Theses on institutional planning and research at universities

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Abstract

Institutional research is critical for informing a university's goals and policies, for effective and penetrating review of a university's performance, for continuous improvements in teaching and learning, scholarship, research, community engagement and for the overall functioning of a university.
Institutional research is also a key input into institutional planning, the process of careful and considered deliberation and making of choices on the academic and overall institutional trajectory and development of the university. A university which does not seek to be entirely shaped by historical patterns and contemporary currents and pressures strives to proactively and consciously shape its own future.
Institutional research and planning agendas are not purely technical and neutral issues. They are shaped by values and politics, the latter understood as contestation and struggles over social relations, over what kind of institution a university seeks to be.

Keywords: Universities; institutional research; institutional planning

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the 2011 forum of the Southern African Association of Institutional Research (SAAIR) is *Enhancement* and the forum announcement correctly recognises that a 'culture of continuous enhancement of quality and reflective practices is critical to the well-being of a university', and that as institutions they need 'to operate more efficiently and effectively in a resource constrained environment'.

I will advance a number of theses in order to frame as well as engage with the activities of institutional research and planning as part of the 'critical self-reflection' that the SAAIR seeks to promote.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH AND PLANNING

Thesis 1

Thesis 1 may be so self-evident as to be trite but I wish nonetheless and unapologetically to advance it. Universities exist in order to serve three fundamental purposes. The primary purpose of institutional research and planning is to support universities so that they may undertake their fundamental purposes effectively and on a principled, informed and considered basis.

The first purpose of a university is to *produce knowledge* so that academics can advance their understanding of their natural and social worlds and also enrich their accumulated scientific and cultural heritage. This means that academics 'test the inherited knowledge of earlier generations'; they dismantle the mumbo-jumbo that masquerades for knowledge; they 'reinvigorate' knowledge; and they share their findings with others (Boulton and Lucas 2008, 3).

Researchers undertake research into the most arcane and abstract issues and the 'most theoretical and intractable uncertainties of knowledge'. At the same time, they also strive to apply their discoveries for the benefit of humankind (ibid.).

Researchers 'operate on both the short and the long horizon'. On the one hand, they grapple with urgent and 'contemporary problems' and seek solutions to these. On the other hand, they 'forage' into issues and undertake enquiries 'that may not appear immediately relevant to others, but have the proven potential to yield great future benefit' (ibid.).

The second purpose of universities is to *disseminate knowledge* and to cultivate minds. Their goal is to ensure that their students can think imaginatively, as well as 'effectively and critically'; that they 'achieve depth in some field of knowledge'; that they can critique and construct alternatives; that they can communicate cogently -- orally and in writing; and that they have a 'critical appreciation of the ways in which we gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves' (Task Force on Higher Education and Society 2000, 84).

At the same time, universities also strive for their students to have 'a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times'; to be 'able to make decisions based on reference to the wider world and to the historical forces that have shaped it'; and to have 'some understanding of and

experience in thinking systematically about moral and ethical problems' (ibid.).

The final purpose of universities is to *engage with their communities*. On the one hand, this involves their voluntary participation in community projects. On the other hand, it involves service-learning, 'a "curricular innovation" that is infused in the teaching and learning and research activities of the University' (Stanton 2008, 2). Here, students and academics take part 'in activities where both the community' and they benefit 'and where the goals are to provide a *service* to the community and, equally, to enhance our *learning* through rendering this service' (CHE/JET 2006, 15).

Thesis 2

In order to undertake their diverse educational and social purposes effectively, universities must have a commitment 'to the spirit of truth' (Graham 2005, 163) and must possess the necessary academic freedom and institutional autonomy. However, while academic freedom and institutional autonomy are necessary conditions, they are also rights in which duties inhere (Jonathan 2006).

In formerly colonial contexts such as the South African one, Du Toit (2000, 103) urges, 'the legacies of intellectual colonisation and racialisation as threats to academic freedom' must be recognised. He notes 'that the enemy', in the forms of colonial and racial discourses, 'has been within the gates all the time' and argues that these discourses are significant threats to the flowering of ideas, discourse, discovery and scholarship (ibid.). These discourses are, of course, also threats to the cultivation of graduates as critical and democratic citizens. Very importantly, Du Toit links institutional culture to academic freedom: cultures characterised by colonial and racial discourses endanger 'empowering intellectual discourse communities' and 'ongoing transformation of the institutional culture' is therefore a 'necessary condition of academic freedom' (ibid.).

