

The Global Educational Environment Within Global Management of Knowledge

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The previous studies have outlined the major theoretical perspectives that have been developed within the global education of planning development. They have explored the application of these perspectives to the central substantive theme emerging from global educational analysis of planning organisation and behaviour, that is, the process of managerial control. This study focuses upon the global educational environment within global management of knowledge and substantive parameters set by the previous studies. It carries out this task in a number of respects. First, it reviews the various explanations that have been offered for the historical development of modern planning—both as a unique organisational form and as a distinctive educational worldview. Second, it considers various conceptions of managerial work that have evolved within educational analysis since the inception of the corporate system enters into global education societies during the early years of the 21st century. Third, it assesses the implications of empirical research on the three major levels of planning that have crystallised within contemporary corporate hierarchies. These are made up by the elite group of staffs and senior lecturers, and the middle strata of line workers, who are the superintendents of production. A concluding section evaluates the general contribution educational analysis has made to our understanding of the nature of managerial work.

Keywords: strategic planning, global educational environment, global management, knowledge

Introduction

The global management of knowledge is about enabling educational organisational effectiveness. It is frequently referred to as providing support to the global educational environment. Whilst the debate over precise definitions goes on, the discipline should not be mistaken for a support function. Rather it is an enabling mechanism, which responds to the evolving needs of the global educational environment. Similarly, debates as to what it should include and how it should be structured will also continue, as organisations search for the optimum solution to meet their needs. It is these evolving within the learning and globalisation of knowledge needs that are explored here. The following paper describes how facilities tutors and organisations might respond to such needs.

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Above all, it should be viewed against a backdrop of change—one of life's two certainties.

The Global Educational Environment and the Future

Universities face a future full of uncertainties. For some that future is some unforeseeable time ahead; for many, however, that time is now and the facilities tutor will come of age in the role of a change master. Possessing 20/20 vision in hindsight is easy. Looking back, for example, at the factors, which contributed to the growth of the discipline of global facilities management, it is obvious how inevitable it was. Having a clear vision of things to come, however, is somewhat harder.

Naisbit (1984) produced ten predictions which would change the way in which we would go about our lives in the 1990s. To a greater or lesser extent, all ten predictions are based on objective facts of the way in which our world and those who share its passage are changing dramatically. But predicting the future is not so much the skill of a visionary but is the province of the enlightened.

Naisbit (2000) and Aburdene (1990) make similar sweeping predictions which will shape the way in which the world will conduct its learning around the new millennium. It is evident that only fools, and perhaps those experiencing an unsuccessful year in the future universities, rush in to mitigate against the threats and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by these sweeping changes. The greatest fools of all, however, are those who choose to procrastinate when the window of opportunity presents itself.

Whilst the “valour” vs. “discretion” choice is always likely to be a hard one when contemplating change, scant comfort can ever be gained by modelling the “do nothing scenario”. Heraclitus (c. 500BC) stated that “nothing endures but change” (De Bono, 1999, 2001). The challenge for any global management of knowledge is making the right decisions at the optimum time. In the dynamic and competitive environment in which all learning must operate, whilst managing change is a learning success prerequisite, anticipating change is the real enabler. In the Lewis Carol classic *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice was faced with a choice between two roads; the one she took, as the Cheshire Cat said, depended upon where she wanted to get to. Unless we know where we want to be or what to expect when we get there, how can we plan for the future (Adair, 2004).

Change Drivers

Hammer and Champy (2003) in *Re-engineering the corporation: A manifesto for business revolution* summarised the three forces driving change within organisations as the three Cs:

- Customers;
- Competition;
- Change.

Globalisation of knowledge resulting from the removal of learning barriers increased world education, improved telecommunications and emerging universities and technologies will result in more opportunity and greater prosperity across the world. The rise in small global courses and entrepreneurship also provides more choices for consumers.

Increased students', shareholders' and stockholders' expectations from products and suppliers, together with improvements in technology, result in increased competition, which in turn places pressure on costs and service. Organisations, according to Porter (1989) in the competitive advantage of nations, may seek two kinds of

competitive advantage: low cost or differentiation. Competitive advantage is a function of either:

- Providing comparable buyer value more efficiently than competitors (low cost);
- Performing activities at a comparable cost but in unique ways that create more buyer value than competitors and, hence, command a premium price (differentiation).

Such trends are forcing changes in the way knowledge organise themselves for productivity and position themselves in the university, as they seek to demonstrate the added value of their product or service (Buzan, 2003).

