Placing Research within Strathmore University Corporate Strategy

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to answer the question, "how can strategic planning help new universities re-define the meaning of scholarship?" The old Traditional universities (older than 100 years) have perfected their existence as sources of knowledge through basic research and publications. However, most of the newer universities, so called "teaching universities", have on the other hand concentrated on scholarly teaching rather than research. There has also been a growing demand for a third type of recognition; the recognition for service that will transfer knowledge from universities to the industry or society. The paper highlights how strategic planning and implementation has helped Strathmore University to address these conflicting types of scholarship.

The Evolving University

> *….the goal of universities should not be publish or perish, or teach or impeach, but we beseech you to publish and teach effectively. The aim is to increase the circumstances in which teaching and research have occasion to meet, and to provide rewards not only for better teaching or for better research but for demonstrations of the integration between teaching and research (*Jenkins, 2000, P.13*).*

Defining a University

The successful development and implementation of an organisational strategy depends on the type and structure of the organisation for which the strategy is developed. Kaplan and Norton (2004) defined strategic planning as a process through which an organisation differentiates itself from others through a selected set of activities performed to delight the customer.

Baldrige (1999) recognises universities as complex organisations that have evolved from teaching to research and now to the provision of service to the society. He proposes a definition of a university based on the anarchy, bureaucratic and collegium theories of governance.

Based on the anarchy theory, a university could be defined as an organised anarchy where goals are ambiguous, leadership is weak and people tend to go in different directions with minimal coordination. The lack of order in this kind of governance would create surmountable difficulties in developing a visionary strategy with concrete measurable objectives.

The alternative to the organised anarchy is the bureaucratic organisation that is state controlled with a formal hierarchy and clear channels of communication. This setting offers clear authority relations and rules and regulations that govern the university as an organisation. Development of a strategy in such an environment would call for tact in order to involve all stakeholders while at the same time addressing the impact of external state control.

Finally, a university could be a collegium continuum that allows for a collegial approach of governance. This type of governance gives respect to personal attention, human education and relevant confrontation of life. It fosters transparency and advocates for more interactivity between faculty and students. It will be easier to develop a strategy within this environment so long us there is commitment and mutual trust from all the stake holders. However, critics of the collegial governance argue that this is only but an ideology rather than a form of organisational governance that exists to define a university.

Scholarship and the University

The opposing definitions of a university have consequently led to a lack of consensus on the meaning of scholarship in a university. Prior to 1870, universities recognised instruction (scholarship of teaching) as the core function of the university. Schnaubelt & Statham (2007) attested to this recognition when they said:

> *"…facility and power in imparting the truth are even more necessary than in discovering it."* (2007, P.1)

It is much easier to measure and reward the scholarship of research than it is for teaching and service. However, Senge argues that teaching is a noble undertaking and should be given recognition in the assessment structure:

> *"….to be a teacher is to be a prophet - you are not preparing a student for the world of today but for a world twenty to fifty years into the future* (Senge, 2000, P.1)"

Many new universities usually admit students with the intention of creating knowledge workers for the job market. To some of these students, faculty members should teach rather than research because students pay fees to be taught. This way of thinking could also be attributed to the fact that many undergraduate students lack a research orientation and thus can not appreciate the relationship between research and good teaching.

Teaching should complement research rather than compete in opposition for rewards. It is unfair to judge productivity of scholarship in universities by simply basing it on research while ignoring teaching because research should inform teaching. Fairweather (2002) refutes the belief that research, teaching and service is naturally embedded into each faculty member's work and that

faculty can simultaneously be productive in both teaching and research. In his research Fairweather used postsecondary survey data in the United Sates of America to assess productivity of faculty members. He compared productivity of faculty members for research alone, research and teaching and finally teaching alone. His findings showed that there was more teaching than research in universities while only 22% of faculty engage in both teaching and research. Jenkins (2005) carried out a similar research to assess if there was a correlation between the degree of teaching and that of research. His findings indicated a zero correlation between the two, an indication that there was no relationship between good teaching and research. This meant that good researchers are not necessary good teachers although that did not mean that there are no good researchers or teachers.

