

A GUIDE TO

*Strategic Planning for
African Higher Education Institutions*





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African Higher Education Institutions*

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with

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Foreword

The Effective Governance Project aims to build the skills and capacity of the councils, institutional governance structures, student representative councils and institutional forums in South African higher education institutions. Common to all these governance structures is the need for planning, whether it be a three-year rolling plan for the whole institution, a strategic plan for the council, an annual plan for the SRC or the forum, or a strategic plan for a faculty or a department.

While it is so that all these structures have specific needs and functions, the basic principles of strategic planning are generic. This guide focuses on the institution as a whole, but will also be useful for a wide range of structures within the institution. The importance of strategic planning and the context in which it is carried out are emphasised.

This study provides an easy-to-use step-by-step guide to strategic planning. It moves from first steps, through eight stages of the process, including implementation. It also spells out the contemporary context of strategic planning as well as the conditions that make planning especially important to African higher education. The *Guide* includes strategic planning examples from a number of countries, including South Africa, Nigeria, Uganda and the United States.

The two authors have an enormous depth and breadth of experience in planning at a variety of levels in higher education and have given dozens of workshops in South Africa, Namibia, Ghana and the United States. Fred Hayward started planning as a dean of social science in the USA and Daniel Ncayiyana as a dean of the medical school in Transkei. Fred then managed the Ford and USAID-funded strategic planning project in South Africa for the American Council on Education over six years and has worked on planning in other African countries, including Namibia and Ghana. Dan continued to be involved in planning when he was acting vice-chancellor of the University of Transkei, deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Cape Town, then vice-chancellor of M.L. Sultan Technikon and now of the Durban Institute of Technology. Their earlier jointly authored work *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons*, also published by CHET, is now in its fifth printing and has been widely used in South Africa, Namibia, Ghana and Gambia.

We think you will find the *Guide to Strategic Planning* a very helpful and thoughtful tool for strategic planning and believe it will make the process easier and more effective.



Preface

We have written this guide on the fundamentals of effective strategic planning for colleges, universities and technikons to provide information, suggestions, strategies and guidance to help higher education institutions in the complex, often frustrating, yet crucial, area of strategic planning. Much of the material presented here grows out of our work on strategic planning with universities and technikons in South Africa and Namibia over the last 15 years plus experience in the United States and elsewhere in Africa. We have tried to provide insights from what we have learned, strategies that have been effective, approaches that might enhance your efforts, and ideas that might help institutional leaders navigate the difficult terrain on campus as they seek to mould consensus, build commitment, and foster enthusiasm for both the strategic planning process and the plan itself.

This guide is designed to:

- provide basic information about strategic planning;
- suggest why thoughtful, focused strategic planning is vital to the successful operation of a college, university or technikon;
- help prepare you for some of the major challenges of strategic planning;
- present an overview of the framework and stages of the planning process;
- recommend who should be involved in the process and clarify their roles;
- provide tools that will help make the strategic planning process work; and
- highlight approaches, key conditions and elements for strategic planning success.

Strategic planning is guided by fundamental assumptions about the functions and roles of higher education in society and, most importantly, about the vision, mission, goals and place of that specific institution in society. In this sense, no two strategic plans will be the same. Each will be defined by the mission it sets for itself, its current capacity, its goals for the future, the accuracy of its assessment of the environment, and the effectiveness of its implementation.

Higher education institutions continue to be among the oldest surviving institutions in the world because they provide for a broad range of the needs of successful societies. Among their vital functions are: the advancement and transmission of knowledge, learning and wisdom; opportunities for intellectual, ethical and skill development of individual students; the provision of an engine for the nation's development and growth; service as a repository of a society's knowledge and culture; the provision of key links to economic, social and political



development to members of the society; and contribution to the well-being of the community, the nation and societies internationally.

