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Management of Change in Higher Education: Case Study of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Swaziland

Abstract

This study examines the educational management of the merger of the Swaziland Institute of Health Sciences and the University of Swaziland in 1996-2013. The phenomenological approach was used to gain an understanding of the participants' lived experiences. Administrators and lecturers were interviewed because of their experiences. Interviews and documentary evidence were used. Themes which emerged from the data include: consultative process, training, curriculum change, managing complexities. Findings: the merger guard against demoralizing staff and destroying knowledge capital; created inclusive employment opportunities; promoted collaboration and partnerships; review of institutional priorities; training. Despite the management complexities of the merger the educational landscape of the Institute has been restructured. There is now a comprehensive Faculty of Health Sciences at the University. The merger resulted in rebranding the Faculty and establishing a new identity for itself with a unique culture. Diversity in programmes that are required to meet international needs were designed and implemented.

Key words: **Merger, higher education, phenomenological approach, complexities, change.**

Background

Merger of Educational Institutions

Institutions of higher learning in Swaziland have been in a state of continuous change over the past decades, since the country's independence in 1968. This is part of the fundamental nature of institutions of higher learning that they will always be in a state of constant change. External forces, such as expectations from government, political ideologies, employers and students more

often, create institutional changes. After independence, institutions of higher learning in Swaziland have experienced some changes in the certification and mode of curriculum delivery because of societal needs and expectations for an independent state. In the late 1980s Teacher Training Colleges in Swaziland started to offer Diploma courses in teaching.

Institute of Health Sciences

The Institute of Health Sciences (IHS) was affiliated with the University of Swaziland (UNISWA), and the University playing different roles such as the supervisory role, with certifying power for nurses, Midwives and Health Inspectors, the fact that there was no nursing Science Department at the University made it difficult to effectively and efficiently monitor the teaching and examining processes which precede the awarding ceremony (University of Swaziland Academic Planning Committee, 1994). To a larger extent this undermined the training process of nurses in Swaziland and the validation procedures. These practices caused some educational faulty lines and academicsø parity with regional, international academic standards and graduates international recognition (see University of Swaziland Academic Planning Committee, 1994). This suggests that some causes of change in Higher Education are mostly initiated by internal and external forces, for instance, the creation of the National Partnership Awards for collaboration between industry and Higher Education in the United Kingdom (McVicar, 1993). In some instances changes in institutions of higher learning are not largely the consequences of a response to external forces. For example, changes in curriculum may be initiated by internal intellectual challenges such as the organization of knowledge, governance and new funding mechanisms.

The transfer process of the (IHS) to the University of Swaziland started while the Institute was still under the Ministry of Health, and the process continued until it was transferred to the Ministry of Education which eventually handed over to the University in 1996. The Ministry of Education agreed to transfer the (IHS) to the University of Swaziland on the 15th of October 1996. The transfer meant that the responsibility of monitoring financial and material resources was shifted from the Ministry of Health to the University. This required a new form of public accountability procedures to help in reporting how, and how well, the money has been spent and material resources used.

Merger process

The merger of the Swaziland (IHS) with the University of Swaziland in 1996 was not a unique local-oriented educational process because different nations had similar experiences in other parts of the globe. For example, Higher Education in the United Kingdom (UK) has been in a continuous change for decades to certify different societal needs (Scott & Watson, 1994). Educational institutions have been subjected to socio-economic changes since the late 1970s (Farnlam & Horton, 1993). This notes that changes in higher education are not an isolated phenomenon but part of broader social forces. These forces had an impact on both the organization and society. In the 1990s some colleges in the United Kingdom and elsewhere became increasingly financially unsustainable and Governors decided to seek strategic alliances which led to a process of merger with Universities. Merger of higher educational institutions are characterized by different objectives, such as consolidating existing programmes to enable a

wider range of academic programmes to be offered in response to regional, national and international needs. In South Africa, the merger of higher education institutions in the late 1990s aimed at correcting the historical realities and to provide better opportunities to all citizens, training, and to satisfy the national development goals as stated in the National Plan for Higher Education 2001 (Government Gazette No 22138). Research by Sell et al. (1996) also noted that consolidated schools benefit from better trained and professionally developed professionals.

