

**Issues of Strategic Implementation in Higher Education: The Special  
Concerns for Institutions in Developing Economies**

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**ABSTRACT**

Strategic planning is a process that is challenging in and of itself. Unfortunately, implementing the strategic plan has presented its own set of highly complex issues. In higher education, many authors have already identified that the strategic planning process is even more complex, and that implementation is seldom successful. In a book released in 2001, we talk about the difficulties institutions of higher education face in implementing their strategic plans and suggest eleven different methods that can make the process more plausible. In this paper, we take this discussion further and examine the special conditions of emerging economies and how these types of environments challenge the strategic planning in higher education in those countries. We also tie several of the eleven implementation strategies to these conditions and make recommendations about specific methods that may help assure that strategic planning in higher education in developing countries is successful.

**The Problems of Strategic Implementation**

Whether or not colleges and universities are located in highly industrialized or developing nations of the world, the strategic planning process is fraught with challenge. First, as Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) have suggested, campuses often do

strategic planning that isn't really strategic planning. It's short-term planning or problem-solving planning. Second, many college and university campuses do it for the wrong reason. They do it because it's fashionable or because they know how successful it has been in business settings. Third, they do not understand that strategic planning in colleges and universities is necessarily different from the process that businesses use.

Yet, it is widely understood that strategic planning is becoming more and more important for colleges and universities due to the rapid changes in the world economy, technology, transportation, and communication. The traditional roles of the academy is becoming increasingly more challenged to develop new programs, new pedagogies, and new methods of delivery to meet the needs of the emerging Information Age (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1998). It seems as if this reality would be especially poignant for colleges and universities in developing countries because they are already disadvantaged in their ability to deliver leading edge research and education due to the dwindling of already scarce resources and the increasing management problems they face in their countries (Lillis, K. M. 1990).

### **The special issue of implementation**

An additional troubling problem with strategic planning is the wide-spread inability of a college or university to implement its plan once that plan is in place (Rowley & Sherman, 2001). While there are a variety of reasons for this, the fact remains that many campuses go through a time-consuming and often an expensive and disruptive process in developing a strategic plan only to see it shelved and ignored as anything truly useful. Evidence suggests that this is not particularly a problem of individuals on a

campus killing a process they resent or fear (though in some cases, this is true), it is much more a problem of having an implementation strategy that will successfully put the plan into motion.

In addressing this issue, Rowley and Sherman (2001) suggested that there are a variety of choices that strategic planners and campus leaders can choose from among. Each of the eleven implementation strategies speak to different campus circumstances that might make some more effective than others. While they do not suggest that individual campuses should only choose one and ignore the others, they do suggest that particular conditions suggest particular strategies. On many campuses, where those conditions are complex, then a combination of strategies might be necessary in order to effectively put the strategic plan in motion.

### **Eleven methods of implementing strategy**

The following discussion does not speak to the actual strategic plan itself, only the strategies which campus leaders and strategic planners have at their disposal to implement those plans. While obviously the plan is important, our intent here is to discuss the next step following the drafting of a dynamic, long-term, and innovative plan for achieving long-term survival and relevance. The eleven methods that campus leaders can choose from among to effectively implement strategic change are identified in Table 1 below.

Each of these eleven methods presents a specific set of activities that campus leaders can use to make certain that the strategic plan becomes a part of the life of the campus, beginning in the short-term, but continuing on to help assure the success of the long-term. Below, we briefly describe each of these strategies. We also speculate

as to the conditions that might surround each of these conditions in a developing country's college or university.

**Table 1**

**Eleven Methods of Implementation**

- 1 Using the budget to fund strategic change**
- 2 Using participation**
- 3 Using force**
- 4 Establishing goals and key performance indicators**
- 5 Working within the human resource management system of the campus to plan for change and to create change**
- 6 Using the reward system to foster and support change**
- 7 Faculty and staff development**
- 8 Working with or changing institutional culture**
- 9 Working with or moving away from tradition**
- 10 Developing and using change champions**
- 11 Building on systems that are ready for or are easily adaptable to strategic change.**

**Using the budget to fund strategic change.** Detweiler (1997), Roach (1988), and Swain (1988) all have written about the effectiveness of this approach toward implementing a college or university strategic plan. This approach gets to the heart of campus functionality, its financial resources. Its method is to tie funding to those items that support the progress of the strategic plan and not to fund (or perhaps significantly reduce funding to) those areas, programs, or activities that do not support the strategic direction that the campus leadership has identified. This is a clear and direct method of putting plans into action and requires the unwavering support of governing boards and top campus leaders to implement and follow-through.

