

PROFESSIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION MANAGEMENT. BEST PRACTICES FROM FINLAND.

Operational environment for managing a higher education institution

From the managerial point of view, the starting point is to understand the demands of and changes in the environment. On the one hand, the environment creates positive pressure for a higher education institution to change but, on the other hand, it can introduce factors that hinder the institution's development.

In general, we can say that education, and especially higher education including research and development, have played a very important role in supporting economic growth and global competitiveness as well as contributed to social cohesion. The recent development towards knowledge-based society has introduced new demands for skills and competences which also require the higher education institutions to respond in new ways.

Growing expectations for higher education require renewal of education contents and new pedagogical approaches. They cannot be fulfilled without a major transformation in the operations and management of the higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions act as a part of their ecosystem and participate in the public-private cooperation. They can play a significant role in advancing emerging megatrends, like digitalization, technologic development, and deformations in the environment.

Higher education can provide solutions to the miserable problems in societies. The higher education not only responds reactively to the changes caused by trends but is proactive in changing and creating a new future....

Strategic management in higher education

Strategy scholars and their theories have always been dependent on the context and period. Over the decades, the ultimate aim of the strategies has been to reach a vision of the organization. However, the main changes in the theories on strategy have focused on two aspects: on the means (i.e. how the vision will be reached) and on the process (i.e. how the strategies have been formulated).

In late 1990s the universities of applied sciences became a completely new form of higher education in Finland. In this transformation, the role of strategy turned to be crucial. Top management had the challenge of creating a completely new higher education institution, creating their own form of strategic management and all the practices needed to implement

a strategy. The Ministry of Education and Culture did not participate in the project but expected the new and autonomous higher education institutions to create their own models of operation, i.e. governance, organization, campuses, management systems as well as the model of creating the strategy itself. The situation was new even for decision makers and for regional and local politicians who had strong influence in the formation of strategies for municipally owned universities of applied sciences.

In this chapter, we will learn that in the modern environment the top management needs to 'live' the strategy. During the past decades, the idea of what strategy is and how it is implemented has changed. Thus, we will provide tools to analyse, transform and implement the strategy....