More often, changes had major impact on the nature of the organizations, the services provided, curriculum and the way in which the institutions are managed by relevant acts. For example, the post war state educational change in Britain was guided by the Educational Act of 1944 (McVicar, 1993). In addition, the incorporation of the Polytechnics and Colleges in Britain was facilitated by the Education Act of 1988 (Scot and Watson, 1994). Education policies help in shaping the curriculum in its broader sense, in order to respond to the transformation process and social needs of societies. Curriculum involves not only what is taught but also who teaches, how it is taught and to whom (Gerwel, 1991).

A merger of institutions is characterized by reform of the curriculum and certification (Bocock and Watson, 1994). It is impossible to conceive of a merger of institutions without some changes on the curriculum system of courses and certification. Certificate changes which reflect the interests and socio-economic needs of the nation for example, the reform of institutional certification in South Africa after the collapse of apartheid, reflected the interests of the majority of South Africans, mainly the dispossessed racial groups.

Focus of the study

This study explores the changes in the context of institutions of higher learning reform in Swaziland but within the broader social context. This was achieved by paying more attention on the management teams' work, practices that usually influence the management of the changes and for the (IHS) itself and its future directions. The study looks at the multi-faceted challenges and outlines the ways in which the Institute aims at transforming itself to respond to evolving international educational needs. Institutions change to align themselves with new local and international educational challenges and socio-political circumstances. For example the merging of universities in South Africa after the collapse of apartheid was influenced by socio-economic factors. Within the Swazi context there is no clear research based justification supporting the merger of the (IHS) and the University of Swaziland and its management practices. This study examines the management processes of the merger of the former (IHS) and the University of Swaziland, exploring the policies, structures and attitudes that influenced the change process. This was achieved through the following research questions:

The key Research Question

How was the merger of the Institute of Health Sciences with the University of Swaziland carried out?

Sub-research questions

- What were the management mechanisms which were put in place within the University and beyond to make the change process a viable project?
- What changes were made on the existing programmes and teaching professional practices?
- What changes were made on the management of assets of the Institute of Health Sciences?
- How was the assimilation process of the academic and non-academic staff of the Institute of Health Sciences to the University managed?

Theoretical Framework of the study

The Social Impact Assessment (SIA) was used as the theoretical foundation upon which the case study was based. It helps in looking at sustained educational changes in people's lives brought about by a new programme or educational project such as the merger of the former Institute of Health Sciences and the University of Swaziland. The (SIA) focuses on how and to what extent, educational change had occurred in terms of improving practices, and these depend on communication and people's commitment and relationships. Assessing educational change requires an understanding of the perspectives of various stakeholders who were involved and an understanding of the socio-economic context in which the educational change took place. The social context is crucial because the ability of the key stakeholders to benefit from the educational change depends on how the institutional management system functions in that context.

In an educational change process different social forces are converging and diverging, and in that process people's communication and relationships are affected. It is advisable to pay more attention to people's relationships because they provide both the evidence of change and the means by which change was promoted or blocked. The evidence of change and the means in which it was promoted were captured through the use of the (SIA) assessment approach which is capable of providing the following:

- an assessment of the management of the transition from present to the future state—assessing how time was used to discuss critical things to the change process at an earlier stage, identifying direction and the means to reach it (resources required) and management of time to allow communication and feedback on problems faced, progress, commitment;
- an assessment of the educational change context (relationships, negotiations with key stakeholders) and consequences of the change;

Methodology

This case study followed a phenomenological research approach as most appropriate to understanding the lived experiences of those touched or affected by the merger of the former Institute and the University of Swaziland in 1996-2013. The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (Creswell, 2006, p 58).

A phenomenological approach is suited to studying the merger of institutions because it is important to understand how individuals with different roles and responsibilities and perspectives share common experiences in order to develop a deeper understanding of the merger. This highlights the importance of taking into serious account the issue of phenomenology of change-that is how individuals actually experience change in their organisations and societies (Fullan, 1991). It is also important to understand the experiences of individuals who experienced the merger from different perspectives: the administrators and academic staff of the former Institute of Health Sciences. Creswell (2006) noted that the first step in the phenomenological approach is to collect data from individuals who have actually experienced the phenomenon (merger). She suggests in-depth interview with the relevant participants.

Population

Sample

The sample was drawn from a population of twenty lectures who worked for the Institute and ten Administrators who participated and served in different Steering Committees during the merger process. Lecturers and Administrators were involved in the study because of their experiences and understanding of the educational change. These participants were chosen through purposive sampling-where participants are chosen for a purpose. Five lecturers and five administrators were the key participants. Few participants were involved because the case study aims at gaining a deeper understanding of this change process.

