

8th Annual Teaching & Learning in Higher Education Conference

University of KwaZulu-Natal,
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Change in Institutional Thinking as a Tipping Point for Responsive Reform in Higher Education

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Introduction

- South African higher education:
 - Dominantly discussed in terms of two era:-
 - a) Apartheid (narrated in terms of segregation and denial of access)
 - b) Post-apartheid (discussed in terms of opening up access, transformation)

Everyday talk and research engagement has dwelt on:

The higher education landscape in terms of demographics

The higher education landscape in terms of policy framework

Classifications and differentiations in South African higher education

Access and success imperatives in terms of advantage and disadvantage
positioning and dynamics

Introduction cont.

- A critical engagement to elicit debate, discussions
- prompt inquiry

- But then,
 - Not an opinion piece, (a build up reflections to a position paper)
 - Nor a 'simplistic advocacy'
 - Neither an evolutionist or revolutionist's call to a new social order

Introduction cont.

- Students' success, graduation, throughput, retention and access continues to inform interventions
- Data (and increasingly bigger data) is thrown about most times without interrogation (beyond what the numbers say), what has the data not said?
- We increasingly gravitate towards the Eurocratic dispensation (commoditisation, big-data business and the Big Mac cloning) that Higher Education has become even with the mis-placed notion and ideas of transformation and change on not only our lips, but also **inserted** in our insignia, proclaimed ethos and chatters
- Perhaps justified by the 'big big big grammar' "Globalisation?"

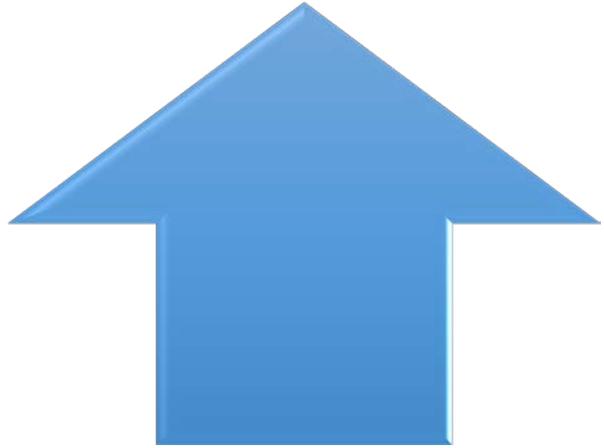
'But then?'

- But then what?
 - If we take it that the world have globalised, what and where is our own little space within that globe? Or does globalisation mean that the Chinese must stop serving you those delicious fresh Chinese food in a Cape Town Chinese restaurant with the chopstick simple because MacDonal'd's in Shangai serves theirs in a cloned package as they do in New York?
 - We must remain competitive – (but I had thought Globalisation has a face to it – the unknown). So with whom are we then competing with and for what?
 - Perhaps Pinar is wrong on “Distinctiveness?”

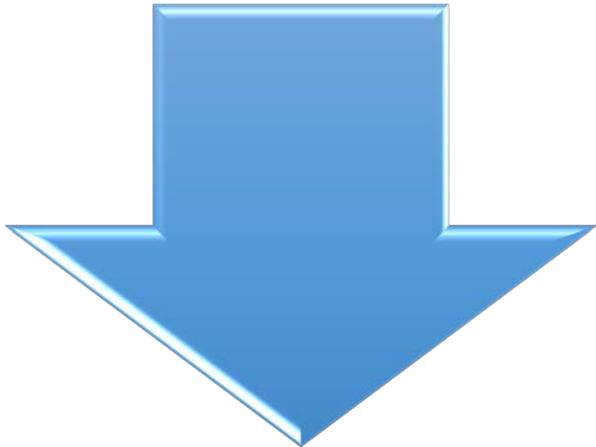
Responsive change

- The concept of change is highly contested
- Change could mean anything to any person, many things to many people
- I engage change from meanings derivable from the concept of responsive change
- How dose a change mechanism respond to a default of 'real problems in real time and space'
- Can South African higher education respond to the real problems of the South African space?
- What influences the kind of desirable outcomes of SA Higher Education (targeted graduate attributes)?
- Is it enhance access, increased throughput, accelerated graduation rate, increased racial and gender contrast?
- (none or a combination of these perhaps)

What is a Higher Institution (The University)?