For those institutions in developing countries, the issue here is that of having enough resources to use them in this manner. In many countries, where the resource base is small to begin with and often in decline, this option may be more difficult since

there may not even be enough resources to fund the basic operation of the campus.

Yet, while the option may be difficult, it still has relevance in helping a campus establish a crucial strategic direction.

**Using participation.** Many authors in the area of organizational behavior tout the importance of participation in major decision-making activities in an organization. Birnbaum was one author who particularly targeted college and university campuses as being important venues within which participation occurs (1991). In the American tradition of shared-governance, there is a built-in condition that suggests that the strategic decisions top administrators are making regarding the direction of a campus must be agreed to by the faculty, especially in academic matters. In other countries this tradition may be the same or significantly different. Nonetheless, as Birnbaum has suggested, one of the most effective methods of assuring campus-wide acceptance of major strategic decisions is to ensure that everyone has a voice and that that voice is heard seriously as part of the overall system of strategic planning.

Not just developing countries, but many countries do not have a tradition of participation in higher-level decisions. One of the authors of this paper has had personal experience in working with a university in Asia, where one of the major problems the campus recognized was the strong influence of Confucianism and its tendency to curtail dissent from people in lesser positions. In many developing countries, the importance of family (normally dominated by a strong male head), adherence to state rule, and even religious practice often teach society members that they do not have a legitimate right to question authority. These conditions can severely impair participation.

**Using force.** Force can be effective, but its use must be limited. Steeples (1988) describes how he used force to create change on a campus where things had deteriorated to the point that the campus was considering shutting down. This is an extreme condition, and the use of extreme measures makes sense here. Yet, force must be used carefully. If force is the only method used on a campus, creativity is stifled, campus-wide identity is diminished or nil, and worst of all, trust is destroyed.

In many developing countries, particularly those with a totalitarian history, the problem may well be that many don't know how to progress unless it is done through the threat of force. Recognizing that many such nations have also developed strong new leaders who have much broader democratic agendas, these countries continue to work with bureaucracies and local officials who only trust their use of force (or the threat of force) to be effective. Again, we caution that force in the modern world needs to be used only as a last resort, that its consequences are generally far worse than its benefits.

**Establishing goals and key performance indicators.** The importance of establishing goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) has its history in management methods going all the way back to management by objectives (MBO). In strategic planning on college and university campuses, Rowley (1997) has suggested that KPIs provide an excellent method of implementing strategies because they identify specific goal related activities that individuals and departments across the campus help establish, carry out, and monitor. KPIs must be measurable, time-specific, and expressly identified as part of the strategic plan. (For example, if a campus wishes to increase its endowment by \$250 million dollars, it divides that up into reasonable yearly

objectives, perhaps \$25 million dollars, and then measures its progress toward that goal. If the goal is met, then planners can assume the plan is accurate. If the goal is not met, then planners need to rethink their goals or strategies.)

This appears to be a reasonable approach for any college or university, including those in emerging economies. The approach is gentle; it is objective; it is carried out over the long-term; and it recognizes the importance of changing along the way if the desired outcomes change or the methods of achieving them prove to be ineffective. It also breaks the campus-wide strategic plan down into units for which individuals take responsibility.

**Working within the human resource management system of the campus to plan for change and to create change.** Along with budgeting, working within the human resource management system (HRM) to achieve change is one of the most effective methods available to campuses throughout the world. Simply, no campus is any better than the quality of its faculty, administration, and support staff. As Shirley has pointed out, this approach is best carried out over the longer-term, which allows for attrition, additional training, or reassignment (1988). He also described how the importance of eliminating certain programs while strengthening or adding other programs can create chaos on a campus if done in a single change event or even over the short-term. Yet with a longer-term perspective, which should be one of the hallmarks of a solid campus strategic plan, this can prove to be a very humane and very effective means of enacting change.

Perhaps the biggest concerns for colleges and universities in developing countries regarding this strategy include their inability to compete for top faculty or

administrators; bureaucratic rules which make it difficult to alter campus structure; and the necessity to move forward rapidly. However, even in a short-term mode, college and university leaders should not ignore HRM planning. Here, a strong strategic plan that identifies the specific direction the campus needs to take should be in place before campus leaders decide the needs for specific personnel changes.

