

# Chapter 2

## Higher Education at a Crossroads: Accountability, Globalism and Technology

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### ABSTRACT

*The leadership needs to develop new organizational structures and systems that will promote and encourage quality learning and the ability to assess the impact of the teaching. Governments across the world have steadily minimized their support for public higher education, and costs associated with gaining a degree have increased constantly over the last decade. Most universities are forced to adopt a restructuring model for commoditizing education to make a profit from large numbers of students. The road ahead for higher education is filled with challenges, risks and uncertainties that begin with education being valued as more than a simple commodity: education becomes a public good. Higher education is increasingly viewed as a major instrument of economic development. In order to hold universities accountable despite limited governmental budgets, many nations have adopted performance-based university research funding strategies for targeted programs.*

### INTRODUCTION

Now that society has assumed a global focus, supported by technology, higher education institutions are asked to offer the highest quality education, especially technology skills and competencies,

to a widely diverse audience at a cost that can be supported by society. But, what is the cost? How is the cost measured? How are the outcomes assessed? The use of technology will often increase costs without easily measurable or discernible benefits. The educational leader should constantly

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assess the methods used in the educational process to increase continuous learning and innovation. Quality assurance in higher education has risen to the top of the policy agenda in many nations. Accountability gives an educational institution the evidence it needs to make substantial changes to enhance productivity.

The leadership needs to develop new organizational structures and systems that will promote and encourage quality learning and the ability to assess the impact of the teaching. Governments across the world have steadily minimized their support for public higher education, and costs associated with gaining a degree have increased constantly over the last decade. Most universities are forced to adopt a restructuring model for commoditizing education to make a profit from large numbers of students. The road ahead for higher education is filled with challenges, risks and uncertainties that begin with education being valued as more than a simple commodity: education becomes a public good. Higher education is increasingly viewed as a major instrument of economic development. In order to hold universities accountable despite limited governmental budgets, many nations have adopted performance-based university research funding strategies for targeted programs. Citizens and bureaucrats in many countries are asking more frequently what tangible benefits the society is receiving for the tax revenues being spent on higher education.

Historically, education was viewed as a basic human need and a key factor in social and economic development. Investment in education was perceived to raise the well-being of individuals while elevating their 'human capital' and economic capacity. Education was also viewed as a means of reducing inequality and a venue for social development. The capacities for countries to adopt, disseminate, and maximize rapid technological and educational improvements were reliant on adequate systems of education. However, many politicians speculated on education as a commodity and not a service. Certain influential

decision makers considered higher education to be a tradable commodity as well as a social service. Although education was increasingly seen as an export commodity, educational professionals perceived higher education as a public good and a tradable commodity. Many researchers assume that globalization and internationalism exploited higher education so that it was seen primarily as a private good subject to national and international markets. The road ahead for higher education is filled with challenges, risks and uncertainties that began with education being valued as more than a simple commodity or a public good. The marketing and selling of education at the international level has had both positive and negative effects on the future of global education because stakeholders are increasingly asking whether students are learning and whether institutions are providing a quality of service that justifies their cost.

## **Background**

Globalization tends to be something beyond any institution's control — the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across borders (Ball, Dworkin, & Vryonides, 2010). Globalization, a key reality in the 21st century, has already profoundly influenced higher education (Zhu, 2015). Globalization is defined as reality shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology, the emergence of an international knowledge network, and other forces beyond the control of higher education institutions (van der Wende, 2003). It is this integration of world economy, information and communications technology that has created a crossroads through which higher education leaders must navigate. The ubiquity of change in the environment makes this navigation challenging for even the most prescient of leaders.

Technological changes are occurring at such an accelerating rate that the production of knowledge makes management imperative (Van Vught, 2008). Futurists predict that the education systems of to-

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