"THE ARCHAIC ORGANIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE CURRICULUM"*

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Summary

When viewed from an organisational perspective, higher education institutions rely heavily on internalised decision – making and leave a minor role to the external environment. Even internally, the sub-systems (departments, sub-departments and programmes) are loosely coupled. It could be observed, with justification, that as organizations they failed to produce internal consensus on proper institutional goals. There are several situations as examples: for the purpose of this article the best example is the graduate-teaching control over programmes (introducing new, modifying others or elination of anothers).

Key Words:

- curriculum,
- department,
- discipline

The university is one of our oldest social institutions. It started as a single community – a community of masters and studentes. It was largely a professional school for law, religion and medicine, with an overlay of what has come to be known as liberal arts.

These old institutions are at a hinge of history: while connected with their past, they are swinging in another direction[12]. They are no longer a single community of teachers and students: in fact it is not one community, but several. They have an educative function: through education for roles, the values of society are made manifest.

Clearly there is an identity crisis, the world of scholarship being altered, and people no longer seemed to know how they fit productivity into social structures[19].

To reconcile the conflict between competing goals, the institution must itself refer to the rational structures under which the knowledge processes are organised and to a form of authority.

Especially in recent times, as universities have been compelled to restrain operating costs and read more conscientiously the demographic and economic conditions affecting society at large, the study of faculty at work has received increased attention[4].

1 - The university

Virtually all of the modern world's universities are based on the western model, which can be traced to the medieval universities of Paris (organized by the faculty) and Bologna (development by the students) [12].

Oxford and Cambridge universities later development of the medieval models, were the prototypes for North American institutions.

The new German idea of the university was provoked into existence by the French Revolution [18] and Napoleon's defeat of Prussia in 1806. Germany, before Napoleon, was a fragmented as medieval Europe, and its many universities, almost one for every state and independent city, had a similar function: to provide, in the absence of a single political authority, a unifying intellectual link for its wandering scholars and studentes.

Latin American universities were organized along federative lines and still exist as collections of independent schools (or faculties), lacking any integrating structure that would enable them to work together.

2 - The department

It was the establishment of Berlin by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 1809 that was the dramatic event. The department was created and the institute.

In the second half of the century the system may have been counterproductive with the creation of new disciplines and subdisciplines: the rigidly separated and isolated units, each under the personal control of a single professor, may have discouraged innovation and competition.

The department emerged as an operating unit that was to be both a collegial order and a burocratic form. Within it, personal rule could obtain space in specialities, and faculty members could decide certain matters together. An ideological claim to guildlike rule was also gradually elaborated, drawing on the oldest tradition of the university, the German model of the research university and the concept of the academic freedom[5].

3 - The disciplines

Given the structure of the German university, built around the autonomous chair holder with his private research institute and his acolytes (the Privatdozent and research students), it was seem a proliferation of new professorships and new disciplines[6].

Despite their temporal shift of character and their institutional and national diversity, we may appropriately conceive of disciplines as having recognizable identities and particular cultural attributes[13].

The attitudes, activities and cognitive styles of groups of academics representing a particular discipline are closely bound up with which such groups are professionally concerned.

4 - The department and the disciplines

The sociological forces of tradition, vested interest, and ideology – the internal forces of instituon building – are the heart of organizational (department) persistence. Such forces are basic to the stubborn capacity to survive all types of pressures, including the efforts of powerful aims to change and to protect their own ways and molds of organization into the future.

On the other hand the concept of an academic disciplines is not altogether straightforward, in that, as is true of many concepts, it allows room for some uncertainties of application.

In some of the typical instance of dispute, certain institutions may have decided to establish departments in a particular field but may find that the intellectual validity of those departments is under challenge from established academic opinion[2].

One way of looking at disciplines is through a structural framework, notting how they are manifested in the basic organizational components of the higher education system[7].

Such a perspective tends to highlight one particular set of issues: the variation in how academic institutions elect to draw the map of knowledge; what operational distinctions need to be made between traditional established disciplines and interdisciplinary fields; the organizational complexities of combining autonomous, self-generation units within a single managerial structure; the mechanisms for accomodating newly defined intellectual groupings and phasing out those which are no longer regarded as viable.

5 - The department, the disciplines and the function

Traditionally, higher education serves three functions: teaching, research and service. This tripartite division of faculty work has been criticized as artificial because the whole activities intersect and overlap[3]. Faculty members assume all three roles in every institutional type, but to differing degrees.

A major source of dissatisfaction for faculty is the inherent ambiguity of these situations. Role problems are rife, particularly those concerning the division between teaching, research and extension work. For example, a large teaching hospital very often has the three aims: to reach graduate and undergraduate students, to carry out research and to promote health and cure sick people.

This ambiguity is further exarcebated by the academic reward system and it should not be seen as surprising that faculty choose to concentrate their best efforts into that area – research – which has visible signs of reward and recognition.

It is to be emphasized that over the past fifty years the culture of medical education – and indeed the culture of the health services as a whole – has been progressively dominated by the university hospitals. As technology developed an medicine became more specialized, the university hospitals came to deal with the unsual rather than the typical cases, with the sophisticated rather than the simple situation. They developed into "centres of excellence". They became concerned with research rather than teaching, with an emphasis on disease rather than health.