**Using the reward system to foster and support change.** Operant conditioning (Skinner, 1969) is a method of management that all managers need to utilize carefully. It speaks to the use of rewards in creating motivation within a workforce, and it also speaks to the use of punishment (or negative rewards) in controlling behavior. It is also a method, or perhaps a series of methods, that find their way into almost every organization today.

The use of rewards to gain the desired behaviors that result in the implementation of a strategic plan can be either a very good strategy or can be a very poor one. Certainly one of the positive sides is that people will generally support change that benefits them, so if campus constituents perceive that the strategic plan will benefit them, they are likely to support it. This is good. On the other hand, if people fear that they will be hurt (negative rewards) or punished (such as the use of force we described earlier), they are likely not to support the plan. Again, the long-term approach is important here in that over time, as the strategic plan is implemented and begins to show success, resources will grow and more and more tangible, and intangible benefits will become apparent. Used evenly across the campus, these benefits can engender even greater support for the continuing implementation of the strategic plan. Another important codicil of this approach is that it must be open, fair, objective, and campus-

wide. Any implementation scheme that rewards some while punishing others is not going to be very effective, especially where a contentious faculty is present.

A clear problem here is putting a reward system in place where reduction, reengineering, or dismissal may be necessary. How does the reward system fit in here? Honesty must be part of any process like this. It is never a reward to be fired, but if that dismissal came with assistance to land an equal or even better position elsewhere, then the person who has been let go should objectively understand why it happened, but also feel that she/he wasn't hurt. Perhaps this person will also feel they benefited from the change.

For developing economies, the rewards a campus has to work with may well be more intangible than tangible, but these types of rewards have their value just the same. Being a successful change agent can be very satisfying, particularly when the campus as a whole recognizes that change. Being able to be part of a growing campus, in terms of both numbers of students and quality of instruction, can also be very satisfying. As one participates in the successes of the strategic plan, these intangibles serve a very valuable purpose. Too, as the successful plan comes to fruition, more tangible rewards will also become available.

**Faculty and staff development.** The strategy of faculty and staff development has become more and more of a crucial issue as the nature of knowledge itself has begun to change in the new century. The entire notion of the life-long learner isn't just an issue for the student any longer, it is also an issue for the purveyor of knowledge – the college or university itself. As Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1998) have described, the campus of the 21<sup>st</sup> century no longer serves the same societal needs as it did in

previous centuries. The Information Age demands new knowledge bases, new methods of delivery, and even new levels of participation in the academic experience. Therefore, if the academy needs to change, it is reasonable to conclude that academics, administrators, and support staff will need to change right along with it. The best method for doing this is through developing an on-going training and education function, tied to the strategic plan, which allows everyone on the campus to maintain state-of-the-art knowledge bases and methodologies.

The negative about faculty and staff development is that it is costly. Many campuses do not engage in such programs because of the cost, they simply don't believe that they have the resources to spare to engage in such programs. Other campuses may recognize the importance of faculty and staff development, but feel that it is more the responsibility of the individual to acquire new skills or knowledge bases instead of the responsibility of the institution. For colleges and universities in developing countries, the lack of resources makes this option very difficult to select. While there are some institutions that have seen the value of this strategy and chosen it despite the resource problem, most campuses put this option way down on their list of priorities.

**Working with or changing institutional culture.** Organizational culture is the general pattern of acceptable behavior that governs how people behave within the organization. It is central to understanding how and why people act as they do. Sometimes, the culture is good – it supports change that improves the overall well being of the organization. Sometimes, the culture is poor – it is stratified, parochial,

unconcerned about the organization as a whole or of the well being of others within that same organization. This universal condition is also true for colleges and universities.

Campus strategic leaders can use a good culture to implement a good strategic plan when that culture is supportive of the types of activities and changes called for in the plan. Though not everyone will be entirely supportive all the time, in such a culture, objectivity and reason can go a long way in helping people understand why they should help implement and support the plan. When the culture is poor, the problem for implementation is much more difficult. Here, the culture can take on a variety of faces from total indifference to anarchy. Especially where trust is an issue, where relations between administrators, faculty, and staff have been strained and where there is a tradition of bad decisions and bad outcomes.

