Introduction

This is a story about hope, about a belief in a better future, about people who sought major change in higher education in eight underdeveloped countries. In this study, I explore efforts to improve lives by building high-quality higher education in more than a dozen cases that faced a variety of difficult challenges: war, underdevelopment, economic crises, corruption, mismanagement, racism, repression, external interference, gender discrimination, selfishness and greed, or a combination of the above. It is a story of dedicated, committed, and often fearless leaders who initiated strategic planning efforts and higher education policy for change and those who worked with them to make it happen. Most of these change efforts were successful, though not always. And there were several major failures—efforts that were unsuccessful through mistakes of their own or because of events over which participants had no control, including war, coups d'état, international economic crises, disease, and other calamities.

These strategic planning efforts take place in a variety of different places in Africa and Asia ranging from the struggle to reorganize, upgrade, and transform higher education in Afghanistan in the midst of a war, to the successful fight against apartheid in South African higher education with its amazingly open and participatory process both at the national and institutional levels. They include ongoing efforts to improve higher education in Malawi in a situation of weak government interest in higher education, political turmoil, drought, and internal crises. Each case represents a major strategic planning effort to improve and upgrade higher education by a group of educators, academics, politicians, students, faculty members, and citizens with a wide range of goals—efforts that are complex, fraught with challenges, and with varying results. At the same

time, the reader will not find a model strategic plan as a result of this study. I and others have found, as Tony Strike et al. (2018: 37) emphasize, "[T]here was no normative or 'right' way . . . to deliver strategy and planning, and that many variations existed on how SP was devised and delivered." Even in the most successful cases we will see variations in the process—something that is important for practitioners to understand.

Each of these examples describes a major human effort to improve conditions for the citizens of each of these countries, to enhance the life chances for young people by providing quality higher education for them, to help national development by building strong knowledge centers in higher education institutions that can respond to local needs, foster creativity, innovation, and development and build open and free societies in which knowledge and discovery will operate in a free and hospitable environment. Some of the people discussed in these pages have put their lives on the line in the process of these change efforts. Many of these leaders have made the kinds of commitments that have given hope to young people for the future, laid the groundwork for growth, and been models for countless others who will follow them. Others have focused on narrow, specific problems and worked to resolve them. In some cases, their efforts have largely failed. Yet even those struggles have brought hope for a better life and memories of triumphs in that direction—if only for a moment—that cannot be erased. Some of these sacrifices will resonate at some point in the future and serve as a basis for real, sustainable change. Several of the cases examined here suggest reasons for failure which have broad applicability. Others provide examples of the hard work and commitment often required to bring about change and transformation. A few have been incompetent and/or corrupt with lasting damage—though there have not been many like that.

This study is written for those interested in higher education change and the policies that fostered it, whether as participants in the process, students, or as observers. My primary audience is a general one of people concerned about higher education in underdeveloped and developing countries, but the cases explored here will be relevant to anyone involved in or interested in higher education in any part of the world, including students who far too often have little knowledge of foreign countries. The cases examined focus on challenges, failures, and successes in strategic planning for change in higher education similar to those in any part of the world, since they explore themes, policies, and strategies that have general applications. Each in its own way, of course, is unique. Yet, all

of them have lessons for anyone interested in bringing about change. This is especially the case for those doing so using strategic planning as the vehicle for change since these cases demonstrate its importance to success. Some of the cases examined here confront problems of an enormity few people will face, yet they too are suggestive. Those successes under especially difficult circumstances explored here should give courage to anyone who has to meet challenges in higher education and may, for some, suggest strategies that might not have occurred in other settings. Four of these cases represent striking examples of higher education system transformation. All of them deal with problems that have relevance to higher education in general.

In this study of higher education change, I examine twelve cases of strategic planning, the policies that drove them, both national and institutional, in eight different countries in Africa and Asia where I have worked over the last thirty years. Indeed, except for South Africa, little has been written on strategic planning and policy change in the developing and underdeveloped world.

As we think about the leadership of strategic planning, it is worth going back to the Prologue of James MacGregor Burns's 1978 classic *Leadership* where he writes

> that leadership is nothing if not linked to collective purpose; that the effectiveness of leaders must be judged not by their press clippings but by actual social change measured by intent and by the satisfaction of human needs and expectations; that political leadership depends on a long chain of biological and social processes, of interaction with structures of political opportunity and closures, of interplay between the calls of moral principles and the recognized necessities of power; that in placing these concepts of political leadership centrally into a theory of historical causation, we will reaffirm the possibilities of human volition and of common standards of justice in the conduct of people's affairs. (Burns, 1979: 3–4)

This description of leadership sets a high standard, but indeed that is what is being called for in the demands for change in most of the cases we have examined here—a range of fundamental changes in higher education to be led by people expected to have extraordinary capabilities and characteristics, or where the demands are not quite so great, where the

reality of success requires some of these characteristics. We will assess a number of higher education leaders and the strategic planning processes and policies in the pages which follow. Some of the leaders were remarkable in their ability to mobilize people to foster change and transformation. We will see others who fail, sometimes because of limitations of their own, sometimes because of problems with followers or other leaders, sometimes because of events over which they have no control. Nonetheless, Burns provides an excellent introduction to the strategic planning processes we are examining with a clear description of ideal expectations, which are still valid after all these years.

