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Strategic Management and Universities' Institutional Development

by Pierre Tabatoni, John Davies and Andris Barblan

FOREWORD
Andris Barblan

Following the seminar organised in Istanbul in 2000 for its members, EUA invited the two seminar facilitators to turn their presentations into articles.

We are now pleased to provide EUA members with a continuation of *CRE-guide* n°2 of June 1998 on the "Principles of strategic management in universities" (this can be downloaded in English on the EUA's website, and the French version can also be obtained from the EUA Geneva office). This *Thema* n°2 replaces the survey of management practices in European universities that should have been published at that time. In addition to the articles by Pierre Tabatoni and John Davies, revised in collaboration with Andris Barblan, a glossary of the main expressions of strategic management is included in both languages.

EUA uses these various concepts in its institutional review programme, which was launched in 1994 with the help of the two mentioned authors.

Today, having evaluated more than 80 universities, essentially in Europe but also in South America and South Africa, EUA has become a main actor for quality management on the European university scene. As such, it is represented on ENQA's Steering Committee (European Network of Quality Agencies). Together with its members, it also develops the strategies and policies for change that will enable universities across Europe to adapt to the challenges of the European Area of Higher Education, to be set up by 2010.

AVANT-PROPOS
Andris Barblan

Suite au séminaire organisé pour ses membres à Istamboul en 2000, l'EUA a prié les deux animateurs de cette réunion de reprendre leurs thèses pour les élaborer en articles.

Il est ainsi possible d'offrir aux universités membres de l'EUA une suite au *CRE-guide* n°2 de juin 1998 sur les «Principes du management stratégique dans l'université» (opuscule encore disponible en français et téléchargeable en anglais sur le site web de l'Association). Ce *Thema* n°2 remplace l'aperçu de la «pratique de la gestion dans les universités européennes» qui aurait dû paraître à l'époque. Outre les articles de Pierre Tabatoni et de John Davies, retravaillés en collaboration avec Andris Barblan, un glossaire des termes principaux du management stratégique est inclus dans les deux langues. L'EUA utilise ces divers concepts pour son programme d'évaluation de la qualité des institutions universitaires, programme mis en place dès 1994 avec l'aide des deux auteurs précités.

Aujourd'hui, après l'évaluation de plus de 80 universités, essentiellement en Europe mais aussi en Amérique du Sud et en Afrique du Sud, l'EUA est devenue un acteur important de la gestion qualitative du monde académique européen. A ce titre, elle est présente au Comité Directeur du Réseau européen des agences de qualité (ENQA) et, pour ses membres, elle réfléchit aux stratégies et politiques de changement qui permettront leur meilleure adaptation aux défis de l'Espace européen de l'enseignement supérieur, à construire d'ici 2010.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, A TOOL OF LEADERSHIP – CONCEPTS AND PARADOXES

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The complete strategist's advice: if you want to make a sculpture of an elephant out of a block of granite, start cutting little parts away and then remove, fast, anything that does not look like an elephant.

Strategic planning is different from strategic management.

Planning as a set of possible choices for action is, by itself, an organised process of collective change embracing aims, norms, resources, criteria of choice, structures, organisational, institutional and personal relations – all elements which are at the core of any managerial process. **Long-term planning** is supposed to determine objectives for the future, while allocating responsibilities and resources to reach them. It is becoming more difficult, however, to achieve distant goals in innovative and complex environments, although the potential for planning exists when strands of stability within that context can be presumed. On that basis, with some vision, long-term planning can use scenarios, i.e., prospective states of the future, that can be deducted from current trends.

However, **strategic management** is more specific. It aims at leading, driving and helping **people**, those inside the organisation and those outside (also involved in its development), to focus on the organisation's identity and image, to question its worth in a new environment, to fix its longer term growth, while using its present capacity and fostering its "potential" for development.

Indeed, this implies proper planning, as it calls for a choice among major objectives, the achievement of which requires sets of specific means. But, more than planning, management stresses dynamic and critical processes, those of leadership, which can bypass present strategies and design new ones. In other words, strategic management prepares people to project themselves into the future, i.e., to face new situations in the near future, at the cost of risk and uncertainty, when dealing with changes in structures, models of action, roles, relations and positions.

Norms are principles for collective action, shaping personal behaviour and group relations. Normative management is a pleonasm, as any significant change necessarily implies developing new collective norms, new visions and new practices. The dynamics of **cultural processes** (values turning into norms, models and word patterns) sustain any managerial move.

In management literature, **strategy** and **identity** are often perceived as the two sides of the same coin. However, in fast changing environments, strategic issues can imply and induce changed identities. Leadership then requires critical minds, fresh vision, courage, and the capacity to convince. Such a critical approach can be enhanced when institutions participate in **networks**, which allow for comparisons between different sets of inspiration and practice, thus pointing to revised needs, new constraints and new models of change, if the organisation's potential is to be realised.

In organisations considered as learning systems, strategic management becomes the educating process of change agents, the institutional actors.

The **actor** can be anyone in the organisation, or its related environment, whose behaviour can significantly influence change in the organisation and its milieu. For instance, for a university, the main actors are the students, faculty and staff, network members, public and private regulators, as well as the media. In a learning organisation, their education requires information, communication, motivation through focused exchange and open debates.

Educating the person as an agent of change requires well-structured strategic information systems.

The data collected should provide relevant material available at the right time to support

the right change. Such **data** (i.e. well-designed information) should structure **signals**, **even weak signals**, which impress the organisation with a sense of change in process. How to magnify and transform such signals into data is a managerial information task.

Data can monitor change in the environment, or in the strategies applied in other institutions used as benchmarks. But, more importantly, data should reflect the practice of the actors themselves, inside the organisation or in its direct environment. It is clear today that a lot of significant information can be drawn from staff experience inside the organisation. It is difficult, however, for management to convince employees not only to expose their experience, but also to analyse it so that it can contribute to a database of useful information for the organisation.

Information must be structured so that it is **easily communicated**, while providing useful data to the enquirer. Inside the organisation, it must be available to anyone who is concerned with specific elements of information: this means setting up open systems which are difficult to organise, but essential. Such a task represents a managerial challenge, especially when strong competition for positions exists inside the institution or, on the contrary, when the administration, interested in routines, prefers to retain information rather than to find time to disseminate it properly, thus risking the cultural fragmentation of the organisation.

Policies and strategies

1. **Policies** deal with identity, with missions (what Max Weber calls *axiologic rationality*), with organisational climate. At this level of generality, they are usually expressed in broad terms, even symbolic ones. But such wording must have **meaning** for the people involved, as these policies define norms of behaviour and serve as fundamental references in case of serious conflicts between projects – or between people – within the institution. They play the role of a constitution in a State.

Inside and outside the organisation, these norms represent institutional commitments and any interpretation which might lead to strongly divergent positions should be seriously debated, explained in writing and commented by the people in charge.

Too often, obscure or outmoded policies are just ignored, to avoid either the effort of updating or redefinition, or internal strife or potential conflicts with external regulators. It usually means that some of the more powerful and determined sub-groups in the organisation are *de facto* imposing their own norms and objectives as if they were those of the whole institution. Alternatively, it leaves the way open for policies imposed from the outside by public authorities, the unions, resource providers or even by public opinion. Doesn't this ring a bell in universities?

Yet, the worst situation for an institution is a policy (statement of identity, expression of norms, etc.) which has no **credibility**; either because it has been expressed too vaguely, or because it is simply ignored or interpreted as fluctuating with circumstances. In such a case, most people, especially the managers, try to understand which is the real policy of the organisation and what this agenda really means for them.

It is often said that it is not possible, nor opportune, to explain all policies: some should be kept confidential, **secret**, in order to minimize potential opposition, while being implemented by a few people "in the know". But secrecy is difficult when implementation requires a wide distribution of information and an open exchange of experience. Moreover, secrecy does not permit decentralised initiatives – it provides privilege to the happy few, leaving the other actors with a strong feeling of arbitrary behaviour, if not of mistrust.

In fact, the formulation and implementation of strategies in the organisation are the test of the validity of institutional policies. When no strategic drive proves effective, there is an obvious need for change in policies.

2. **Strategies describe types of changes and ways of transformation**; they tell us what to do in order to implement policies (**instrumental rationality,** or **efficiency**). That is

why they need to be expressed in **operational terms**: recalling objectives, they enunciate those activities selected to reach those objectives, the type of changes induced by such activities, the means which can be used – or kept untouched – to develop them, the allocation of individual sub-missions, resources and authority, the evaluation criteria for specific projects, the procedures to implement evaluation and those to take account of conclusions and recommendations.

In other words, understanding the i**nteraction between actors and strategies** is at the core of any managerial process, and of the exercise of leadership.

3. **Evaluation** is thus the key to any policy and strategy, because it questions constantly the aims of the organisation, the institutional allocation of resources, the leadership and operational capacities, i.e., the norms, communication development, the criteria for quality, their implementation and their critical re-evaluation. At the level of the whole organisation, it is called **institutional evaluation** and deals with the basic orientation and norms of the institution.

Functional evaluation of the departments, of specific activities or of the use of specific methods is a necessary complement to institutional evaluation but, too often, as it is easier to achieve and exploit, functional evaluation displaces or replaces institutional evaluation. Strategic management must make institutional evaluation possible and even desirable for the majority of actors, thus offering a frame of reference to functional evaluations that develop a critical approach to policies.

Managing evaluation, as a **collective process of change**, in order to educate and motivate people for change, is thus at the core of strategic managerial capacity. This includes the ability to engage people in the evaluation process, as a critical understanding of what they do and why they do it. As a side benefit, this may help other members of the organisation to understand the managers' tasks and difficulties.

An internally-organised evaluation is essential to help institutional actors to question their goals and practices. An outsider's viewpoint is also useful – or even vital – to reconsider more objectively the organisation's aims and operations, its performance criteria or its public image. The outsiders could be external members of the administrative board, regular and influential in the governing process, as well as consultants or members of networks cooperating with the institution. The organisation's information system should be able to register this data even if it proves difficult to gather because of its informality, usually reflecting various actors' needs and motivation.

Moreover, the management of evaluation implies a proper **follow-up** of the recommendations made, i.e., getting people's support for change when they are shown the advantage of action adjustment. Wisdom consists here in showing that a **non-change** attitude, after the evaluation has pointed to areas of weakness, could lead to external adaptation pressures, and that immobility can only undermine present positions, making it all the more difficult to adjust later.

The balance between rationalisation, innovation and preservation

Often, managers are tempted to give priority to **rationalisation**, on the basis of efficiency criteria – usually a reduction of costs that leaves structures and roles as little affected as possible. Indeed, when change is the key, **innovation** cannot be developed without some rationalisation in order to provide transfer mobility in resource allocation as well as new models of action. Thus, rationalisation usually leads to reorganising organisational structures and to developing new functions while, however, keeping to the basics of the existing system.

A classical way of developing innovation is to design **experimental structures away from mainstream activities** in the organisation; areas of transformation are set up at the margin with their specific norms and evaluation criteria. This allows for focusing, in mainstream activities, on rationalisation and efficiency, thus allowing for some questioning of current practice. But, at some stage, innovation will need to be transferred from the periphery to the core resources for increased structural change. This should lead to a difficult act of balancing

between rationalisation and innovation. Too often, the drive for rationalisation and innovation, which professionally and even culturally proves rewarding for managers, underestimates the damage it can impose on situations that should be preserved in the longer term interest of the organisation.

Ignoring the need for **preservation** can often endanger the institution or reduce its assets by wasting the professional and technical experience of staff, thus jeopardising quality, norms of cooperation, processes and communication or, more broadly, the **organisational climate** of the institution, i.e., its cultural norms. It is an illustration of badly managed change. Cultural organisations (universities in particular) – which are made up of traditions, individual motivations, weak leadership, fragmented and difficult communication procedures, as well as individual initiatives – are particularly at risk.

Rationalisation, innovation and preservation make up an interdependent system with its own feedback loops. Designing and operating an appropriate balance within this system is at the core of strategic management, and therefore of leadership. It cannot be an *a priori* policy, but should flow from the implementation of change, while leaders remain aware of the danger of ignoring preservation.

Contradictions and paradoxes in strategic management

In a fast changing environment, an organisation is often **torn apart** between different objectives, which are not necessarily coherent, especially in terms of their succession in time; an organisation working on **projects**, each with its own specificities, efficiency and quality criteria, types of personnel and resources, requires management to allow for initiative from the people involved to foster fast adjustment to unforeseen change.