This condition is really the most challenging to effective strategy implementation because it has the onus upon it of having to rebuild trust and create a new playing field. This is hard, and sometimes impossible to achieve. There are methods available, such as organizational development (OD) that can be helpful in trying to change culture. Sometimes, too, new leadership can be effective in bringing out needed change. But once again, these are hard options. They are very expensive and time-consuming methods that many campuses simply do not believe they can afford. As a result, the single most destructive condition that will prevent campus leaders from successfully implementing a strategic plan is a poor campus culture.

For developing economies, particularly those emerging from the era of communist rule, culture may be an issue. For some campuses, a positive culture might exist, where campus constituents are keeping positive change and are anxious to be a

part of the new approaches that a solid strategic plan can provide. For other campuses, a poor culture might exist, and here, the lack of resources will only exacerbate an already poor situation. One cannot be hopeful for successful change here, and one can only hope that strong leadership can help make a difference and turn a bad situation around.

**Working with or moving away from tradition.** Related to culture, tradition has an especially poignant place on college and university campuses. Tradition is built over time and may reflect the pride of past accomplishments and recognitions. It may engender the college or university's alumni to adamantly and financially support the institution over a long period of time. It can be a force that supports the strategic plan, particularly where supporters see that the plan will only make their colleges or universities more prestigious and stronger. One would think that a Harvard University or a Cambridge or Oxford University would have little difficulty putting a strategic plan into place where its alumni and other external supporters see the value of it.

However, tradition isn't always positive. Bureaucracies are a good example of how traditional methods that have no place in the modern world tend to hang on anyway. Bureaucracies have the ability to support themselves and become stronger over time, particularly if they are not checked or altered. In strategic planning, it may well be important to reduce or eliminate many bureaucratic practices and procedures in order to help the institution become more flexible and resilient in adjusting to or creating change. Certainly, many within the bureaucracy may challenge attempts to limit it, but there will be many others who will support the plan simply because it does propose to limit or abolish practices which are out-mooted or unnecessarily restrictive.

Again, the tradition of many emerging economies is that of heavy-handed bureaucracies that have created traditions that are hard to overcome. Further, many of these bureaucracies are external to the institution itself and create conditions that are beyond the control of local college or university to alter. Here, the strategic plan needs to take the longer view and seek to establish political and educational connections that can help to reduce the negatives of external control over time. Having a strong strategic direction is one of the best offences in situations such as these.

**Developing and using change champions.** Brown (1988) identifies the importance of having a change champion as an effective method of implementing a strategic change on a university campus. A change champion is someone who has a new vision, but also someone who has the ability to provide leadership to others. This could be a faculty member who has discovered a new teaching methodology and is successful in talking his/her colleagues into trying it. This could be the staff person who has discovered a more effective way of facilitating student financial aid requests and is able to get the change implemented within the department. This could be an administrator who sees the need to restructure her/his department to function more efficiently and effectively and is able to gain both the support of his/her subordinates as well as that of her/his higher-level administrators. Where a college or university can generate one or more change champions, the process moves much smoother from planning to implementation. The excitement of the change champions becomes infectious and through the personal leadership qualities of the champion, people actually become anxious to make the needed strategic changes.

The strategic change champion is a person who believes in the merits of the plan and wants to see it play out. This person needs to feel a complete member of the campus team and wants to have her/his colleagues join with him/her in making things better for everyone, based on the tenets of the strategic plan. Campus leaders usually already know of such people on their campuses and need to incorporate them early into the process to help assure that these people will then go back into the balance of the campus and do those things which will engender excitement and motivation. With these people in place, the plan is certain to be properly implemented.

Other than the previous issues of negative culture and poor traditions (where change champions are rare due to past lessons on the value of not being supportive), college and university campuses in emerging economies should be able to develop conditions within which change champions emerge. Colleges and universities around the globe have the one especially good resource of having highly intelligent, bright individuals who are clearly capable to become innovative and take on leadership roles. In recognizing the importance of this particular role, campus leaders can help to create the environment within which change champions will become more and more evident. From that point, then, it is simply a matter of incorporating these people into the strategic planning process and supporting their efforts to create and implement change.

