

Project Management for PhD Students



Lecture 13

Managing Successful Universities

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The current situation



- ◆ Increased competition between universities for
 - Research funding
 - Students
- ◆ Universities are both about research and teaching but success is often synonymous with research reputation
- ◆ Many ranking systems which take different aspects into account
- ◆ Success has become hard to define
 - Research
 - Teaching
 - Role in society
- ◆ -> a need for universities to ensure performance is geared towards achieving success, and it is a multifaceted goal
- ◆ So, what should management look like to achieve this?

Isomorphic change



- ◆ Increased marketization and competition has reduced diversity (whereas the opposite may have been expected)
- ◆ Also other factors reduce diversity in the university sector:
 - Formal pressure from e.g. authorities and evaluation bodies
 - Fashion for institutional restructuring
 - Managers bring ideas from their previous workplace, which was also a university

How to measure university success?



- ◆ Depends on what to measure (e.g. research or teaching)
- ◆ Research Assessment Exercise (RAE):

Table 1 A comparison of research performance based on the RAE results 1986-2008 (top 15 universities only)

	1986	1989	1992	1996	2001	Average 1986-2001	2008
Cambridge	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Oxford	2	2	2	3	3	2	2
LSE	3	6	9	2	2	3	2
Imperial College	3	2	5	5	4	4	4
UCL	5	4	4	6	7	6	5
Warwick	6	5	5	4	5	5	7
Manchester (joint)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6
UMIST	14	8	7	12	16	8	n/a
Manchester	9	10	14	14	18	10	n/a
York	9	8	11	9	6	7	8
Edinburgh	9	13	8	7	20	8	10
Essex	14	11	16	11	25	15	9
Bristol	6	7	25	16	14	12	12
Southampton	8	13	21	22	11	14	12
Durham	22	16	13	15	13	16	12
Lancaster	22	16	9	8	9	11	18
Sussex	17	11	10	13	17	12	28

Note: I am indebted to Rebecca Lambert and Giles Carden for the construction of this table. A note on the methodology and sources appears as an appendix.

- ◆ This rank strongly suggests that "high quality research, once established, tends to reinforce itself." (Shattock, 2010, p. 11)

Other measurements



- ◆ There are a number of different rankings:
 - The Times, The Guardian...
 - But one pattern occurs: Top 6 in RAE are ranked as the top 6 in The Guardian's ranking which emphasizes teaching and excludes research rankings altogether.
- ◆ It seems that there is a group of universities that are consistently successful in both *teaching* and *research*.

Contextual factors that contribute to success



- ◆ There is a connection between age and research prestige.
- ◆ The Matthew effect (Gueno, 1998):
 - A good scientist is usually attracted by centers and universities of excellence > This improves the quality of the individual as well as the institution > which then attracts new research funds and researchers. A positive spiral.
 - In the top 64 cluster of European universities a majority have their roots in the Middle Ages
- ◆ General wealth: The Financial Times has estimated that Cambridge and Oxford have an addition of 363 and 456 staff members respectively, because of their general resources
- ◆ Good location in large centers of population

Alternative criteria for measuring success



- ◆ Intentions to recognize social functions:
 - Recruitment from socially excluded groups/areas
 - Learning efficiency by measuring completion rates
- ◆ Economic impact on the local region (compare the importance of Stanford in Silicon Valley and the different colleges in the Boston area)
- ◆ Successful examples of science parks (Oxford, Cambridge and Warwick doing well)

Staying on the top



- ◆ Successful universities are successful in both research and teaching – both are needed and go hand in hand.
- ◆ Once high quality research is established it tends to reinforce itself.
- ◆ Create a momentum in which success reinforces success rather than being dependent on isolated actions or sharp changes of direction.
- ◆ Good institutional management

Defining university success



- ◆ The UK universities that are most successful are:
 - the most successful in research, and
 - the most successful in teaching. AND these go hand in hand.
 - There is a strong link between academic success and success in broadening the university's role in a wider economic and social agenda.

The new challenge



- ◆ Since the 1990's the university sector is more exposed to market forces
- ◆ Government funding has been reduced
- ◆ The ratio between government funding for research/teaching is much differentiated
 - 50/50 for some of the big ones
 - 5/95 for the least research intense

Adaptation to external factors



- ◆ Adaptive University Structures (Sporn, 1999). Five major changes to which universities have to adjust:
 - Restructuring of the economy
 - Changing role of the state
 - Shifting demographics
 - New technologies
 - Globalization

The answer: strategic management



- ◆ *The art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross functional decisions that enable an organisation to fulfil its objectives.* (David, 1996, p.4)
- ◆ So, how does that fit into our world?
- ◆ Especially since, according to Searle (1972) academics tend to be more loyal to their discipline than to their institution.
- ◆ ... sustained success lies much less in dramatic new initiatives, important and necessary as these may sometimes be, and much more in harmonizing the different components of university management to be mutually reinforcing (Shattock, 2010, p. 30)

A shift in management style



- ◆ From a “traditional bureaucracy” to something more entrepreneurial.
- ◆ Adopting a management philosophy from the competitive business sector with other strategic characteristics (p.33 ff.):
 - Skepticism about fixed strategic plans
 - A belief that evolutionary strategic plans are better than directive (successful companies are opportunistic and adaptive)
 - Strategies are formed bottom-up rather than top-down
 - Critically important to understand and adapt to environmental change
 - High performance organisations just don’t do the right kind of things: they combine more of them and integrate them differently so they outperform their competitors (p. 35)
 - Conservative financial management

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More metrics... and an observation



- ◆ Bryan and Joyce (2007) argue that companies should place greater weight on returns on talent than on returns on capital and that profit per employee should become the primary metric of profitability.
 - Data on research grants and contract income
 - Publication records
- ◆ However, many universities seem to have adopted structures from an earlier industrial age -> machine metaphor in a traditional organisation)
- ◆ But more successful universities have managed to build collegiality and participation as an essential element in the achievement of goals.

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Form a long term strategy



- ◆ A governance strategy within which decisions should be taken.
- ◆ Compass in a swamp vs. road map on a highway
- ◆ 4 reasons to go for the compass (p. 38 ff.):
 - Environmental turbulence (75% of all change at universities in the US is triggered by external factors)
 - Fluctuation in departmental fortunes (competition, recruitments, retirements...)
 - Maintaining the infrastructure (academic support services, administration, student-related services)
 - Managing the day-to-day (based on a general consensus on goals and objectives)

Institutional culture



- ◆ The essential academic vitality of a university must lie in its academic departments.
- ◆ Individuals are important and take initiatives. There can be conflicts of interest and the department may not be able to support all initiatives. This has to be dealt with in a way creates continuous encouragement.
- ◆ A climate of innovation and development, where new ideas are supported and initiative is rewarded. Success has a cumulative effect and drives up performance across the institution.
- ◆ It is a competitive environment and there are winners and losers.
- ◆ Open environment where debate is ok