The duties of universities include advancing the public good and being democratically accountable. Their duties also encompass bold engagement with economic and social orthodoxies and public policies that may seriously misunderstand and distort the purposes of universities, stripping them of their substance and leaving them 'universities only in name' (Boulton and Lucas 2008, 6).

Thesis 3

No university can undertake its three core purposes in their entirety: institutional monitoring, evaluation and research, and planning informed by appropriate data are -- or ought to be -- critical elements in the making of choices and decisions with respect to the key issues and areas of a university. These key issues and areas include:

- Enrolments: The size of the overall student body of a university; the rate of annual growth; the mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students; the mix of students in the Humanities, in Science, in Engineering, in Medicine, in Commerce, in Pharmacy, in Education and in Law; the mix of local and international students (including short-term exchange students); the equity (class, race and gender) profile of the university; the geographical origins of local students; an envisaged maximum size; and so on.
- Teaching-learning: The options or balance of different levels of provision (undergraduate and postgraduate); the breadth of qualifications, programmes and possible course combinations; the nature of programmes (the mix of general formative, vocational and professional programmes, inter and multidisciplinary programmes, etc.); the mode of provision (correspondence, distance, open, e-learning, contact, etc.); the scope of provision (local, regional, national and international); the desirability and feasibility of new programmes; pass, throughput, success and graduation rates; and so on.
- Knowledge production: The options or balance of different kinds of scholarship (of discovery, integration, etc.); the nature of research (fundamental, applied, strategic and developmental); the relationship between research and teaching; and research support, productivity; and so on.
- Community engagement: Relations with different kinds of communities (mining, manufacturing, agriculture, commerce, government, non-governmental organisations and social movements) that exist or operate in different spaces (national, provincial, regional and local) and have different requirements (research and teaching).
- Balancing teaching-learning, knowledge production and community engagement.
- The staff dimensions of a university, including the size of the university's academic and support staff bodies; the rate of annual growth of the academic and support staff bodies; the academic : student ratio; a mix of local and international staff; the equity (race and gender) profile of the academic and support staff bodies; the development of a new generation of academics; and the transformation of the social composition of the

academic staff body.

- The infrastructure needed to support the activities of a university (including infrastructure for academic programmes; student accommodation and sport or cultural activities; the housing of academics and support staff; and administrative and other support services); backlogs with respect to infrastructure for different activities; the implications of future enrolments; academic programmes for different kinds of infrastructure; and the capability and capacity of local government to provide the necessary services to support new infrastructure.
- The finances of a university (including available finances to maintain current academic programmes; to initiate new academic [teaching and research] programmes; to remunerate staff appropriately; to ensure the addressing of infrastructure backlogs; and to support additional infrastructure related to growth and development); the current and possible future mix of the sources of funding (including state subsidy and its components of teaching-input funds, teaching-output funds, research funds [postgraduate outputs and publication-related funds], institutional-factor funds for size and student social composition, teaching-development grants, research-development grants, academic-development funds and infrastructure and efficiency funds); student tuition-fee and third-stream income (including short courses, research contracts, endowments and gifts); and the effective and efficient use of available finances to address the social purposes of the university, implement agreed-upon strategies and realise defined goals.

Intimately *knowing and understanding* a university is a critical yet necessary condition for any effective pursuit of its goals, for deliberatively planning its development and for its governance and management.

Thesis 4

More generally, institutional research and planning are vital in ensuring that:

- A university has informed and carefully considered and deliberated ideas of its academic and overall institutional trajectories and development -- in other words, an institutional-development plan that is not an invariant, cast-in-stone blueprint as much as a compass that guides developments, prioritisation, decision-making and implementation, while leaving room for pursuing new imperatives and exploiting possible new opportunities.

- There is effective alignment of enrolment planning, academic planning, staffing, infrastructure planning and financial planning.
- A university, which is neither entirely nor even largely shaped by historical patterns and contemporary currents and pressures, proactively and consciously shapes its own future.
- Planning occurs on a longer-term horizon than tends to exist at universities.
- A university remains financially sustainable with respect to its current and future envisaged enrolments, academic programmes and operations, staffing and infrastructure requirements.

Thesis 5

Whatever parallels some may seek to draw between a university and a business corporation, a university is fundamentally *different* from a business corporation. For one, whereas a business tends to be a hierarchy, a university is a holyarchy. This is a reference to the core component parts and specifically the academic units possessing substantial autonomy by virtue of the principles of academic freedom and intra-institutional autonomy.