**Building on systems that are ready for or are easily adaptable to strategic change.** An old adage is that nothing breeds success like success. This is a reality that is true of the strategic planning implementation process in colleges and universities. Rowley and Sherman (2001) have identified that when campus constituents can see evidence that part of a strategic plan has been successful, they are more likely to

support further strategic initiatives. Further, since the strategic planning activity is not intended to produce a one-time implementation event (Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence, 1997), incremental implementation is a perfectly acceptable method of proceeding. A common tactic is for a campus to select a highly-visible area where it is also unlikely that there will be many critics, announce that part of the plan, implement it, and then appraise the rest of the campus of progress. For example, if a campus wishes to improve its scholarship funds by \$50 million dollars over 10 years, it could announce its plan (capital campaign, alumni campaign, major donor campaign, business organization campaign, or some combination of all these), begin it, and then report on its progress. By the end of the first year, if the campus can announce that it has been successful in raising additional scholarship funds by \$6 million dollars and is ahead of projection, the rest of the campus will notice two things. One, no one was hurt by the plan; and two, that apparently this plan can work. This then allows campus leaders and strategic planners to implement other portions of the plan and as each section shows positive outcomes (and no negative rewards), it becomes easier and easier to put the entire plan into place.

For those campuses in emerging economies that have developed forward-thinking and exciting plans, this particular implementation method should be easy to adopt. While the notion of strategic change may prove to be unwelcome in a more staid or resource-deficient campus, as the plan proves it can work slowly, painless, and effectively over time, support should build and the campus leadership can look forward to implementing the entire plan.

## **Choosing the Appropriate Implementation Strategy**

The options we describe in the previous section provide a set of choices for any college or university looking for an effective method of implementing their campus strategic plan. In this section, we look at some of the issues that surround the decision of just which strategy (or strategies) is appropriate for a given campus, with special attention to those colleges and universities in developing countries.

### **The central objective**

It may seem a simple statement, but the central objective of selecting an implementation method is to actually implement the plan. Yet, there is more substance to this statement when one recognizes that in some colleges and universities, campus constituents go through the motions of creating a strategic plan with absolutely no intention of ever implementing it. The discussion here does not speak to these particular campuses. Rather, for those campuses that are anxious to put their plans into place and make strategic differences, the discussion here concentrates on the decision process of which option is most likely to be effective on a given campus.

Further, the objective involves gaining a better understanding of the resource base and character of any given campus, because these elements directly impact the effectiveness of the various choices. One cannot choose an implementation method because it looks good or feels good. The decision must be made based on material facts found in the internal analysis of the campus that should have been conducted during the planning stage.

## Crucial determinants

There are a variety of determinants that impact the effectiveness of each method. These include resources, culture and politics, campus health and time, external control, and governance. Table 2, below, demonstrates how these determinants impact the several options.

Table 2

Implementation Option Crucial Determinants

	Resources	Culture and Politics	Campus Health	Timing	External Control	Governance
1 Using the budget to fund strategic change	Red			Red		Red
2 Using participation		Red	Red		Red	Yellow
3 Using force				Red		Yellow
4 Establishing goals and key performance indicators			Red			Yellow
5 Working within the human resource management system of the campus to plan for change and to create change	Red		Red	Red		Red
6 Using the reward system to foster and support change	Red			Red		Yellow
7 Faculty and staff development			Red			Yellow
8 Working with or changing institutional culture		Red	Red			Yellow
9 Working with or moving away from tradition		Red	Red			Yellow
10 Developing and using change champions		Red		Red	Red	Yellow
11 Building on systems that are ready for or are easily adaptable to strategic change.			Red		Red	Yellow

**Resources.** While resources are an issue, they are not the only issue in implementing strategic plans. They certainly help, and those campuses that have more liquid resources available to them are in a better position than those that do not. At the same time, it is important to understand that no campus in today's world has an abundance of free resources laying around waiting for ideas as to how to use them. Further, such a campus would probably not be engaging in a strategic planning exercise. That leaves everyone else, and that is well of 99% of all campuses throughout the world.

Option #1 (budgeting) looks at the operating resources of a college campus and makes decisions regarding how best to apply them to achieve desired ends. Regardless of the state of the campus in either developed or emerging countries, budgeting must take place. The issue is what the decision rules will be, and if the decision rules are dependent upon the strategic plan, then this method works on any campus. This reflects our earlier statement that control of the budget is clearly one of the most important methods of effectively instituting a strategic plan.