Such an approach can reveal, sometimes in a dramatic way, the organisation's **contradictions** between the objectives of its staff members, their attitudes, their potential for change, their constraints or their management operations. These contradictions can induce unexpected consequences, good or bad, and institutional leaders should be ready to manage them as components of true strategic change, with high professional and cultural impact. This is an increasingly important dimension of management for change. In more classical terms, this represents the **dialectical dimension** of governance.

Many contradictions occur at the same **level**, i.e., within the same general framework of relations and criteria for action. The traditional managerial solution has been to seek compromise (by dividing stakes, risks and means), thus inducing short-term favourable consequences. In the longer term, however, compromise could lead to inertia as it is built on acquired status and pre-existing strategies. For most leaders, this is seen as a stable solution, a step which will introduce leverage to structure future development. For others, however, compromise is but a temporary and tactical move, a stage conceived as part of a longer term perspective. Such managers can envisage a changed future requiring renewed negotiations to decide on shared goals, action criteria and redistribution of resources.

On-going tensions will probably become the rule when contradictions develop at different levels of institutional strategy. Indeed, in such a case, the organisation deals with situations of **paradox** rather than of **contradiction**. Paradoxes are confronting situations, positions, languages or models, referring to different rationales. A compromise is therefore difficult to design and implement in such a situation, as the frame of reference is not the same.

Paradoxical management leaders should allow diverging situations to develop side by side, as an incentive towards the finding of management processes that differ according to the level recognised to specific goals and means inside the institution. While accepting contrasting situations leading to possible conflicts, the organisation should re-design and adopt new models for action. In such a case, conflict brings about strategic innovation and requires transformed leadership practices as well as new cooperative networks.

In such a **paradoxical** context, managers should **play on those tensions** and

encourage those institutional actors feeling estranged by continuous conflict to invent new strategic models, the emergence and implementation of which could be sustained within the organisation. With the speed of change and the importance of external constraints, history has provided many examples of such managerial experience. Paradoxical management thus develops strategic modalities for new leadership processes in which **preservation** becomes a tool for the administration of institutional paradoxes.

Shock management

As an approach to managing change, shock can be opposed to **incremental change management**. Shock has its place in a strategy of change only if used at an appropriate time when supporting the rhythm of change. Even so, members of the organisation should realise that shock can always be employed, for mere necessity's sake. Such awareness would require some education, as compared to the non-conflictual **marginal move** policies, which usually reinforce conservative behaviour, as people are quick to react to incremental change by using it for their own interests.

Global and local commitments

Policy and strategy have traditionally been considered as **global** dimensions of management, aimed at driving the whole organisation towards its long-term future. Implementation has been regarded as affecting **local** levels of action. This can be true in a bureaucratic or thoroughly hierarchical system – as so often described in the literature. Everybody knows that in times of fast change, growing complexity and uncertainty, decentralisation and local initiatives are keys to the development of the whole institution. At such moments, a local initiative, in response to a signal of the market, or to the inventive spirit of local people, can, in the long run, turn into a real strategic path for the organisation *in toto*, as the electronic bet taken by some departments or the use of Internet by others have shown recently. Such an extension of innovation can occur if central managers are not only informed in time of potential change, but also if they have the culture and organisational capacity to "exploit" quickly such novelty, while spreading the information through the strategic information system.

Looking from the top down, global views can be interpreted only at the local level; meaning, motivation, awareness of practice are local; thus, they inform adaptation or invention. Systems theory is indeed now teaching that each **item** of a system incorporates all the basic messages of the system and that "itemised" change can induce global change. Chaos theory also insists on the local source of global disturbance. In terms of management philosophy, this means that any general policy, relative to a particular field of activity, must be explained and understood at all levels of execution at which that activity is being implemented. Only language would differ according to the audience and the type of change agents.

Leadership consists in organising such global-local interactions, for the benefit of the institution as a whole. This is not always easy as, in human affairs – the essence of management –, **rational attitudes** can only help to communicate and control global views; their implementation, however, always evokes **feelings** among the members of the organisation: they **desire to be informed, heard, respected**, whatever the level of operations, even more so at the lower levels. American managers consider the **affective illiteracy** of managers as an obstacle to innovation! Look at Princess Diana's tragic death and the incredible wave of emotions aroused by a road accident turned into a stage of royal fate. Sentiments, feelings and emotions are gradually recovering their place in the understanding of human behaviour in organisations: this represents a big change in the theory and practice of managerial processes.

Technical innovation and culture: Internet as a strategic revolution

Stressing personal growth in institutional development is but one aspect of governance. It could be comforted by the extended use of electronic communication that centers also on the individual. Thus, the **Internet revolution** should lead to major transformations in activities and in relations,

especially with the new generation of easy access day-to-day tools, such as wireless telephones or satellite-televisions, which integrate sound, image and numeric data.

Indeed, by fostering communication and personal interaction (through information exchange, debate or networking), the Internet challenge strikes at the heart of social dynamics. The electronic revolution calls for major changes in the way people establish and conduct interpersonal relations, rely upon, confirm and contest their collective norms of behaviour. However, its real impact on social norms will depend on its cultural specificity, i.e., on the values it implies and on their structuring role within the institution, not to speak of the prevailing rules protecting the individual actors in the system.

It directly influences individuals' new aspirations, motivations, reference models and, therefore, their political, economic and cultural organisation.

1. **In political terms**, this affects society's organising functions such as authority, leadership, regulation and control, or collective consensus. It is clear that public administration processes, sooner than expected, will be under strong pressure to change, because of new modes of interaction between political power and administration, on the one side, and more demanding citizens, on the other.

Power has, historically, combined "communication" with "distance". With the development of new interactive networks, people are now able to gather information independently of the political powers' official wisdom. The desire for **direct and efficient** interaction with public administration and leadership should be much enhanced, because the role of traditional mediators (political agents, representatives of authority, establishment groups, including the media) will be challenged by the new ease and capacity with which many people will participate in the activities of real or virtual communities based on exchange of individual views and on coordinated collective action.

More generally, as the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas has suggested, the dynamics of communication will change the concept and practice of State and Law, i.e., the citizens' experience of democracy.

2. **In cultural terms**, this affects society's language, values and significations, norms, models of action, i.e., its communication, learning and teaching systems, its esthetics and leisure criteria. The concept itself of culture, which in Europe has been traditionally linked with "enlightened" values and leadership or class criteria, could become more attuned with the "expressed opinions" of a broader part of the population, a trend already observed in the arts and media performances. This is characteristic of today's mass societies.

Innovation is difficult for cultural institutions, which are supposed to preserve their fundamental role, the collective development of methods of critical thinking, by keeping contact with the ideas of prominent thinkers and with the heritage of culture. The rapid decrease, now palpable, in the "reading" habits of society, even among students, challenges the self-discipline and reflection induced by writing and reading as the basis for our civilisation. Mass culture, as evidenced in TV broadcasts, tends to value all opinions in the same way, thus helping viewers to acquaint better with their neighbours' existence and needs. For Dominique Wolton, social democracy tends now to shape cultural development. European universities should not stay aloof from this evolution of culture but, on the contrary, they should reaffirm the basic missions of higher education, also in terms of culture, as required by the *Magna Charta* of Bologna. Yet another paradoxical challenge for our institutions!

The cultural systems (in communication, education, leisure and sports, literature, performing arts and fine arts) will use new information technology heavily and widely. The language they use is already and frequently "permeated" by technical terms, which mirror rapid and widespread technical change. The level, nature and need for cultural development is modified, discussions and exchanges of views will grow in importance while reflecting socialisation and group action through fleeting interests and personal emotions.

3. **In economic and managerial terms**, this affects the production of goods and services, the markets for their exchange, the organisation and use of information systems as well as the modalities of human resource development, in other words it influences society's "investment in people" and in their learning activities, both being strategic processes in a knowledge society. The aim for the organisation is for structures and personal behaviour to spread innovation by adapting quickly to new constraints and opportunities, if possible at an acceptable cost. Achieving such a goal should be at the core of governance strategies.

Setting up a new strategic information system in the organisation could question the cultural norms of the institution, its structures and resourcing policies and, of course, its leadership. This is already the case in the development of "electronic commerce" and of network strategies for customised trade.

Powerful agents of change, such as the new technical and managerial systems of information, will probably influence social change in fast expanding areas and at fast growing rates.

Because the electronic revolution coincides and combines itself, in time and space, with important cultural changes in society, the personal and social needs of citizens, their sense of human dignity, equality or their exercise of liberty, are now at stake.

The new norms stress personal autonomy, i.e., the need to "express" one's own opinions and needs; one's desire to communicate, to be heard, to be listened to; one's wish for information and the discussion of one's own specific problems; in other words, the "right" to be informed and "respected". Thus, citizens expect from society more equality in terms of personal recognition and individual concerns, more personalised attention to their problems and efforts: "We are all equals and formality is an obstacle to free exchanges of views and to innovative practices". Learning, leisure, entertainment, game playing, formal reasoning and mere expression of opinions are becoming increasingly combined, or just mixed, in work, speech and, also it would appear, in education. The information society will certainly enhance this evolution in social development.

According to Pierre Bonnelli, the chairman of SEMA, a powerful Anglo-French group of information services, these are still **latent needs**, although they are calling for fulfilment. The present convergence between new needs and new techniques is revolutionary and should change the strategic evolution of our societies. New marketing methods, thanks to the power of information systems, permit **targeting personal profiles**. Organisations will need to focus more and more on the client's customised needs, unless unforeseen cultural factors block this trend.

Universities will soon meet, and in fact have started to face, those new latent needs, as expressed by the changing mentalities, norms and attitudes of their students, a new behaviour that will be hastened and reinforced by the formidable growth of communication techniques. In fact, university students, with an increasing proportion of adults, now consider themselves as "users" of academic services to answer their cultural, professional, if not their personal needs.

In other words, being deeply immersed in all the currents of social change, students no longer consider themselves as members of a separate academic community, the medieval *universitas*. This is a major challenge. The generalisation of evaluation methods should, in this sense, work towards developing some form of cultural *lingua franca*, making values and attitudes explicit among faculty and students – at least as far as the universities' objectives, means and activities are concerned. Evaluation comes out as one of the main tools of university governance and strategic management.

Universities cannot ignore such overwhelming trends in communication and social norms, nor can they delay their inclusion into strategic management and thinking. This represents a vast domain of comparative and coordinated scientific research, that should induce concerted action on a European scale.

CULTURAL CHANGE IN UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF STRATEGIC AND QUALITY INITIATIVES

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PREAMBLE

Much attention in the current developments and debate on strategic planning and quality assurance has focused on technical issues and the design of various rational instruments of institutional transformation. However, the interaction of actors in the policy formation and implementation processes is at the core of any successful reform, but bound up with tensions which derive from differences in intellectual opinion on the best way forward, as well as from vested interests and fear of the unknown. Strategic management (including the quality process) is thus permeated with contradictions and paradoxes. Institutional leaders therefore have come to appreciate that such contradictions have to be lived with, that strategic development, far from being a linear process, is highly interactive, and that tensions have to be positively and creatively managed.

Central to this issue is the question of the effective assembly, management and circulation of knowledge about the performance and direction of the university. Any quality assurance system within a strategic context should incorporate means by which the university learns about itself, then undertakes activities deemed necessary for constructive change, the so-called virtuous circle. Universities should conceive of themselves as "learning organisations", not in a conventional pedagogic sense, but in the sense of self-evaluation and ongoing monitoring, leading to continuing enhancement of an institution's capacity to respond to, and lead, a turbulent environment. This clearly calls for some university-wide strategic awareness or intelligence which does not destroy or inhibit the creativity of the academic heartland, but enhances its vitality.