In these circumstances, despotic and dirigiste -- even if enlightened and socially committed -- leadership is unwise. There is no alternative to continuous engagement and persuasion for realising the progressive transformation and development of universities.

Multiple types of *participation* (ranging from the provision of information, to seeking advice, to engaging in consultation and to direct involvement in policy and decision-making) as well as *structures of participation* (committees, faculty boards, the senate, the institutional forum and the council) are necessary for effective agenda-building, deliberation and democratic policy and decision-making.

It should be noted that a university can be characterised by effective and efficient management and administration, but simultaneously by poor governance. For example, policy and decision-making may be concentrated within university management rather than principally in the faculty boards, the senate and the council of the university, and external bodies may strongly influence important decisions.

Thesis 6

Universities are complex institutions that have to confront, address and mediate myriad institutional academic, governance, management, administrative, relational and financial challenges, the diverse needs, requirements and demands of various internal constituencies (students, academics and support staff) and of different external constituencies.

The needs of every constituency, department and individual cannot always be easily or immediately met. The only path is to address needs in ways that are principled and yet flexible without creating dangerous, inequitable and unsustainable precedents.

In as much as there are legitimate expectations of universities, sometimes misguided expectations and unreasonable demands, which have the danger of corroding the value and core purposes of universities, are also placed on universities.

Thesis 7

Directed institutional research and institutional planning for greater efficiency and effectiveness in relation to institutional activities are not in competition with autonomy, academic freedom, democracy, equity and quality.

Still, in as much as planning is necessary, it must accord substantial freedom to academic departments and scholars with respect to teaching and research matters. It must also avoid inflicting unnecessary burdens on those whose preoccupation should be intellectual work rather than creating an institutional culture of dull, plodding conformity that stifles imagination, creativity and innovation.

There must be space for academic and research programmes with different purposes, methodologies, pedagogies and modes of delivery and that respond in different and distinct ways to the country's varied and changing intellectual, social and economic needs.

Thesis 8

In the context of inadequate financial resources, university leadership continuously confronts profound social and political dilemmas and has to make difficult and unenviable choices related to various issues, such as: the size and shape of the university; the social composition

of students; staff equity; recruiting and retaining talented staff; mobilising new sources of funding without compromising institutional autonomy and academic freedom; and ensuring financial sustainability.

Institutional research and planning must not shy away from highlighting -- it should, in fact, bring to the fore -- the fact that certain values, principles, purposes, goals and strategies related to goals may exist in a relationship of intractable tension in so far as universities are, for good political and social reasons, obliged to pursue them *simultaneously*.

These paradoxes and dilemmas have to be addressed creatively and policies and strategies have to be crafted that can satisfy multiple imperatives; can *balance* competing goals; and can enable the pursuit of equally desirable goals.

If trade-offs are necessary, they should be made deliberatively, consciously and transparently with respect to their implications for vision and goals. The trade-offs and choices that are made should also be communicated in ways that build understanding and secure support from important constituencies.

The difficult choices include establishing priorities with respect to institutional goals. This is more easily asserted than accomplished in practice. Yet a rational mode of prioritising for the establishment of first-order, second-order and third-order priorities and for determining what changes are essential concurrently, what changes can be sequential and so forth is crucial if the institutional agenda is not to be compromised and undermined.

Thesis 9

Institutional research and planning agendas are not purely technical and neutral issues. They are also shaped by values and politics, the latter understood as contestation and struggles over social relations, over what kind of institution a university seeks to be.

Research, no matter how thoughtful and rigorous, does not entirely provide the answers to what is to be done and which strategies and interventions are appropriate in specific circumstances.

The forum announcement refers to 'evidence-based practices' being 'utilised to improve the

quality of teaching practices and graduate attributes'. Perhaps the notions of 'evidence-based' policy-making, decision-making and 'practices' need to be further interrogated. The phrase evokes the idea that the 'evidence' will tell people what they must do. This may be an attractive idea to researchers and experts (and technocrats) but one that should be treated with scepticism and concern.

The sociologist Mills (1959, 174) writes that:

> Freedom is not ... merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them -- and then, the opportunity to choose. That is why freedom cannot exist without an enlarged role of human reason in human affairs ... [T]he social task of reason is to formulate choices, to enlarge the scope of human decisions in the making of history. The future of human affairs is not merely some set of variables to be predicted. The future is what is to be decided -- within the limits, to be sure, of historical possibility. But this possibility is not fixed, in our time the limits seem very broad indeed.
>
> Beyond this, the problem of freedom is ... how decisions about the future of human affairs are to be made and who is to make them. Organisationally, it is the problem of a just machinery of decision. Morally, it is the problem of political responsibility. Intellectually, it is the problem of what are now the possible futures of human affairs.

