

**BALANCING GENERAL AND PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATION IN THE ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND  
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

**Inaugural address  
delivered by Prof C Koornhof  
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# **BALANCING GENERAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN THE ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this inaugural address is to present and analyse the assertion that tension exists between general and professional education in institutions of higher education and specifically in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences of the University of Pretoria. This tension can be constructive if it is managed to ensure that a balance is achieved. Conversely, if a balance is not achieved, the relationship could become destructive.

In this context “professional education” refers to programmes that are developed to lead *directly* to professional qualifications. For such programmes a close relationship usually exists between the institution of higher education and the professional body concerned. The professional body usually prescribes the curriculum, accredits the educational institution, conducts independent professional assessments and stipulates the minimum outcomes of professional competence.

The term “general education”, as it is used in this address, refers to all other formative programmes at higher educational institutions that are not designed for the development of specific professional qualifications. This does not imply that general formative education never leads to a professional qualification. The distinction made between general and professional education is far from absolute. In practice, the boundaries between these types of education tend to be artificial and open to varying interpretations.

The term “profession” also requires clarification. The relevant literature contains varying and conflicting definitions of and perspectives on what a profession is. The use of the term is elucidated in a subsequent section that deals with professions.

This address comprises a brief overview of the environment in which institutions (or artefacts - Simon: 1955), such as universities and professions, currently operate. The overview discusses the social contract that exists between such institutions and society. The sections entitled “Evolving universities” and “Evolving professions” present a historical and contemporary perspective on the development of universities (and faculties) as well as the historical and contemporary development of professions. Some interesting parallels arise when the development of universities is contrasted with the development of professions. A subsequent literature review provides support for the assertion that tension does indeed exist between general education and professional education. A brief analysis of this tension is presented under the heading “Achieving a balance”. This analysis is followed by an assessment of the position in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences in the section that is entitled “A position audit”. Thereafter some suggestions are presented on how an effective balance could be maintained. In conclusion, a vision for the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences is presented.

## **A SOCIAL CONTRACT**

We are all aware of the rapidly changing environment in which we currently have to operate and survive. The change, which is sometimes even termed radical and discontinuous (Nadler & Tushman: 1995), is creating an uncertain and complex environment in which traditional beliefs and ideas are challenged and proven recipes and methods for order and structure can no longer guarantee success. Some authors even claim that the future is unpredictable and unknowable (Gleick: 1987 and Wheatley: 1994). This extreme view makes planning irrelevant and retirement to the “Reef of Solipsism” (Burrell & Morgan: 1979:239) appear to be infinitely more attractive.

Futurists predict that more change will follow our survival of “Future Shock” and the “Third Wave” (Toffler: 1970 and 1981) en route to the present knowledge economy. For example, Codrington (2004) argues that a relationship economy, in which the individual reins supreme and emotional intelligence and relationship management are the keys to success, is progressively replacing the knowledge economy. Even

the battlefields have shifted from the military sphere (the world wars), through the political sphere (the cold war) to the economic sphere (the creation of economic unions) (Pistorius: 2004). Viewed from an economic perspective, the knowledge-intensive economy has replaced the work-intensive economy and the capital-intensive economy (Van Ginkel: 2004).

Social institutions, such as universities, professions and businesses, operate in this rapidly changing society in terms of an explicit or implicit social contract. It was as long ago as the seventies that Shocker & Sethi (1973) that the survival and growth of these institutions are based on the delivery of socially desirable ends to society:

“A social institution operates in a society *via* a social contract, expressed or implied, whereby its survival and growth are based on:

- the delivery of some socially desirable ends to society in general, and
- the distribution of economic, social or political benefits to groups from which it derives its power.”

(Shocker and Sethi: 1973:97)

In our society, needs and expectations are continuously changing and evolving, and, from a functionalist perspective, institutions are constantly being measured against the twin tests of “legitimacy” and “relevance” (Shocker & Sethi: 1973, Van Ginkel: 2004 and Llop: 2004). This perspective suggests that universities and professions can only maintain their status and independence if they continuously demonstrate the benefits of their services to society.