In the light of the above, this paper attempts to analyse characteristics of cultures in universities, and the extent to which particular types of culture support strategic and quality initiatives. It then goes on to explore issues in the transformation of cultures and the various approaches open to institutional leaders in this process, exploring in operational detail some of the tensions and paradoxes discussed by P. Tabatoni. This is inevitably bound up with a discussion of leadership authority, style and instruments of change (especially at rector's level), and supporting structures.[1]

EXISTING CULTURES IN UNIVERSITIES

The existing organisational culture in many universities may not be at all conducive to the sustainability of organisational learning, both in terms of enhancing knowledge acquisition across the institution, and in terms of using it constructively for organisational change. The literature on organisational cultures in universities emphasises how complex a phenomenon this is. McNay (1995), building on previous studies, classifies university cultures along two interrelated dimensions. The first is that of the structure and character of policy formation which may be tightly determined by senior leadership at university level, or, alternatively, rather loose. The second is that of the nature of operational activity, which may be tightly regulated at one end of the spectrum by a host of rules and conventions (state or institutional) or rather loose at the other end, which clearly gives leaders and academics in the lower parts of the university much more operating autonomy and freedom. This yields four categories of institutional culture: bureaucratic (loose on policy; tight on regulation); collegial (loose on policy; loose on regulation); corporate (tight on both policy and regulation); and entrepreneurial (tight on policy; loose on regulation). The first paradox or contradiction we may identify is that, whilst a particular university may display an emphasis on one of the above, inevitably all four dimensions will be present to a certain degree, in a specific part of the university (so that a business school may be very entrepreneurial, whilst other faculties are not), or for a specific function (financial management clearly has to be bureaucratic in many respects given the demands of external public accountability). The institutional leader has thus to be able to manage strategically in different cultural settings, particularly within the institution, where

1 This paper builds on evidence collected by the author as academic director of the CRE(EUA)-IMHE rectors' Management Seminar over some 28 seminars, and as team leader, member or secretary of many institutional evaluations in Europe and Australasia under the aegis of CRE(EUA), IMHE and ACA and for various national governments and universities as well as for the Salzburg Seminar Universities project.

the collegial mode often dominates as part of the academic heartland of the university.

Leaders attempting to introduce strategic or quality initiatives usually encounter difficulties linked especially to cultures with a heavy collegial emphasis, eg.:

1. A tendency to avoid problems. This may be explained by the individualistic cultures which generally respect individual academic sovereignty for teaching and research; moreover, the development of highly specialist areas of knowledge may also limit challenge or learning from other perspectives, and induce reward structures based on the individual rather than the group. The reluctance to confront difficult issues may be linked to sheer cowardice! In a strategic management setting, the practical consequences of avoidance are defensiveness, isolationism, non-accountability and fragmented information, which makes quality-oriented processes problematical to install.

2. When quality assurance is initiated as a formal process, it is normally a top-down activity, fuelled by external accountability or financial reduction, requiring crisis management. Traditions of low corporate identity will create tension and defensiveness that are reflected in non-compliance with quality processes. This translates into a reluctance to admit errors and to be self-critical, information then being passed upwards in a substantially unfiltered manner.

3. The fact that many universities are public and tied to state higher education bureaucracies could also lead to prevalence of the rule-book and maintenance-oriented procedures. This may be encouraged by fragmented information flows designed for external accountability purposes, as well as by limited planning horizons, or a separation between planning and evaluative processes – all of which do not help sustain quality processes in the sense outlined by Tabatoni.

4. It is also common to find barriers to the sustainability of a quality culture in the feedback/evaluative process itself. This process is often ambiguous (apart from some simple performance indicators) in terms of objective measures. Arrival at commonly accepted interpretation of terms and reality may be problematic owing to the different agendas, interests and behaviours of the various actors. There may also be lengthy delays in the feedback, particularly for impact measures, which render short-term adjustments hazardous when contexts alter; such delays are problematical for consensus building.

5. A barrier exists between academic and administrative staff, which is not simply hierarchical, but may reflect fundamental differences in values and operating styles, all the more so as the two groups draw on different knowledge bases. Each version of so-called "reality" is only partial. Filtering out of data occurs on both sides – and differentially – so that the debate on quality and evaluation issues may take place from quite different standpoints. However, the tendency points to some managerial discipline being imposed on a hitherto highly collegial culture, as a result of the changing role of rectors, vice-rectors and deans. In fact, these senior officers are often caught in a personal paradox: are they administrators or academics? Especially in the case of deans, are they part of senior management, (with what is implied in terms of collective responsibility for strategic decisions) or part, not to say leaders, of a devolved collegial structure? They may find extreme difficulty in coping with the demands and role expectations of the rectorate, on the one hand, and of their faculty colleagues on the other.

6. Different disciplines also display different operating assumptions, beliefs and modes of behaviour, which clearly influence the way of understanding issues, approaches to decision-making, and means of intervening in complex issues.

7. Furthermore, many rectors and university leaders have had at their disposal an ambiguous set of instruments of organisational change, and this clearly affects the possibility of implementing desired quality strategies. We shall return to this later.

One might thus conclude that, by and large, existing institutional cultures are not conducive to the sustainability of systematic strategic and quality activities, in particular

when they appear natural and inevitable, and can be defended as part of academic freedom against arbitrary executive action, as an incentive to individual creativity within the academic community. However, operating cultures in universities are shifting from a heavy emphasis towards the bureaucratic and collegial aspects to an entrepreneurial and corporate orientation. This should result in a greater concentration on strategic, university-wide thinking (usually prompted by external constraints): serious discussion may develop on the extent of devolved authority needed to realise strategic purposes in ways best suited to the devolved unit (faculty) and its external constituencies; that evolution often leads to use of resource incentives and devolved budgeting.

EMERGING CULTURES CONDUCIVE TO STRATEGIC, QUALITY-RELATED ENDEAVOURS

1. A "learning organisation" being naturally adaptive, self-reflexive, and self-critical at strategic and operational levels, a "**learning university**" should display a strong ability to identify, confront and resolve problems; it means recognising its weaknesses, collectively and singly, and acting accordingly; it implies also to use internal competitiveness and comparisons transparently and constructively, as well as a readiness to account for performance. Such features are not obvious in EUA quality reviews: therefore, institutions reviewed have not often developed staff appraisal and development processes.

2. Transformation should then be grounded in the experimentation and tolerance of error as a counterbalance to stability and predictability. Such a non-punitive ethos implies transparency, openness and frankness, not only in leadership style, but also in the incentives and support systems of institutional change. It encourages conscious risk taking, i.e., the capacity to prepare for the unexpected.

3. An "adaptive" university is thus able to make choices openly and systematically by determining clear measurable objectives generated through consensus and commitment. Not an easy task for leaders facing a dilemma difficult to resolve: how to balance democratic procedures against executive power, as consensus does not automatically arise out of strategic thinking or vice-versa.

4. Flexibility is therefore essential, i.e., the willingness of leaders at various levels to test the legitimacy, relevance and robustness of rules and regulations: this could mean allowing space for a dean or an entrepreneurial professor to contest the administration, or for a rector to question a national agency, with a good chance of being heard.

5. Hence, the creation of consciously designed feedback loops is important to turn experiments and initiatives into learning, spreading information on good practice throughout the institution, and providing short turn-around time for the use of evaluation results. Cross-university/cross discipline linkages are not, however, so common in many universities, where rigid demarcations between faculties still represent a major constraint to multi-disciplinary approaches – not to speak of simply learning about other faculties! Therefore, building what James calls a "collective IQ" is not always evident.

6. Since organisational change in universities, to be thorough, must occur way down in the organisation, the basic academic unit – the department or its equivalent – is the key to cultural transformation. Recognising traditional autonomy is one thing, but it will never stimulate a quality or strategic culture in the institution unless team performance is rewarded as much as individual results. In other words, a collective approach to quality exercises remains a prerequisite for institutional change.

7. Structural experimentation, therefore, characterises an emerging culture of transformation in which formal and former structures are no longer considered adequate to new purposes when the institution needs to cope with different external stakeholders, each with a different agenda, in terms of service requirements and time frames (for continuing education, technology transfer, franchising, co-operative education, independent study, and e-learning, to mention a few fields for concerted change). The differentiation of demand requires a diversification of organisational patterns, both in interfaces with the environment and in internal operations. Tensions, contradictions and

paradoxes can then be accommodated within an institution through purpose-built structures and personnel arrangements for different organisational objectives and priorities. Universities, however, run the risk that a wide spectrum of objectives will affect their sense of identity, all the more so when they depend on simple linear organisation structures, based on historic roles and functions.

In order to support an overall institutional specificity, one would not only expect differentiated structures, but also conscious experimentation monitored from the centre, thus developing a structured process of organisational learning based on shared evaluation criteria, on accepted assessment modalities, and on a clear understanding of the identity and motives of the reviewers. In short, the university must be able to learn from its experiments.

MATURATION OF STRATEGIC, QUALITY-ORIENTED INSTITUTIONAL CULTURES

Pierre Tabatoni pleads for a greater sophistication in strategic thinking and management, using *inter alia* openness and transparency, credibility, collective education and innovation. Developing such elements for strategic management and quality assurance requires a relatively slow process of maturation if universities are to cope with the many tensions for change inside and outside. Maturity is not an instantaneous process, and its evolution may be discerned as follows:

1. First, interpersonal and intergroup understanding should evolve both within universities and between university personnel and external stakeholders. The 1998 CRE study analysing the dialogue of universities with their regional stakeholders pointed to five stages in the development of effective and mature working relationships (*see Figure 1*, p.16) that cannot be short-circuited. The process is both intuitive and interactive. The same considerations apply in creating mature relationships internally. The contention here is that tensions and contradictions often reflect misunderstanding or lack of information as well as genuinely held beliefs. A sense of the evolution of dialogue towards trust and respect of the other is an intrinsic part of the dialectic to which Tabatoni refers.

2. The evolution towards maturity in strategic and quality domains is partly related to the degree of importance given to activities in both fields. A low level of activity does not lead to much visibility or sense of priority, thus downgrading the sense of urgency needed to learn on these issues.

3. Of equal importance in the maturation of strategic and quality cultures is the degree of systematisation adopted by the university in its approaches to new challenges, i.e., the institution's sophistication. Does it mainly respond to change needs in an *ad hoc* disjointed manner, with little attempt to develop robust policy and procedural frameworks, or does it carefully attempt to design stable instruments to guide collective behaviour, thus building on experience of good practice? In the latter case, the tensions outlined by Tabatoni have been built on and used creatively: in the former, the tensions will tend to paralyse lateral learning and restrict constructive innovation.

The dimensions of maturity outlined above may be portrayed diagrammatically, as in *Figure 2* (see on p.16): its four different quadrants reflect different approaches to the question.

- Quadrant A: Low on importance/volume, and low on systematisation.
- Quadrant B: Low on importance/volume, and high on systematisation.
- Quadrant C: High on importance/volume, and low on systematisation.
- Quadrant D: High on importance/volume, and high on systematisation.

These categories are broad generalisations, and, whilst at institutional level, one type may largely predominate, elements of all four may be recognised somewhere in the university, given the nature of the institution as an organisation, and the cultural idiosyncrasies of different subject disciplines.

Four strategic questions arise for the institutional leader when considering this typology:

(a) Which category best describes the current position of the institution?
(b) Are the leader and the various interest groups in the institution satisfied with this position, or should there be movement to another, more desirable, quadrant?

