

# Competing Priorities? The Pursuit of Excellence and Sustainability in Higher Education

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# SHE - Influencing Factors

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- *Financial constraints*
- *Government regulations*
- *Climate and geography*
- *Physical infrastructure*
- *Institutional practices*
- *Culture*

*(Clugston, 2004; Di Giulio, 2006; Fien, 2002)*

## SHE - Barriers

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- *Overcrowded curriculum*
- *Perceived irrelevance by academic staff*
- *Limited staff awareness and expertise*
- *Limited institutional drive and commitment*

*(Gough & Scott, 2007)*



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# Context – Education Trends

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- Literacy & basic education → Higher education
- Elite access → Massification
- Popular demand → Public sector investment

(Altbach, 2004; Bie, 2008; OECD, 2006; Hayward, 2011)

# Higher Education - Expansion

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*Investment in scientific research and HE are recognized as having, “a positive effect on economic growth and regional competitiveness, as well as on individual employment prospects and well-being”*

(OECD, 2006)

# Higher Education Governance Common Drivers

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- Globalization
- Communications / Information Technology
- Competition
- Neoliberal, free market policies

(Kim, 2007; Mok, 2008)

- Declining state financial support
- Rising student numbers
- Increasing operating costs

(Hayward, 2011)

# Higher Education Governance

## Common approaches

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- Management discipline and control
- Competitive pressures
- Accountability
- Cost efficiency
- Performance indicators
- Selectivity

(Cowen, 2008; Peters, 2007)



# Higher Education - Convergence

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- World-class university model
- Business-like managerial approaches
- International university rankings

(Altbach, 2003b; Marginson, 2008; Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008; Salmi, 2009; Salmi & Saroyan, 2007; Usher & Savino, 2009; Waite, Moos, & Lew, 2005)

# International Models

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- World-class university (Altbach, 2007)
- Emerging global model (Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008)
- Global research university (Marginson, 2008)

# “Paradox” of the World Class University

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“Every country wants a world-class university. No country feels it can do without one. The problem is that no one has figured out how to get one. Everyone however, refers to the concept.”

(Altbach, 2003b)

# Common Characteristics of the World Class University

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- Visionary Leadership
- Research intensity
  - Adequate facilities for academic work, Research output
- Global focus
  - Worldwide recruitment, Student mobility, Global collaboration
- Increasing complexity
  - New roles for professors, New government and industry ties
- Diversified funding
- Academic freedom
  - atmosphere of intellectual excitement, Internal self governance

(Mohrman, Ma & Baker, 2008; Salmi, 2009)



# LTRS

## A necessary evil?

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- Rankings & world-class as “Excellence”
- Pros and Cons
- Short history . . . Long future
- Highly influential

# University Rankings & University Stakeholders

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- Potential students and families
- Funding agencies
- General public

(Salmi & Saroyan, 2007)

- Leaders and senior managers in Higher Education
- Rankings as a policy instrument

(Hazelkorn, 2008)

# SHE Research

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- Policy, planning, and administration
- Curriculum/teaching
- Research and scholarship
- Service to communities
- Student life
- Physical operations/infrastructure

(Wright 2007)

# Questions

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- Which aspects of the world-class model are having the greatest impact on campus sustainability issues?
- How does one problematize the relationship?
  
- How are the world's leading research universities addressing the potential tensions posed by competing priorities?
- What do their actions suggest for other institutions seeking to address climate change and sustainable development while at the same time striving to improve overall quality?

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