This broad range of functions suggests, however, that no one institution can fill them all. Indeed, in this complex age, we know of no single institution that succeeds in doing so, nor is there reason to believe such an institution would be desirable. The implication, therefore, is that institutions of higher education and their strategic plans must reflect the breadth of needs and goals through:

- differentiation of functions and specialisation between institutions;
- a focus on functions seen as primary to the mission of each institution;
- recognition of a wide range of societal needs for training and development;
- awareness of the continually changing needs of students and citizens for lifelong learning;
- specialisation of research and experimentation, in at least some institutions, to deal with the rapid pace of change and new opportunities created by them;
- an openness to outside scrutiny; and
- recognition that the success of higher education is dependent on individual creativity, an openly competitive environment, and an educational culture that fosters new knowledge and technological excellence.

The critical role of tertiary education in the development of any society has been highlighted in a recent World Bank report.¹ The authors note that, ‘... knowledge accumulation and application has become one of the major factors in economic development and is increasingly at the core of a country’s competitive advantage in the global economy’.² They continue by pointing out that:

... the role of tertiary education in the construction of knowledge economies and democratic societies is now more influential than ever. Tertiary education is indeed central to the creation of the intellectual capacity on which knowledge production and utilization depend and to the promotion of lifelong learning practices necessary to update one’s knowledge and skills.

The authors stress that:

Developing and transitional countries are at risk of being further marginalized in a highly competitive world economy because their tertiary education systems are not adequately prepared to capitalise on the creation and use of knowledge.³

These comments emphasise the importance of higher education and highlight the need to focus and plan carefully for the future. It is in this context that we have written this guide.



This booklet reflects our personal experiences and viewpoints as educators and administrators, drawing heavily on our South African and American experiences. We hope that, as with our previous booklet, *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons*, readers will draw from this what is useful, ignore what is not, and make suggestions about useful additions and improvements.

We hope you will find this guide useful as you lead or participate in the critical work of strategic planning, helping to build on your institution's strengths, and focusing on the goals and strategies that will help your institution make a major contribution to higher education and national development. Our efforts are designed to stimulate debate about and inform the mission, vision, goals and planning process, and to help create the conditions needed to provide the ongoing change needed to make tertiary education institutions like yours the driving force in the knowledge production and dissemination so central to national development.

Dr Fred M. Hayward

Dr Daniel J. Ncayiyana

Endnotes

- 1 Education Group, Human Development Network. 2002. 'Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education'. A World Bank Report. Draft, 8 April 2002.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. ii.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. ii-iii.



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This publication grew out of more than five years of collaboration between the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) and the American Council on Education (ACE) on a series of projects in higher education. Among them was the *South Africa Project on Strategic Planning*, funded by the Ford Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development, which focused on strategic and financial planning at historically disadvantaged universities and technikons from 1993 to 1997. That project was followed by several others funded by the Ford Foundation, including the *Pilot Project Consortium on a New Higher Education Framework for South Africa*, and the CHET/ACE project, *Transformation in South African Higher Education*. This co-operation also resulted in an earlier CHET publication entitled *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons*, by Daniel Ncayiyana and Fred Hayward. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the Ford Foundation throughout this collaboration and in particular to this project through both CHET and ACE.

Dr Jacqueline E. Johnson made substantive contributions to this guide in editing the final draft and adding important insights and examples. She is president of Jacqueline Johnson & Associates, LLC, a management and higher education consulting firm. She works with institutions of higher education, organisations and associations to create strategic directions, build capacity and enhance productivity.

There are several individuals to whom we have a special debt for their contributions to our work and thinking about strategic planning. Prof. Raymond M. Haas, former vice-president and professor of commerce at the University of Virginia, who served as a senior associate for strategic planning and presented numerous workshops on strategic planning in South Africa, was an inspiration and mentor during the five years we worked with higher education institutions in South Africa and Namibia. Dr Madeleine F. Green, vice-president for International Initiatives at ACE, was a tireless contributor, facilitator and fundraiser throughout this project. Dr Nico Cloete, director of CHET, has helped and encouraged us and facilitated the publishing of this *Guide*. We are also indebted to Nkulie Pityana, who worked with ACE on the strategic planning project, for her contributions to our thinking about long-term financial planning, and to Prof. Donald Crawford, former executive vice-president at the University of California Santa Barbara, who provided helpful information and suggestions about academic planning. We would also like to thank Alice Sena Lamptey of the Association of African Universities (AAU) for very useful suggestions and assistance.