He argued that many faculty members often give the excuse of heavy teaching workloads when their research capacities are questioned. Although there is enough evidence for faculty members to measure their level of teaching through their teaching methods, student experiences and learning outcomes, some faculty members still claim to be good teachers without verifying their claim.

Frost and Teodorescu (2001) propose five ways of improving the balance between teaching and research. (a) Identify clear concrete ways of measuring and appraising scholarship of teaching that maintains the personal dignity of the lecturer. A multiple approach to appraising should be used to incorporate student evaluations, self evaluation through portfolios or personal journals, peer reviews or exit interviews by staff on students, (b) universities should make teaching a priority by entrenching teaching in the strategy and reducing workload, (c) support development activities through teaching excellence centres for better teaching approaches such as learner centred, (d) reward teaching by recognising it for tenure and promotion and finally (e) foster collegiality through interdisciplinary teaching.

The change in recognition from scholarship of teaching to scholarship of research commenced in Europe in 1870 when Cambridge and Oxford universities and a few others in Germany started to encourage research by recognising it for tenure and promotion (Boyer 1990). The reason to focus more on research or discovery than teaching was to generate new theories and ideas in order to make a university a place for learning. By 1906 many universities in North America adapted the European approach to scholarship and embraced research as the core function of a university. This gave research more recognition for tenure and promotion (Schnaubelt & Statham, 2007; Boyer, 1990). It was easier to measure and define staff performance based on research than on teaching. The quantity and quality of publications became the most prestigious achievement for the professor and the university. Research generated more funds and created a wider international visibility for the professor than teaching and it became the yardstick for measuring performance in many universities. In Jarvis words, the university became an "ivory tower":

> *".. the universities have had two major functions: to prepare elite to govern the nation and lately to provide an institutional basis for research in different forms of knowledge"* (Jarvis, 2000, P.1)

However, a strong focus on scholarship of research while ignoring teaching created tension within universities. Although teaching workloads remained heavy, little recognition was awarded to teaching. Those spending more time on teaching and service were often by-passed by those who published when promotional opportunities became available. The value of teaching was further eroded as more universities admitted more post graduate students to enhance research and gave less attention to the teaching of undergraduate students.

Serow (2000) interviewed faculty staff in universities in Netherlands in order to learn more about the recognition accorded to teaching and quotes a faculty member who said:

> *"The emphasis has gone from 'How good a teacher is he?' to 'How many complaints have we had about him?* (Serow, 2000, P.453)

Boyer (1990) studied how faculty time is rewarded and which academic activities were highly priced and proposed four generic views to classify university scholarship; (a) discovery (b) integration, (c) application and (d) teaching. His paper argued that it will be futile to think of improving quality in teaching unless it is recognised as a contributing factor to performance of the lecturer. The degree to which a push for better education is achieved is determined by how the scholarship is defined and rewarded. The dominant view is that to be a scholar is to be a researcher thus publications are the yardstick for measuring scholarship. Boyer concluded by saying that for universities to serve their intended academic and social mandates, their missions must be creatively re-defined and the definition of scholarship reconsidered.

Ellen Hazelkorn (2005) extended the work of Boyer in her international research carried out among OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member counties in 2005. Her research focused on many issues but among them was to understand the strategic management and organisational issues and challenges that arise for higher education. The idea was to provide guidance for institutional managers to respond to the increasing pressures required to grow research capability and capacity. The paper discussed the genesis of the changing university referred to as "the new universities". These are universities created to produce new knowledge workers (through teaching) to produce new knowledge (through research) and to produce new producers of new knowledge (train post graduate research students).

Her research findings indicated that tension between research and teaching is time based i.e. faculty staff are given too much workloads thus depleting research time. The problem is compounded by the poor research infrastructure and culture which makes staff to view research as a burden. She concluded that research should inform teaching and should be embedded in the university strategy and that institutions should aim to strengthen the research capacity, encourage a research culture, enhance the learning environment and relate research to the society while enhancing institutional profile.