FIGURE 1
MATURITY SPECTRUM FOR INTER-GROUP EFFECTIVENESS

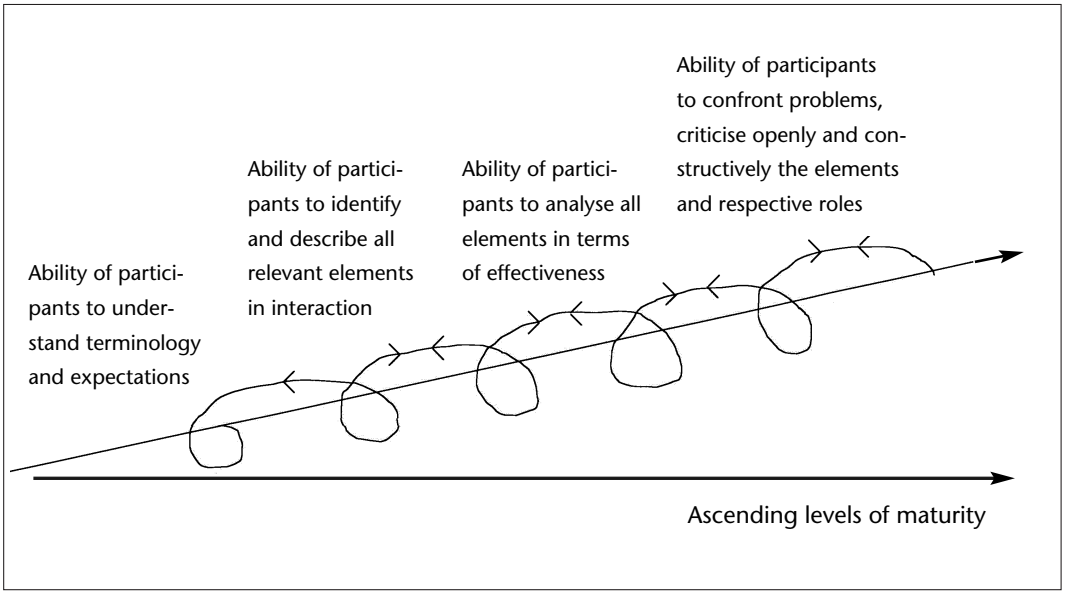
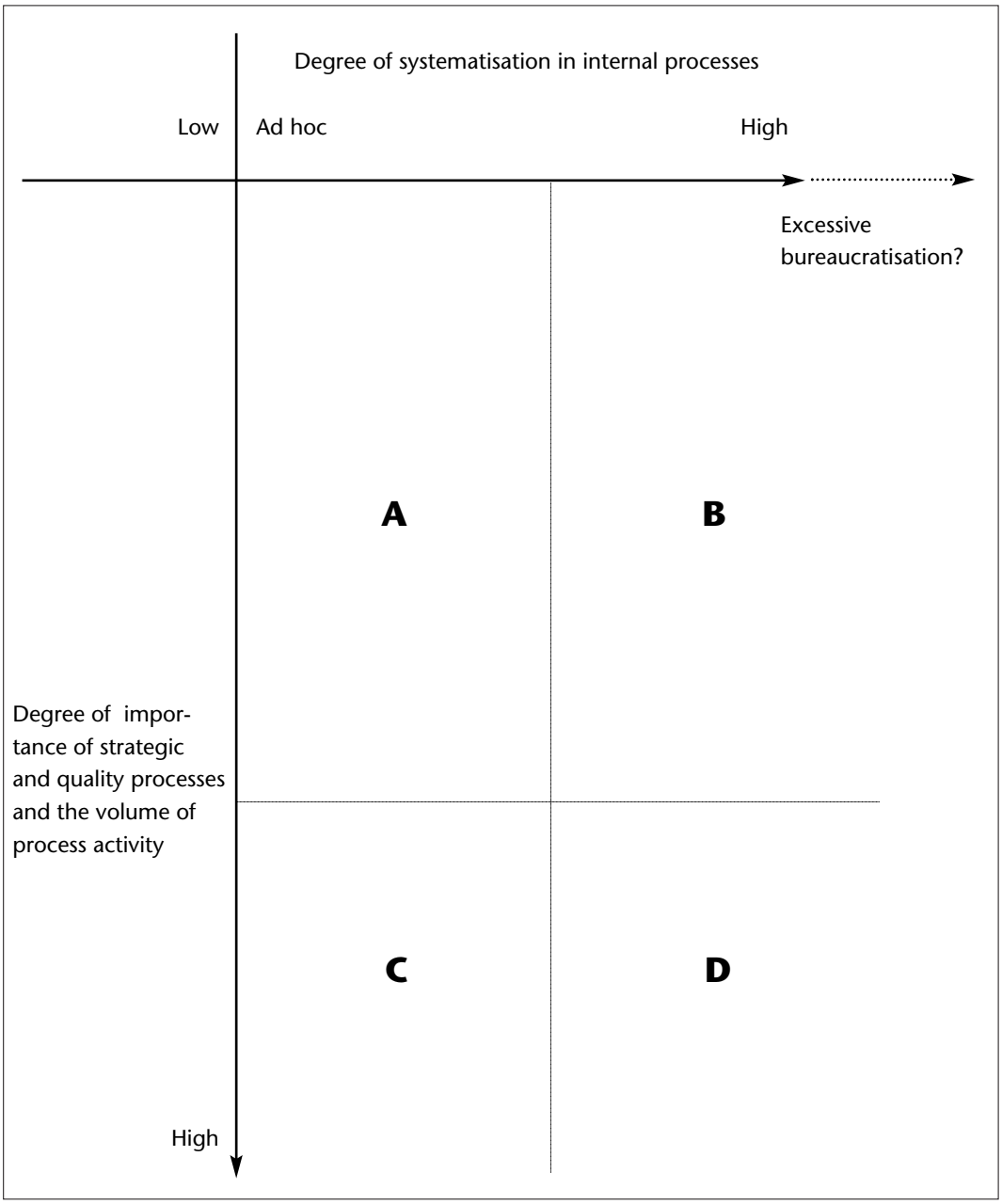


FIGURE 2
INSTITUTIONAL MATURITY IN RESPECT OF STRATEGIC AND QUALITY PROCESSES



(c) If the latter, to which quadrant should the institution move?
(d) How should the movement be stimulated, managed and achieved?

These four questions are clearly at the hub of cultural transformation. In general, we may reasonably say that Quadrant A is probably the weakest in terms of strategic and quality culture, whereas Quadrant D is the strongest.

However, for many institutions, in southern and central/eastern Europe in particular, Quadrant A often represents the current location, and, as long as the external imperatives can be reasonably accommodated, a movement from A to B, and then maybe to D, is probably optimal. Quadrant C should be avoided, if possible, since the combination of frenetic activity with uncoordinated growth simply leads to so-called "organised anarchy". Moreover, it is rather difficult to move from C to D, assuming that the latter is a desired position, since the *ad hoc* nature of effort in C may well have become endemic and beyond control in the institution. In other words, Quadrant C could prove to be a dead end.

TOWARDS A STRATEGIC AND QUALITY-ORIENTED CULTURE

To enrich a quality culture within universities, the question posed is "how to move a university to a more desired position in the matrix", where quality has a higher priority, and where strategy is better systematised.

External factors

Various environmental factors, i.e., framework conditions in which institutions operate, have played an important role in changing attitude to strategy and quality in most systems and universities. They refer to the needs of government departments (education, finance, industry and trade), state higher education agencies (planning, funding or quality), rectors' conferences or peer groups of institutions or subject specialisms, industrial or commercial stakeholders (interested in the nature, quality and price of services), individual consumer groups (students), research funding bodies (public councils, academies and foundations), and international agencies. Each university is subject to various combinations of such external requirements, depending on its academic profile, mix of activities and particular context, and the relative weight of these external demands is clearly an important factor for the institution's possible response. For universities subject to all the above, the reconciliation and accommodation of differences requires internal management skill of a high order, and considerable sensitivity to external agendas.

Social demand may nourish the development of diverse quality-oriented cultures, for instance, by

(a) requiring universities directly to operate or conform to externally designed quality processes for assessing teaching and research, a culture of *compliance*;

(b) requiring universities to develop internal processes which are intended to satisfy broad external criteria and benchmarks, a culture of *introspection*;

(c) requiring universities to set standards for accreditation purposes, a culture of *normalisation*;

(d) requiring universities to have an institutional strategy and transparent quality processes, a culture of *quality management*;

(e) requiring linkages between quality reviews and resource allocation, directly or indirectly, a culture of *retroactive strategies*;

(f) benchmarking university performance in such domains as teaching, research, cost effectiveness, value for money, resource base, student satisfaction, income generation, a culture of *transparency*.

Viewed as a spectrum, these various "cultures" range from point (a), enslaving obedience, to point (f), informed service.

All too often, universities replicate internally their approaches to external demands. Then, the internal culture is driven by outside needs, an understandable development given the threats which external evaluation may very well pose. Such a trend becomes particularly obvious when quality officers, internal

reviews, quality committees, or directors of quality abound. To meet the requirements set by some external industrial stakeholders, for instance, the university could adopt generally recognised commercial or public sector Total Quality regimes, such as ISO 9000, at the risk of disagreeing with the university's mission and vision, thus evoking new sources of tension inside the institution.

There is clearly a wide psychological spectrum of responses by universities to the above … from a highly defensive closed, even rigid, stance ready to repel perceived invaders (in which the admission of failure is not high on institutional agendas) to a welcoming stance in which the university, trusting in its own capacities, will be frank, tolerant and open, and will use external initiative as a means of stimulating internal change.

However, whatever type of external framework appertains, many universities would not have adopted, or moved towards a strategy and quality culture, without an external stimulus of some kind. The forces of traditional academe, whilst clearly quality-oriented, especially at lower levels in terms of scientific relevance, have often not permitted a strategically oriented quality culture with its own mechanisms, at institutional level.

Internal factors

If quality transformation often relies on external stimulation, quite a few universities have achieved change by enhancing internal quality awareness; for their rectors and senior leaders, external imperatives have become extra means for changing behaviour, when it became obvious that refusing change would jeopardise the institution's future. Strategic and quality processes are ideally about

(a) holding up a mirror so that the institution and its parts are able to see themselves for what they really are, rather than cling to obsolete identity myths;

(b) providing to people at all levels within the institution insights about existing issues, as well as possibilities and perspectives of change;

(c) providing a vehicle for the provision of structured advice in relation to defined issues and opportunities;

(d) providing education in the ways and means of institutional improvement.

It might therefore be said that effective quality processes are, in fact, exercises in the supportive destabilisation of the *status quo*, with a view to constructive transformation. The process builds on uncertainty regarding the validity of *status quo* arrangements, thus stimulating an assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses as far as mission, strategy, processes, role, structure and resources are concerned; this internal and creative capability to be critical often refers to similar phenomena in other institutions: such comparisons allow for improvement. Changes in behaviour and attitude are the desired end-products of the exercise.

When universities move across the matrix, various activities may prove unhelpful, and, as experience indicates, should be avoided. There is no need for processes which are erratic and inconsistent, which offer excessively narrow and rigid perspectives, which reflect partiality and bias, or which contain heavy, costly, and time-consuming data collection. Such processes, indeed, are likely to deter innovation, while leading to substantial demotivation.

LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES

To develop sound quality cultures which move their institutions broadly in the direction of Quadrant D (High Priority/Systematic), senior managers may adopt several distinctive leadership strategies. Though conceptually distinct, in terms of underlying leadership style, they are nonetheless linked in practice, since university leaders will usually combine them for effective implementation, thus remaining sensitive to the micropolitical map of the university. Some university groups may well respond to rational approaches, others to normative educative approaches, and others to the exercise of more power-related political approaches. Considerable flexibility and judgement of the strategies' appropriateness is thus required from university.

1. **Rational approaches** to the development of quality cultures, and the movement towards Quadrant D, are based on the assumption that the people who inhabit universities are generally rational, and will react positively to arguments which are clearly and logically presented, demonstrate a case, and are supported by sound and relevant data.

In this event, the quality strategy must be clear and explicit, its rationale (external and internal) transparent, its purpose well-defined, its decision clear, and its link to institutional mission obvious. A rational quality culture calls for performance indicators which are perceived to be relevant and appropriate to what is to be assessed, neither excessive in number and complexity, nor overpowering in terms of the paperwork which is generated. Legitimate ground rules would be expected for the operation of the system, with accompanying documentation and handbooks for the various parties – evaluators, evaluated, and system maintainers. In addition, legitimate experts – internal or external – whose specific reports are likely to have credibility with the evaluated, should fulfil the role of change agents. Finally, the whole effort must be supported by a respected organisational framework to guide the quality endeavours, for instance an office or offices to sustain the process and provide assistance, as well as a forum to discuss policy and define outcomes.

Whilst rational approaches may certainly be justified in terms of intellectual rigour, this, *per se*, does not generate acceptance by the academic community, given that the context of their use may be fraught with financial reduction, local crises and internal micropolitics. It is normally wise to develop such "rational" instruments in a period of relative institutional calm, and well before they are likely to be used for rather difficult organisational purposes. In this case, questions of validity and integrity are rather less likely to arise, giving academics less opportunities to disparage the validity of the proposed instruments and processes.

Rational approaches clearly imply highly transparent and open procedures and a free flow of information. This is more difficult to sustain in a very turbulent environment.

2. Given the limitations of rational behaviour patterns in the academic community, **formative or educative approaches** to strategic quality culture development can better concur to change. The underlying assumption here is that people are likely to feel threatened by the development of quality instruments, which could reveal personal inadequacies in terms of past performance, or because their use brings insecurity and uncertainty in terms of induced change. Educative approaches are thus designed to enable academics and other staff to feel comfortable and proficient in changed circumstances, in order to reduce resistance, alienation and the feeling of inadequacy. Rectorate and deans can set an example by subjecting themselves to review and personal development initiatives. Widespread briefings on the reasons why quality processes are needed, the likely ramifications and consequences of their use at various levels, and a demonstration, in specific terms, of expected and likely positive outcomes are also vital. If difficulties are likely to crop up, staff should be briefed on the support they can expect when coping with change. Colleagues could be further involved in the design of processes, relevant structures, performance indicators and databases as this should generate commitment and ownership of the change process. Systematic training and staff development are also important to strenghten mature approaches: external and internal workshops for both academics and non-academics on assessment procedures could lead to counselling, mentoring and related activities, in order to provide tailor-made assistance to staff members involved in a specific area of transformation.

