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LEADERSHIP, BY, AND OF, UNIVERSITIES

- And What Are They For?

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Introduction

This short paper discusses the leadership role that universities can, and, it is argued, should play within their nation – its economy, but also its culture and its civilisation. It starts by outlining what is now generally accepted as a valuable role for universities to help economic development, focusing on some of the difficulties that universities have found in doing this. But the heart of the note discusses how, as leaders in society, universities can and should be so much more than that: promoting the principles of what is right, influencing public ethics and actively contributing to cultural and social development. The note then goes on to discuss the implications of these roles for leadership within the university. Given this focus, the note is primarily concerned with public sector and not-for-profit universities.

The note is not intended to be comprehensive in its discussion of these types of leadership: it seeks to cover those aspects of leadership which are often weak. The observations are based on the author's 40 years of experience working with, for – and occasionally against, over 70 individual universities and higher education systems in about 45 countries (listed at the end) – including extensive work in Britain covering 30 years of higher education reforms.

Economic development and the search for relevance

A generally agreed important role for a university is to contribute to its country's national and/or regional economies, both as a gatekeeper to knowledge and innovation and as a route to higher level skills. Trends in the 21st century that affect this role include:

- Aspects of globalisation that lead employers to expect some minimum international standards in their graduate intake
- Increasing economic competitiveness between nations, which means that the standards and levels of skills of a nation's graduates can play a key role in its economic success
- Rapid developments in science and technology resulting in skills and expertise quickly becoming out-of-date: learning to change and learning to learn can be as important as learning a discipline
- A growing emphasis on 'knowledge economies', coupled with an increasing fragmentation of knowledge, mean that future graduates will also need high levels of innovation and enterprise

The labour market implications of these and other factors should inform changes in university provision. But labour market signals are notoriously weak and often out of date, so it is tempting for a university to ignore them. That is not good enough. A university should, using imagination and thought, try to anticipate *future* needs, rather than follow *past* tends – or *current* fashions, for example, by horizon scanning and by drawing international lessons from peer countries or from those with more advanced economies.

Such information, along with feedback from labour markets, should inform rigorous course and programme review processes within the university and so lead to changes in provision of them. These processes should have clear criteria for

stopping a course or a programme. This can be a difficult decision and so is often avoided - but to continue a course that should be stopped short-changes future students and wastes valuable university time and resources. Strong decisions are needed.

New courses for the future will often need to be cross disciplinary, which can also be difficult to arrange in some universities; again this difficulty should be resolved rather than avoided. Much new course development will need to be in-house, but insufficient attention is often paid to the possibility of buying in courses, especially in core subjects for which materials are now widely available, for example, in MOOCs – the modern equivalent of textbooks.

The rapid external changes mean that it is important for academics to keep up-to-date with their discipline. This is the essence of 'scholarship': keeping up with the literature, holding discussions and attending seminars and conferences. For the purposes of good teaching, such scholarship work is necessary; it should also be sufficient as most academics do not need to work at the forefront of research, nor to undertake research aimed at peer review publication.

The changing labour market means that the initial subject which a student studies may well be less critical in the future than it used to be – although science and engineering are likely to remain important. Irrespective of the discipline of study, graduates in the 21st century will need key skills such as: thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation, team work and communication, combined with core skills such as English and ICT.   These skills should not be 'bolted-on' with specific courses, but should be built into *all* teaching and learning: they are best developed through the learning *process* rather than by *content*. This requires styles of teaching and learning that are very different from those needed to teach 'facts', implying a move away from traditional approaches. Many academics find it difficult to make this change and need active encouragement to make it.

Universities also need to respond to the aspirations of young people, albeit that these are often based on even worse labour market information than that available to a university – and risk being unrealistic, out-of-date or more simply, based on fashion more than need (eg business studies). 'Customer' orientation is all very well, but universities should not simply pander to student 'customers' who are badly informed. One way of mitigating this is for universities to recruit students on a less specific basis, and then adjust their study programmes after arrival – an approach taken by most US universities. Universities could also help prospective students by supporting a good school based Careers Service - as long as it was not used as a route to recruit students to existing programmes.

Sometimes excess student demand, whether reflecting a labour market need or, more likely, reflecting a fashion, is met by new, often 'for-profit' private universities, which mostly provide programmes that are cheap to run. Some of these programmes, and indeed sometimes whole institutions, can be extremely weak and risk undermining the reputation of 'higher education' in the eyes of the public. National Quality Assurance processes must be rigorous enough to identify the programmes and institutions that are inadequate and must also be strong enough to ensure that they are closed if they don't reach acceptable quality standards. This is

the only effective way to protect what are necessarily relatively poorly informed students – *'caveat emptor'* simply does not work in these circumstances.