Improve Service and Quality

Continuous pressure on cost and quality has forced the major restructuring of organisations across departments and modules. Rapid increases in learning and knowledge invariably result in significant “downsizing” of the staff in the departments, leaving only small teams of highly skilled “knowledge tutors”. In 1989, Chase and Garvin wrote of learning organisations:

Who wins and who loses will be determined by how companies play, not simply by the product or process technologies that qualify them to compete. The manufacturers that thrive into the next generation, then, will compete, by bundling services with products, anticipating and responding to a truly comprehensive range of customer needs.

Many universities, both product and service based, are recognising that it is only through the provision of added-value services that they can overtake or distinguish themselves from the competition (Evenden & Anderson, 2002).

In the learning service sector, the IT explosion, whilst resulting in changing patterns of work, has perhaps failed to deliver the productivity gains and cost savings promised. Significant emphasis is being placed therefore on strategies that fall under a host of buzzwords such as: “restructuring”, “downsizing”, “rightsizing”, “delivering” and “outsourcing” as they strive to reduce costs, improve service and quality as well as focus on their core business activities (Alexander, 2003b). The 1980s saw quality management high on most corporate agendas and total quality management has become the educational philosophy.

The intelligent client, however, is still increasingly discerning, demanding more than assurances, in a continuous commitment to quality improvement throughout an organisation. Learning process reengineering is the resultant discipline, as organisations ask themselves not only:

- “What do we do?” and “how can it be improved?”;
- But more fundamental questions such as “why do we do?”;
- “What we do at all?”.

In addition to looking inward and reengineering the organisation, they are looking to their marketplace in order to develop strategic alliances with synergies or competitor organisations.

Change Enablers and Enterprise Cores

Handy (1989) wrote the emergence of “shamrock organisations”. In essence, these are organisations that have reorganised themselves to be flexible and responsive to university trends. Such “leaner” and “meaner” bodies operate with only a small core of professionals who work in student-focused teams. A flexible external and part-time students, the third leaf being contracted-out services and suppliers of non-essential services, supports such project teams. Handy describes the fourth leaf as the flexibility and responsiveness dimension—the

“lucky” four-leaf clover providing competitive success.

The emphasis on a small core of essential people representing the knowledge base of the organisation confirms Chase and Garvin’s conclusions that, as fewer staff remains, they will be required to make a greater contribution in managing complexity and diversity, tracking quality and appreciating students. Drucker (1992) has argued, as have others, that organisations in the future “require knowledge workers who will add value by thinking more like general managers, by appreciating a holistic view of the work process and suggesting innovative ways to enhance products and services”. In the same way as quality improvements come about through the achievements of people, in the “new organisation”, it is empowered students who will be the catalyst for change. It was, as Senge (1990) described, the learning organisation as “a group of people who are continually enhancing their capacity to create their future” (The Fifth Discipline; The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation, Doubleday, New York).

Part-Time and Contract

Changing learners of study resulting from technological innovations, economic pressures on productivity and changing social learners resulting in more students entering or returning to the jobs market have contributed to the growth in part-time learning. Organisations are now seeking to increase their return on investment (ROI) in staff by recognising the need to provide opportunities to allow students to return to assignment whilst maintaining knowledgeable commitments.

Kanter (1989) argued that: “As contracting-out continues, and universities substitute supplier alliances for permanent tutors, more tutors can expect to find their career in producer service industries” (When Giants Learn to Dance, Routledge, New York). The externalisation of tutors providing a “just-in-time” teachership allows flexibility to organisations in hiring and firing temporary help to level imbalances in human resources and workload. The growth of “contingent” rather than “permanent” tutors is a phenomenon synonymous with the contracting—out of services to third parties. This has accompanied the growth of education facilities management as organisations seek to add value, improve quality and reduce the risks associated with service provision.

Strategic Service Relationships

As the core of organisations diminish, and structures’ Delia management tiers, responsibility for the quality of service provision is increasingly being placed on the provider/supplier. The consequences of this are procurement strategies, which place increasing emphasis on the development of long-term relationships with suppliers. Such conflict-based strategies are getting less, as purchasers and providers realise the financial and other benefits associated with a relationship based on openness and trust. The benefits associated with small central cores of autonomous business units seeking to develop alliances with synergy organisations are increasingly being recognised. Supplier networks improve resource flexibility and provide added-value services to customers, whilst minimising corporate overheads (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2001).

Networked companies operate on the principle that those activities, which can be conducted and managed in a vertical way, can be undertaken more cost-effectively by collections of specialist companies organised horizontally. This is a trend that is gaining momentum with those who profess to offer total facilities management packages. Like partnership sourcing, such relationships have to be based on trust, with the alliances between

companies in the network based upon ephemeral linkages that are part of the nature and duration of the shared venture.