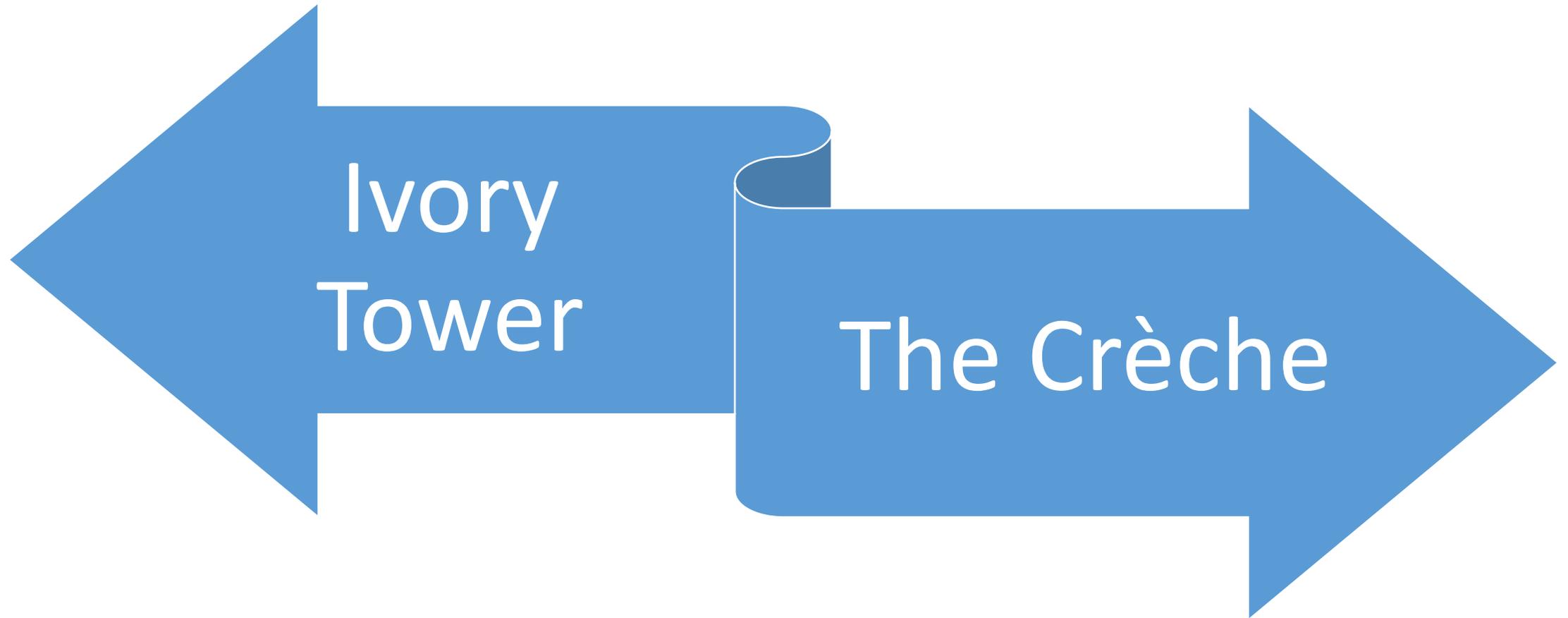


Ivory Tower



The Crèche

What is a Higher Institution (The University)?



At the two extremes

• **Ivory Tower**

The Crèche

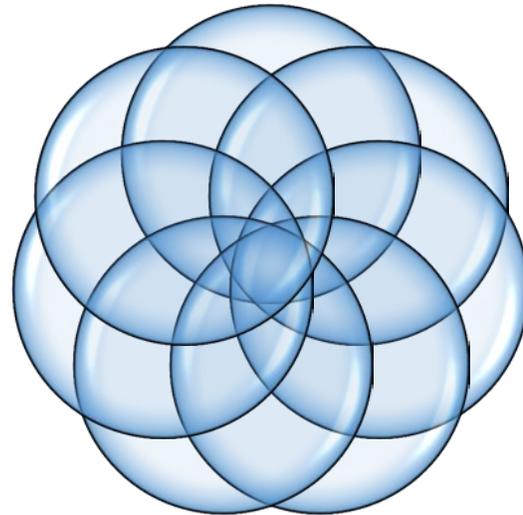


- State property give the tools for service Nurturing the seeds of aristocracy
- Elitism the blessed of the Earth Only Kings and Queens
- Professoriate high up there Winner takes it all
- Research/Entrepreneurship productivity No room for handholding (less teaching)
- Managerial/Industry led models skills and nothing but skills All sizes can fit (cloning lab)
- (driven by hedge fund donors)
- High expectations (standardization all graduates, they must be the same Complacency (the window display shop display)
- and the Bologna Process Harmonization creed)