The rector benefits from a significant advantage due to his/her position, i.e., a global understanding of all the facets of a quality issue and of a quality strategy; this gives the leaders immense scope for institutional integration and cross-referencing. Moreover, the rector often has advance notice of likely external issues and strategic developments, because of membership of the national rectors' conference and closeness to the national higher education agencies; thus, university leadership should be able to prepare the political climate of the institution for the likely big issues looming on the horizon, or use inside information to create shock.

The educative approach is in essence a continuous procedure, highly flexible to the needs of particular groups when assistance is required. Therefore, considerable calls are likely to be made on expert support from university quality offices, from quality specialists at faculty level, all people able to identify and diagnose likely problem areas at an early stage, and to provide support, remediation and follow-up. The constructive partnership between rector's office, strategic planning office, quality office, staff development department and deans is thus a key factor in the evolution of a quality culture.

3. There will inevitably be occasions when the rational and educative approaches above may need to be supplemented by a third, the **political or power-coercive approach**. The assumption here is that, in times of organisational stress and high conflict, the density of institutional micro-politics is likely to increase substantially. Even in relatively quiet times, there will always be people who do not respond positively to rational or educative approaches. Thus, acquiescence or compliance with university strategy may need to be achieved through other means. This is often quite difficult in various institutional or national settings where the formal instruments of authority available to the rector are not adequate when facing substantial opposition from colleagues. To enlarge on rational and educative approaches, however, political approaches may encompass a number of different possibilities if power is to be exerted.

(a) Rectors and senior leaders may well wish to sustain change by referring to sources of executive legitimacy, the university law or charter; or to the authority delegated by the Ministry, Senate, University Council; or to their personal job descriptions. Credibility often arises from a rectoral election, especially if it can rely on strong management structures. However, this needs to be supplemented by personal competence, credibility and reputation, as expressed by trust and prestige (personal and scientific).

(b) The targeted use of reviews and performance indicators on those parts of the university deemed to be in need of improvement, investment or remediation, and the widespread publication of results arising are an important tactic to destabilise the *status quo*, and may certainly be an exercise of power. This little group of instruments can put considerable pressure on particular groups within the institution, developing quality awareness in the area concerned, and helping others to realise that they are not immune from such pressure.

(c) Resulting from such a targeted use of reviews, a link with funding can also be established either within or alongside the normal budgetary process. Funds may be awarded or withdrawn, evoking formidable incentives to quality awareness and, progressively, to a strategic culture. That represents "shock tactic" in a different guise. Aggressive follow-up of change induced by a review exercise is likely to have the same effect.

(d) To make obvious the need for change, rectors may wish to engage external reviewers coming from the stakeholders' community, especially if the academic unit concerned relies on such outside partner for business or credibility (e.g., a health authority, company, or government department).

(e) In terms of the formulation, legitimisation and acceptance of a quality strategy in the first place, rectors may well exert their power in bartering loss and advantages among various university groups, thus developing coalitions of university interest groups who can deliver a majority verdict for a policy; this needs clear steering techniques (appointment of committee chairs and members; influence on agenda setting; provision of documentation etc.).

(f) The selection or nomination of allies to key positions in the strategy quality process is an instrument certainly open to rectors who, in some systems, can influence the choice of a vice-rector for strategy or quality, of the director for the quality office, or even of the deans. This can help influence and condition subsequent behaviour by academic colleagues in the area concerned.

(g) An especially important area of concern should be the composition and operation of the rectorate or senior management group

itself. Here, the important elements would be for members to share values on the quality agendas relevant to the university, to develop frequent contact and dialogue throughout the university (for instance, when deans are part of the institutional management teams). One would expect that one member of the rectorate has prime responsibility for quality matters as a whole, but all senior managers should feel responsible for quality within their portfolios – be it teaching and learning, research, postgraduate or continuing education.

It might be argued that these devices are not necessarily power-coercive approaches *per se*. Nonetheless, they are tools often used to force rather than encourage movement in a specific part of the university. As such, their inclusion in political instruments is justified.

We have already alluded to the importance of the dynamics of policy formation in understanding the nature of paradoxes, utilising the existence of tensions to foster change. Therefore, the skill of the leader in recognising and exploiting ambiguity is crucial. Analysis shows that a policy portfolio needs to encompass strategic directions (size, shape and scope of the university) as well as supporting "bread and butter" policies (for curriculum, research, personnel, finance, business generation etc.) if it is to reinforce trust in the process of transformation, particularly in a turbulent environment where effective policy-making (in relation to the original crisis) tends to move through four stages:

- **an ambiguous stage** (typified by a clarification of the dimensions of the problem and the parameters of likely solutions, and by an identification of policy actors in a climate of high tension and uncertainty);
- **a political stage** (typified by a sorting out of viable policy options, by the selection of incentives and bargains, by informality, and by a solid information base);
- **a legitimisation phase** (typified by the testing of solutions against criteria, by political acceptability leading to commitment, and by formal collegial approval processes);
- **a bureaucratisation stage** completing the maturation process and corresponding to implementation.

One is not insinuating in the above that rectors should become unbridled disciples of Machiavelli in the development of a particular type of culture. Rather, in view of the micropolitics of the academe, there is a need for political as well as intellectual leadership of a high order. That is why institutional leaders should develop a balanced portfolio of approaches – rational, formative and political – in order to move the institution to a position which is both one of high priority and an appropriate systematisation.

CONCLUSION

The stimulation of university cultures supportive of strategic quality endeavours is far from easy, but is probably a precondition of effective quality operations. Such stimulation usually needs a kick-start from externally inspired initiatives, at least if a university-wide approach is to be achieved. However, given the nature of the academic community, its beliefs and values concerning innovative and creative research, teaching and community service, the institution requires a quality-related culture that avoids rigidity, and harnesses the enthusiasm and sense of ownership of the academe. In this respect, the selection by university leaders of appropriate approaches to cultural transformation is clearly critical.

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AN EXPLANATORY GLOSSARY

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MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

The management of a body is a way of conducting collective action on the part of those responsible for it. While "government" and "leadership" are also employed, these terms tend to express the structures of command and control, whereas "management" describes the processes by which collective action is stimulated with a view to change.

The aim of any management activity is to steer the development of a body in certain directions, to co-ordinate its different initiatives to the same end, and to ensure that its administrative activities deliver the appropriate support, logistic, evaluation and control services. It is essential that **management and administration**, which are highly interdependent, are coherently devised and implemented.

POLICY AND STRATEGIES

As part of the function of management, the ultimate aim of policies and strategies is to guide the activities and operation of a university with respect to the **transformations in its environment** which are observed, foreseeable or liable to result from its own innovations. These bearings or objectives apply to its activities, structures, methods and operational regulations, as well as its resources, relations and public image. They concern the entire university when they are defined and acted on by its central bodies, or each of its decentralised units (faculties, departments, institutes or research centres, and services) whenever they possess some developmental autonomy.

Policy is formulated in terms of general principles regarding what to do (or not do) and how: it comprises rules and common standards which condition the long-term development of an institution. **Strategies** reflect policy from an operational standpoint, defining a set of aims and associated means. They fix priorities and balances to be respected across different objectives. They determine precise goals, whose achievement can be measured and performances evaluated. And, finally, they specify their time frame, allocate responsibilities and resources, organise structures and ways of working and set up evaluation exercises. A policy may thus give rise to several different strategies, all of which are compatible with its general thrust.

Policy and strategy thus engender **quality criteria** for evaluation of activities. This **evaluation** makes it possible to see how objectives and goals are implemented and to analyse obstacles and positive factors, and may sometimes lead to their reappraisal.

IDENTITY, INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AND THE "VIRTUAL" UNIVERSITY

The **identity** of a university seeks to communicate the essential aspects of its different tasks, the specific nature of its objectives and methods, and its public image. Although symbolic, identity is sufficiently precise to influence subsequent strategic decisions and give rise to arbitration regarding new institutional policies. The latter express, in terms of action principles, the concrete embodiment of this identity. They also define the quality criteria that are the basis of **institutional evaluation**. By this is meant the appraisal of the capacity of the university to formulate and further general policies for change, which affect the long-term development of the entire institution.

With the development of numerous and varied networking activities both internally and with external partners, and as part of the future information society, universities might gradually assume a more **virtual form**, in which it would become hard to circumscribe precisely their activities, and structural and organisational rules, indeed their very being. Ultimately, the identity of an institution would be expressed mainly by rules of conduct enabling the operation of networks, norms, the shared perception of a collective interest – and, where possible, common policies and communication within and between networks – rather than through strong action and decision-making structures, regulations and control mechanisms. It is to be expected that elements of this "virtual" nature will become an increasingly marked feature of the organisation of universities and the university system.

When a university simply turns to **experts** to evaluate what it does, it **implicitly** adopts the

policies and strategies of the bodies or professional milieux that these experts have chosen as their model. Indeed, its institutional policy may be to adopt a model which the experts recommend as good. However, this decision has to be clear and explicit. And the various experts consulted who, in most cases, evaluate specific activities (such as organisation, finance, particular training programmes, different kinds of research and staff policies), still have to adopt coherent points of view among themselves.

The absence of formulated institutional policies certainly does not mean that there are none whatever. Often they are implicit, corresponding to the policies of certain bodies or influential persons who make use of the potential of the institution for the benefit of their own particular strategies. As far as the development of the institution is concerned, the result may be good or bad, depending on the quality of those strategies, as well as their capacity to influence for the good those bodies and agencies that are least influential. But often this mode of management has the effect of strengthening centres of excellence at the expense of sectors the least able to adapt and improve the quality of their activities. In the last resort, this leads to internal tension.

Naturally, these institutional policies must be adapted to the **development of the environment** or, in other words, to changes which have occurred or are foreseeable in restrictions, in the perception of new opportunities, or in appreciating the capacity for change within an institution, so that it may better fulfil its responsibilities.

In our societies, in which environmental changes are numerous, rapid and interdependent, **future developments** are not easily predictable. As a result, institutional policies are aimed above all at preparing an institution for change, at ensuring their own flexible adaptability and ability to grasp **innovative opportunities**. They primarily concern the institution's organisation, its standards and attitudes, and its leadership relies on strategic management methods.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

This is a particular form of management. It is participatory, critical, forward-looking, leading towards institutional policies which seek essentially to enhance the **potential for change** in a university. This potential depends on skills, the principles governing the conduct of all parties concerned, the organisation and management methods and the network of relations and their quality.

It is directed towards **complex situations** involving numerous and highly autonomous actors. In such situations, there is considerable uncertainty as regards both information and trends, which can only be forecast to a limited extent, while the evaluation of results encounters serious difficulties.

Thus, strategic management strives to introduce and sustain a capacity for adaptation, and **collective learning** about change at all decision-making levels. It relies on organisational methods (**behavioural norms, structures, communications, rules, procedures**, etc.), on a solid and clear **commitment** on the part of administrators in new courses of action, which is an integral part of appropriate methods of **leadership** (stimulation of collective action). It encourages decentralised initiative, innovation, personal involvement, but also co-operation, the exchange of information, and network activity, with a **constant concern for quality** and the widest possible propagation of evaluation methods and quality standards.

A university and the university system are complex organisations. But they also include, to a greater or lesser extent, more standard situations with clearly perceptible developmental trends, which have to be planned, programmed and organised in the classical manner.

Strategic management must be able to control these two types of situation in combination.

There is no standard strategic management model. Each university possesses its own **form of government, structures, traditions**, experience, problems to be resolved, individual persons, means, capacity to manage and, in particular, its practice of leadership. It is characterised by its own management style.

Strong centralised leadership, whose authority and know-how are fully accepted, with real staff concern for quality and good communication, can exercise innovative management in a way that has its limits. There are also bureaucratic management methods with little leadership, in which management essentially entails administration, cost supervision and sound programming of the implementation of decisions, and the conduct of operations according to the rules, etc. Such methods may suit certain situations. But forces for change may then come from outside an institution (external reforms and regulations, limitation of means, competition, "centrifugal" movements of staff or resources, or the arrival of influential new staff, etc.).