There are important lessons to be learned from the works of Hazelkorn, Boyer and others. The ethos and culture of each university will determine the balance between teaching and research but all these must be documented into policies and or strategies to guide the stakeholders. Research creates an environment where synergetic effects of teaching and research co exist with

the objective of improving both of them. A research culture should encourage the creation of community of scholars that comprise individual faculty, researchers and research students. Hazelkorn asserts that to encourage research universities have to recognise the different types of research that is, basic versus applied research; individual vs collaborative, department Vs institutional research priorities; post graduate vs staff research.

The UK reform Act of 1988 created independence for colleges and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and allowed them to offer degrees in order to create more knowledge workers for the growing economy. The change created new universities that transformed higher education into mass higher education (massification). Students who enrolled for university programmes wanted to gain skills for the job market. These new universities formed partnerships with the industry and the communities around them thus introduced a new type of scholarship, the scholarship of service.

The new universities were faced with the problem of reduced funding from the government compounded by the challenge of lack of experience and capabilities to carry out research. This made these universities unable to compete for research donor funding. In order to generate income for self sustenance, some of these universities transformed themselves into entrepreneurial universities. An entrepreneurial university is one where students and staff are entrepreneurs and thus work together to generate wealth while maximizing her potential for commercialization of ideas without compromising her academic values.

To encourage scholarship of service, Boyer, (1990) urged colleges and universities to practice "diversity with dignity" by establishing unique missions that respond to community needs. Rice (2003) modified Boyer's earlier concept of a 'scholarship of application' into a 'scholarship of engagement.' Engagement emphasized genuine collaboration with external stakeholders of the university which created a mutual relationship between universities and its external partners.

However, recognition for the scholarship of service remained low prompting Schnaubelt and Statham (2007) to complain about the lack of consensus in the mechanisms used to assess the quality of service work at universities. Boyer had earlier noted that the definition of scholarship of service was ambiguous thus difficult to incorporate into the reward structure of a university and yet it is important in order to accommodate a broader concept of scholarship.

In figure 1, Hazelkorn (2005) concludes by drawing readers to the trilogy of scholarship in classifying the different types of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
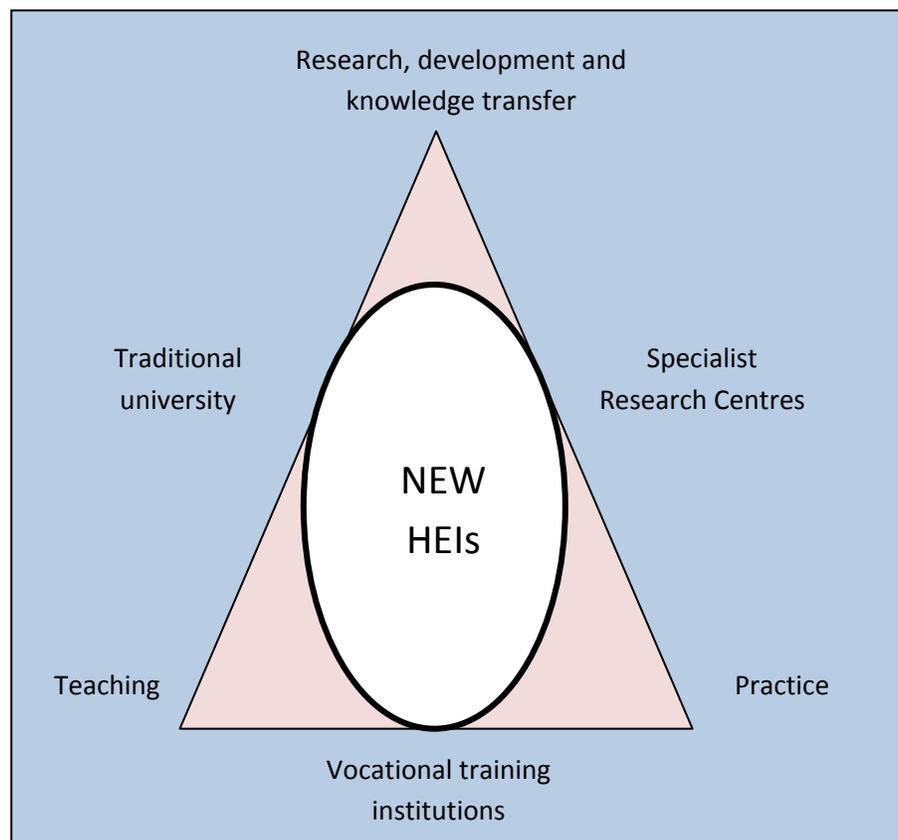