In addition to supplying trained graduates, universities can contribute more directly to economic development through research and through the provision of services. Research at a national level often depends on the priorities and sources of national financial support. This is beyond the scope of this note, but universities should be selective in what they try to do, based on their true research strengths. There may be a few universities that can drive economic change rather than follow it (eg in Silicon Valley); but this is not a realistic aim for most. Larger and richer countries may be able to afford a few research based universities, but most universities, and hence most academic staff, should focus on teaching and learning, backed with relevant scholarship work.

Regional universities should seek a special role, geared to local development needs, by providing relevant courses (which may include sub-degree and part time provision), and by undertaking applied research and services for the local community and businesses. There will always be a temptation for regional universities to follow the model of the (few) research based universities; this should be resisted and discouraged.

But contributing to the needs of the economy is only half the picture for a good university.

The university as a leader

1. Wider purposes
It is understandable that Governments tend to see 'their' universities as important drivers of economic growth and wealth creation; but universities have wider purposes than that. It is unfortunate that governments sometimes give undue emphasis to this dimension of universities; more unfortunate still, is the similar emphasis sometimes given by supposedly 'neutral' supra-state bodies: for example, the World Bank has described universities as 'handmaidens of the economy' and one of its publications on education policy stated: 'universities should strengthen the foundations of the market based economy'. This is a *political* view, based on a perceived need to serve global capitalism; it is not an undisputed 'truth' – and it is certainly not an *education* policy.

No one would dispute the importance of a university's contribution to the economy, but universities are more than mini-industries providing knowledge and skills for market economies. To define the university role in such simple terms is to miss a central point of a university. Universities are enquiring bodies seeking after truth and so can, and should, use the status they have in society to make wider contributions to social development by helping to build a civilised, tolerant and moral society. As well as by developing fully rounded graduates – and not just labour market 'fodder', universities can do this by taking public positions on important topics and by making creative contributions to the arts, to philosophy and to 'blue skies' research. Each of these contributions may, but may not, have an impact on the economy; but they can certainly contribute to a civilised society and can also help preserve and promote a nation's cultural heritage.

Even through its education provision, a university provides so much more to the society than private benefits to its individual graduates, significant though that is. The combined value of the individual graduates to society is more than the sum of the benefits to them personally; this is a genuine 'public good' which contributes to nation building. A corollary is that, an activity that provides a public good, particularly one that does so uniquely, should receive some public funds for the role – and to encourage it.

This point is in danger of being lost in countries where there has been pressure on public universities to charge close to 'full-cost' tuition fees (as has been happening in the UK, for example). To some extent, this pressure comes from a global trend of 'modernisation' that seeks to extend market capitalism ideas to higher education. Of course there are good social equity reasons for charging students some portion of their costs (for example, for the benefit they personally receive); but the pressure to adopt a 'market' approach to such matters, perhaps too closely reflecting presumed Western economic values, and charging student close to full costs, can run against a goal of nation building and risks endangering national values and national cultural identities.

In developing countries in particular, there is a tendency for universities to be too ready to 'accept' values from outside. For example, supra-state organisations (eg WB, EU) and large corporations, often assume (or impose) their values on universities, such as the adoption of a 'free-market' approach mentioned above, as a condition of providing project funds. Universities either fail to notice that such assumptions are implied or tend to accept them as inevitable. Of course, universities need to respond to changing circumstances, but their power as institutions means that they can change the circumstances in which they operate, for example by questioning rather than just accepting simplistic or fashionable beliefs. Before any project funding is agreed, universities, as places of objective study, should debate assumptions on which it is based to decide whether or not to accept the implied values – or whether to insist on operating with their own values instead.

2. The values of graduates

It is a role of a responsible university, as a seat of learning, to think about the future of society and to cultivate good citizens by inculcating high ethical values in its graduates as part of their education. The period of study in a university can have a major impact on the formation of a person's character and so can change the contours of a generation. This comes not so much from what is taught, but more from how teaching and learning take place, and from the sort of community environment that the university offers. Different styles of teaching produce different types of people with different views about life and values.

Graduates with ethical values, a concern for society and a belief in themselves are more likely to be agents of social change and development than being interested simply in their own gain – and more likely to want to use their skills for the benefit of the wider society. One converse is that, if high level decision making is dominated by people from a small number of similar elite schools and universities, they are unlikely to be able to sympathise with, or even understand, the

needs of those less fortunate – exemplified by one UK Prime Minister's claim that: 'there is no such thing as society'.