Indeed, the futures of local universities involve choices and the critical issues are how they are to 'formulate the available choices', how they are 'to argue over them' and how they are to innovate the 'just machinery' that provides the 'opportunity to choose' and to make decisions.

Here, there is no place for an ideology and culture of 'managerialism', while it must be acknowledged that effective management of all universities is indispensable.

There is also a need to combat a number of threats to effective institutional research and planning: namely conduct, practices, self-comforting perceptions, self-fulfilling prophecies, dangerous platitudes, indefensible notions of academic freedom and trite notions, such as, 'If it ain't broke don't fix it', all of which induce a dangerous inertia and complacency and stifle creativity, improvements, transformation and development.

Thesis 10

In *Business Day* of 6 October 2011, it was reported that the University of Cape Town (UCT) was -- at 156th -- the sole 'African institution in the top 200 on the British-based Times Higher Education (THES) magazine's World University Rankings' list. It was further reported that 'UCT deputy vice-chancellor Danie Visser said the university was taking its ranking with a "pinch of salt", as a complex institution should not be reduced to a number' (ibid.).

It was also reported that one 'Saleem Badat said rankings of universities were based on "dubious science", and therefore Rhodes had chosen not to participate'. He added that 'in a nutshell, neither I nor Rhodes are waiting with bated breath for the publication of the THES rankings, nor will lose any sleep over not being in any of the global rankings'.

It is to be hoped -- and it is critical to development -- that institutional researchers and planners have the space and the courage to speak truth to power, especially when those in power are, for whatever reasons, seduced by false agendas like 'global university rankings' and dubious notions like 'world class universities'.

As I have recently written (Badat 2010), no value can be attached to the Shanghai Jiao Tong Institute (SJTIHE) or Times Higher Education-Quacquarelli Symonds (THE-QS) rankings. They are simply incapable of capturing either the meaning or diverse qualities of universities or the varied roles of universities in a manner that values and respects their educational and social purposes, missions and goals. The rankings are also underpinned by questionable social science and arbitrarily privilege-particular indicators and they use shallow proxies as correlates of quality.

The critique of global university rankings is not a rebuttal of the critical public scrutiny of universities. It is simply that performance indicators and benchmarks, as distinct from rankings, are of much greater value when they are carefully conceptualised, designed with clarity of purpose and aims, and are respectful of institutional mission and policy goals. These have an important role to play in institutional improvement and development and, through these, in the achievement of national economic and social development priorities and goals. So too do effective monitoring, evaluation and penetrating reviews of universities. None of these important goals, however, are advanced by the SJTIHE or THE-QS global university rankings.

As Einstein put it, not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts

can be counted. And, as the president of a Japanese university put it, 'A farmer wanting to breed a big cow should focus more on nutrition than the weighing scales' (cited in Charon and Wauters 2007).

Instead of universities being obsessed with global rankings, they should rather create instruments that genuinely serve educational and social purposes; that contribute to improvement, innovation and development in universities; that enhance transparency and critical public scrutiny of universities; and that facilitate informed choices and judgements on the basis of robust social science and appropriate methodologies.

These instruments must respect the varied social purposes of universities instead of seeking to reduce universities to instruments of the economy and to vocational schools. They must recognise the vital public, positive functions of higher education, as opposed to the idea of higher education as a market, universities as 'firms' and students as 'customers'. And, instead of using the destructive logic of global rankings and a universal gold standard, the diversity of universities and the variety of their missions and goals in relation to the different historical and social conditions and developmental challenges of society must be revalued.

Higher education 'requires bold visions of internationalism, of alternative globalization, that transcend the edicts of market accountability and narrow commercial calculations and embrace the ethics of social accountability and an expansive humanism that will elevate and empower all ... people' (Zeleza 2005, 54-55). Indeed,

> we will have failed the future if we do not vigorously pursue the dreams of university education as an ennobling adventure for individuals, communities, nations, and the world at large, if we do not strive to create universities that produce ideas rather than peddle information, critical rationality rather than consumer rations, and knowledge that has lasting value (Zeleza 2005, 55).

Thesis 11

Caution should be exercised with respect to institutional research and planning not being entirely focused inwards and insulated from South Africa's social context and from national, regional and international economic, political and social dynamics, trajectories and trends.