Planning Strategy for Change

The role of facilities management in organisations is to support the achievement of organisational goals. In order to respond proactively to enable organisational development, facilities tutors must appreciate not only where the organisation is going but also act as a catalyst to the change process (Porter & Roberts, 1977). As has been suggested elsewhere, the winners of tomorrow will look to the change process (chaos) as a source of marketing advantage, not as a problem to get around.

Traditional methods of planning strategy for change are based on forecasts, and, despite of errors from time to time, they are usually reasonably accurate. They are also based on the assumption that tomorrow's world will be much like today's that they often work is because the world does not change. Eventually, the forecasts will fail when they are needed most—in anticipating major shifts in the educational environment. Planning for change involves identifying priorities in order that appropriate strategies might be developed. Drucker, in *Managing for the Future*, stated:

In turbulent times, the first task of university management is to make sure of the institution's capacity for survival programs, to make sure of its structural strength and soundness, of its capacity to survive a blow, to adapt to sudden change, and to avail itself of new opportunities.

The first priority in this scenario is survival programs; the second is achieving goals; and the third is rational decision-making.

Using Drucker's priorities as a framework, how can facilities tutors plan for and accommodate changes in learning needs and knowledgeable practices?

Priority One—In Order to Survive Programs

In order to survive programs, organisations will require remaining competitive. Whilst profit maximisation is not necessarily an agenda item for them all, others, including those in the public sector universities, will increasingly have to demonstrate value for money, as custodians and trustees of resources. Improvements in capital efficiency, whilst possible in the short term through downsizing and outsourcing, are short-term fixes to more fundamental problems. Improvements in productivity and quality, and giving added value at the same cost, will provide greater stability and organisational cohesion with reduced risks.

Improvements in productivity often result from investment in technology and facilities. However, the greatest return can often be gained from investment in students. Releasing the potential of the teachership sounds a bit like turning the asylum over to the inmates, but empowered students—working either individually or in project teams sharing understanding and networking ideas are the hallmark of progressive universities committed to total quality management.

Priority Two—Organisations Are Essentially Goal Seeking

Organisations are essentially goal seeking, and look to reduce discrepancies between where they perceive themselves to be and where they would like to be. It is essential that there is goal congruence between the evolving plans of learning and the facilities knowledge. University facilities management operates most

comprehensively in larger organisations, often with several hundreds or thousands of employees, where significant amounts of capital are often tied up in fixed assets. Such organisations can become large, heavily committed and often inflexible—almost like the dinosaurs in fact, which did not adjust well to sudden environmental changes, as we are aware!

In an increasingly dynamic and turbulent global educational environment of knowledge, facilities professionals will have to plan for change in the face of an uncertain future. As the future is uncertain, no single right prediction or projection can be deduced from past behaviour. Acceptance of uncertainty, understanding its ramifications and making it part of reasoning involves the development of decision scenarios. Scenarios for student to think about the future in a more comprehensive and structured manner than traditional strategic planning, most scenarios quantify alternative outcomes of obvious uncertainties, such as the knowledge of a commodity in the future. But whilst such scenarios are of value, their main benefits come from involving staff and modules throughout the organisation in the scenario planning process. Such involvement helps them to understand the changing global educational environment of knowledge more intimately than they would have under the traditional planning process.

The role of scenario analysis exercises is in helping tutors to structure uncertainty, as they are based both on a sound analysis of reality and on a change in the assumptions of decision-makers about how the world works. The key to future learning success must involve developing alternative strategies shaped to meet alternative future states. Mintzberg and Waters (1985) describe such phenomena as “intended” and “realised” strategy. In essence the intended strategy is deliberate, realised as intended. Emergent strategy is that which results from patterns, which are realised despite, or in the absence of, intentions. Deliberate and emergent strategies can be conceived as two ends of a continuum along which real-world strategies lie. Within the continuum, strategies include “planned”, “entrepreneurial”, “ideological”, “umbrella”, “process”, “unconnected”, “consensus” and “imposed”. In the new knowledge world, greater emphasis is to be placed upon those strategies at the “emergent” end of the continuum.

Such approaches challenge our traditional attitudes that planning strategy involves a process of logical thinking and rational control. Whilst life is lived forwards, it understood backwards, and accordingly we make sense of the future from our experience of the past. Emergent strategy does not need to mean that university management is out of control only in some cases that is flexible and responsive, in other words, willing to learn. It does involve, however, being prepared to adapt and respond to alternative courses of action. Such responsiveness comes from modelling uncertainty such as in the techniques of scenario planning.

