

# Strategic Management in Higher Education: conceptual insights, lessons learned, emerging challenges

Special Issue in TEAM Tertiary Education and Management

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Strategy in higher education has been a growing area of research over the last 20 years. Scholars, as well as policy makers and practitioners, have significantly contributed to the body of knowledge related to higher education management and have investigated different aspects of strategy of higher education. This has been analysed at the national (Waring 2013; Gazizova, 2012; Barbato et al, 2019), organisational (Vuori 2016; Fumasoli & Lepori, 2011; Van Vught & Huisman, 2013; Shah & Nair, 2011; Luoma, Risikko, & Erkkilä, 2016, Fumasoli et al, 2020) and individual (Degn, 2015; Ainscough, Stewart, Colthorpe, & Zimbardi, 2018; Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 2000) levels of analysis.

At the organisational level, different dimensions of strategic management have gained prominence: mission statements of higher education institutions (Arias-Coello, Simon-Martin, & Gonzalo Sanchez-Molero, 2020; Seeber et al., 2019), development and implementation of strategic plans (James & Derrick 2020; Morphew, Fumasoli, & Stensaker, 2018), use of strategic management tools like SWOT-analysis and Balanced Scorecard (Chimtengo, Mkandawire, & Hanif, 2017). University strategy has been explored regarding various activities such as teaching (Newton, 2010), internationalisation (James and Derrick 2020; Soliman, Anchor & Taylor, 2019; Kristensen & Karlsen, 2018; Middlehurst, & Woodfield, 2007), the articulation of the research-teaching nexus (Couper and Stoakes 2010), application and competition for research funding (Taleb & Steele, 2000; Litwin, 2009; Boezerooij, van der Wende, & Huisman, 2007), and the marketing promotion of higher education institution (Milian, 2016). The strategy has also been investigated as a response to changing environmental conditions e.g. funding arrangements (Rolfe 2003), as well as, more recently, to the Covid 19 pandemic (Bebbington, 2021). An important strand of research has developed around institutional positioning and profile building (Vuori 2016; Fumasoli & Lepori, 2011; Van Vught & Huisman, 2013; Fumasoli & Huisman, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2019; Morphew, Fumasoli, & Stensaker, 2018; Fumasoli et al 2020).

At the individual level scholars have explored the strategy development and implementation by different higher education actors e.g. academics (Degn 2018), deans and department heads (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Degn, 2015; Hladchenko & Benninghoff, 2020; Davis, Jansen van Rensburg, & Venter, 2016, Stensaker and Fumasoli, 2017), doctoral candidates (Odena & Burgess, 2017), students (Ainscough et al., 2018; Torrance, Thomas, & Robinson, 2000; Lee et al., 2017). Strategy as practice has been highlighted as an important approach to understand the complexity of strategy in higher education (Frolich et al, 2013).

Strategy has been investigated in different types of higher education institutions e.g. university college (Couper and Stoaker 2010), university of applied sciences (2016), undergraduate and research-intensive universities (Milian 2016). The literature provides views on the strategy of higher education in multiple countries: Finland (Vuori 2016), Denmark (Degn), Canada (Milian, 2016), Ukraine (Hladchenko & Benninghoff, 2020), South Africa (Davis, Jansen van Rensburg, & Venter, 2016), Portugal (Mourato et al. 2019),

the United Kingdom (2019), Australia (Shah & Nair, 2011). However, strategy of higher education remains underexplored in many national contexts outside Western countries, particularly in post-socialist countries.

Though the body of knowledge on strategy of higher education has grown and developed in recent years, there is, on the one hand, a need for taking stock of this diverse literature; on the other hand, the challenges higher education has been facing more recently require new investigations on how strategic management is understood, operationalized and on the extent it is impactful. In other words, this special issue wants to bridge the first stage of strategic management studies in higher education to the ongoing and emerging issues universities are facing when they decide their organizational goals and priorities, how to allocate resources, adapt their governance and select the markets in which to operate

This special issue aims to attract studies that contribute to enhance our understanding on theory and practice of strategic management in higher education. It addresses the following questions:

1. What is the role of strategy at the national level in order to make higher education systems globally competitive and nationally relevant? How do the different actors influence strategy of national higher education systems?
2. What role do middle managers play, in particular the deans and department heads in the strategic positioning and development of the higher education institution?
3. How are the different groups within the academic community involved in strategy making? How do academics, including Early Career Researchers, PhD candidates, students, administrators perceive strategy regarding their academic life as well as the strategic development of departments, faculties and higher education institutions?
4. How are higher education institutions developing their strategic capacity to cope with disruptive environmental conditions? This question may be related to disruptive changes such as Covid 19, as well as the increasing demands to be societally relevant, e.g. vis-a-vis UN Strategic Development Goals, employability, technology transfer, financial sustainability.
5. What strategic tools do higher institutions use to sustain their strategic objectives? Here the focus might be on mission statements, devices such as SWOT, PESTEL, etc. as well as on the role of governance structures, e.g. board of governors.

Papers need to include a comparative perspective, whether cross-sectional or time-related, and need to be contextualized against an international background.

The submission deadline is Friday 25. June 2021, manuscripts shall be uploaded through TEAM online system <https://www.springer.com/journal/11233>

All papers submitted will undergo double-blind peer review. We aim to provide a first decision within two weeks, reviews by Autumn 2021 and the final decision by beginning of 2022. The SI will be published in 2022.

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