3. Moral responsibilities of a university

As important institutions, universities can be a major influence in their society – the university equivalent of 'corporate social responsibility' now being exercised by some large private companies.

A university should hold, and be seen to hold, the moral high ground on important issues, for example: by providing an authoritative voice on matters of major public concern, by promoting the principles of what is right, by acting as a leader in public morals and by making a visible stand against all forms of corruption and social injustice. Universities should also support the concept of 'the rule of law' and its associated values. As a seat of learning, a university can influence other values in society, for example emphasising the importance of civilisation, cohesion and the engagement of citizens in a strong democracy with freedom of speech and with clear values and ethics. Underpinning all this should be the promotion of a strong sense of national cultural identity – not least to help balance some of the counter-cultural effects of globalisation.

A university can also play a valuable role as a civic leader. As a major national player, it has the capacity to identify, analyse, collaborate and solve problems with multiple stakeholders – taking the lead where necessary. Rather than simply developing knowledge and wisdom, universities should use it to speak with authority on matters of public confusion: two obvious current ones, perhaps more in the USA than elsewhere, are the confusions and lack of understanding about 'creationism' and about anthropogenic climate change.

Most directly, universities are unavoidably a major influence on a nation's school system, with authority and power that affects:

- the school curriculum, school subject specialisms and school standards
- school exams - especially, but not only, the exams and process for entry to universities
- the nature and skills of the teaching profession, both initially and through continuing professional development
- the operations of a careers service for school leavers

These are matters of concern that extend beyond any Faculty or School of Education: they affect the capacity and skills of all students entering universities, and more widely still, they have an impact on the nature and workings of society as a whole. Valuable though a university's 'Education Faculty/School' is, these matters should be of concern to the whole university.

In matters of higher education policy, universities should also use their weight, knowledge and leadership to speak out, especially on topics on which Government may be conflicted. For example, universities should articulate that:

- the 'market commercialisation' of public universities stems from a political ideology and not from an economic necessity: major reductions in public funding are political decisions about public spending priorities – and the consequences can be reductions in quality, standards and fairness
- unless they are rigorously regulated, the growth of new private universities, especially those 'for-profit', risks devaluing the concept of a 'university', reducing standards and damaging the interests of young people; 'fake' universities with false offerings should be exposed and stopped by requiring ALL universities to operate within a strong, transparent regulatory framework

More contentiously – and with more caution, universities can also help stimulate, accelerate or block social change when truly needed - where there are good, objective reasons for doing so (e.g. to protect a valid national constitution). A powerful university can be a voice of authority by speaking out on extreme moral issues such as genocide, an unreasonable dictatorship, public corruption, apartheid under its various guises and other forms of persecution, for example McCarthyism.

In summary, a university provides protected space which has openness and unconstrained enquiry at its heart and which enables academics (and students) to push the boundaries of new ideas and have cutting edge thoughts. It is a place for reflection and contemplation and an environment for dialogue and debate without constraint: the very essence of 'academic freedom'. In exchange, a university should use its very privileged position for the benefit of society – not only for its own members.

Leadership within a university

1. University values and strategic leadership
A university needs active leadership on both the economic and social dimensions. Neither is easy - and they require different internal mechanisms. For the economic dimension, the university needs to be actively engaged with the real world of economic development, but at the same time, for the social dimension, it needs to be able to act as a 'critical friend' for the development of society. Sometimes, the two roles may conflict, and there will be border-line issues where it is intellectually difficult to contribute to both dimensions (eg on issues around GM foods). The leadership needs to ensure there is adequate debate about such issues to minimise any perceived conflict.

Much has been written about how universities can contribute to economic development. This has tended to focus on ways to encourage universities to undertake research and services that are directly relevant to industry and commerce, for example by liaison arrangements, joint committees, secondments and other forms of 'joint working'. Rather less attention has been devoted to the implications for teaching and learning; this is just as important – although rather more difficult, not least as it needs to start from an appreciation of the future skills that are likely to be important.

In general terms, there is now fairly wide acceptance that the 21st century will need more rounded individuals with thinking, problem solving and related skills, and for graduates to learn how to learn throughout their working life. This understanding has not yet fully informed the teaching of many academics - who still tend to focus on the subject matter of their discipline. In structural terms, a university can encourage these skills through flexible course provision: for example, by providing an initial broad education before specialisation can be a good base for a student's future and can also foster analytical skills, encouraging students to think for themselves and to think differently. An example of this is the US style 'liberal arts' course, although there is evidence that this can discourage students from persevering with sciences when they make their course choices.