Most important, have been the contributions of the presidents, vice-chancellors, rectors, chief financial officers, strategic planners, faculty, students, council members and citizens from South Africa, Namibia, and Ghana with whom we have worked since 1992. They contributed immensely to the workshops we gave, challenged us, sharpened our thinking, made suggestions and inspired us as we tried to put down on paper the thoughts, strategies and ideas we worked through together.

In many respects, the *Guide to Strategic Planning* is about change. In this respect, it reflects the pain, anxiety, frustration, false starts, satisfaction, joy, failure, and celebrations of success that accompany any concerted effort at transformation and growth. We are especially grateful to those who have shared this path with us.



About the Authors

Fred M. Hayward

Fred Hayward is a specialist on Africa and higher education with more than 25 years of experience as an educator, scholar and senior administrator. He has a Ph.D. from Princeton University and a B.A. from the University of California. He has taught at the University of Ghana, Fourah Bay College and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has been a research associate at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire in Dakar, Senegal. He was executive vice-president of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation during 2001–2002 and prior to that was senior associate for the American Council on Education (ACE) for more than ten years, working with higher education institutions in Africa and the United States on strategic and financial planning. He continues to be a consultant for ACE. Dr Hayward has written extensively on both African development and higher education. Among his publications are *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons* with Daniel J. Ncayiyana; chapters in Madeleine F. Green, ed., *Transforming Higher Education: A Worldwide View*; and *Elections in Independent Africa*.

Daniel J. Ncayiyana

Dan Ncayiyana is vice-chancellor of the Durban Institute of Technology in South Africa. Prior to that appointment, he was deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Cape Town. Forced into exile for Pan-African Congress (PAC) activities, he lived in the Congo and then moved to the Netherlands where he completed his medical degree. He specialised in obstetrics and gynaecology at the New York University Medical Center. He returned to South Africa in the mid-1980s, and served as professor of obstetrics and gynaecology, dean of medicine, deputy vice-chancellor, and acting vice-chancellor respectively at the University of Transkei from 1986 to 1993. Dr Ncayiyana is editor of the *South African Medical Journal*, secretary of the World Association of Medical Editors, has served as consultant and writer for the World Health Organization in Geneva, and is a Fellow of the Academy of Sciences of South Africa. He is co-author of *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons* with Fred M. Hayward.

About the Effective Governance Project

The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 puts forward co-operative governance as a new model for governing higher education. While providing guidelines with regards to the functioning of councils, institutional forums and student representative councils, the Act leaves much scope for individual institutions with regard to interpretation and implementation. A key function of the Higher Education Branch of the Department of Education is capacity building. During 1999 the Constituency Affairs Division of the Department of Education (DoE), in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as the funding agency and the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) as the implementation agency, started a three-year project to assist institutions in making institutional governance more effective.

The Effective Governance Project focuses on three governance structures: councils, institutional forums and student leadership. The methods of capacity building are through the development of generic guidebooks and facilitator manuals, the training of facilitators for capacity development, conducting research on co-operative governance in key areas and the provision of focused support to a limited number of institutions.

The following individuals serve on the Advisory Committee for this project:

Professor Connie Mogale, Vice-Chancellor Technikon Witwatersrand; Professor Dan Ncayiyana, Deputy Vice-Chancellor University of Cape Town; Professor Stuart Saunders, former Vice-Chancellor University of Cape Town; Mr Khaya Matiso, Dean of Students University of Port Elizabeth; Ms Mel Hagen, Dean Cape Technikon; Ms Phindi Mabena, Equity Director South African Institute of Chartered Accountants; Ms Linda Vilakazi-Tselane, Human Resources Director Council for Scientific and Industrial Research; Mr Zola Saphetha, Secretary-General South African Technikon Student Union; Ms Nandipha Zonela, Secretary-General South African Union of Student Representative Councils; CHET and DoE representatives.