As I revisited the literature on leadership I was struck by the fact that most of it focuses on what could be done to build strong leadership—books such as Jim Kouzes and James Posner's *An Administrator's Guide to Exemplary Leadership* (2008), which identified what the authors saw as five keys to successful leadership. At the same time, some of the literature was downplaying the role of leadership, as does Barbara Kellerman in *The End of Leadership* (2012), who concludes that: "[L]eadership is in danger of being obsolete—but leadership as being more consequential than followership, leadership as learning we should pay to acquire, leadership as anything better than business as usual, leadership as a solution to whatever our problems, and leadership as an agreement of which merit is a component" (Kellerman, 2012: 200). Linda Hill and Kent Lineback (2011) see three critical characteristics of successful leaders, which include managing your team, managing yourself, and managing your network. Added to that are a host of other "how to" books such as Yukl (2014).

Most of the work on leadership and change focuses on the United States, and I thought it important to explore the process in the underdeveloped world. I began to look at the processes of change and higher education policymaking from that perspective and to relate it to the strategic planning work I had participated in working in the United States and elsewhere. There are many similarities in the underdeveloped world, but also areas, such as security, which are not as serious an issue in most of North America or in Europe.

One of the criticisms of work on higher education leadership is the failure to look at leaders over a long period of time (Lumby, 2013:18). Several studies have tried to overcome that problem by returning to their case studies after a period of time.[1] I have had the luxury of being able

to do that both in terms of the time I was able to observe the process of change in each of these countries and my ability to go back to reexamine the conditions of the process at a later date. In the cases of South Africa, Afghanistan, Madagascar, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Pakistan, I was able to conduct additional interviews and reexamine earlier conclusions about what transpired in the face of more recent information.

In the course of this study of higher education strategic planning, I examine what seem to me to be key characteristics of successful higher education leaders in the underdeveloped countries examined. For example, Lumby asks, What role does vision play (Lumby, 2013: 2)? How do we show that? I try to answer that and related questions. What about organizational skill? Integrity? How do these attributes work in practice? What other characteristics of leaders seem to be important? At the same time, I am aware of the caution emphasized by Birnbaum to avoid "[t]his tendency to attribute influence to leaders, even when it may not be objectively warranted, [which] distorts the way we think about leadership, and obscures the actual relationship between leaders and outcomes" (Birnbaum, 1992: 7). Similarly, I find useful James MacGregor Burns's definition of leadership as "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers." He goes on to say that "the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations" (Burns, 1978: 19). In higher education it is the link between goals of leaders and followers that is much more important than concerns about power or control.

Especially important as well is "strategic thinking," the ability to consider and evaluate a variety of possible actions to deal with challenges—to think strategically about the challenges to the institution or the system (Pritchard, 2018: 52). Pritchard emphasizes the importance of "enabling strategic thinking and the other active engagement of stakeholders" (Pritchard, 2018: 49). As we will see, that is an important part of success in many of the cases we examine here. We will return to strategic thinking later in this study.

I also look at the role played by context and the conditions of the individual education systems. What different challenges have planners faced? How successful were their efforts to bring about change? What do those successes teach us about the strategic planning process? Are

there critical parts of that process that affect success? Are there particular types of leaders who seem to be more successful than others at achieving change? We will return to these questions in what follows.

Several of these leaders had to contend with especially difficult crises. That is a particularly powerful test of their leadership abilities and the strategies they employed. As we will see, their responses to these challenges are often creative, sometimes exceptional, and frequently suggestive of mechanisms some of the rest of us might find helpful.

These cases demonstrate why strategic planning is so important to successful higher education change and transformation, how it focuses attention on critical needs, helps foster strategies and policies that work and abandonment of those that do not, can mobilize support, and often provides the basis for the change and transformation that is critical to quality improvement, national development, political stability, and the development of democratic values. In several cases, the process was in many respects more important than the actual changes in that it created agreement on conditions for cooperation at the institution or in the system for years to come (for example, between students and administration, or between faculty members and staff). Several of the less successful cases suggest weaknesses in the planning process, critical areas that were neglected, the cost of the inability to foster agreement about basic goals or strategies, lack of support from critical actors, financial shortfalls, or the failure to develop a viable plan.

