Unpacking the top trends in Australian Universities Strategic Plans

Madelaine Marie Judd
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I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are based today.
Acknowledgement of co-author

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Overview

- Universities – then and now
- Challenges in Higher Education
- Defining strategic capability and planning
- New Horizons for University education
- What’s hot in university strategy?
- Recommendations for strategic planning.
What is a University?

"Universities have become complex organisations that require sophisticated management systems and new ways of governing the academic enterprise. They are, at the same time, bureaucracies and communities of scholars" (Altbach, 2008, p. 12).
Universities – then and now

12th Century
Universities established

17th – 18th Century
Little contribution

19th Century
Serve society

20th – 21st Century
Massification of sector

21st Century
Funding cuts

Challenges in Higher Education

● Government funding cuts

● Disruptive technology

● League tables and relevance

● Student enrolments.
Challenges in Higher Education

“Universities have never been more important to our future. In a world facing very large and complex social, environmental and economic challenges our universities will play a central role in keeping Australia economically competitive and socially cohesive. The higher education sector will be at the forefront of shaping contemporary policies and a modern society” (University of Wollongong, 2016, p. 2).
Defining strategic capability and planning

“Strategic plans become a compass, positioning what counts as metaphorical magnetic north for that University” (Kinash & Judd, 2018, p. 112).
"A university, like a lot of other institutions, is rather like a huge ocean liner that cannot change course abruptly. Its strategic capacity at any one time reflects organisational traits that are lastingly entrenched in its internal social fabric" (Thoenig & Paradeise, 2016, p. 300).
Master vs Strategic planning

"... master planning, which emphasised the physical development of the campus, and strategic planning, which focused on the university's institutional nature" (Kogler, Thomas & Keller, 2009, p. 17).
Methodology of research

- Content analysis of 40/41 Australian strategic plans (as at January, 2018)
- Reviewed 2017 Horizon Report (Education Edition)
Grounding questions

1. What are the trends articulated within the strategic plans of Australian University strategic plans?
2. Do these trends align with those articulated within the 2017 Horizon Report?
3. To what extent do university strategic plans articulate challenges, approaches and explicit impact statements?
New Horizons for University education

1. Cultural Transformation
2. Employability & Workplace Development
3. Collaboration
4. Diversity & Accessibility
5. Learning Analytics, Graduate Attributes & Personalisation
New Horizons for University education

6. Digital Fluency & Co-constructing Knowledge
7. Beyond Online, Mobile & Blended Learning
8. Unbundling, Microcredentialing & Educational Apps
9. Artificial Intelligence & Internet of Things
10. Lifelong Learning
Alignment of Strategic Plans to Horizon Report Trends
Higher Education Governance Framework
Students as Partners Initiative, Framework
Recommendations for strategic planning

**Landscape**

- Knowledge of context / demographics
- Aligned to values of University.
Recommendations for strategic planning

Leadership

• Cannot solely rely on ‘charismatic leaders’ but also require strengthened social process that empower the community.

“to proceed step-by-step with a participative style so as to provide opportunities to see how the social fabric of the organisation reacts and adapts each step” (Thoenig & Paradeise, 2016, p. 320).
Mutual accountability & Practical Considerations

- Champions of initiatives
- Sufficient funding (and time) to achieve objectives / strategic purpose.
Recommendations for strategic planning

**Transparency**

- Ongoing reporting / evaluation of impact of strategic initiatives
- Communication channels to key stakeholders and broader University community.
Call to action

“To date, the story of universities in Australia is the steady expansion of a single model ... The result is a system characterised more by similarity than diversity. ... Even if existing universities can maintain their current character, further growth using the standard model may not deliver what the nation or its students need” (Davis, 2017, p.126-128)


References


Thank you

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