It is difficult to assess the full impact and consequences of changes in higher institutions without exploring systemic changes within specific instances of change. For this purpose a case study is deemed as powerful and illustrative of changes in institutions of higher learning and it allows for deeper and penetrating analyses of what such changes mean in educational practice or context. It also helps in giving a detailed examination of one or multi-setting (Biklen, 1992), thus relevant to the research focus. This study does not aim at making some generalization but providing a deeper understanding of the educational change process of the merger of the (IHS) with the university and also contributes to the understanding of educational processes during merger.

Research tools

Interviews

In this case study the researchers arranged one hour-long interviews with five administrators, five academic staff who were part of the former Institute of Health Sciences who experienced the merger process. Interviews were not audiotaped-but note taking. To find out the meaning and effect the merger had on the participants the researchers asked open ended questions to allow them to provide a thick description of their experiences. Issues such as the aims and

objectives of the merger, staff assimilation, and management of assets were addressed by the interview questions. All interviews were conducted in person on working site during working hours.

Documentary evidence

Documentary evidence (such as the Minutes of a Special meeting of Senate held on 15th October 1996; Report to Vice Chancellor University of Swaziland on the Faculty of Health Sciences, 1996, relevant journals and articles) were used by the researchers because of the nature of the study which traces the pulling and pushing factors of the change processes and its management practices. Documentary evidence is crucial in understanding the factors which triggered the change. Change can be triggered by critical programme reports on organizational performance. For example, urgency of change can be conveyed by citing the future needs of students or other stakeholders, appealing to the interest to students' best interests, or uncovering and tackling the perceived inadequacies of the current education programmes. Through official documents (policy documents, minutes from meetings, annual reports and dossiers) researchers can get access to official perspectives and to change initiators' perspectives (Biklen, 1992).

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the phenomenological approach which helped the researcher to make sense of the interview data and eventually the formation of these themes: transfer process, establishment of a Faculty of Health Sciences, consultative process, Professional Associations' influence, Curriculum in a rapid Change, Curriculum Delivery and Standards, Professionals in the middle of change, Professionals Qualifications complexities, Management Complexities of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Managing Assets.

Summary of Results

From the participants' voices and documentary evidence or 'voices' the following results were deduced: Mechanisms and management processes; Consultative process; Curriculum change; Training; assimilation process.

Discussion of Results

Management mechanisms

A Steering Management team was set-up to lead the merger process. The team comprised of key personnel and organs of the University. This included Directors, Head of Departments, Academic planning Committee, Registrar's Office and the Senate. Some of these organs play a crucial role in designing academic programmes. The University of Swaziland Senate, for example, approved academic programmes. The Senate approved the creation of the Faculty of

Health Sciences and recommended to the University Council for its establishment in accordance with part VI, article 19 (1) of the University of Swaziland Act of 1983.

Arrangement practices related to the transfer of assets such as land, physical facilities, equipment, staff and budgets were worked out between relevant government ministries and the University Steering Management team. This created a new culture of a working relationship between different government ministries, though it was a complex one. This complexity of the relationship is substantiated by this lecturer's claim:

Before the merger we had a direct working relationship with the Ministry of Health, but because of the merger we lost direct contact the direct link. This affects the work of the faculty members,.. the Ministry of Health no longer fully support the faculty members on major issues such as attending conferences, using NGO's resources. This flawed partnership is a product of hidden infighting between the ministries (health and education) and this affects the transition,.. files were lost, this delayed the merger but eventually the process went through.

This flawed working partnership was a product of the absence of specific policies for the merger (handover of the Institute to the Ministry of Education) and the existence of hidden infighting between ministries (Health and Education) and this affected the merger and the required culture of multidisciplinary practices.

The Steering Committee Management team was guided by the Consultancy research based evidence. This helped in bringing understanding and clarity on key aspects of the merger, such as staff assimilation, physical resources (required land, buildings). The evidence helped in designing an inclusive assimilation programme for the staff and the establishment of departmental based administrative structure within the Faculty of Health Sciences. The expected benefits for the merger were evidence based. This helped in motivating unwilling partners, reducing anxiety and revealing the complexities of the change process, such as the assimilation of staff. The complexity of this programme is also noted in this lecturer's argument:

although the staff assimilation was inclusive in nature and promoted peoples' lives in a positive way but to an extent it was a challenge because most of staff members were did not have the relevant qualification to make a positive contributions to the change. Some brought wrong organizational culture/work ethics from government which affected practice. On the other hand, the transition affected the staff members because their seniority was not considered during the merger. Their experiences were not considered yet they had wealth experiences on health related matters. Though the staff assimilation programme was inclusive but guided by complex of assimilation policies.

