fresh insights and new perspectives.

Of course it is important to note that benchmarking itself is not without its critics, more because of its narrow focus, or occasionally the motivation behind it. The scope, parameters and terms of reference can make all the difference. Issues such as staff turnover are rarely if ever addressed, whilst the thorny issue of women in leadership roles is often left to one side. There is also the debate about whether one is truly comparing like with like and the ways in which findings can be manipulated or merely end up in a file gathering dust. That said, benchmarking has clearly come to stay in the Arab World and to date the signs are that it is having some beneficial effects.

New technology affords a wealth of opportunities for data capture, some of which can assist in the likes of benchmarking. Our next paper wrestles with some of the challenges thrown up by rapidly technological advances and the way in which these are being managed with a view to benefitting the user. *Matthias Schmuck* in his paper entitled: *Mobile Governance in Complex Value -Creation Networks: A User Centric Approach* takes into a realm which initially can appear daunting. Data capture and behavioural data capture has enormous potential for higher educational institutions. That said, it is imperative that there is a clear appreciation that there are statutory requirements concerning storage and privacy. There is a growing recognition across the sector that information mining can play a transformative role, providing of course the data capture tools are designed in such a manner as to meet the end users' needs. Hence the focus of this research. Anyone familiar with the Cambridge Big Data Strategic Research Initiative ([www.bigdata.cam.ac.uk](http://www.bigdata.cam.ac.uk)) will appreciate that here is an area of research and endeavour that has yet to be fully harnessed by most institutions, partly due to

insufficient funding, but largely due to being viewed as a near impenetrable or obscurantist area of research only fully understood by those hidden away in the very bowels of IT departments. Fear and misconceptions abound and yet as this paper makes clear the potential is considerable.

It takes a particularly courageous academic to examine gender related issues in higher education and thus the author of the next paper deserves to be applauded for doing so. *Achieving Gender Equity in Leadership of South African Institutions of Higher Learning: Is Woman Empowerment Mission Impossible in Universities?* by Mokoko Sebola could well be viewed as incendiary in some quarters and thus might need to be handled by those with asbestos gloves. Gender equity in any sector is always a hotly debated topic, but it would appear that the situation in South Africa raises multiple questions about cultural, context and prestige. The fact that Sebola concludes that currently there is a belief that the more women results in lower prestige is controversial in itself, yet whilst this may be a bleak assessment in regards to gender equity, he makes a spirited effort to explain why this is the case and how to some degree the higher education sector differs from other areas of human endeavour.

The paucity of female representation in senior roles across academia should be a matter of concern not only for South Africa, but the world at large. Many would argue that the tyranny of the patriarchy is such that leadership is invariably viewed through a masculine prism and as such women will always be disadvantaged. This paper makes clear that the local context has been thrown into even sharper relief because of South Africa's troubled history, yet in some respects in other areas, such as parliamentary representation the country is performing better than some might expect. To its credit this paper does not shy away from the feminist arguments, it enunciates them with clarity and as much objectivity as can be mustered.

A particularly telling observation in this paper is concerning the progress made in Rwanda. Whilst gender equity has advanced in many fields, high education appears to buck the general trend. Higher Education is not as enlightened, welcoming or tolerant of change as many of us would like to think, then again, those of us in academia probably already knew that. A particularly telling line from the research is the following; "Most women leaders have not failed in academic leadership or senior management because of the incapability, but simply because the system that put them into positions failed to support them in times of organisational crisis." - this observation speaks volumes. One aspect that might well have brought additional value to this study is in regard to differences between urban and rural institutions. What is set out here makes uncomfortable reading, yet is a timely reminder that considerable work remains to be done if change is to come about in a manner that does justice to those seeking to serve the higher education sector and society at large.

The eighth paper of this volume is entitled: *How (Not) to Manage a Business School in India* by *Tarun Pasricha*. The title may well be catchy and whimsical, but it is evident from the outset that this is a paper with an extremely serious message. The tyranny of rankings is such, especially in India, that leadership, management and of course investors genuflect at the altar of league tables. Parents too are swept up in this spirit of reverence and are naturally preoccupied with the chances of seeing a return on their investment. Rankings have become a veritable straight jacket in some respects and Pasricha draws our attention to the fact that B-Schools are particularly susceptible to vanity projects; his observation that; "it is relatively easy to build infrastructure rather than the institution itself" is a shrewd observation that really does get to the heart of the problem. This is something that is mirrored in many of the second tier Public (that is 'Private' or Independent) schools in the UK. Equally the point made about "research" and "publication" is a particularly cogent one.