To explain the responsibilities of universities with regard to the social contract, Duderstadt (2000:132) notes that:

“The public supports the university, contributes to its finance, accepts scholarly and professional judgements, and grants it a unique degree of institutional autonomy and scholarly freedom. The university has the obligation for impartial scholarship, high professional integrity, commitment to development of human resources and sensitivity towards the need for its services in society at large. For all its independence and autonomy, the university has a social responsibility and a public obligation.”

As the terms and conditions of the social contract that exists between society and universities are constantly evolving, the role of universities and other institutions of

higher education are being questioned and scrutinised. Negative publicity and perceptions (see Sykes: 1988), often associated with the inability of universities to respond timeously to changing demands, have contributed to the erosion of public support and trust and to a greater measure of oversight and regulation. For example, in South Africa the transformation of the higher education landscape resulted in, among others things, the creation of SAQA, the CHE and the HEQC as well as the promulgation of new legislation.

Similarly, the terms and conditions of the social contract that exists between society and the professions are constantly changing the role of the professions. In this regard, Velayutham and Perera (1995:81) note that:

“Professional activity has been the subject of public scrutiny in recent years as many professions have been criticised for their failure to live up to society’s expectations, which require them to play an important part in the smooth functioning of modern society”.

Once again, negative publicity and perceptions as well as the inability to respond to the rapidly changing demands of society are eroding public support and trust and therefore give rise to greater regulation, oversight and control. A case in point is that of the accounting profession, which recently lost some credibility as a result of public scandals such as that involving Enron, World.com and Parmalat and, closer to home, Macmed and Masterbond. The accounting profession is currently being subjected to greater regulation such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the USA and the Draft Auditing Profession Bill in South Africa.

## **EVOLVING UNIVERSITIES**

The notion and function of a university have been topics of discourse over the centuries (Newman: 1996; Von Humboldt: 1964; Jaspers: 1960; Rosovsky: 1990; Dolence & Norris: 1995; Bok: 2003). Notwithstanding the often diverse opinions expressed and the various historical and geographical contexts within which the discourse has taken place, universities have been sufficiently robust to serve as the custodians and conveyers of knowledge, wisdom and values for a thousand years

(Duderstadt: 2000:6). The Carnegie Commission (in Daniel: 1997:6) commented on the resilience of universities as follows:

“Taking as a starting point 1530 when the Lutheran Church was founded, some 66 institutions that existed then still exist today in the Western World in recognisable forms, the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Parliament of Iceland and the Isle of Man and 62 universities ...”

Although universities may still exist in a recognisable form, they have evolved and changed substantially since the founding of the oldest universities in the Middle Ages. It is not clear whether the University of Bologna in Italy or the University of Paris is the oldest university. The University of Bologna claims the honour on the grounds that it was founded in 1088, but historians have expressed doubts about this date (Rügg: 1992). Both universities developed along quite different lines at approximately the same time. The date upon which each of them actually became a university is subject to interpretation. The third oldest university is Oxford, which, as Graham (2002) notes, was probably formed because English students were barred from attending the University of Paris. In 1207, some of the Oxford teachers relocated to Cambridge to form the second oldest English University there.

Rügg (1992) characterises a university as a European institution, which was founded as a community of teachers with the right to administrative autonomy, academic freedom and the awarding of publicly recognised degrees. In the thirteenth century, the Latin term “universitas”, which means “the totality” or “the whole”, was widely used to refer to a community. Verger (1992) notes that the term was also used in the context of a guild or a trade. Later the term was reserved for universities that were distinguished by academic independence, scholarship, cohesion and royal, papal or, eventually, secular recognition. The main faculties of the medieval universities were those of Theology, Law, Medicine and Arts. An important purpose of these universities was to provide education for professionals (Graham: 2002:6).

During the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, universities became increasingly secularised and independent of religious and royal dictates. The equivalent of the modern university, in which natural sciences and research became

important foci, developed in Europe. In this regard the German universities such as Halle and Berlin probably took the lead. Graham (2002) comments that by 1809 the University of Berlin was already offering laboratory-based courses in experimental sciences, while the University of Oxford was still focussed on the liberal arts. In addition to the English and the German models, Llop (2004) identifies the French model, which was based on the Napoleonic system in terms of which the functions of a university were subjected to state intervention and it concentrated mainly on the education of professionals.