This suggests that the University had to discuss the merger of the (IHS) with Swaziland Government because without government support the educational project cannot be got off the ground. One administrator stated:

the human resources issue-involved the Registrar's Office of the University which worked with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Public Service. This working partnership aimed at discussing issues of assets and staff. It was the Ministry of Education which authorized the University of Swaziland to incorporate the Institute of Health Sciences into the University, to be part of the proposed Faculty of Health Sciences.

This claim is substantiated by the letter (dated 15th October 1996) written by former Principal Secretary of the Ministry of education to the then Vice Chancellor of Swaziland authorizing the University to incorporate the (IHS). The letter was also copied to the Principal Secretaries of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Public Service and to the Principal of the (IHS) highlighting the complex factors (the transfer of staff and assets) to the University (Ministry of Education, 1996; 2001).

Programmes diversification

Most programmes had become community oriented in nature in order to respond to complexities of today's society (HIV/AIDS). Programmes had a potential of promoting the culture of multi-disciplinary practices with the aim of providing students with practical experiences through field attachment to new Health Centres across the country. As one lecture noted:

the existing health Centres help students to do their internship or practicals but we need organized training hospitals, the current environment is not appropriate, we need a University hospital, equipped with relevant equipment and facilities,...we need direct contact with NGO's to gain support for this project/University hospital.

Most of these programmes became community oriented and characterized by the key aspects of nursing such as nursing ethos and professional practice and aspects of law for health practice (University Academic Planning Committee Report, 1994; 1996). Programme delivery was grounded in different array of practices (changes in the curriculum delivery methods, staff professionalism). The changes came with some challenges which required qualified professionals to ensure that the education meets the expectations of students and society. The importance of qualified professionals was noted by one of the participants (Lecture) in this argument:

The key focus of the merger was on upgrading the training of nurses to be in line with international standards. Introducing programmes relevant to new societal challenges. Professionals were given the opportunity to attend further training. W.K. Kellogg Foundation an American organization supported the training of some professionals. Some obtain their masters degrees an PhD degrees. Many students and lectures took advantage of the additional opportunities offered by the merger.

This suggests that any merger to an extent depends on trained professionals.

Curriculum delivery

Curriculum delivery and standards were one of the key focus of the merger. As noted by one of the administrator:

the diversification of the curriculum helped by bringing in international students to share ideas and experiences with the local students. It promoted collaboration between and among faculties, and industries sharing of ideas, and expertise. This helped in the process of shaping and the development of the curriculum. Curriculum is always changing because of international health standards and guidelines but the current problem is that members of the Faculty Board stifles the changes because the department is overruled by members who lack understanding of health matters.

The issue of academic standards and service delivery were one of the key focus of the merger as administrators and lecturers noted:

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A lecturer who also experienced the change process noted:

It was also government's wish to upgrade the training of nurses to be in line with international standards and practices and it was the University with powers to offer degree programmes. Both the nation and the University benefited from this development. The university benefited because nursing was a programme to the University. The university started to understand health matters. The merger Increases the faculties by incorporating the Institute of Health Sciences. It promoted staff exchange, change of ideas and expertise and collaboration with other institutions. In addition, the university wanted the faculty of health to address nation's health needs-through training nurses, environmental health students, addressing Millennium Development goals -helping the country in its focus on goal 4,5,6.

These arguments suggest that the effectiveness of an institution depends on the efficiency and quality of its staff, relevant support to the change and on how assets are managed.

Management of assets

The management of assets (land, buildings) was a process. The management of assets was removed from the Ministry of Health, to the Ministry of Education then to the University of Swaziland to be shared by all faculties. The transfers of assets were characterized by vigorous negotiations between the University and relevant ministries- Ministry of Health, Education, Labour and Public Service. This suggests that merger process of Institutions of Higher learning is a complex process with a range of challenges which need to be managed by qualified professionals. The importance of qualified professionals was also noted by one participant (lecturer) in this argument:

we needed more trained staff. By that time we also needed a Professor from outside with relevant health related experience to lead the new faculty- not promoting from within the department, ...considering the magnitude of the assignment of transforming the faculty , ... we needed someone to lead the change process, ... to change the organizational working culture,.. to look at work ethics, organizational culture and assets management which still remain a challenge to the current administration though there are procedures.

