FACING THE CHALLENGES IN A CHANGING TERTIARY ENVIRONMENT: THE VOICES OF SENIOR AND MIDDLE LEADERS

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Leading the tertiary education reforms

“High levels of generic skills are going to become more important than ever before. And people are going to have to up-skill and re-skill constantly to keep abreast of the needs of industry. They are going to have to become accustomed to changing career paths several times throughout their lives.”

The Honourable Lockwood Smith
Minister of Education 1990 - 1996
The research approach (2015)

- Qualitative Research Study - interviews and focus groups
- Sample: 3 institutes of technology in 3 different regions
- 3 of the original 5 case studies in the earlier study (2005)
- Interviews with 6 senior leaders (chief executives and directors)
- 3 Focus groups with 12 middle leaders (deans, group managers and programme leaders)
- Institutional documents provided
Eighteen Strategic Changes Identified in 2005 and Embedded by 2015

**Process**
- Clarifying the relationship between management and governance
- Strategic planning
- Introducing financial management systems
- Developing marketing strategies
- Developing international marketing
- Developing external funding

**Leadership**
- Improving leadership at middle and senior management levels
- Promoting professional development

**Organisation**
- Restructuring the organisation
- Developing bicultural initiatives
- Advancing technology and communications
- Introducing academic cooperation between polytechnics

**Culture & Values**
- Introducing academic quality management systems
- Responding to student needs
- Recognition of prior learning
- Responding to community needs/industry
- Developing buildings/environment
- Developing research
10 years on...

In the later study in 3 tertiary institutions in 2015 major themes identified:

- Changing Credentials for Senior Leadership
- Increased Strategic Management
- Enhanced Research Focus
- Increased/Excessive Workload for Middle Leaders
Changing Credentials Senior Leadership (now embedded)

- Financial and strategic management experience and capabilities
- Experience in a commercial environment
- Dual role as an academic leader and an institutional manager
- Expertise and experience in tertiary teaching
Increased Strategic Management (changed significantly)

- Strategic Plan a living document
- Strategic planning at all levels of the institute
- Strategic alignment with financial deliverables
- Senior leaders allocated formal time for strategic thinking/planning
- Middle leaders use informal time outside of work hours for strategic thinking
Enhanced Research Focus (changed significantly)

- Research culture developed with the introduction of the Performance–Based Research Fund (PBRF) in 2002
- Appointment and recruitment of highly qualified academic staff
- Staff required to be research active and to contribute to research outputs
- Development of postgraduate programmes
- Phasing out of lower level (1-3) courses
Increased Excessive Workload For Middle Leaders (new)

- Cascading academic responsibility from the senior leadership to middle leaders
- Inadequate preparation and training for the new middle leadership roles
- Lack of leadership development opportunities
- Lack of time for middle leaders to think and to plan strategically
- Increased and excessive workload
- Imbalance between work and personal life
Benefits Evident 10 Years On:

- Students more work ready rather than programme qualified
- Staff research active and well qualified
- Focus on financial sustainability
- Leaner operation
- Prepared for future shocks
- Reduced dependency on state funding
- Move towards entrepreneurial work
Summary

- Senior leadership business and financial credentials and experience
- Institutions met their Tertiary Education Commission requirements for funding
- Shift to funding system based on enrolments and results
- Strategic planning institute wide
- Increased and excessive workload for middle leaders
- Lack of leadership development opportunities for middle leaders
Alongside widespread change, a degree of continuity, at least in some institutions, also needs to be recognised, the picture presented is one of a continual “institutional churn” through which institutions regularly re-invent themselves in an attempt to better face their changing circumstances.