The level of participation and initiative of members in the formulation and achievement of policies is also specific. Traditions and leadership play a central part in them.

Despite the highly specific nature of strategic management, it may be considered to possess general principles which are the subject of this document.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND COACHING

To **lead**, in the strict sense of the term, is to bring to bear a particular line of action through organisational, resourceful and supervisory means aimed at achieving objectives laid down by the management bodies. But in a body as varied and fragmented as a university, the different management units (boards, managers, etc.) strive to engage in **coaching**, by means of a **participatory management** system in which discussion makes for agreement, in line with experience, on the nature of the developmental problems to be resolved, as well as on appropriate strategic methods, and groups of objectives, goals and means which arise from them.

The real vectors of strategic practice are, then, the **behavioural norms**, the richness and **effectiveness of internal and external communication** and the quality of discussions, rather than plans, structures and regulations which are part of the administration of activities and persons.

Coaching therefore entails methods of collective orientation which are devised and carried out with a constant eye to possible divergences from the aims, the very validity of the latter and the suitability of the means. There is simultaneous concern also for promoting the quality of activities through propagation of a quality culture, the nurturing of responsibility among the greatest possible number of "actors", encouragement of initiative and innovation and the spread of good practice.

COLLECTIVE LEARNING WITH REGARD TO CHANGE

To adopt now the most current expression, coaching practices at the heart of strategic management seek to strengthen the nature of a university as a "**learning organisation**". This term refers to an organisation capable of establishing a collective memory *vis-à-vis* its innovations, and of learning to change on the basis of its own experience or that of partners or competitors. The expression "**collective learning with regard to change**" may also be coined.

Clearly, a university is by definition a learning organisation. All its members, teaching staff and students or partners are part of a broad community of specialists in their disciplines or professional expertise who are ceaselessly reshaping their knowledge and exchanging experience via their publications and meetings.

However, the move from knowledge possessed by individuals to that of a collective entity is not straightforward. The information comprising it is still specialist, in the domain of experts, and is linked to the play of power and influence or, in other words, to the highly compartmentalised strategies of the different parties possessing it. Neither is it made up solely of firmly recorded and clearly structured data that are easily transferable. In fact, it is only fully accessible in the complex context of experience, expertise, "know-how" and, above all, the practice of collective action.

There are other forms of knowledge than scientific or academic expertise. They include experience of teaching innovations, working methods in co-operation and exchange networks, the development of relations, methods of organisation and management, etc. Furthermore, communication is not neutral, but a participatory exchange in which subjective, cultural and even social factors associated

with those involved contribute to the very nature of the information and to the meanings and representations with which it is invested. The German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas refers to "action conducive to communication". The circulation of knowledge is thus a complex process the effectiveness of which depends on a real **organisational culture**.

In a period when progress in information processing both implies and makes it technically possible to work in networks and when information must be widely available for all concerned, experience demonstrates the difficulties involved in establishing it on an integral and integrated basis. It is easier for information related to standardised clearly identified activity in technical, scientific, commercial and financial fields or in personnel administration. Broadly accessible databases can be built up, at least if there is a suitable communication policy.

On the other hand, in less standardised sectors, the specialisation and fragmentation of information on the very conduct of occupations are often much stronger. The exchange and propagation of information are harder to achieve. Universities are in this category of "non-industrial" small-scale culture in which, other than in publications and formal teaching, non-formal knowledge is transmitted among the small number of persons, teachers, researchers or students who are involved in the execution of a project or teaching session. Strategic management methods must strive to reduce these difficulties.

HOW IS ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING TO BE IMPROVED?

- By ensuring good communications between those party to it and, in particular, carefully noting their **innovatory practices**, circulating and initiating critical discussion of them, with a view to transposing them and possibly amending prevailing institutional policies.

- By encouraging behavioural norms and institutional organisation which prompt those involved to try out new solutions and systematically analyse other experimentation or experience which seem relevant.

- By gathering and interpreting outward **signs** of satisfaction on the part of those who resort to its services (students and users, staff, partners and co-contractors, supervisory authorities and suppliers of resources, public opinion), and taking account of them in quality evaluation procedures and the reformulation of action programmes.

- By learning to identify and exploit **signals of discontinuity or weak signals** which help one to understand that major changes are likely to develop in the future and that very close attention should be paid to the way they do so. Such changes are far from self-evident, and identification and interpretation are only possible where there is a strategic and forward-looking culture. In general, real strategies for change are based on these signals, and are reflected in new directions which are necessarily characterised by risk and which, in the context of the present, may well seem misplaced and impossible to implement. Such signals are associated with uncertainty.

- By maintaining **competitive pressures** to reduce inertia and "defensive routines" and to induce the emergence of new roles and new innovative "actors" and assist them in their enterprise. This spirit of competition and the individualism which accompanies it, should not however lead to reinforcement of the "boundaries" between bodies or individuals, inhibiting co-operation and thus creating a barrier to the development of a learning organisation culture. For management, this is a serious challenge and a paradox to be resolved in an imaginative and vigorous manner.

- By establishing **structures** and modes of organisation and, therefore, communication which are as **flexible** as possible in that they are fairly rapidly adaptable to new situations, and can facilitate experimental activities. In this way, the adaptation of structures and organisation itself becomes a process of change and a collective way of learning how to change.

Here, however, another paradox has to be overcome, since structures have to be well established in order to be useful as operational and communications networks. They are often strengthened by an associated culture and by working norms and relations compatible with them. But, in a structural framework, different cultures are conceivable, with modes of operation and relations between those concerned which make for greater adaptation, including changes in the structures themselves.

Furthermore, there always exist **informal structures** which may be more flexible or, on the contrary, more rigid, and work within networks often results in the setting up of a matrix-style organisation, in which individual "actors" may be related to different structures, depending on the activities for which they are responsible.

RATIONALISATION, INNOVATION, PRESERVATION

The methods of strategic management seek to oblige the different individuals and agencies involved in university strategies to appropriately combine the three components of any strategy for change, namely strategies for **rationalisation**, strategies for **innovation** and strategies for **conservation**.

Rationalising means implementing defined objectives with optimal efficiency. Reduction of unitary costs is the most classical form they take, at least when it is possible to define new and more productive methods, or to expand the scale of operations with existing means (for example, a greater number of students, or a reduction in the teacher/student ratio). A policy of rationalisation is always necessary when changes seem inevitable, since it releases resources which may be earmarked for innovation. However, efficiency cannot be measured solely in terms of cost since quality is at stake.

Innovation in the nature of the service supplied, or in the processes which enable it to be so, is frequently the means to rationalise an activity, making it more efficient and enhancing its quality, but at a higher development cost. However, it often entails new responsibilities related to conception, and then development. Therefore, there is always a measure of arbitration between rationalisation and innovation, and these strategies are rarely dissociated.

Conserving or preserving is also frequently an essential requirement in change. Intense and rapid rationalisation through cost reduction may certainly prompt compensatory innovations. Indeed, this is one of the expected reactions in policies for reduced financial support which often accompany basic reforms. But when the quality of services does not suffer, it may be because the contractual or conditional modes of funding have been increased, with specific costs in terms of academic independence.

In short, rationalisation, innovation and conservation are linked in paradoxical interdependent relations. Only a clear, coherent and consequential institutional policy in strategic management practice can lead to a dynamic equilibrium between the three dimensions of change. The exercise is all the more difficult in that the consequences of processes of rationalisation and innovation on the preservation of certain characteristics may be difficult to envisage or foresee, and hard to control too in their cumulative development. Moreover, in phases of important and rapid change, there is a frequent tendency to underestimate their long-lasting effects on the attitudes, norms and modes of operation necessary to preserve the values, know-how, relations and a public image, which are part of the potential for development. From this standpoint, strategic management must be constantly on the alert and ready to redirect its goals and means.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT MODELS

By definition, participatory, strategic management relies considerably on jointly conducted processes, with a view to resolving the inevitable conflicts associated with change. The term "consensus strategy" can be used when the diversity of interests and points of view does not threaten the identity of institutions. The aim of the joint effort and negotiation is thus to reduce differences and find a solution in the general interest. At the outset, the essential phase is for leaders to make apparent, understand, and if possible admit, the need for change, to identify clearly its forms and to make credible, for the most influential at least, the idea that this change is possible and will be profitable. This is the way

to establish a climate of confidence, without which the cultural and organisational cost of the change may be prohibitive.

A flexible model. The complexity and uncertainty which reigns over problems and solutions in strategic practices, the need to learn jointly through experience, the action of a multiplicity of interdependent processes, the divergent values, motivations, interests and influences of everyone involved, the fact that university statutes often provide for elected representatives, are the factors that put a premium on adaptive logic. Partial, acceptable and promising changes, lead on to others within the framework of general inspiration regarding change, which becomes clearer in successive stages.

The task of leadership, therefore, is both to transmit this general inspiration as regards action, and to prepare through negotiation the acceptance of what are often compromise solutions enabling its concrete conversion into particular strategies; then, to encourage the transfer of new ideas and practices from one sector to the other. With a view to ensuring maximum credibility for change and fresh inspiration, leaders thus take the time to choose innovations that have the best chance of being accepted, achievable and transferable. These are so-called adaptive strategies, entirely consistent with the hypotheses of "bounded rationality" proposed by H. Simons.

Proactive model. But to ensure the credibility of strategic management essential to its practice, leaders may have rapidly to introduce new strong policies which set the tone for the fresh inspiration regarding the action they intend to promote. Such is the case, for instance, with far-reaching reforms in organisation, programmes, recruitment, funding, or where there is a change of leadership at the top, or where new strategic limitations point to a rapid and radical reaction. One example of this might be a sudden major reduction in financial support. Firm and fast action is therefore necessary so that at least the idea of new strategic scenarios is rapidly communicated, while the expectations and different perspectives of all concerned are modified. At the same time, there is reorganisation and a redistribution of responsibilities and resources.

Paradoxical strategies. Mention has already been made of paradoxical situations in 74 and 75. At the outset, there is no search for compromises. Here are contradictions which provoke confrontation, initiating a new paradoxical scenario. This *modus operandi* presupposes vigorous and efficient leadership. Although leaders may open their new vision to wide debate, they do not attempt to settle contradictions through joint effort at the outset, for fear of weakening in initial compromises the new action principles they wish to implement. On the contrary, they reveal them clearly in the initial procedures, relying on subsequent debate and on procedures that will have to resolve these inconsistencies to launch the impetus for collective change. It is clear that this kind of strategy can only be achieved in circumstances in which the need for change cannot be contested or overlooked long, and where the leaders of the institution concerned have the necessary authority, ability and influence to make the new ideas credible, if not immediately acceptable.

Here, one may refer to a paradoxical strategy as a way of prompting the emergence of a **new vision and meaning** and, therefore, a fresh inspiration. It is through strategic management that these paradoxes can be handled, while developing a new strategic practice through collective action.

STRONG AND SIMPLE STRATEGIES

The need for strong simple strategies **capable of mobilising and committing** the most active interested **parties** around new principles of collective action: this is the true test of leadership.

The choice of a method of strategic management is always specific to each case. But in all cases, policies and strategies have to be defined and conducted. Whatever the complexity of the situation, a strategy, which is the expression of a new vision, is a collection of new principles and highly significant action criteria. All must be as simple and clearly expressed as possible, in order to be easily communicated and, also, to release initiatives and give rise to new norms. In this sense, any strategy is cultural and normative, drawing admittedly on certain existent norms which permit its inception, but carrying new norms within it.

GLOSSAIRE RAISONNÉ

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MANAGEMENT ET ADMINISTRATION

Le **management** d'un organisme est un mode de conduite de l'action collective par les responsables. On parle aussi de gouvernement, de direction, mais ces termes expriment plutôt les structures de commandement et de contrôle alors que le terme management décrit des processus d'animation de l'action collective en vue du changement.

Toute activité de management a pour but d'orienter le développement d'un organisme dans certaines directions, de coordonner les diverses activités dans ce but et de s'assurer que les activités administratives fournissent les services de soutien, de logistique, d'évaluation et de contrôle. Il est essentiel que **management et administration**, qui sont fortement interdépendants, soient conçus et mis en oeuvre de manière cohérente.