The Higher Institution as Ivory Tower mode of thinking

Ivory Tower

Professoriate
High up there
Winner takes it all

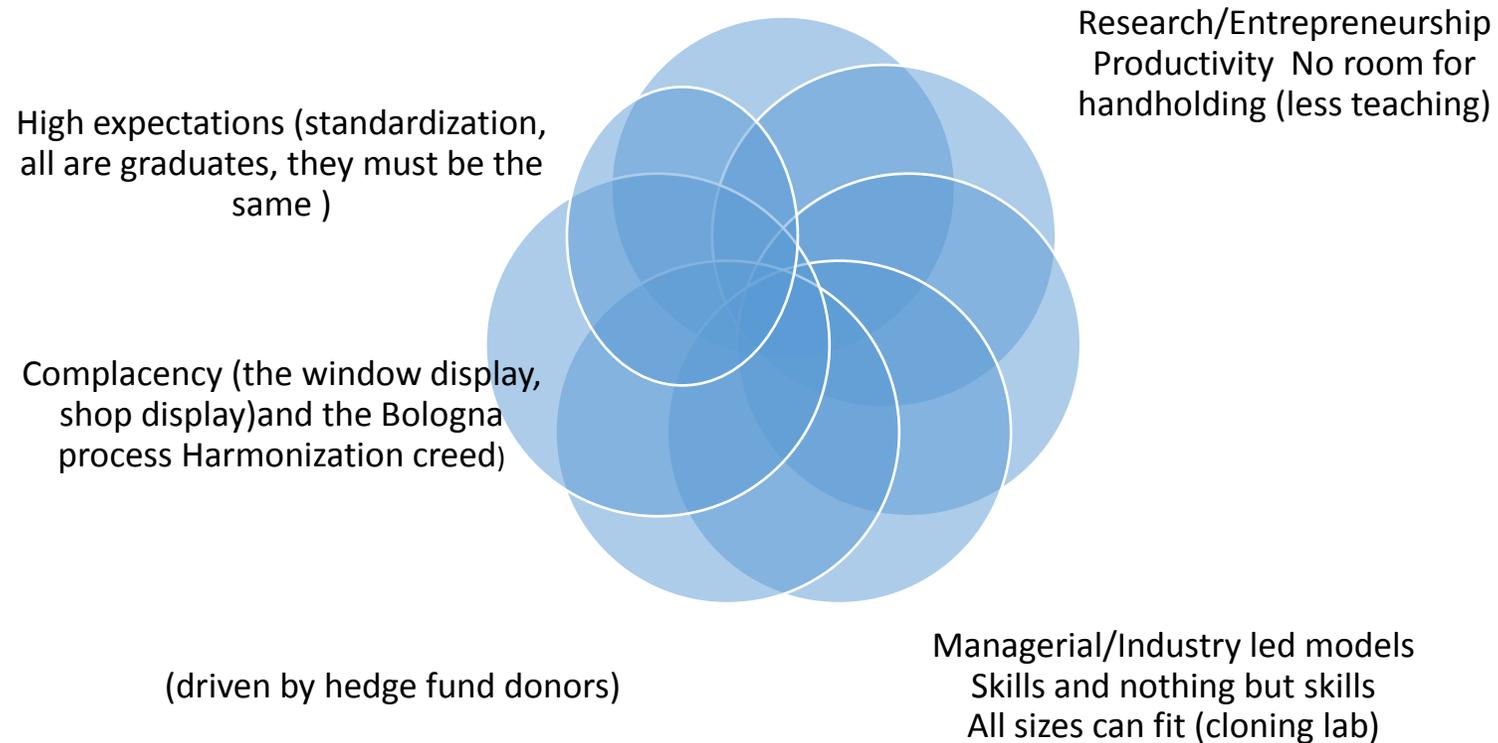


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The Higher Institution as a Crèche mode of thinking

The Crèche



Conclusion

- Change in institutional thinking advocated
- Institutional thinking is given expressions in, and trades with, as its Currency policy making
- Yet, if I may indulge myself to quote:

“policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions and **not frequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work**”

(Stephen Ball, 1998: 127)

(highlights are mine for emphasis)