Figure 1 : Trilogy of scholarship adapted from Allen Hazelkorn – OECD 2005

The three corners of the triangle represent the different types of scholarship that is, research, teaching and service. The sides of the triangle represent the type of organisations that are formed based on these types of scholarship. Traditional universities identify themselves with more research and teaching, specialist research centres stress more on research and practice while vocational training centres stress on teaching and practice. The new universities have positioned themselves in the centre of the triangle to indicate a balance between research, teaching and service.

Strategic Planning

Burgess states that

> *"Today's organizations, including institutions of higher education, are being compelled to change from traditional ways of operating to new and innovative methods in order to survive in their respective markets" (quoted in Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1998, P.23)*

What can higher education institutions (HEIs) learn from the current research on the importance of the trilogy of scholarship? The answer may not be obvious, however the literature has highlighted the need to re-define scholarship and to formally recognize and entrench it in the assessment system. A university strategy is one way of formalizing this process in order to create harmony between faculty members and administrative staff towards developing this trilogy.

The idea of strategic planning was first conceived in the private sector but later introduced in Higher Education Institutions in about 1959 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Dooris,2002). The aim of strategic planning was to foster accountability and encourage universities to set objectives that were measurable and would create organisational competitiveness. In recent times, emphasis has moved from just planning (thinking) to implementation (doing) thus leading to better management of these institutions.

Groves (1997) has however warned against universities from directly adapting strategy models from the private business sector without modification. This is because, unlike the business sector, HEIs are complex organisations whose purpose is not clear and often answer to multiple stake holders (Baldrige, 1999). Groves proposed a modified version of the Porters value chain model for competitive advantage for universities which he says will adequately address the unique university organisational features – teaching, research and service.

The opponents of strategy implementation argue that strategy is not the answer to the problems of the changing university since only 10 percent of the implementations succeed. In fact Dooris quotes an administrator who said that most universities:

> *".. look at strategic planning as a path to pain, rather than a path to plenty" (2000, P.10)".*

We believe that when a proper process of planning and implementation is applied, strategic planning should positively contribute to a university's competitiveness. Groves agrees with this postulate when he says:

> *"..strategic management techniques can make a substantial contribution to university management (1997, P.309)".*

Strategic Management at Strathmore University

Strathmore University is a private institution that previously offered professional courses in business and information technology (IT), but launched her first degree programme in 2001. In order for the university to remain relevant and competitive in the market place, management rolled out a strategic plan in 2005 with a core goal of improving the quality of her graduates.

The planning and implementation process of the strategy was guided by the balanced score card framework (Pangarkar, 2008) and comprises a mission, a vision, measurable objectives and outcomes that are supported by initiatives.

The University's vision is to become a leading outcome-driven entrepreneurial university while the mission is to provide an all round accessible quality education through excellence in teaching, research, ethical and social development; as well as service to Society (SU Strategy 2005). Although the university strategy addresses five themes, three of them directly address scholarship, these are; (a) teaching and learning, (b) Research and enterprise, (c) corporate image (service).

Each of the three themes target specific outcomes although they complement each other. The aim of the teaching theme is to create international reputation for excellence in teaching and quality of graduates. The research theme aims to foster international reputation for excellence in research and enterprise; and make the university a major contributor to the knowledge economy. The service theme is meant to create a clear profile and reputation for the University's corporate identity and mission in the community.