But a more important change in teaching is needed to inculcate these skills into graduates as part of, and during, their 'normal' degree studies. This requires changes to the *methods and process* of teaching, more than to the *content* of subjects; it requires teaching and learning that:

- stimulates student engagement and is interactive, with feedback and discussions
- navigates and facilitates learning by managing the learning process – rather than simply transmitting knowledge
- involves generic problem solving and communication, focusing on ideas and creativity
- stimulates intellectual curiosity and critical reflection by students
- helps students learn how to think for themselves, to question and to use their own judgement
- requires the creative and intelligent application of knowledge
- develops personal ethical values

Strong leadership is often needed to steer a university towards these methods of teaching and learning. The first step is to gain acceptance of the need for change; this is rarely easy as many academics are surprisingly conservative, especially about how they teach. Further, this style of teaching is difficult – much more difficult than teaching 'facts', and many academics will need training for it: 'academic freedom' should not include the freedom to teach badly.

As well as intellectual persuasion, to bring about this change in teaching style is likely to require leadership in adjusting the approach to the professional development for academics; this can include making changes to the methods and criteria of staff appraisal and giving rewards for pedagogical excellence, with training where needed - ironically, those with the greatest need for such training are often those who least think they need it. The criteria for promotion need to give considerable weight to pedagogical abilities and teaching style, playing down research performance which is only marginally relevant for most academics. In most universities, pedagogical training itself will also need to be developed as, even where it exists, it tends to be weak, with little initial training and no continuing professional development (unlike for teachers in schools) – and rarely does it cover teaching

style. Further reinforcement of the change can come from strengthening Quality Assurance and/or Improvement to include assessments of teaching style.

For a university's wider role in society, the leadership task is equally challenging, but very different. The leadership needs to identify topics on which the university should take a position, requiring a mechanism to advise on the position that the university should take and then on ways to promote that position in the most effective and relevant manner. While the senior management of the university should be actively involved, some topics will require additional expertise from within the wider academic community.

It can be useful to establish a 'Policy Group', chaired by the Rector or equivalent, to identify topics on which the university might take a public position – and to advise the Rector accordingly.   New issues are not likely to arise very often, but the Group would need to be constantly vigilant, just in case. For identified topics, the Group might set up 'sub-groups' with the appropriate knowledge and experience to explore the issues and to propose a position for the university. There will be few issues on which all members of the university have the same views; it is a role of the leadership to determine the view(s) that are to be those of the university and the strength and manner with which they are to be presented and followed up. The leadership will need to distinguish between views stemming from disgruntled or self-interested academic conservatism and those of genuine social concern.

The Group might also advise on ways to present the university's position. This can include policy and/or academic papers, press statements, interviews by the Rector and/or others and publicity campaigns. Different topics require representations from different constituencies of the university: for some topics, the public face of the university might best be the Board of Trustees or equivalent body, for others, it might be the Rector, for yet others it might be the Senate (for example on purely academic matters).

There will be some topics for which universities might collectively think that a position should be taken across the nation. In many countries, there is an organisation that brings universities together, at least the public ones. This forum should not feel hesitant about taking a position, especially on matters that affect the sector as a whole. Different Rectors can be selected to be the spokesman on different topics.

To be effective and consistent in these roles, a university needs to articulate its mission and core values – and then ensure they are enacted. These need to be captured in a university strategy that is understood and accepted by the university community, with the values then pervading and influencing attitudes and behaviours through the university's operations.   The articulation of values and the development of the strategy requires a participatory process, in several stages and including any external Board. It should start with promoting awareness of the external context and constraints for the university, pass through a stage of rigorous analysis and culminate in a long term vision, based on the articulated values, with a strategic plan that sets out how the university will move forward. The vision and values must be sufficiently realistic and clear for people to be able to judge the extent to which they are being achieved.

In strategic terms, it is worth noting that the so-called 'world ranking league tables' are not relevant for most universities; they are based on a set of parameters which give undue emphasis to research, which should not be a major function for large parts of most universities. In fact, the tables are harmful as they distract from the attention that ought to be paid to good teaching. Most universities should ignore such tables – and instead, design a ranking basis that is relevant for the aims of their own university and then see how well they perform on that.