The educational trends that were prevalent in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are reflected in the writings of distinguished scholars, such as Newman (1996) in Britain and Van Humboldt (1964) in Germany, who questioned the purpose of higher education and in particular the purpose of universities. In his discourses prior to the establishment of the first Catholic University in Ireland in 1854, Cardinal Newman (1996) characterised a university as “a place that is detached from society, uncontaminated by worldly values and concerned only with the teaching of “universal knowledge” as an end in itself.” His concept of “universal knowledge” formed the foundation for the modern liberal arts approach to education. His main emphasis was on teaching and he largely excluded research and knowledge creation, which he considered to be the domain of learned societies, museums and private scholars. Universal knowledge, as propounded by Newman, aims to produce an educated mind and a moral character, instead of having only the utilitarian and vocational focus of the professions, guilds and trades. Newman recognised the tension that could arise between general formative education and professional education or, in different terms, the potential conflict that exists between “universal knowledge” and “useful knowledge”. However, he did not provide guidance on how such tension could be managed.

In the late 1700s, Von Humbolt (1964) developed a framework for universities in Prussia that emphasised the importance of a holistic approach to education. He stated that:

“The real purpose of man’s life is to grow into a whole being where all his diverse faculties are developed to the highest possible degree through a well-balanced process of training and education.”

After the Second World War, Jaspers (1960) provided a more recent German view of the role of a university. He considered a university to be a community of scholars that is characterised by loyalty to the idea of searching for the truth, unconditionally and for its own sake. He stated that the university has a duty to provide professional and specialist knowledge, but warned against such training being regarded as the sole – or even as the most important – purpose of the university. Jaspers considered a university to have a broader role in respect of both the education of future leaders, specialists and professionals and in respect of the creation of new knowledge through research. He cautioned that teaching that is divorced from research would rob institutions of their basic impetus and he stressed that the combination of teaching and research formed the gist of university education.

The vital role of higher education in a knowledge-intensive society is well recognised and entrenched at present (Unesco: 1998; World Bank: 2000). Van Ginkel (2004) contends that knowledge is so crucial to the future in a knowledge-intensive society that this society cannot afford to leave the development and preservation of knowledge to “haphazard market-driven processes”. In their World Declaration on Higher Education, UNESCO (1998) also confirms that the core mission of higher education should be preserved, reinforced and expanded in present-day society.

Duderstadt (2000:281) suggests that the future development of universities will result in more integration:

“There are many signs that the university of the future will be far more integrated through a web of structures, some real and some virtual, that provide both horizontal and vertical integration among the disciplines. We have witnessed the blurring of the distinction between basic and applied research, between science and engineering and between various scientific disciplines. So, too, we are seeing a far more intimate relationship between academic disciplines and the professions.”

Growing integration is also evident in the larger higher education landscape, in which the distinction between universities, colleges, technikons and other institutions of tertiary education is rapidly fading.



The challenge with which modern universities are faced, is to fulfil the expectations of society and incorporate the process of integration while also protecting the fundamental ideas of “truth”, “scholarship” “autonomy” and “academic freedom”.

## **EVOLVING PROFESSIONS**

The idea of a profession also originated in Europe in approximately the eleventh century when guilds, associations and skilled communities evolved in close association with the church. The dominance of the Medieval Catholic Church over learning and skills is reflected in, for example, the development of the double-entry system in Accounting, which was introduced in a monastery in 1494 by a monk named Pacioli (Vorster 1995).

The emergence of associations, professions, guilds, and, as mentioned above, universities, brought about some social order in what was essentially a feudal era that was characterised by violence, warfare, class aspirations and anarchy. Velayutham and Perera (1995) suggest that the collegiate nature of these associations, together with the protection of the church, provided individuals with a buffer against uncertainty and disorder.

Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) argue that divinity was the earliest profession and that the church significantly influenced the early concepts of “profession” and “professional ideology”. Specific attributes that were recognised by the church formed the basis for affording professions certain privileges and powers. The attributes of a profession included:

- a body of knowledge;
- altruistic values and concepts that were based on serving the public interest;
- ethics that was based on the values of selflessness and self-discipline; and
- appropriate education and training.