Just as Volkswagen is not above doctoring computer programmes in order to manipulate results, rankings are never a true picture and themselves are open to abuse. Currently, they are the main mechanism by which institutions, parents, students and prospective employers view institutions. The author of this paper makes it abundantly clear that in his opinion India's B-Schools, or rather their leadership and management thereof are taking insufficient note of the importance of placements. This surely raises questions about value added, for an institution might well select seemingly bright students during its recruitment process, but what is it doing to ensure that they fulfil their potential?

In declaring his hand as a marketing professional mention is made of the customer being king. If that is indeed the case, can we then assume that all customers know what they want and can recognise a quality education when they encounter it? Already the social apartheid opening up in India between the elite schools and the B-Schools is alarming enough. The old boy network is not only alive, but thriving and thus what we learn here through the author's candid assessment of the state of higher education in India today is both fascinating and alarming. The fact that this issue has been discussed at all is cause for hope. It certainly provides some useful food for thought, not just in regards to education in India, but our means of appraising and benchmarking institutions globally.

The penultimate paper is entitled: *Analysing Innovative Practices for Oman Firms to Excel on Global Markets and Networking and Linking with Higher Education* by *Al-Nabhani et al.* All progress lies in a degree of self-realisation, this is as true of nation states as it is of people. The Sultanate of Oman finds itself in a region that has undergone rapid transformation in some respects in recent years and thus it comes of little surprise that it benchmarks itself against the



likes of the UAE. Innovation and increased Research & Development have both been shown to improve GDP and thus the observation; "Research is driven by money not rhetoric and wishes." is an important one. How to incentivise academics is an area that generates considerable discussion. One route suggested here is with regards to allowing those to benefit from their research. Anyone familiar with the activities of Coventry University Enterprises Ltd/Technology Park can appreciate that relationships with industry are possible, but might well cause some misgivings for some in academia.

This paper raises some interesting points about identity and nationalism. The whole debate around Omanization is one that sheds considerable light in some of the problems faced. Whilst there is a natural desire to upskill the local work force, in an increasingly globalised world leading centres recognise the value of drawing expertise from around the world. Those familiar with the history of the famed *Beit el Hikma* (The House of Wisdom) in Baghdad will appreciate that a centre of excellence cannot rely solely on local knowledge or expertise. Local context is of course important and thus there is only so much inspiration that can be drawn from elsewhere. Whether the leadership in Muscat wish to see their city emulate London's multiculturalism I very much doubt it in the light of what I have read here. That said, the author raises some legitimate questions about how to seek to excel in global markets and the plain truth is that no higher educational institution can afford to ignore what is going on elsewhere. Many academics may well have misgivings, but must at least be mindful that students have to operate in a world that is very different to the one of our student days.

It is apposite that the final paper is entitled: *Successful Publishing in Academic and Scientific Journals: Framing and Organizing the Scholarly Paper* by David Ahlstrom. This is a masterly analysis, that is candid and insightful, as well as being a veritable cornucopia of practical tips for new and experienced academics. We all benefit from looking afresh at the way in which we go about constructing and submitting papers. When Ahlstrom writes; "be sure to read the journal's aims and scope" he gets to heart of a problem that impacts on every journal in existence, namely the inability of seemingly intelligent individuals to read instructions and follow rubrics. This paper deserves to be required reading not only for potential contributors, but also for editors and reviewers. Indirectly it is a scholarly rebuke to all those journals that either are imbued with a sense of their own importance or are at the other end of the scale and masquerade as something that they are not and are to all intents and purposes are bogus in nature.

A paper of this nature should cause us all to stop and reflect on what the purpose of a journal is and why some are desirous of being published. Legitimate questions need to be asked

about motivation and process. Just as there are questionable motives about why some seek to be published, the value of some so-called academic conferences should be a matter of concern as their existence tarnishes the intentions of the vast majority of organisers and participants who have laudable intentions. The Higher Education sector would do well to appreciate that for all its splendid work, it is not above reproach and IJHEM looks forward to being a conduit for research that encourages a greater willingness for engagement, self-reflection and improvement.



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