2. Leadership and management values

The leadership of a university of the 21st century also needs to ensure that there are efficient governance and management arrangements – 'to do things right' as well as having the inspiration and values to 'do the right things'. This combination is rare. The 'style' of management decision making should reflect the values of the university and should set a good example to other institutions in society. Good management is normally seen as being transparent, decent, truthful and accountable for what it does and what it achieves. In management terms, the leadership should maintain morale at difficult times, should not promote self-interest and should, where possible, involve participatory decision making based on constructive, even challenging dialogues.

However, decision making based on 'old style collegiality', in which everyone discusses everything in an endless search for consensus, often results in ossification; this might have worked in a university in the 19th century, but it is no recipe for one in the 21st. On the other hand, 'autocratic managerialism' is not the answer either: it simply does not work just to tell people what to do – not in a university, and nor in most other organisations. 'Collegiality' for the 21st century is best seen as a frame of mind, one that accepts that the interests of the university are usually more important than those of any one individual part, and that decisions may be needed that disadvantage the few, but benefit the university as a whole. This mature understanding needs to pervade the university; it means that narrow self-interest should not block change or wield a veto. This form of collegiality should be able to secure understanding and so achieve 'consent' on important decisions: it needs good leadership and a high level of trust for its successful operation. It is important to distinguish between securing 'consent' in this way and seeking 'consensus' - which can result in endless rounds of meetings that achieve very little.

The values reflected in the leadership style should cascade down to heads of academic units, such as Schools, Faculties and Departments; it is then more feasible to operate with a level of delegation of authority based on trust. Delegation to the heads of the main academic units, and maybe to the next level too, is good management practice, but needs clear definitions of the authorities and responsibilities of the lower tier. It also requires prior and well defined accountability arrangements, along with good central monitoring and the availability of sanctions if needed – and a good management information system designed explicitly for the purpose (not just to collect data). Good management in this way should result in decisions that are:

- well informed, backed by analysis – not simply based on intuition

- made only once, clearly and then recorded, especially when they are difficult decisions
- conveyed to, and understood by, all for whom the decision is relevant
- implemented efficiently, with the effects monitored and with scope for later review

It also requires committees to have clear, unambiguous terms of reference which define whether the committee is advisory or decision making – and with what authorities. Clarity in terms of reference for 'Senate' (or equivalent body) is especially important: as the top academic body, Senate can play a key role in the protection of academic standards, but sometimes Senate tries to be involved in management decisions, for which it is not well structured. Its terms of reference should be clear on the limits of its authority.

Even good managers find some tasks difficult; examples include:

- developing a long term aim for the size of the university and for its broad discipline coverage, along with targets for staff/student ratios, student drop outs and completions
- setting a balance between teaching (with 'scholarship') and research and determining whether post-graduate education be viewed more as a continuation of 'education' or as a preparation for 'research', and hence the balance between u/g and p/g provision
- monitoring the academic strengths and the financial health of individual academic 'units'
- operating rigorous processes for course development and review – with tough criteria both for starting new courses and for stopping current ones
- using full activity costing, particularly for potential research projects to assess the extent to which they would need to be cross-subsidised and, if so, from where
- arranging for academic staff development, including using criteria for the selection, appraisal and promotion of academics that give weight to teaching more than to research, along with good provision for pedagogical training – both initially and continuing
- enforcing regulations and time limits for staff who wish to undertake external 'private' work and rules for the treatment of any resulting earned income
- establishing ways to monitor, and then ensure, the efficient use of limited university resources such as space and equipment
- ensuring that the administrative functions operate to assist the academic functions, not vice versa, and that they are efficient – for which 'benchmarking' can occasionally be useful, but only for routine activities - and even then, only to raise questions

3. Institutional autonomy

To operate under good leadership, a university needs autonomy on academic matters (academic freedom), but also some institutional autonomy for decisions about structure, organisation, finance and management. The greater the level of autonomy, the more likely it will be that a university can attract good leaders to its top jobs.

On the other hand, any institutional autonomy must be accompanied by high transparency and by clear accountability to the public. This should involve some form of external Council or Board of Trustees, reflecting external stakeholders of the university from business, the public sector and from the wider community; at the very least, it requires a university to publish full annual and financial reports, along with post hoc audits, both on quality and on finance.

Autonomy for individual universities enables there to be diversity within a higher education system (and in any one university), with universities developing in different ways. Without adequate autonomy (although sometimes, even with it), there is an observable, but unfortunate tendency for universities all to try to develop similar profiles – a tendency encouraged by the unhelpful 'world ranking league tables' referred to above. A further differentiation between universities in larger countries should be based on differing roles within their region.