Option #5 (HRM) examines the strengths and weaknesses of a given campus's human resources and, over the long-term, reengineers this resource base in a direction that supports the strategic objectives of the plan. This is important and ties to basic implementation theory that says that strategic planning is implemented through structure. Designing or redesigning that structure is what this option promotes and, once again, if the longer-term state of the HRM function of a college or university is designated by the strategic plan and implemented as personnel rosters shift, this becomes the 2<sup>nd</sup> most effective means of implementing strategy. Like option #1, every

campus deals with this issue, so economic conditions do not apply to the ability to choose this option.

Option #6 (use of the reward system) does reflect the free resource base of the campus much more so than the other two options. It is always a mistake to assume that people will respond to intrinsic rewards the same way they will to extrinsic rewards. A pat on the back at a time when it is hard to pay the rent is clearly not as effective as some form of material reward. This is not to suggest that all rewards should be extrinsic and we recognize this as highly problematic. However, if there appears to be no material benefits to a campus as a result of going through a strategic planning process, it is going to be far more difficult to engender support. While we feel that intrinsic rewards should clearly be superficially a part of every implementation process, campuses need to keep in mind that there is some obligation to reward acceptable performance (even if it is only over time) by some level of positive extrinsic reward. If this is not going to be possible, and in some developing countries it may not be, then this is not an option that those campuses can use effectively.

**Culture and politics.** Option #2 (participation), option 8 (culture), option 9 (tradition), and option 10 (change champions) are dependent upon the prevailing culture of the campus as well as to the strength and direction of the various political systems that one can find on every campus. Participation might well be highly desirable (because, where present, it helps assure successful implementation), but it cannot be mandated. The connections to culture and tradition are strong and predictive. If the culture is supportive and the tradition is one of cooperation, then participation can work. If the culture is one of mistrust and the tradition is one of “us vs. them” (for example,

faculty against the administration and vice versa), then participation doesn't really occur. It is possible that a college president or chancellor will ask people from throughout the campus to serve on a strategic planning committee, and those people will do so. However, this administrative head is disillusioned if she/he believes that people will naturally participate at the highest level. They won't. They will warm seats, they will add comments, and they may even endorse the final results. Regardless, these results will not be optimal, they will be tainted, reserved, and mediocre. So it may be necessary for a campus in this type of setting to address culture and tradition prior to hoping to depend on participation as the best way of implementing strategy.

The case for the change champion is a bit different. Every campus has an individual or group of individuals who are strong candidates for such a role in the implementation process. These are people who want to see positive change and are willing to work hard to achieve it. However, these people also live within the campus culture and are impacted by campus tradition. Therefore, unless these larger elements allow for an individual or group of individuals to step forward and champion a major change event, it is not likely that it will happen.

**Campus health and time.** The extent to which a campus is in trouble also dictates the use of certain options as opposed to others. Those campuses that do not have major campus-wide pressing problems can afford to spend more time in the implementation process. Options #2 (participation), #4 (KPIs), #5 (HRM), #7 (development), #8 (culture), #9 (tradition), and #11 (building on success) are all options that work when time is not of the essence.

Those campuses that have major campus-wide problems and cannot spend much time trying to solve them must look to other options. Options #1 (budget), #3 (force), #5 (HRM), #6 (rewards), and #10 (change champions) are all methods that can be put into place immediately for certain desired impacts on the problem-solving mandate. A caution here, however. Just as we described our concern regarding the use of force (option #3), campus leaders need to be very cautious and careful in deciding what to do and how to do it. For example, if the problem is that the resource base will continue to dwindle over the next few years and there must be some reduction in force (assuming that a reduction in pay is not possible) and that the budget for the next period simply will not support the current staffing of the campus, then an HRM solution must be developed and implemented. The concern here is that whatever plan the campuses decides upon, it must be carefully crafted to fit within the strategic plan of the institution to avoid eliminating positions or people that will be needed to fulfill longer-term goals. It would not be wise for a campus to eliminate its computer sciences department (whose salary costs are usually higher than the average campus salaries) just to save money. Given the world-wide direction of the economy, any campus that was to take this particular step probably also just sealed its own death warrant.