University procedures help in managing the assets and promoting interdisciplinary and multi-departmental planning and in facilitating partnership between relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Health and Health section of industry; Ministry of Education).

The maintenance of University facilities was set at a level appropriate to University standards because a successfully change on teaching and learning depends upon on how the facilities would be managed, used and on quality of inputs in managing the assets. The inadequate provision of books and limited space in the laboratories were of great concern, as a result tentative solutions were put in place (sharing laboratories with relevant faculties). This notes that the management of assets was challenge, as noted in this lecturer's claim:

most structures were in worse conditions and government did not work on them, ...the University work on this matter-through its budget. Some land within the Faculty of Health Sciences still belongs to government and this affect the expansion. That land was expected to be transferred to the University. The delay of the transfer was caused by hidden in-fighting between the Ministry of Health and The Ministry of education. Some officials overlooked the benefits of the merger. Yet there is no doubt the merger benefited the nation in different ways. Now we produced graduates who are capable of working at international level and in overseas countries. Nurses in Australia and in the United Kingdom. They boost our economy in different ways.

Staff Assimilation

The assimilation of staff to the University was a key to the success of the merger and a challenge. As noted in this lecturer's argument:

although the staff assimilation was inclusive in nature and promoted peoples' lives in a positive way but to an extent it was a challenge because most of staff members did not have the relevant qualification to make a positive contributions to the change. Some brought wrong organizational culture/work ethics from government which affected practice. On the other hand, the transition affected the staff members because their seniority was not considered during the merger. Their experiences were not considered yet they had wealth experiences on health related matters.

This suggests that the assimilation process were expected to be guided by relevant policies.

Discussion

Management complexities and merger

Merger processes of the (IHS) as elsewhere were guided by relevant policies, for example, the transformation of higher education system in the new South Africa were guided by relevant policies (Department of Education, 1997). Educational policies attempt to address fundamental societal problems such as equity, redress, access, quality and relevance, for example, Curriculum 2005 the post- apartheid education policy in South Africa. This notes that policies are intended to facilitate change through strategies in order to enhance practice, bringing educational and societal changes. In South Africa, for example, the 2001, National Plan for Higher Education urged the country's Universities and Technikons to actively recruit non-traditional and adult learners into the education system. This aims at promoting inclusiveness at tertiary institutions in a country with a history of exclusionary practices (Searle and Mckenna, 2009).

In Swaziland and elsewhere acts such as the South African Higher Education Act 1997 served as a core regulating instrument in the process of institutional restructuring and the incorporation of colleges of education into Universities after the collapse of apartheid. Governments Acts provide structures and procedures to guarantee meaningful discussions, ensuring that those affected by discussions and decisions have a say in those processes. This avoids the win/lose mentality which inevitably results to conflict and anxiety (Lane, 2007).

The merger required a new set of regulations relevant to the new programmes, for new decision making, clarifying education requirements for the faculty, and duties of the Dean. Serving as Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences was one the most important responsibilities a Swazi citizen can undertake because of that individuals' influence on the lives of the students and citizens. The Dean together with the other members of the faculty was expected to establish new departmental goals and partnership that would help to shape the future of the faculty.

The new ways of managing the Faculty of Health Sciences required new form of regulations and knowledge to make it work. The merger came out with set of complex changes in the planning, provision and delivery of educational services of all kinds mainly health service delivery. This reshaped the regulations of the Faculty. The new regulations of the Faculty helped in promoting collaborations and partnerships of various kinds with public sector. The partnerships open up various forms of flows between different sectors, of people, information and ideas, educational values, and organisational culture. These include a new culture of working together with professional associations such as the Swaziland Nursing Council and Swaziland Medical and Dental Council.

Stakeholder Consultation

There was a consultation with key stakeholders on the matter of staff assimilation. This was important because educational change strategies, for example, cannot be devised at the top and then smoothly implemented at Faculty level. Strategies need to be designed in a collective manner and be experienced by all relevant stakeholders during the formation phase. This has a potential of clarifying ambiguities and to promote *öbu* inö and personal contact. Gale and Grant, (1997) stated that there is no effective substitute for talking to people directly and explaining to them what is going on, how they are affected and what next. This has a potential of avoiding the creation of a stressful environment and threatening individualø role and status (Lane, 2007). During the consultative process staff assimilation and other matters were discussed by the stakeholders (Ministry of Health, Swaziland Nurses Association) in 1996. These included the academic programmes and their relevance to the needs of the Ministry of Health and the nation. The consultation as a form of communication was important at this stage of the change because effective communication is essential in any organisation at any stage of its evolution. The participatory approach was used to discuss the assimilation process and it was characterized by mutual respect, tolerance, openness, accountability, excitement and maintenance of peace (see Ministry of Education letter: Transfer of Institute of Health Sciences, 1996). For instance, it was openly and clearly indicated during the negotiations for the transfer of assets and staff that it might be impossible for the University to absorb all the staff at the (IHS) (Minutes of a Special meeting of Senate held on 24th October 1996; (University Academic Planning Committee Report, 1994; 1996; Ministry of Education letter: Transfer of Institute of Health Sciences, 1996; Report to Vice Chancellor University of Swaziland on the Faculty of Health Sciences, 1996).