The church protected society from exploitation by the professions. However, the mechanism that was used was not direct regulation, but rather an implicit social agreement that was based on the above values of selflessness and self-discipline as well as the concepts of service and the public interest. After the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, the professions, like the universities, became increasingly secularised. Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) contend that the secularisation was the result of, among other things, the rise of the middle class; the more secular approach propagated by philosophers, such as Ockham, Hobbes and Hume; and the development of commerce and industry that enabled persons in the professions to earn a livelihood independent of the church. Charters granted by the state, which gave the professions autonomy and self-regulation, increasingly replaced the control of the church. The professions subsequently emphasised the need for underlying theories in terms of which professional techniques could be legitimised (Shein: 1972, Larson: 1977 and Velayutham and Perera: 1995).

Argyris and Schön (1974) identify four separate stages in the evolution of professions, namely:

- Formation – professions practice within the framework of the church and religious authority;
- Secularisation - professions disengage themselves from the church and differentiate themselves from other professions and new professions develop;
- Liberalisation – professions become accessible to a wider range of students, a body of knowledge is developed, professions form associations with universities and the concept of accountability to society at large develops;
- Specialisation – professionals develop techniques and specialisations within their profession.

Goode (1960) suggests that the protected position of professions arose mainly from a social contract with society in which:

- *autonomy* was conceded to the professions in return for the ability (and willingness) to police themselves;
- *higher fees* were conceded in return for particular competence in specialised fields of knowledge in areas that merit them; and
- *a monopoly* through licensure was conceded only if it was evident that the profession's unique service could not be rendered by other professions (Goode: 1960).

The state did not attempt to actively regulate the professions until the twentieth century when pressure from society to review the protected status of the professions made direct intervention and regulation necessary. Velayutham and Perera (1995) contend that the intervention of the state and the subsequent loss of autonomy and self-regulation in, for example, the accounting profession are the result of the following factors:

- a conflict of interest among the many roles fulfilled by the profession;
- the absence of a universal concept of public interest;
- the separation of knowledge and ethics; and
- the downgrading of self-discipline as a reliable form of social control.

Velayutham and Perera (1995) state that professional activity has been subjected to increased public scrutiny in recent years, because many professions have been criticised for their failure to live up to society's expectations. They recognise that the tensions within many contemporary professions have arisen as the result of a mismatch between changing social and institutional conditions on the one hand and the continued emphasis on professional ideology on the other.

As increasing numbers of occupations vie for the prestige of professional recognition, it becomes problematic to state exactly when an occupation qualifies as a profession (Goode: 1956). Instead of identifying a rigid dividing line between a profession and a non-profession, which may be somewhat of a quixotical issue, Goode (1960) suggests that occupations should be considered to fall somewhere along a "continuum of professionalism." The particular position on the continuum

could be determined by an agreed set of criteria, which may indicate, for example, the maturity of the association in achieving professional status or the formality of the structures of professions, which could vary from formalised, licensed and guild-like structures to non-formal, academic and learned-society approaches.

The challenge with which modern professions are faced, is to pursue the ideals of service to the public, high standards, ethical conduct and professional competence, while accepting their accountability to society. Failure to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing society will, as in the case of universities, result in the loss of credibility and trust as well as the erosion of the autonomy and prestige of the professions.

### **ACHIEVING A BALANCE**

In the preceding brief overview of the evolution of the professions and the university, the continuing debate on the tension between general education, on the one hand, and professional education, on the other, is clearly recognisable. Garland (1996 : 273) for example, confirms that “finding the *right balance* between general and specialist education remains an important challenge to the modern university and faculty”. However, in the literature on the issue few authors have attempted to analyse how such a balance could be achieved.

The term “balance”, which is referred to in the literature and in the title of this address, bears several meanings. In the Oxford Concise Dictionary the term “balance” is used in the context of Accountancy to refer to the difference between debits and credits, while in Economics it refers to the difference in the value of payments made into and out of a country. The dictionary also describes balance as, among other things, a “constancy of conditions resulting from interaction between living things”. The latter definition is useful, because it identifies the importance of considering the needs and expectations of the direct stakeholders that influence a system, such as the system of higher education. Bok (1986) comments on the importance of stakeholder expectations when he states that the transfer of knowledge creates high expectations in stakeholders, such as students and employers, who are often quick to voice criticism if their expectations are not

fulfilled. The direct stakeholders in general education and in professional education are typically the students, their parents, future employers, professional bodies, academics and government.