**External control.** No college or university exists without some level of control from the outside. Whether that be foundations, accreditation bodies, governmental agencies, alumni groups, or business concerns, each campus has connections beyond the campus that affect its ability to move in one direction or another. In the developing world, many college and university campuses find themselves subject to major control by governmental agencies and bureaucracies and must find ways of developing and

implementing meaningful strategic plans within the complexities these external players impose upon them. Options #2 (participation), #10 (change champions), and #11 (building on success) are three options that provide promise for those campuses where external control becomes a major issue.

Regarding participation (option #2), there is no reason to restrict this option to on-campus constituents. Moving into the larger community to request advice, and possibly consent, may make a lot of sense for certain campuses. Change champions (option #10) are again not specifically an internal concern. Finding and recruiting change champions among a campus's external control bodies can be an extremely useful method of getting past the gambits certain external control bodies might put up. Building on success (option #11) is a tactic that demonstrates good intent and capability in achieving change that will benefit not only the campus, but the larger external environment as well.

**Governance.** Governance should be involved with any strategic planning process as well as in the implementation process. Any campus that does not have the blessings of its governing body to do strategic planning or implement it can find its activities doomed. However, on many campuses, the reality is that it is the governing board that mandates strategic planning and is anxious to know what campus leaders will do to implement an acceptable plan.

The concern here is for the quality and character of the board. Governing boards are human and subject to a variety of personal as well as professional pressures. In the United States, most public college and university governing boards are either elected or appointed – in either event, the result of a political process. Private colleges and

universities have governing boards that are selected by a variety of means, ranging from strong external forces that want boards that reflect their interests to strong internal forces that may select a board that simply acts as window dressing. Around the world, one will find these methods mirrored as well as a host of additional ways of putting governance in place. In general, most academic governing boards are high quality people, but because of how they have been selected, they may or may not have the best interests of the campus at heart. Further, most boards exercise control over option #1 (budgets), and it is not unheard of that they will make policies regarding many of the other options, particularly #5 (HRM).

All of this to speak to the importance of having governing boards who are willing to partner themselves with the strategic planning process and to continue their support when it is time to implement the plan. Without this type of support, it is again unlikely that the plan will succeed.

### **The case of developing countries**

Though we have identified throughout several of the specific issues that impact colleges and universities in developing countries, it is also important to distinguish them as a group – a group that has its own set of problems and challenges that make implementation of even the best strategic plan problematic. Lillis tells us that colleges and universities in developing countries face special problems with acquiring adequately trained managers to provide high quality administration for their campuses and also seek major linkages to institutions in developed countries to provide useful collaboration (1990). Institutions in the developed world may or may not be helpful, often based on their own directions and resource constraints. Samli (1992) tells us that strategic

planning in developing countries often confuses objectives and achievements and advocates a risk management approach to try to overcome this parochial confusion. Ojo (1996) found that in many developing countries, the governments of those countries inhibit the abilities of college and university campuses to provide instruction and do research in major subject areas, such as science and technology. This conclusion was also mirrored in a report from ERIC (2000), in which they not only concluded that science and technology education must be improved in foreign countries, but that governance needed to be substantially improved as well.

All of these studies identify many of the special needs of colleges and universities in developing countries. They also speak to the importance of engaging in a practice of meaningful strategic planning as well as to some of the barriers toward implementation. It is clear from several of these studies that external control is a major barrier to both effective planning and implementation. It is also clear that there is an opportunity to engage in the type of planning and implementation that will begin to allow such campuses to move into the broader stream of higher education that is necessary to help their countries become an important part of the new world economy.

### **Choosing an implementation strategy**

For colleges and universities in emerging economies, we believe that many of the options we have identified in this paper will be effective in allowing them to implement forward-directed, well-conceived, and meaningful strategic plans to assure long-term survival. However, not all strategies work equally well in all locations. What is needed is a full and complete internal examination that will help each campus decide for itself the exact nature of its internal capabilities to deal with external forces. This

should be part of the strategic planning process itself. As each campus defines its external and internal environments (sometimes known as a SWOT analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), it can begin to chart the best options it has available to it. Based on these findings, part of the strategic plan identifies the implementation process both in terms of what options it will adapt as well as when and how implementation will occur.

Too, it is important to remember that strategic planning is both an on-going process as well as a flexible process. The plan should change as new knowledge becomes available. The same is true of implementation. Options of implementation can be phased in, allowing planners to test their choices to determine whether or not they have selected appropriately. If so, fine. If not, then they should feel free to move to other options. This type of attitude will help assure that the benefits of the strategic plan play out within the college or university.

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