

# Strategic University Leadership for Aligning the Worlds of Academia and Business



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## INTRODUCTION

The landscape of university education has witnessed dramatic changes over the last decade. This change is due to the increased globalization and access to higher education and a large increase in the different sources of knowledge available. Today's extremely competitive environment continues to develop universities more complex form of organizations. Today's highly dynamic and challenging environment is characterized by mass education, declining public funding, knowledge growth, increased emphasis on employment skills, and increased industry-academia collaboration for research and development (R&D). At the same time, there are increasing administrative reporting and accreditation requirements. Universities continue to serve new and different market. At the same time, they are also coming under stricter scrutiny by government and public. Both governments and public are taking a renewed interest in the way universities operate. This renewed interest has created an audit culture in universities where every aspect of academic life is expected to produce a positive engagement with its broader environment.

Mass education is very expensive. With reduced funding from government, universities are increasingly relying on this collaboration for R&D to generate funds. In contemporary economies, knowledge is centralized. The role of universities in preserving application of knowledge is under-acknowledged while they are expected to continuously innovate while participating in an economic environment with decreasing funding opportunities. As such, universities are finding themselves caught between the worlds of academia and business. Universities face a tough challenge to build and maintain their academic rigor while increasing internal and external accountabilities. This chapter reviews literature and available evidence related to the practice of university management/leadership (such as Quality Leadership Profile) to provide some strategies for contemporary universities seeking to be well prepared in a constantly changing environment.

After the introduction, section two further elaborates the importance of striking a balance between universities fundamental job of advancing academic scholarship/knowledge and an ever-increasing administrative/reporting requirements. Section three surveys the literature to come up with some key issues that academic leaders of universities face. Section four discusses some important implications of the today's complex environment for the people responsible for leading and managing the universities. Section five elaborates some possible strategies university leaders can use to strike the delicate balance between the worlds of academia and business and to build and maintain their academic rigor while increasing internal and external accountabilities. Section six provides some managerial implications/recommendations and concluding remarks.

## **BALANCING ADVANCEMENT OF SCHOLARSHIP/KNOWLEDGE AND ADMINISTRATIVE/REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

The governance of universities today is no different from governance of corporate entities. The environments in which universities operate today poses risks and require a similar suite of governance and risk management required for corporate entities. The leadership of universities is accountable for their performance to university senate. These senates or councils, in turn, are subject to much stringent legislative frameworks of governance. According to Coaldrake and Stedman (1998) that universities operated under such risk levels that forced them to expand their activities into commercial field. However, these universities were bound by their practices that limited their flexibility to adapt the new environment. Coaldrake and Stedman, (1999) noted that by focusing on matters of output, accreditation and quality assessment, universities have moved closer to the position of a business enterprise. According to Cohen (2004), post-modernism turned universities into a full-fledged consumer enterprise rather than full-fledged learning institution. Meek and Wood (1997) and (Kaiser et al., 2014) agreed that higher education institution put efficiency and effectiveness on top of the list of their reform agenda. This shift implies increased accountability for every university activity and prompts university leadership for the critical importance of the ability to adapt and change.

According to Coaldrake and Stedman (1999) and (Drew, 2006), academic organizations may have some ideals of determining the parameters of their own working lives. Many a times these ideals do not match with the expectations that universities place on faculty members. The problem is that universities are becoming more reliant on the external world but the existing academic values and work practices of the universities are in conflict with the demands of the external world.

For academic leaders, striking a balance between universities fundamental job of advancing academic scholarship/knowledge and an ever-increasing administrative/reporting requirements is a big challenge. According to Hanna (2003) and (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014) this challenge of operating both as a seat of higher learning and knowledge advancement and a successful consumer enterprise means that higher education institutions need change. This change is needed to bring the transformation required so that universities can address the strategic challenges they face in an increasingly complex and dynamic environment. This new scenario presents both challenges and opportunities. Addressing these challenges successfully, universities need a workforce that blends both a highly experience work force having corporate acumen with the inexperienced but younger, energetic people. According to Brown-Miller, (2012), the number of older persons has tripled over the last 50 years; it will more than triple again over the next 50 years. The older population is growing faster than the total population in practically all regions of the world—and the difference in growth rates is increasing. This re-thinking of strategic organizational developmental issues of universities is very important in order adequately prepare and strengthen academic workforce for an increasingly complex and challenging academic leadership role. In order guide the university development appropriately, this new leadership role will have to tackle multi-dimensional challenges of contemporary academic leadership (Drew, 2006).

## **KEY LEADERSHIP ISSUES IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION**

There exist considerable research that attempts to identify various key issues involved in leading and managing the education at university level (Sallis, 2014). One research study conducted in Australia

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