Leaders within the university

The above tasks are a considerable challenge for the leadership of any university. To meet the challenges, a leader needs respect and credibility within the university community and needs to understand the culture of higher education and of his/her university in particular. This is one reason why leaders appointed from outside the sector sometimes, but by no means always, find it difficult to achieve success.

In addition to having the capacity to undertake these tasks, a leader needs personal skills that fit with the ethos of a university; these usually include being both willing and able to:

- develop and to promote a vision, a culture and a clear set of values
- engender loyalty to the university and encourage true collegiality
- work with a variety of different stakeholders
- be the public face of the university on what can often be contentious issues
- have good analytical and problem solving abilities – and recognising that important decisions will sometimes need to be made under uncertainty and with inadequate information
- be politically sensitive and able to resolve institutional and personal conflicts
- build teams based on trust, use informal networks, motivate and value individuals, allow innovation and review people's achievements fairly
- recognise the need for, and the nature of, good management and strong financial skills

While good management is vital for a successful university, it is not absolutely essential that the university leader should be a good manager him or herself, as long as he/she fully appreciates and recognises its importance and works with a 'deputy' who is a good manager and is responsible for the task (this is broadly the USA model, with a President and a Provost).

The selection of the leader (Rector) is absolutely critical for the future of a university. It is vital that the selection is made based on a clear job description, drawing on the above tasks and required skills. To secure the best candidate requires a wide search, not least outside the university itself, followed by an appointment process using judgements about the ability and the willingness of candidates to accept the responsibilities and accountabilities. Such judgements are best made by an external Council or Board of Trustees, who have no personal interest in the outcome. Of course, a successful candidate should also be generally acceptable to the university community; there are various informal ways to check this, including by taking informal soundings and/or by having a few chosen representatives involved in the selection process. The requirements of the post mean that it is not appropriate for the selection process to involve elections – the selection is not a test of popularity, but an assessment of abilities to undertake a very demanding job.

Other posts which have management responsibilities need to be selected in a similar way – although not normally involving the external Board: on the basis of a job-description, assessed for competence, willingness to do the job, and an understanding of the accountabilities and responsibilities involved. A successful candidate should be similarly acceptable to those for whom he/she will have managerial responsibility; again this is best done by taking informal soundings – an election is not appropriate.

Few people appointed as university leaders have had adequate preparation for such a demanding role; while management training is important, it is not enough. Leadership and management development can start at a fairly early stage in an academic career, for example by arranging for academics to have leadership responsibilities within defined units, such as being a leader of a research team or a team for a teaching program. More explicit leadership development can include:

- holding good practice workshops, using case studies
- arranging seminars and mentoring with world class leaders – including some from sectors outside education
- building networks and collaborations and holding 'foresight' discussions on the future with peers and perhaps with external consultants
- allowing time out for reflection and thought
- arranging special 'flagship' programmes, but NOT standard courses

A prior step should be to raise the profile of the need for good leadership, perhaps based on an analysis of need and maybe setting up a few reference groups.

The main barrier to progress may well be a prevailing attitude that: "I don't need this" from those who need it most!

Conclusion

For centuries, universities in Asia (and in the West) have had respect in their societies as searchers after truth and have exerted a moral and cultural influence over the development of their societies. Even from Confucian times, it has been seen as the duty of the intellectual to speak truth to power. There is a global need for reinforcing, or even recreating, that role in today's climate when so many cultural values are being implicitly questioned, or even undermined, by commercial and similar pressures – often originating from the West.

There will be government and other pressures for universities to focus on the value they can bring to economic development. There are good reasons to embrace this, but not at the expense of neglecting the ethical and cultural values that universities have stood for over the centuries. Courage will be needed from university leaders to stand up for what is right; effective management will also be needed for universities to set a good example to the rest of society and to give leaders the right and the strength to speak in such terms.

Without this leadership, universities may drift into becoming no more than suppliers of (high quality) raw materials for future knowledge economies: graduates and research. This is not unimportant, of course, but it is such a pale shadow of what true universities can be. Leaders should aim high.

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This note is based on observations deriving from the author's work undertaken in the following countries, as well as work for the EU and the World Bank:
Abu Dhabi, Afghanistan, Albania, Argentina, Australia, Barbados, Bermuda, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Denmark, Egypt, England, Hong Kong, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Korea, Malaysia, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Scotland, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Thailand, Trinidad, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United States, Uzbekistan, Vietnam.

Note