I define educational change as *the alteration of major policies and values that guide higher education.* These range from minor changes in one program to major shifts in policy and values, such as new require- ments for students to demonstrate facility in a foreign language or math, changes in recruitment and promotion policies, such as a move from appointment and promotion based on who you knew to one based on merit. M. O. Babury and I (2014: 2) discussed transformation and change as noted below:

> A few words about change and transformation might be useful here. There are many types of change as we are all aware. I find it useful to think about change along a continuum from minor modifications of the system at one end to total transformation at the other. By transformation, we mean that *the system is fundamentally altered in its structure and in some of its major values.*[2]

I find some of the discussions about transformation by other writers particularly useful. Eckel describes transformation as change that is pervasive and deep (Eckel, 1999: 16). Somewhere along the low end of the continuum are isolated changes[3] (one unit, one department) that may be extensive but do not affect the rest of the university or system. Farther along, moving to the high end of the continuum are various degrees of more extensive changes. Finally, at the high end of the continuum is transformational change—*change that is pervasive and deep in a way that fundamentally alter its structure and some of its major values.*

Others define transformation somewhat differently. The Center for Higher Education Transformation, in its study of transformation, identifies four main "pillars of transformation" as being equity, democracy, efficiency, and responsiveness (CHET, 2002). Burton Clark identifies the five common elements of successful institutional transformation as: (1) a strengthened steering core; (2) an expanded developmental periphery; (3) a diversified funding base; (4) a stimulated academic heartland; and (5) an integrated entrepreneurial culture (Clark, 1998: 3–8).

In assessing transformation, following this definition, I suggest that in a transformed higher education system or institution:

- There is a move from a traditional hierarchical system to one that is primarily merit-based and relatively flat.

- The system enshrines equity including gender equity.

- It is knowledge-based.

- The system is responsive and efficient.

- It has an active stimulated academic heartland (following Burton Clark, 1998).

- It is open to the world of ideas and enshrines academic freedom.

- It operates in a supportive environment.

- It is sustainable.

I will use these characteristics to examine higher education change and transformation in the pages that follow.

One of the dangers of studies that focus on leadership is a tendency to overglorify the role of the leader(s) in any successes,[4] attribute powers

to the leader that did not exist, or give leaders credit for things they have not done or successes that were a result of the work of many people. Indeed, separating the impact of leaders on change from other factors that may be responsible for it is difficult. I have tried to avoid that problem, to be cautious in attributing cause and effect, to be self-conscious about both my close connections with some of these leaders, my involvement in some of these cases, the tendency to assert causality where there is none, and the too easy tendency to overlook weaknesses and failures especially when memories may be blurred by time. What are most important for this study are the processes used in successful strategic planning that lead to major change efforts and the changes that occurred rather than attempts to demonstrate causality. Furthermore, in every case of success, the successes were collective efforts involving many people, over a significant period of time.

And, of course, context and timing also have a lot to do with success. Some of the successes chronicled here were significantly aided by the timely availability of funding, or the fact of limited opposition. In several instances, excellent plans were undone by sudden events that the leaders had no control over, such as the coup in Madagascar, the crisis of an invasion, the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone, international economic downturns, and other unforeseeable disasters. These were not the fault of higher education leaders. Some leaders were able to work through or around disasters, as we will see. Those cases make especially interesting reading. Indeed, sometimes it seems that "the context is everything." While that is not the case in any of these examples, it is a critical variable in several cases and plays a significant role in many of these examples in very different ways, as we shall see.

What is especially striking about most of these cases is the level of success even in the most difficult of environments—amidst civil strife, war, economic crises, hunger, disease, and poverty. Many of these examples take place in fragile states[5]—Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Madagascar, among others. Some take place in environments highly stratified by both race and economics—as was the case for South Africa. All but two of these examples took place in an environment tainted by war, civil strife, or military intervention.

It is also important to recognize that none of these examples happened in a vacuum. While some of these countries were more isolated than others, Afghanistan in particular during more than thirty years of war, all are influenced by the events in higher education going on around

them, both in the academic sense of the findings in various fields of importance to them, but also in the higher education community and the world. It is not just the effects of the communications revolution of the twentieth century, the growth of network societies,[6] the development of knowledge societies (World Bank, 2002), but the effect of the constant interaction of academics, administrators, and students—many of whom have studied abroad, are involved in joint programs with foreign scholars, have worked in other countries, read the *Chronicle*, the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, or *University World News*, or are linked to others in education by the powers of the Internet. The power and influence of the networking constantly going on in higher education internationally should not be underestimated. The search for quality improvement, in some cases defined as "world-class standards," has been aided by the Internet, which allows faculty members to look at and draw from the syllabi and reading material of the best courses in the world. And as the Arab Spring demonstrated more than ten years ago, the impact of networking about ongoing events in societies and in higher education around the world can be enormous.