Duderstadt (2000) comments that students and parents have an increasing preference for professional and marketable majors such as Business Science, Accounting and Engineering. A university education is often considered to be the key to a better quality of life, a good career, future financial security as well as recognition and status. Students are often less keen to pursue general formative degrees in respect of which the career path is not clearly identified and the career opportunities do not appear to be as attractive. Because the academic training that leads to the achievement of professional qualifications is often demanding, students may tend to focus on meeting the minimum entry requirements. Consequently, they may not view discussions on ethical dilemmas, social responsibility, sustainable development, theoretical frameworks and the development of research capabilities and soft skills to be either a priority or a necessity in the passing of the examinations of the professional bodies.

Employers, who are also an important stakeholder group, expect market-ready graduates, who require the minimum of additional investment to fulfil their work commitments. They require their graduate employees to have a high level of knowledge, an ability to apply such knowledge to practical situations and basic soft skills such as language, communication and interpersonal skills.

Professional bodies require new professionals who are competent and an asset to their profession. Schön (1983) comments that opinions differ on how competent professionals should be developed, because there are varying ideas on what “professional competence” actually entails. Practicing professionals usually have clear expectations regarding the education of future members. These expectations often differ substantially from the expectations that academics have. Practitioners tend to value teaching above research; applied and useful research above pure research; applications above abstract theories; and practical training above theoretical education.

Academics strive to produce "the educated mind" that critically questions rather than accepts contemporary ideas and methods; that pursues truth as an end in itself; that is able to perceive the whole and not only the individual parts; and that has a sense of moral responsibility towards society. Simultaneously, academics in professional schools may have to adhere to the comprehensive curricula of professional bodies; stay abreast of new knowledge and developments in their profession; protect the accreditation of their departments or schools by professional bodies; and consistently produce excellent results in the examinations for the professions. These demands are often fulfilled at the cost of their own academic development and promotion within the university.

The government has the responsibility to oversee educational systems, provide adequate funding to educational institutions and, in return, expect accountability from these institutions regarding the use of such funding. Government also has to protect the interest of the broader society and the sustainability of the educational system of the country as a whole.

Tension between general and professional education may arise within stakeholder groups or between stakeholder groups. For instance, in the student group tensions may arise between students in the general formative programmes and those in the professional programmes, especially if the latter programmes are perceived to be "more prestigious". Similar tensions could arise between members of staff who teach exclusively in either the general formative programmes or in the professional programmes.

In managing the well-documented tension between general education and professional education, the key to success also lies in managing relations between, and the expectations of, the various stakeholders (Zineldin : 2000). It is improbable that all expectations could be met simultaneously and continuously, which suggests that a balance may require some form of compromise. In balancing stakeholder interests, compromises that affect the quality of the educational content can obviously not be entertained. The important factors in relationships with stakeholders are their perceptions and understanding of the educational process. It therefore becomes increasingly important to communicate effectively with the

parties concerned and to promote understanding of the aims of the educational process.

The following section focuses on the tensions that could arise between universities and professional bodies, with specific reference to the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences of the University of Pretoria.

## **A POSITION AUDIT**

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences of the University of Pretoria provides both general formative and professional education. Faculty members include both persons who have academic qualifications and experience and persons who have professional qualifications and experience. The Faculty also has well-established relationships with a number of professional institutes and associations.

The relationship between the Faculty and these professional bodies can best be mapped by using Goode's "profession continuum" that was referred to in a preceding section. His continuum of professions is represented in a matrix format by identifying those criteria that are typical of professions and that impact on their relationships with academic institutions and that may therefore result in tension. The selected criteria are not exhaustive, nor necessarily complete. Six criteria have been identified to plot the position of the professions on the continuum.

These criteria enquire whether the profession has:

- a body of knowledge that is contained in a prescribed curriculum;
- a process for the accreditation of institutions of higher education;
- a requirement that professional entrance examinations should be written;
- a code of ethics;
- a requirement of learnership or internship;
- a system of continuous professional education.

The matrix together with the continuum of professions and the selected criteria are contained in table 1.