The political terrain, economic conditions, macroeconomic policy, the high-level knowledge and skills requirements of the labour market and budgets for higher education, including

student financial aid and secondary-school outputs, all require close analysis for their potential impact on implications for institutional planning.

An analytical capability to read the nature of policies and policy signals and to fathom the trajectories of policies is vital if universities are to avoid potentially costly mistakes and are not to be determined purely by context but are proactively and creatively to engage and modify their context.

Thesis 12

In a context when significant transformations are needed in local universities, there is the danger that planning will reduce institutional 'transformation' to changing demographics, numbers and proportions, and pursuing and achieving 'race', gender and disability equity goals.

As fundamentally important as social equity is, a narrow conception of transformation is inadequate for the agenda of transforming universities.

Writing about my late mentor, Harold Wolpe, Gerwel (2002) notes that theorisation had been hugely important to Wolpe and that his 'writing always had a very central concern with the nature and quality of discourse and modes of understanding. Absence of or unsound theorising impaired understanding, in Wolpe's view, of the nature ... of critical conversation about societies and social reality.'

Transformation also fundamentally has to be a revolution in *thinking*, in *theorising* and in *conceptual*, *epistemological* and *ontological framing*. People need to interrogate critically how they *think* -- about themselves, about the 'other' and about what they deem to be 'natural' and 'normal'. As a colleague of mine, Louis Vincent, recently argued in relation to institutional culture, people need to make the normal strange. They also need to interrogate critically what are supposedly self-evident but highly dubious notions of academic quality and excellence, what and whose knowledge counts as well as the contestable notions of learning-teaching, curriculum and pedagogy.

The importance of proper theorising is demonstrated by the frequent conflation of terms such as 'transformation', 'development', 'reform' and 'reconstruction'. As Chisholm (2004, 12) notes,

the use of these terms 'interchangeably has tended to empty them of specific significance'. All four terms are associated in some way with the idea of change. However, they are not 'devoid of political and ideological content or context' (ibid.) or, for that matter, contestation and, while they may be related, they are also distinct.

For example, it is not self-evident that what is regarded as 'transformation' in higher education or society is also 'development' or necessarily creates the conditions for development. Transformation and development are not always parallel vectors. Universities have to consciously and purposively link transformation and development, otherwise there is the danger that they may transform without developing or without laying the basis for ongoing development.

To take another example, it is sometimes held that the reconstruction or reform of institutions is a necessary element of their transformation. That may be so but it is not axiomatic that such reform will necessarily result in their transformation. In both cases, it depends on many other issues and conditions.

One last example will bear out the importance of paying attention to theory and ensuring analytical rigour in institutional research. Wolpe's most decisive and powerful contribution was to observe in the early 1990s that educational transformation was being posed only in relation to equity and redress. The result was a failure to adequately pose the transformation of higher education in relation to economic, political and social development. Concomitantly, there was little sensitivity to the difficult choices and trade-offs that would be implied by any restructuring of higher education orientated towards both equity or redress and development. Wolpe's especial genius, as Morrow (1997) observes, lay in the argument that equity and development objectives are 'always in tension'.[1]

Wolpe argues that, in so far as 'both equality and development are prized, but also exist in a relationship of permanent tension, the challenge was *to find a path which to some extent satisfies both demands as far as existing conditions permit*' (cited in Badat, Wolpe and Barends 1994).

This remains an abiding social, policy and planning challenge for universities.

Thesis 13

Flowing from the previous thesis, I wish to make two points. First, the policy relatedness, relevance and value of institutional research are not guaranteed by explicit policy purposes, aims, nature and orientation. Research on an institution that is unconcerned with policy-making can be as invaluable and have as great an impact, if not greater value and impact, as that which deliberately sets out to inform and influence policy-making.

That is to say, if all *high-quality* research on an institution is potentially policy-related and relevant, it can also be the case that research that is explicitly undertaken to inform policy and interventions may have no or little impact for any number of reasons. These could include a lack of rigour, poor quality, a change in policy agenda, an unreceptive political environment, ineffective communication and/or dissemination and the inopportune completion and release of research.

The concerns and objects of institutional research must, therefore, be wider than just the immediate, policy relevance, the micro-level and the empirical. They should also extend to the historical, theoretical, methodological and macro-level and to important epistemological and ontological issues that are associated with research, learning and teaching, curriculum and pedagogy.