The overall goal of implementing the strategy was to develop a culture of quality in teaching, research and service and transfer relevant skills and competency to the graduates in readiness for the job market and for their graduate studies. To achieve this goal, the university:

- developed goals in the areas of teaching, research and service that cross reference each other thus created a wider concept of scholarship
- introduced the Academic Staff Development Programme (ASDP) to foster multi-disciplinarity through a learner centred approach to teaching. The idea is to allow university teaching to be informed by research and faculty staff to publish and share their knowledge about their individual teaching methodologies
- documented procedures that facilitate quality teaching and research and contributes to the culture, economic well-being and quality of life of the society
- created partnerships with industry to foster the scholarship of service while ensuring that the graduates are absorbed in the job market or start their own small enterprises with the help of the university enterprise incubation centre
- enhanced a research culture by creating common interest groups, establishing a research and consulting company and the university printing press to support faculty staff to publish their research works.
- created an assessment structure that recognizes the trilogy of scholarship that is, teaching, research and service. This structure allows a faculty staff to set their goals in the three areas of scholarship as guided by the faculty dean who uses the benchmarks in the university academic staff management document (*see table 1 for details*). In order to give recognition to the three types of scholarship, the three areas are allocated a percentage time as shown in the table. However, this is expected to change as more post graduate programmes are introduced such that the value for teaching will revert to 40 percent while research will rise to 60 percent. It is expected that research should integrate the service function since most of the research should be applied.

Task	Current % time allocated	Target % time allocation	Deliverables – bench mark
Teaching	**60**	**40**	**Teaching materials** 1. 1 manual per year 2. an updated teaching portfolio per year 3. 2 self – peer reviewed reports per year 4. Data from 4 student evaluations per year
Research	**20**	**60**	**Publications/funds** 1. 1 book in two years or 2. 2 referred or 4 un-referred journal papers per year or 3. 2 conference papers per year 4. 1 professional membership at any given time 5. 1 research contract/project per year 6. 1funded research per year
Service	15		1. 2 Community service involvement per year 2. 2 admin tasks per semester 3. 2 academic development courses per year 4. 300 industrial related work hours per year

Table 1: Faculty Performance Measures (Source – SU Academic Staff management Management, 2005)

The implementation process has however not been without challenges. There is very little experience in the region for strategic implementation that the university would benchmark itself for strategy implementation in academic institutions. The university could also not afford the cost of a detailed research to generate accurate baselines for initial performance measures. In some aspects approximate data was used. The strategy office lacks appropriate tools to support the process of data collection, analysis and presentation for better decision making.

The words of the Vice Chancellor of the university are an indication of the vision of the university about campus scholarship:

> *Strathmore University recognises its position as a new entrepreneurial university with a current bias in teaching. However, for the university to remain relevant and competitive this has to change to allow for a balance between research, service and teaching. The University strategy is designed to be the vehicle for this change where research will complement teaching with the aim of meeting the needs of the society. The idea is to*

*recognise teaching in the staff assessment framework and push for international visibility of teaching approaches (*Vice Chancellor- Strathmore University*)*

Conclusion

The paper has explored literature on the evolution of universities as complex organisations and discussed the impact of this evolution on scholarship. A number of challenges facing universities in balancing between different types of scholarship were also addressed. The literature that has been reviewed indicates that there is a common call for more recognition to be awarded to scholarship of teaching and service. Universities will need to widen their conceptualization of scholarship. This can be achieved by formally recognising within their strategies the role of teaching and service in order to reduce the prevailing tension between research and these other types of scholarship. Strathmore University's strategy has considered these concerns and is embracing the nexus between teaching, research and service (the trilogy of scholarship) by recognising each within her strategy. The strategy implementation at the university has received full support from management and has led to a better understanding of the different roles of faculty members and how they can balance their work within the roles as lecturers. The place of research in the overall university strategic plan has been identified as being integral to teaching and research.

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