Curriculum Diversification

The process of improving standards and curriculum diversification were considered as essential if the facultyø productivity was to be improved. The issues of standards in the provision of health service and curriculum diversification were the key factors of the merger. The drivers of the merger were convinced that *without standards, a common base of action is lost, making the reforms, improvements and transformation all become impossible* (Benham, 1992; Cooper and Shuta, 1992, p.50). For the organisation to successfully achieve the set standards, the

professionals need to be trained and also put supporting systems in place (Cooper and Shute, 1992). Setting standards without the supporting systems in place may undermine the change and affect practice.

Setting educational standards and quality of personnel to achieve those standards were re-emphasized during the merger. More emphasis and effort were made in the delivery of a curriculum which broadens and deepens the understanding of those students. This depends on how much the curriculum places greater emphasis on students' preparation that engendered reasoning comprehension, passion of their profession, flexibility and adaptability (Useem, 1989). Cultivation of these abilities depends on the motives for changing the curriculum and institutional practices, which are usually influenced by managers' behavior and financial pressure from funding organisations and the state (Isreal, 1987; Boccock and Watson, 1994). The motives for changing the curriculum of the (IHS) helped in re-examining the existing management strategies, focus and emphasis of the curriculum.

Findings

The researchers found that the merger was influenced by a combination of socio-economic activities and the ongoing dynamics of the context in which the change was taking place. The dynamics of the context and people's action and behaviours influenced the change, both in a positive and negative ways. The stakeholders interactions led into divergent thinking and unexpected outputs. It found that the merger guard against demoralizing staff and destroying knowledge capital and it created an inclusive but complex employment opportunities. It led to a review of educational priorities but not enough investment in staff development because of scarcity of resources. Yet, providing staff with relevant developmental training was crucial in helping relevant stakeholders to adapt to their new demanding roles (being a Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences) and be able to build teams and eventually to do the job fully and effectively. Training for professionals was minimal (only few were facilitated by Kellogg foundation); the existing academic staffs were not fully trained to make the necessary changes to the new expected culture of teaching and learning which the new situation demanded.

The study discovered that the merger helped in promoting collaborations and partnerships of various kinds with the public sector. It opened up various forms of flows of communication between different sectors, of people, sharing of information and ideas, educational values, and organisational culture- key factors for a sustainable change. Collaborations and partnerships with the public sector and relevant government ministries were characterized by hidden infighting or conflict, a hindrance to sustainable educational change. It was a seismic process because of the different forces such as hidden power struggles between different interest groups (different ministries over the issue of handing over assets-land, buildings).

Conclusion and recommendations

Our central question was: How was the merger of the (IHS) with the University of Swaziland carried out? Base on the empirical exploration we concluded that despite the management complexities of the merger the educational landscape of the (IHS) has been restructured. There is now a fairly comprehensive Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Swaziland. The merger guard against demoralizing staff and destroying knowledge capital and it created an inclusive employment opportunities for all staff members willing to join the university. It resulted in rebranding the Faculty of Health Sciences and establishing a new identity for itself with its own unique culture. Diversity in programmes that are required to meet national and regional needs were designed and implemented although without fully fledged qualified personnel. Programmes have been regulated through the accreditation process which ensures that they meet quality standards at both local and international level. The Faculty systems of communication and management redefined their relationship with both the state and society. For example, meaningful partnerships between the Faculty and international health related organisations have emerged. On the other hand, the management of the merger still remains an ongoing challenge, for example, the transfer of assets from different ministries to the University is yet to be completed.

Based on the research findings it was recommended that relevant short professional training should be designed to help relevant stakeholders to understand the University values for a successful change. Under qualified staff should be provided with the relevant assistance to upgrade themselves. Learning facilities should be upgraded to be in line with international standards practices (such building a University hospital).

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