To paraphrase Nussbaum (2006, 5), 'the capacity for critical examination' of ourselves and our 'traditions' must include the capability to interrogate our intellectual traditions. In this regard, Mamdani (2011) writes that 'the central question facing higher education in Africa today is what it means to teach the humanities and social sciences in the current historical context and, in particular, in the post-colonial African context'. Moreover, what does it mean to teach 'in a location where the dominant intellectual paradigms are products not of Africa's own experience but of a particular Western experience' (ibid.)?

A recent article by Stellenbosch academics, 'Scandal of beauty: The Cape must embrace its rich mix' in the *Cape Times* of 7 June 2011, argued in relation to the Western Cape that 'its universities, it artists and its centres of higher learning could play a major intellectual and cultural role in uncrippling the region's imagination and creativity, providing the Cape with critical vocabularies and concepts to transcend insularity, provincialism and nostalgia for a shameful and costly past'. They suggested that 'a first step in this direction would be to take the study of Africa more seriously than has been the case so far. Part of this process

requires ... thinking with the rest of South Africa and as an integral part of this country as well' (ibid.).

Does universities' planning open up spaces for the flowering of epistemologies, ontologies, theories, methodologies, objects and questions other than those that have long been hegemonic and that have exercised dominance over (perhaps have even suffocated) intellectual and scholarly thought and writing? Is their planning giving attention to building new academic cultures and, more widely, new institutional cultures that genuinely respect and appreciate difference and diversity -- whether these be related to class or gender, national, linguistic, religious or sexual orientation, or are epistemological or methodological in nature?

On the one hand, these challenges relate to social inclusion and social justice in the domain of knowledge-making and diffusion. Concomitantly, they also have implications for epistemological access for South African youth and people of working-class and rural, poor social origins. On the other hand, they also go to the heart of higher-education transformation in South Africa: to the question of 'the very institution of the university itself and to the role it can play in a new democracy such as South Africa' (C. Boughey 2008, pers. comm.).

My second point is that institutional planning needs to be enriched by such diverse kinds of research and insights if universities are to navigate institutional challenges in thoughtful ways. To the extent that they are open and revolutionary in thinking, they will create the prospects and potential for the enhancement and development of their students, new generations of scholars and the universities themselves. Otherwise, universities could become ineffectual and, perhaps, even moribund.

Thesis 14

My final thesis is that plans have to inspire people and be effectively communicated, managed and implemented. The best-laid plans are only as good as their implementation and, far too often, there are great shortcomings and weaknesses in the *planning* of implementation, let alone in the implementation itself.

Institutional changes are demanding undertakings, whose complexity and enormity are not always fully understood at the beginning. They require sober, careful, detailed and realistic planning that gives attention to strategies, structures and instruments, available financial

resources, sources of expert staff, time frames, and so on.

At the same time that change is undertaken in certain areas, various other areas of institutional activity have to continue to be steered, supported and maintained. In short, institutional change and institutional maintenance have to be managed simultaneously (not consecutively). If not managed effectively and efficiently, parts and areas of the institution that function relatively well could become dysfunctional and create new problems.

Universities are fragile institutions. Too much ill-considered and frenetic change without continuities can make a university dysfunctional. Equally, no change can make a university moribund. Traditions, customs, rituals and images are important. But they can ossify in unfortunate ways that imprison our thinking, induce blind spots and generate practices that are alienating, discomforting and exclusionary. The values that must be the bedrock of local institutional culture must be clearly distinguished from the historical cultural traditions and practices that serve as impediments to a more open, vibrant, democratic and inclusive intellectual and institutional culture.

The challenge is to map a deliberate, bold and resolute yet sober path with continuities and discontinuities as appropriate to given and changing conditions.

NOTE

1 Morrow (1997) points out that, when confronted with an intractable tension between dearly held values, such as equity and development, various 'simplifying manoeuvres' are possible. One simplifying manoeuvre is to refuse to accept the existence of a dilemma -- a moral blindness if you like. A second simplifying manoeuvre is to elevate one value above all others, making this *the* value in terms of which all choices and policies are made. A third simplifying manoeuvre is to rank values in advance so that, if there is a conflict between them, one will take precedence. In the last two cases, the effect is to prioritise one value or goal above another. Morrow also points out that simplifying manoeuvres can have tragic consequences. To his credit, Wolpe refused to flee from the intractable tension, confronted it and forced others to do so as well. He argued that the way out of the impasse required the recognition of the competing, yet important, claims of both equity (the redress of social structural inequalities) and development (socio-economic, political and cultural development and the development of people).

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CHE *see* Council on Higher Education.

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