6 - Institutional goals and conflicts

Conflicts of various kind are to be found in practically every aspect of higher education.

There is conflict of institutional goals, between departments, between departments and disciplines for comprehensive power, bertween "objective" knowledge and "subjectivity", between personal commitment and institutional detachment.

It has been emphasized[4] that the institutional goals of the university did not influence the personal goals of its faculty members: rather, the personal and professional goals of individuals became the goals of their institution. Analysis of the survey of faculty members show faculty acquiring and retaining power and control over curricular matters and the selection of their colleagues.

The diversity between individuals goals increases with institutional size and complexity.

Department rivalries are not the only kind of conflict generated by the conventional system of academic disciplines. The very nature of a discipline, as traditionally conceived, may cause tension between the aims of a university and those of society[9].

It has been argued[20] that in the "collection" code of the traditional curriculum, the emphasis is on state of knowledge. The contents of the subjects studied are clearly bounded and insulated from each other. By contrast, in an "integrated" code, pedagogy is likely to emphasize ways of knowing rather than state of knowledge, and a synthetising and subordinating idea boundaries between subjects.

A common complaint about universities is that they are illadapted to deal with society's many pressing problems. The theoretical preocupations of academics may be conductive to long-term understanding of complex interrelationship: the desire of society may be for more immediate solution of social, technical, psychological and other problems. The university is discipline-oriented: problems are defined within the perspective and solved – or more often endlessly refined – within the discipline.

7 - The curriculum

Curriculum refers to the systematic, rational structures under which the learning processes of students are organized[8].

Curriculum is thus, in the broadest sense, a technique for the rational ordering of human thought for the purpose of transmitting knowledge to others. Instruction refers to the mechanisms whereby the elements of curriculum are directly transmitted or are made avaiable to students. Administration includes the overall management of curriculum and instructional procedures, the provision and allocation of resources so that curriculum and instruction can be carried out, the day-to-day operational control of procedures, and evaluation of curricular and instructional outcomes.

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The most day-to-day responsability for the implementation of curriculum and instruction is borne by the individual faculty member. The individual faculty member chooses instructional techniques and applies them to the instructional situation and evaluate students performance and achievement.

There is a persisting drive towards an unrealistic degree of completeness in the curriculum, reinforced no doubt by the reluctance of quasi-autonomous departments [1] to surrender what they see as their entitlement to teaching time and by the laudable – sometimes excessive – enthusiasm of teachers for their own subject.

We should move towards a curriculum that is no longer all embracing, but containing a core which is more rigorously defined than has been customary. The greatest educational opportunities will be afforded by that part of the course which goes beyond the limits of the core, that allows students to study in deph in areas of particular interest to them, that provides them with insights into scientific method and the discipline of research and an approach to medicine which is constantly questioning and self-critical. This part of the course is referred to in terms of "special study modules"[10].

8 - The institutional goals, the environment and the curriculum

It could be observed, with justification, that higher education institutions failed to produce internal consensus on proper institutional goals. But how conservative the faculty is within its department and committees? How effectively it is individually in intellectual pursuits, yet how it can collectively over-react in more emotional matters? What is that authority to reconcile the conflicts, and how is it manifested?

In general, a distinction is draw between "power" and "authority". Many authors consider power as the ability to affect the outcomes experience by others [16]. Authority, on the other hand, denotes the group's recognition and acknowledgement (that is, legitimacy) of the patterns of power operating within the setting [11].

The positive thrust of pluralism, embodied in the university, is to make possible the creative use of conflicting intellectual positions.

Therefore, somewhere there has to be unhancement at administration level – it includes the overall management of curriculum and instructional procedures.

It may be appropriate to establish an *interdisciplinary course* – the extend to which the relationship between all the component parts of a new course is eventually apparent to the students and positive –determined by the people involved, much more often than by the name or theoretical structure of the course.

Also it may be advisable to transfer some specialist work to the postgraduate years, as well as other changes including the delivery of health care, with increasing emphasis on prevention of disease and on management of patients in the community.

Where lies the authority to enhance the new program, and how is it manifest?

Faculty members serve as carriers of the process of learning via instructional techniques within the overall systematic plan of a departamental – or division - wide curriculum.

The role of department chairperson is central to the administration of curriculum. If the chairperson is operating in a traditional context, that is, "as first among equals", decisions are made collegially, chairperson's role is that of curriculum planner and educational leader. If the chairperson is more of a direct supervisor to the faculty, the chairperson's gather information on the sucess and failures of the processes. This information is passed back to the dean for overall curriculum improvement.

The decision to develop a new curriculum still remains a matter to be decided according to the conventional wisdom which emphasizes the universities' autonomy[17]. However, in the reform equation funding by the government plays a major role in the decision.

Many commentators agree that the inroads on academic autonomy have increased significantly in recent years, but the scope for outside intervention has been there from the earliest establishiment of the academic profession[15].

The role of the direct agencies of government, the research councils, the grant-awarding foundations and the community is crucial and can be argued to carry certain moral obligations to preserve the integrity of the intellectual enterprise.

In fact, what has been discussed above is more than a theoretical exercise. There are clear reasons and aims embodied on a national system of controling spending and allocating resources to higher education institutions and universities [14].

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