POLITIQUES ET STRATÉGIES

Dans le cadre de la fonction de management, politiques et stratégies ont pour objet d'orienter à terme les activités et le fonctionnement de l'université en fonction des **transformations de son environnement**, observées ou prévisibles, ou qui pourraient résulter de ses propres novations. Ces orientations, ou objectifs, s'appliquent à ses activités, ses structures, ses méthodes et règles de fonctionnement, ses ressources, ses relations, son image publique. Elles concernent l'université dans son ensemble, lorsqu'elles sont définies et suivies par ses organes centraux, ou chacun de ses organes décentralisés (facultés, départements, instituts et centres de recherche, services), lorsqu'ils disposent d'une certaine autonomie de développement.

Les **politiques** sont formulées sous forme de principes généraux de faire, ou de ne pas faire, et comment faire; elles expriment des règles, des normes communes qui orientent le développement à terme de l'institution. Les **stratégies** traduisent une politique de façon opérationnelle, définissant un ensemble d'objectifs et de moyens associés. Elles fixent des priorités et des équilibres à préserver entre divers objectifs. Elles déterminent des buts précis dont la réalisation est mesurable et les performances sont évaluables. Elles précisent les délais, affectent des responsabilités et des ressources, organisent des structures et des modes de travail, mettent en place les évaluations. Une politique peut ainsi donner lieu à plusieurs stratégies différentes mais qui sont toutes compatibles avec ses orientations générales.

Politiques et stratégies fournissent les **critères de qualité** pour évaluer les activités. **Cette évaluation** permet d'apprécier comment les objectifs et buts sont mis en oeuvre, d'analyser les obstacles et les facteurs positifs et conduit éventuellement à les remettre en cause.

IDENTITÉ, POLITIQUES INSTITUTIONNELLES, UNIVERSITÉ VIRTUELLE

L'**identité** d'une université vise à communiquer l'essentiel de ses missions, la spécificité de ses objectifs et méthodes, son image publique. Elle est symbolique mais suffisamment précise pour orienter des choix stratégiques ultérieurs, inspirer des arbitrages entre de nouvelles politiques de l'institution. Ces dernières expriment, en principes d'action, la signification concrète de cette identité. Elles définissent ainsi les critères de qualité qui servent de base à l'**évaluation institutionnelle**. On entend par là l'appréciation de la capacité de l'université de formuler et conduire des politiques générales de changement, politiques qui affectent le développement à terme de l'institution dans son ensemble.

Avec le développement des activités en réseaux multiples et divers, aussi bien en son sein qu'avec des partenaires extérieurs, l'université, dans le cadre de la future société d'information, pourrait tendre vers une **forme virtuelle** où la localisation des activités, les règles de structure et d'organisation, en bref les frontières de l'université deviendraient floues. A la limite, l'identité de l'institution s'exprimerait surtout par des règles de conduite permettant le fonctionnement des réseaux, des normes, le sens partagé d'un intérêt collectif, éventuellement aussi par des politiques communes et des communications intra ou inter-réseaux, plutôt que par de fortes structures d'activités et de décisions ou par des réglementations et

contrôles. On peut s'attendre à ce que des éléments de virtualité soient de plus en plus présents dans l'organisation des universités et du système universitaire.

Lorsque l'université s'en remet simplement à des **experts** pour évaluer ce qu'elle fait, elle adopte, **implicitement**, les politiques et les stratégies des organismes ou des milieux professionnels que ces experts ont pris pour modèle. Sa politique institutionnelle peut être alors l'adaptation d'un modèle qui a bonne réputation, telle que la recommandent les experts. Encore faut-il que ce choix soit clair et explicite et que les divers experts consultés, qui évaluent le plus souvent des activités spécifiques (organisation, finance, programmes particuliers de formation, types de recherches, politiques de personnels...), adoptent des points de vue cohérents entre eux!

L'absence de politiques institutionnelles formulées ne signifie nullement qu'il n'y en ait aucune. Souvent elles sont implicites et correspondent aux politiques de certains des organes ou personnes influentes qui, de fait, utilisent au profit de leurs stratégies particulières le potentiel de l'institution. Le résultat pour le développement de l'institution peut être bon ou mauvais, selon la qualité des stratégies particulières, et selon leur capacité d'influencer dans le bon sens les organes et acteurs les moins influents. Mais souvent ce mode de management revient à renforcer des centres d'excellence au détriment des secteurs les moins aptes à s'adapter et à améliorer la qualité de leurs activités et il finit par être source de tensions internes.

Bien entendu, ces politiques institutionnelles doivent être adaptées à l'**évolution de l'environnement**, c'est-à-dire aux changements intervenus, ou prévisibles dans les contraintes, ou dans la perception d'opportunités nouvelles, ou dans l'appréciation des capacités de changement de l'institution, toujours en vue de mieux remplir ses missions.

Dans nos sociétés où les changements dans l'environnement sont nombreux, rapides et interdépendants, le **futur** n'est pas aisément prévisible. Les politiques institutionnelles visent alors surtout à préparer l'institution à changer, à s'adapter en souplesse, à savoir saisir des **occasions innovatrices**. Elles concernent surtout son organisation, ses normes et mentalités, et son leadership relève de méthodes de management stratégique.

MANAGEMENT STRATÉGIQUE

C'est une forme particulière de management. Il est participatif, critique, prospectif, conduisant à des politiques institutionnelles qui visent essentiellement à accroître le **potentiel de changement** dans l'université: ce potentiel dépend des compétences, des normes de comportement des acteurs, de l'organisation et des méthodes de management, du réseau des relations et de leur qualité.

Il s'applique à des **situations complexes** où opèrent de nombreux acteurs disposant d'une forte autonomie, où l'incertitude de l'information et l'incertitude sur les évolutions est importante, où, par conséquent, la prévisibilité est limitée et où l'évaluation des résultats rencontre de sérieuses difficultés.

Aussi le management stratégique s'efforce-t-il d'instaurer et d'entretenir une capacité d'adaptation, un **apprentissage collectif** du changement à tous les niveaux de décision. Il repose sur des méthodes d'organisation (**normes de comportement, structures, communications, règles, procédures**) sur un ferme et évident **engagement** des responsables dans des voies nouvelles, un engagement qui s'insère dans des méthodes de **leadership** appropriées (animation de l'action collective). Il favorise l'initiative décentralisée, l'innovation, l'implication personnelle mais aussi la coopération, l'échange d'information, le travail en réseaux, avec le **souci constant de la qualité** et la plus large diffusion des méthodes d'évaluation et des normes de qualité.

Une université et le système universitaire sont des organisations complexes. Mais elles comportent également, de manière plus ou moins extensive, des situations plus standardisées, dont il est possible d'apprécier les évolutions tendancielles et qui doivent être planifiées, programmées et organisées de manière classique.

Le management stratégique doit pouvoir gérer, en les combinant, ces deux types de situation.

Il n'existe pas de modèle standard du management stratégique. Chaque université a sa **forme de gouvernement**, ses **structures**, ses **traditions**, son expérience, ses problèmes à résoudre, ses personnes, ses moyens, sa capacité de manager et en particulier sa pratique de leadership. C'est son style de management propre.

Une direction forte, centralisée, mais dont l'autorité et le savoir-faire sont bien acceptés, avec des personnels motivés pour la qualité, et une bonne communication, peut exercer un management innovateur mais qui a ses limites. Il existe aussi des modes de direction bureaucratique qui comportent peu de leadership, où le management consiste surtout à administrer, surveiller les coûts, bien programmer la mise en oeuvre des actions décidées, effectuer des opérations selon les règles, etc. Le management bureaucratique peut répondre à certaines situations mais les impulsions pour le changement risquent alors de provenir de l'extérieur (réformes et réglementations externes, contraintes sur les moyens, concurrence, mouvements centrifuges des personnels et des ressources ou arrivée de personnels influents nouveaux ...).

Le degré de participation et d'initiative des membres à la formulation et la réalisation des politiques est également spécifique; les traditions et le leadership y jouent un rôle clef.

Malgré cette spécificité, on peut considérer qu'il existe des principes généraux de management stratégique: ils sont l'objet de ce document.

PILOTAGE DU CHANGEMENT COLLECTIF

Diriger, au sens strict, c'est exercer une orientation par des moyens d'organisation, d'animation et de contrôle, qui visent à réaliser des objectifs assignés par les organes de direction. Mais dans un organisme aussi divers et fragmenté qu'une université, ces organes de direction (conseils, dirigeants..) s'efforcent plutôt de **piloter le changement** (*coaching*) grâce à un système de **management participatif** où les discussions permettent de s'entendre, en fonction de l'expérience, sur la nature des problèmes de développement à résoudre, sur des méthodes stratégiques pour y parvenir, sur les ensembles d'objectifs, de buts, de moyens qui en découlent.

Ce sont alors les **normes de comportement**, la richesse et l'**efficacité des communications** externes et internes, la qualité des discussions qui sont les véritables vecteurs de la pratique stratégique plutôt que les plans, les structures et la réglementation, qui relèvent des fonctions d'administration des activités et des personnes.

Le pilotage pratique donc des méthodes d'orientation collective conçues et réalisées avec le souci constant d'apprécier les écarts par rapports aux objectifs, ainsi que la validité même de ces objectifs et l'adéquation des moyens; il s'agit de promouvoir la qualité des activités par la diffusion d'une **culture de qualité**, la responsabilisation du plus grand nombre d'acteurs, l'incitation à l'initiative et à l'innovation, et la diffusion des bonnes pratiques.

APPRENTISSAGE COLLECTIF DU CHANGEMENT

Pour reprendre l'expression aujourd'hui usuelle, les pratiques de pilotage du changement, qui sont la base même du management stratégique, visent à renforcer le caractère d'«**organisation apprenante**» de l'université. On appelle ainsi une organisation capable d'établir une mémoire collective de ses innovations et d'apprendre à changer – à partir de ses expériences ou de celle des partenaires ou concurrents. On parle aussi d'**apprentissage collectif du changement**.

Evidemment, une université est par définition une organisation apprenante puisque ses membres, corps enseignant et étudiants ou partenaires, inclus eux-mêmes dans une large communauté de spécialistes de leurs disciplines ou d'expertise professionnelle, ne cessent de renouveler leurs connaissances et d'échanger leurs expériences par les publications et les rencontres.

Mais il n'est pas aisé de passer de la connaissance des individus à celle d'une collectivité. L'information reste spécialisée, experte, liée aux jeux de pouvoir, d'influence, en bref aux stratégies des différents acteurs qui la détiennent, toutes forts cloisonnées. Elle n'est pas non plus uniquement constituée de connaissances bien enregistrées et modélisées, qu'il

est facile de transférer. En fait, elle n'est pleinement accessible que dans le contexte complexe de l'expérience, de l'expertise, du «savoir-faire», et surtout de la pratique de l'action collective.

Il existe d'autres connaissances que les expertises scientifiques: expérience d'innovations pédagogiques, méthodes de travail dans des réseaux de coopération et d'échange, développement des relations, méthodes d'organisation et de gestion, etc..). En outre la communication n'est pas neutre; elle est un échange participatif, où les facteurs subjectifs, culturels, sociaux même, affectant les partenaires, contribuent à la nature même de l'information, aux significations et représentations qui lui sont associées. Le philosophe allemand J. Habermas parle, on le sait, d'«agir communicationnel». De ce fait, la circulation des connaissances est un processus complexe dont l'efficacité dépend d'une véritable **culture organisationnelle**.

A l'heure où les progrès de l'informatique impliquent et permettent techniquement de travailler en réseau, et où l'information doit être largement disponible pour tous les acteurs, l'expérience de l'entreprise démontre les difficultés à mettre en place une information intégrale et intégrée. La réalisation est plus facile pour l'information qui concerne des activités standardisées, bien identifiées, dans les domaines techniques, scientifiques, commerciaux, financiers ou d'administration des personnels. On peut alors constituer des bases de données largement accessibles, si du moins il y une politique de communication adéquate.

En revanche, dans les secteurs moins standardisés, la spécialisation et la fragmentation de l'information sur la pratique même des métiers y sont souvent plus fortes; son échange et sa diffusion sont plus difficiles à réaliser. Etant de culture artisanale, les universités relèvent de ce type d'organisation où, en dehors des publications et des enseignements, la **connaissance non formelle** se transmet entre le petit nombre de personnes – enseignants, chercheurs, étudiants – impliquées dans la réalisation d'un projet ou d'un cours. Les méthodes de management stratégique doivent s'efforcer de réduire ces obstacles.

COMMENT AMÉLIORER L'APPRENTISSAGE ORGANISATIONNEL?