The choice of the cases examined here is purposive—chosen because I have worked in all of them. I have worked with higher education in fifteen countries, taught at the university level in Ghana and Sierra Leone, as well as the United States, and have worked with universities and ministries of higher education (or their equivalent) on strategic planning in Afghanistan, Algeria, Cameroun, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Uganda, among others. That has allowed me to experience strategic planning in a variety of higher education systems over a period of time (in some cases several years), see the plans being developed and observe conflicts about goals and how they were resolved, witness a large number of challenges to higher education in many different environments, look at a wide range of leadership styles in higher education, and follow plans for higher education change in all of them—often under very difficult circumstances. This has given me a major window into the work of planning, regular discussions of the process, and the ongoing work of a system or institution, over several months and in several cases a number of years. I have been careful not to divulge confidential events or policies (of which there were few) and have shared my findings with many of the people involved in follow-up discussions or visits. Collectively, these cases have served as excellent

learning environments for a study of higher education planning in underdeveloped and developing countries.

In chapter 1, I briefly describe the focus of the study as strategic planning for higher education change and transformation in twelve cases in eight different countries in Africa and Asia in which I have worked. We will see the critical role of careful strategic and budget planning in the most successful change efforts in these underdeveloped and developing countries, as well as the importance of strong multi-level leadership, broad consensus on goals, and an open and democratic environment. My aim overall is to illustrate how careful strategic and budget planning can bring about major changes in higher education with each of these cases providing quite different examples of strategic planning for, and experience with, higher education change as well as to illustrate several failures. I look at the decisive role of high-quality higher education in fostering economic growth and social development in underdeveloped and developing countries. No nation has achieved significant economic development without a high-quality higher education system. I focus on the potential role of strategic planning in fostering higher education change and transformation. In chapter 2, I discuss some of the problems of slow and fluctuating growth and economic change in Africa and in much of the developing world in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing particularly on an overall assessment of the problems and their implications for higher education. The Asian economic situation began to improve significantly by the year 2000, while growth in Africa, after brief improvements in 2012–14, began to stall in 2015 but is now growing (Jerven, 2015: 124).

Chapter 3 begins an examination of specific cases of higher education change focusing on the case of Pakistan, a major strategic planning success in the transformation of higher education after years of decline and inaction. It is a model of careful strategic planning, budget development with risk assessment that proved its worth during a later slump in the economy. In chapter 4, I examine the higher education change process in Afghanistan—a particularly interesting and successful case taking place in the midst of war. It suggests a great deal about the leadership of strategic planning under difficult conditions—providing examples that have broad implications. In chapter 5, I look at the strategic planning process in South Africa—the difficult effort to end apartheid and produce a higher education system that is open, nondiscriminatory, and of high quality. It provides some of the most remarkable examples of national

and institutional strategic planning success I have studied and suggests a great deal about the importance of process as well as goals. In chapter 6, I look at three interesting institutional cases in South Africa, the University of the North, University of Fort Hare, and Peninsula Technicon. Each of them in very different ways suggests the importance of process to successful planning.

Chapter 7 is focused on efforts to bring about higher education development and change in Sierra Leone, home of Fourah Bay College, the oldest university in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the devastating challenges encountered following a series of coups and other disasters including the Ebola epidemic. Chapter 8 is focused on strategic planning for change in Uganda, facilitated by the National Council for Higher Education, in a context fraught with dissension and a government with little interest in higher education. It has important lessons for financial planning, risk assessment, and consensus. In chapter 9, I examine the promising higher education strategic planning change efforts in Madagascar, the long struggle to gain broad support, early successes and then their derailment by a military coup d'état, and the aftermath of those events.

In chapter 10, we move to an unusual institutional level of strategic planning at the University for Development Studies (UDS) in Ghana. This example of higher education transformation serves as a model for student-centered development. UDS developed a unique third term program where teams of students worked on rural development projects during their whole undergraduate career in cooperation with local communities.

In chapter 11, in contrast, we look at the very difficult higher education strategic planning process at the University of Malawi and its aftermath—a process that was successful in developing an excellent strategic plan, one that illustrates the importance of team building and consensus on goals but also the critical need for strong government support. That case also illustrates how external consultants can sometimes help resolve conflicts that have created impasses locally. That is followed in chapter 12 by an examination of an institutional strategic planning endeavor in Afghanistan at Kabul Polytechnic University—demonstrating what can be achieved institutionally even in a war environment in which strategic planning is new and experience lacking generally and showing the importance of paying attention to writing quality in a strategic plan.

In chapter 13 I look at the leadership of change, the characteristics of leaders, the skills that seem to have been especially useful, and

strategies used by various leaders. In chapter 14 we look at what we have learned about successful change and transformation in higher education in underdeveloped and developing countries focusing on several major themes. Chapter 15 presents the conclusions of this study and what it suggests for strategic planning in higher education in underdeveloped and developing areas for the future.