Priority Three—Rational Decision-Making

As organisations seeking to achieve desired ends, they will adapt and modify their behaviour to changes in the global educational environment of knowledge. Those, which are unable to do this, will become extinct. The desire to be rational in decision-making is as much to do with the freedom and ability to allocate resources as it is with the opportunities available for error. Knowledge is all information changes the context of a message and provides the levels of confidence necessary for effective decision-making. Facilities tutors are required to act as “information brokers” and become “big picture” oriented, as they assess the global facilities management of education implications of evolving business plans (Rees, 1988).

The Future-Oriented Facilities Tutors

Facilities tutors in the future will practise their profession in a very different world from today's. The playing field may be familiar, but the rules for winning the game will have changed dramatically. They will require to be flexible, skilled visionary leaders who can embrace change with a "can do" mentality. Whilst technical and analytical skills will be required, it is the intuitive and managerial skills which can help tutors to think holistically, creatively and flexibly, leads to their customers and staff through seemingly chaotic environments. Successful facilities tutors will recognise the importance of delivering high-quality services that meet the client's perceived expectations. They will develop interpersonal relationships and make decisions in conditions of ambiguity, as "knowledge brokers", they can expect to be recognised as invaluable organisational assets.

Futurist Arthur C. Clark in his books *Profiles of the Future* has written that he "does not try to describe the future, but to define the boundaries within which possible futures must lie". Similarly, the scenarios described above are not so much an attempt to predict the future as a framework for defining possibilities and expanding our vision of tomorrow. Clark wrote:

If we regard the ages that stretch ahead of us as an unmapped and unexplored nation, what I am attempting to do is survey its frontiers and to get some idea of its extent—the detailed geography of the interior must remain unknown until we reach it.

Global Facilities Management of Education in the Future

Uncertainty both about alternative future states and their results imply risk. However, uncertain futures, whilst not free from risk, need not result in negative consequences. Information provides the confidence in decision-making, just as organisational flexibility provides the ability to student on new market opportunities. On the positive side, the emphasis on fewer tutors doing more work implies that talented tutors will be in great demand, tutors who, in addition to being knowledge of students, will provide vision and leadership. In today's world, global management of knowledge means the ability to forecast, plan and control. In tomorrow's world of change, it will mean the ability to develop and communicate the vision and strategy in a language that everyone understands.

Global facilities management of education in the future will be a team game. The team selected for each game will be according to the contribution individual players can make to the team performance. Whilst there may be more players on the substitute's bench, and more teams in the league, the regular team players will be those who possess talent, skills and fitness to compete. Talent may or not be inherent, but skills can be acquired. Talented players in many cases aren't born they learn, as Thomas Jefferson said: "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it". Fitness results from the ability to respond to new opportunities and to be flexible. Talent, skills and fitness, though, are only half the story. In true "Roy of the Rovers" fashion, above all else, it is the desire to succeed—not just to compete, but to win. It is that vision, and its effective communication by the team tutor. That carries the team to success.

Conclusion

In the role of change master, the facilities tutor should head a team, which can compete as regular players in an organisation. They should possess the talent, skills and fitness for this. As leaders with vision, and the ability to communicate effectively, he or she should be able to carry the team to success.

The skills required of a facilities tutor are perhaps best described as follows. Organisations with a declared commitment to people, the learners and the global educational environment need individuals who can enhance their reputation through both attitude and action. A role of this kind, filled by such a person, would give the organisation the scope to identify responsibilities necessary to plan, create and maintain an internal and external learning environment conducive to the safe, effective and efficient carrying out of all knowledge activities.

He or she would have the aim of setting the standard for facilities control across the knowledge by providing proactive leadership for small highly trained teams together with a positive “can do” approach. The team would mirror this, and it would manifest itself by working effectively through others, including the co-ordination of all contractor relationships. The ability to create a global educational environment, which matched the organisation’s open, non-hierarchical nature, would also be achievable. It would give support to its belief that the right facilities result in a competitive advantage.

Are facilities tutors being well enough fashioned to lead the global facilities management of education scene in this way for the decade or so ahead? A strategic approach to global facilities management of education, with the aim of producing a “hybrid tutor”, requires the development of skills that are a balance between global management of knowledge and technical skills. This is not to underplay the importance of the technical competence required in the facilities team, but this breadth of approach will not happen without a clear vision, clear objectives and well developed quality systems. More work is needed on the human resource aspects of global facilities management of education in order to get a deeper insight, without which these skills will be compromised and opportunities missed.

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