- assurer de bonnes communications entre les membre de l'institution, et en particulier recenser soigneusement leurs **pratiques innovatrices**, les diffuser, engager leur discussion critique en vue de les transposer et, éventuellement, de modifier les politiques institutionnelles en cours;

- favoriser des normes de comportement et une organisation institutionnelles qui incitent ses membres à expérimenter des solutions nouvelles et à analyser systématiquement d'autres expériences qui semblent pertinentes;

- recueillir et interpréter les **signaux** de satisfaction émis par ceux qui utilisent ses services (étudiants et usagers, personnels, partenaires et co-contractants, organes de tutelle et pourvoyeurs de ressources, opinion publique), les prendre en compte dans les procédures d'évaluation de la qualité pour la reformulation des programmes d'action;

- apprendre à repérer et à exploiter les **signaux de discontinuité ou signaux faibles**, qui peuvent aider à comprendre que des changements importants sont susceptibles de se développer à l'avenir et qu'il faut être vigilant sur leur évolution. Ils sont peu évidents et on ne peut les repérer et les interpréter qu'avec une culture stratégique et prospective. Les véritables stratégies de changement sont généralement fondées sur ces signaux et se traduisent par des orientations nouvelles, nécessairement **risquées**, qui, dans le contexte actuel, peuvent sembler aberrantes, impossibles à mettre en oeuvre. Ce sont des signaux conduisant à des paris.

- maintenir des **pressions concurrentielles** pour réduire les inerties et «routines défensives», induire l'émergence de nouveaux rôles, de nouveaux acteurs innovateurs, les aider dans leur entreprise. Cet esprit de compétition et l'individualisme qui l'accompagne ne doivent pas cependant renforcer les «frontières» entre organes et personnes, freiner la coopération, donc faire obstacle au développement d'une culture d'organisation appre-

nante. C'est un sérieux défi pour le management, un des paradoxes à résoudre de façon dynamique.

- établir des **structures**, des modes d'organisation, et donc de communication, aussi **flexibles** que possible, c'est-à-dire rapidement adaptables à des situations nouvelles; faciliter les activités expérimentales. Ainsi l'adaptation des structures et de l'organisation devient elle-même un processus de changement, en même temps qu'une manière collective d'apprendre comment changer. Mais c'est un autre paradoxe à résoudre car, pour être utiles comme réseaux de communication et d'opérations, les structures doivent être bien établies. Elles sont souvent renforcées par une culture associant des normes de travail et de relations compatibles avec elles. Mais, dans tout cadre structurel, différentes cultures sont concevables, avec des modes de fonctionnement et des relations entre acteurs qui permettent plus d'adaptation, y compris une évolution des structures elles-mêmes.

En outre, il existe toujours des **structures informelles** qui peuvent être plus souples ou au contraire plus rigides, et le travail en réseaux aboutit souvent à la mise en place d'une organisation matricielle, où un acteur développe des allégeances institutionnelles selon les diverses activités qu'il assure.

RATIONALISATION, INNOVATION, PRÉSERVATION

Les méthodes de management stratégique s'efforcent d'exercer les différents acteurs des stratégies universitaires à combiner de manière appropriée les trois composantes de toute stratégie de changement: stratégies de **rationalisation**; stratégies d'**innovation**; stratégies de **conservation**.

Rationaliser, c'est mettre en oeuvre des objectifs déjà définis avec une efficacité meilleure. La réduction des coûts unitaires en est la forme la plus classique, du moins lorsqu'il est possible de définir de nouvelles méthodes plus productives ou d'accroître le volume des opérations avec les moyens existants (par exemple un plus grand nombre d'étudiants ou une réduction du taux d'encadrement). Une politique de rationalisation est toujours nécessaire lorsque des changements paraissent inévitables car elle dégage des ressources qui pourront être consacrées à l'innovation. Cependant l'efficacité ne peut être mesurée uniquement en terme de coût car la qualité est en jeu.

L'**innovation** dans la nature du service fourni ou dans les processus qui permettent de le fournir est fréquemment le moyen de rationaliser une activité, de la rendre plus efficace et de meilleure qualité mais à un coût de développement plus élevé. En effet, elle induit souvent de nouvelles charges pour sa mise au point et son développement. Il y a donc toujours un arbitrage entre rationalisation et innovation, et ces stratégies sont rarement dissociées.

Conserver, préserver, sont aussi fréquemment un impératif du changement: une rationalisation par réduction des coûts, intense et rapide, peut certes inciter à des innovations de compensation. C'est même l'une des réactions attendues dans les politiques de réduction de crédits qui accompagnent souvent des réformes de fond. Mais lorsque la qualité des services n'en souffre pas, ce peut être parce que les modes de financement contractuels ou conditionnels ont été accrus, tenant compte de coûts spécifiques, c'est-à-dire des risques de réduction de l'indépendance scientifique.

En bref, rationalisation, innovation, conservation ont entre eux des relations paradoxales d'interdépendance. Seule une politique institutionnelle claire, cohérente et suivie, dans une pratique claire de management stratégique, peut conduire à un équilibre dynamique entre les trois dimensions du changement. C'est un exercice d'autant plus ardu que les conséquences du processus de rationalisation et d'innovation sur la préservation de certaines caractéristiques peuvent être difficiles à concevoir ou à prévoir – et difficiles à contrôler dans leurs développements cumulatifs. De plus, dans les phases de changement important et rapide, on sous-estime souvent leurs effets durables sur les attitudes, normes et modes de fonctionnement, toutes choses nécessaires à la préservation des valeurs, des savoir-faire, des relations, d'une image publique, qui font partie du potentiel de développement de l'institution. De ce point de vue, le management stratégique doit être constamment en alerte, prêt à réorienter ses buts et ses moyens.

MODÈLES DE MANAGEMENT STRATÉGIQUE

Etant par définition participatif, le management stratégique a largement recours à des processus de concertation en vue de résoudre les conflits inévitables associés au changement. On parle de stratégie consensuelle lorsque la diversité des intérêts et des points de vue ne met pas en cause l'identité de l'institution. La concertation et la négociation ont donc pour objet de réduire les différences et de trouver une solution d'intérêt général. La phase essentielle au départ est pour les leaders de faire apparaître, comprendre et, si possible, admettre, la nécessité d'un changement, d'en discerner les formes, et de rendre crédible, pour les plus influents au moins, l'idée que ce changement est possible et sera fructueux. C'est le moyen d'établir un climat de confiance sans lequel le coût, culturel et organisationnel, du changement peut être prohibitif.

Le modèle adaptatif. La complexité et l'incertitude quant aux problèmes et aux solutions qui règnent dans les pratiques stratégiques; la nécessité d'apprendre en commun par l'expérience; l'intervention de multiples processus interdépendants; les divergences de valeurs, de motivations, d'intérêt, d'influence entre les acteurs; le fait que les statuts universitaires comportent souvent l'élection des élus, sont tous des facteurs qui donnent prime à une logique adaptative; il s'agit de lancer des changements partiels, acceptables et prometteurs, qui en entraînent d'autres, dans le cadre d'une inspiration générale du changement qui se définit au coup par coup.

La fonction de leadership consiste donc à la fois à diffuser cette inspiration générale de l'action et à préparer par des négociations l'acceptation des solutions, souvent de compromis, qui permettent de la traduire concrètement en stratégies particulières, puis de favoriser le transfert des idées et pratiques nouvelles d'un secteur à l'autre. En vue d'assurer la meilleure crédibilité du changement et des inspirations nouvelles, les leaders prennent ainsi le temps de choisir les innovations qui ont les meilleurs chances d'être acceptées, d'être réalisables et transférables. On parle de stratégies adaptatives, tout à fait conformes aux hypothèses de rationalité limitée, «*bounded rationality*», de H. Simons.

Le modèle volontariste. Cependant, pour assurer la crédibilité du management stratégique, qui est essentielle à sa pratique, les leaders peuvent devoir introduire rapidement des politiques nouvelles, fortes, et qui donnent le ton aux inspirations nouvelles pour l'action qu'ils entendent promouvoir. C'est le cas, par exemple, des réformes profondes d'organisation, de programmes, de recrutement, de financement, souvent facilitées par un changement de leadership au sommet ou par des contraintes stratégiques nouvelles, qui impliquent une réaction rapide et profonde – par exemple, en cas de réduction soudaine et importante de crédits. Des chocs sont alors nécessaires qui diffusent rapidement au moins l'idée de nouveaux scénarios stratégiques et modifient les anticipations, les perspectives de positionnement des uns par rapport aux autres, ce qui d'ailleurs est accompagné de réorganisation, de redistribution de responsabilités et de ressources.

Stratégies paradoxales. Nous avons déjà parlé de situations paradoxales en 74 et 75. On ne recherche pas le compromis au départ. Ce sont même les contradictions qui provoquent le choc, nécessaire au nouveau scénario paradoxal. Cette manière d'opérer suppose un leadership vigoureux et efficace. Les leaders, bien qu'ils soumettent leur vision nouvelle à de larges débats, ne tentent pas de régler les contradictions par la concertation au départ, de crainte d'affaiblir, dans des compromis initiaux, les principes nouveaux d'action qu'ils souhaitent voir mis en oeuvre. Au contraire, ils les révèlent clairement dans les procédures initiales et ils comptent sur les débats ultérieurs et sur les procédures qui devront résoudre ces incohérences pour engager une dynamique de changement collectif. Il est clair que ce type de stratégie n'est réalisable que dans des circonstances où la nécessité du changement ne peut être longtemps contestée ou ignorée, que dans les institutions où les leaders ont l'autorité, la capacité et l'influence nécessaires pour rendre au moins crédibles, sinon immédiatement acceptables, les idées nouvelles.

On peut donc parler de stratégie paradoxale, comme moyen de faire apparaître une **vision nouvelle**, une signification et donc une inspiration nouvelles. C'est par le management stratégique que ces paradoxes devront être gérés afin d'élaborer par l'action collective une nouvelle pratique stratégique.

DES STRATÉGIES SIMPLES ET FORTES

Nécessité de stratégies simples, fortes, **capables de rallier et d'engager les protagonistes** les plus actifs autour de principes nouveaux d'action collective: c'est le test du leadership.

Le choix d'une méthode de management stratégique est toujours un cas d'espèce mais, de toute manière, il s'agit de définir et de conduire des politiques et des stratégies. Quelle que soit la complexité de la situation, une stratégie, qui est l'expression d'une vision autre, est un ensemble de principes nouveaux, se référant à des critères d'action significatifs. Ils doivent être aussi simples et clairement exprimés que possible, afin de pouvoir être aisément communiqués et aussi afin de libérer les initiatives et de susciter des normes inédites. En ce sens, toute stratégie est culturelle, normative, s'appuyant certes sur des règles existantes qui permettent de l'engager, mais aussi porteuse de nouvelles normes.

WHAT IS EUA ?

The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both European universities and national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. Its membership includes 609 individual members, 34 collective members and 7 affiliate members in 45 countries throughout Europe.

EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research, through active support and guidance to its members, to enhance their contributions to society and the quality of their core activities.

EUA focuses its policies and services to members on the creation of a European area for higher education and research. More specifically, EUA's objectives are to develop consensus on

- a European higher education and research identity based on shared values;
- the compatibility of European higher education structures through commonly accepted norms;
- convergence of the European higher education and research areas to strengthen further the sector's attractiveness in Europe and beyond.

QU'EST-CE QUE L'EUA ?

Organisation représentant à la fois les universités européennes et les conférences nationales de recteurs, l'Association Européenne de l'Université est le principal porte-parole de la communauté de l'enseignement supérieur en Europe. 609 membres individuels, 34 membres collectifs et 7 membres affiliés dans 45 pays d'Europe en constituent les forces vives.

L'EUA a pour mission de favoriser la mise en place d'un système cohérent d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche en Europe en orientant ses membres vers une amélioration de la qualité de leurs activités fondamentales, soutenant ainsi activement leur apport à la société.

L'EUA articule sa politique et ses services autour de la construction d'un espace européen de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche. Plus spécifiquement, elle vise à rassembler ses membres sur:

- une identité européenne de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche qui se fonde sur des valeurs partagées;
- la compatibilité des structures de l'enseignement supérieur européen à travers des normes acceptées en commun;
- la convergence en un espace européen des systèmes d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche pour renforcer l'attrait des institutions en Europe et dans le reste du monde.

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Rédaction/Editors:	Dr Andris Barblan
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Graphiste/Designer:	Atelier Thierry Clauson
Imprimerie/Printer:	Cojo sa/Somco Publicité