**Table 1****Continuum of professions associated with the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences****Formal professions**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Body</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Prescribed curriculum</b>	<b>Accreditation of programmes</b>	<b>Entrance examinations</b>	<b>Code of ethics</b>	<b>Learnership</b>	<b>Continuous professional education</b>
Accounting	South African Institute of Chartered Accountants	SAICA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants	ACCA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Commercial and Financial Accountants of South Africa	CFA	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Financial Management	Chartered Financial Analyst Institute	CFA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants	CIMA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Auditing	Institute of Internal Auditors	IIA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Human Resources Management	Health Professions Council of South Africa	HPCSA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	South African Board of Personnel Practice	SABPP	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marketing and Communication Management	Marketing Federation of South Africa	MFSA	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
	Public Relations Institute of South Africa	PRISA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Business Management	Southern African Institution for Management Scientists	SAIMS	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
SPMA	South African Association of Public Administration	SAAPAM	No	No	No	No	No	No
Tourism Management	World Tourism Organization	WTO	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Economics	Economics Association of Southern Africa	ESSA	No	No	No	No	No	No

**Non-formal professions**

It is apparent from the matrix that a profession that meets all the criteria should have adopted a more formalised structure. Professions that will typically fall into this category are those of the chartered accountant, financial analyst and internal auditor. Goode (1960) comments that the traditional guild-like professions usually apply for certification; require a fully developed code of ethics and conduct; have a concern that members should be “professionally competent”; and have formalised processes for disciplining non-complying members. Certification of members usually takes place after the completion of a bachelor’s degree or an honours degree, which is obtained at a recognised or accredited university, and a period of learnership.

Professional associations, which are located on the opposite side of the continuum, are usually neither licensed nor certified and are similar to learned societies that do not attempt to oversee members or to protect them against lay evaluations and criticism. Members of these associations often complete general programmes with later specialisation by means of masters and doctoral degrees in their disciplines. Goode (1960) contends that this type of emerging profession is closer to academic traditions and tends to apply a high level of scientific knowledge to practical problems. Professions that meet only some of the criteria stated in the matrix represent less formalised professional associations. Economists, public managers and other management scientists typically form associations of this nature.

As stated above, tension between general programmes and professional programmes mainly arise from the conflicting aims that stakeholders have. However, the type of structure, i.e. a formal or a non-formal structure, which is adopted by a profession has a direct impact on the level and nature of this tension. Tension that arises between formalised professions and the academic fraternity is likely to be more intense than the tension that arises between universities and non-formalised professions, because there is a convergence of educational aims in the latter instance.

To illustrate the tensions that may arise between universities and the formalised professions, the accounting profession is used as an example. In referring to accounting education, Gray and McKernan (2000: 9) recognise that “an acute and

long-standing tension” has arisen between accounting education and accounting practice:

“In essence, this tension arises because Anglo-Saxon university education is, generally speaking, trying to achieve three distinct objectives:

- it is trying to prepare students for employment;
- it is seeking to prepare students for the professional accountancy examinations; and
- it is attempting to develop the students’ abilities in wider, critical independent thought in line with the traditional purpose of university education.”

Often universities are unable to fulfil these objectives simultaneously. Consequently, tension arises, in particular between the first two objectives and the third objective. The first two objectives, which obviously may differ from one country to the next, are based on the relations between the professional bodies and the universities. Gray and McKernan observe that in the Accounting domain, the tension is particularly acute in the USA, but is at a fairly low level in South Africa. A low level of tension in respect of the first two objectives may, however, prevail at the cost of a compromise in respect of the third objective of critical and independent thought. It is because of this possible compromise that Gray and McKernan (2000) argue that students in Accounting may often be unable to think outside the paradigms within which they are taught. Consequently, they may not critically examine or question the assumptions upon which frameworks are based and they may, initially, be unable to bring sophisticated moral reasoning to bear on complex business-related problems, such as sustainability and social responsibility. They may also lack the skills for and the experience in planning and conducting research. These arguments raise concerns that the students who are preparing for entrance to formalised professions may lack some of the tools that are necessary to survive in a knowledge-intensive society in which continuous learning and research is the norm.

The argument put forward by Gray and McKernan reinforces the importance of analysing and managing the relationships that exist between the Faculty and professional bodies; and of ensuring that graduates meet educational objectives, without compromise, in areas that are fundamental to an education of a high quality and to a professional competence outcome.

## CONCLUSION

Several authors (Newman: 1996; Bok: 1986; Garland: 1996) have recognised that tension can develop between general programmes and professional programmes at institutions of higher education. They have, however, provided no guidance on the nature of the tensions and how they should be managed. In analysing the relationships that exist between the Faculty and its stakeholders, and the professional bodies in particular, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences experiences some tension among its stakeholders in its general and its professional programmes.
- The stakeholder groups of the Faculty should be identified and their expectations, needs and understanding of the educational process should be studied in order to identify areas of potential tension.
- The tension should be analysed and balanced and the areas of potential compromise should be assessed.
- The levels of tension between general education and professional education will differ in departments and in programmes and can be influenced by several factors. Such factors should be identified.
- Effective communication, continuous discourse and the strengthening of relationships with stakeholders are important elements in the maintenance of a sound balance in the general and the professional programmes of the Faculty.
- The professions with which the Faculty is associated as well as their structures, aims and educational requirements should be analysed, because these factors can be important in the creation of tension.
- The Faculty should also analyse and fulfil the expectations of society at large with regard to its general and its professional programmes.

It is, and will remain, a prime objective of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences to educate students in both the general and the professional programmes. It should, however, be recognised that a university education should go beyond the delivery of excellent professionals and specialists and produce responsible citizens and leaders. Van Ginkel (2004) says that higher education has a vital role to play, through its teaching, research and developmental projects to sustain, develop and preserve the intellectual and ethical base of society. This contributes to the preservation of cultural identity; fostering of social responsibility; and sustaining a peaceful and inclusive society.

## **A VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

The vision shared by the staff of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences is to be at the forefront of relevant and innovative economic, financial and management education and research, while primarily focussing on Africa. This vision is supported by six pillars, namely:

### **Our students**

Students are the lifeblood of a university (Strategic Plan: 2002-2005, University of Pretoria). Students are both the subjects and the products of our academic and intellectual endeavour and they will become our “innovation generation” who are also the responsible leaders and professionals of tomorrow. The Strategic Plan (2002-2005) of the University of Pretoria states that:

“Our innovation generation must be characterised by an excellent academic education. They will be well-rounded individuals who are balanced and responsible citizens who understand and appreciate social, political, economic, technological and environmental contexts. They will have skills that are necessary to compete on an international level, and they will have developed a hierarchy of personal values and understand and appreciate the importance of a value framework.”

(Strategic Plan of University of Pretoria: 2002-2005)

The achievements of our students and alumni are major determinants of the continued success and long-term sustainability of the Faculty of Economic and

Management Sciences. It is therefore fitting that we should continuously evaluate our performance and debate how we can “add value” to the education of our future generations.

### **Our staff**

The members of staff of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences form the backbone of the Faculty and are its single most important asset. They provide the academic endeavour and infrastructural support for the education and training of the new members of the “innovation generation.” It is important to create a positive, enabling and nurturing environment that allows members of staff to develop their scholarly potential and professional competencies and that attracts new members of staff of a high academic professional and intellectual calibre.

### **Our research**

The Faculty is committed to the continuous improvement of the quality, quantity and relevance of its research output. Young academics in the Faculty will be encouraged to undertake research and use research findings in their teaching in both the general and the professional programmes. Excellence in research should be duly recognised.

### **Our leadership**

The leadership team of the Faculty is committed to positive and inspirational, but simultaneously flexible and consultative, management in pursuing the vision of the Faculty and of the University.

### **Our partnerships**

The building and management of relationships within the Faculty, with the University and beyond, at a local, national and international level, is an important focal area of the Faculty. It is through partnerships that the Faculty can promote integration, share resources and cross boundaries to create a “network of excellence” that stimulates interdisciplinary research and teaching, creativity, innovation and internationalisation.

**Our commitment to innovation**

The Faculty is committed to “working smarter” within the constraints of its limited resources and will encourage, acknowledge and implement suggestions on how to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its systems. At the same time, the Faculty will stimulate creativity and innovation in its programmes, research and development projects.

The social contract that the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences has with the broader society requires that it should remain at the forefront of new economic, financial and management education, research and development initiatives. The staff is committed to the delivery of competent, creative and productive people and relevant research findings that contribute towards the growth, development and success of the South African economy. The Faculty views the future as being “alive with possibilities.”

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