

3 Leading your department

'As I went to bed at about 3 a.m., I was conscious of a profound sense of relief. At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I were walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial.' Winston Churchill on becoming Prime Minister, 10 May, 1940

[Seven weeks later and France had fallen to Hitler's armies. A shattering blow that left Britain to fight on alone.] Clementine Churchill wrote to her husband on 27 June, 1940: 'My Darling Winston, I hope you will forgive me if I tell you something that I feel you ought to know. One of the men in your entourage (a devoted friend) has been to me and told me there is a danger of your being generally disliked by your colleagues and subordinates because of your rough sarcastic and overbearing manner . . . I was told 'No doubt it's the strain' – I cannot bear that those who serve the Country and yourself should not love you as well as admire and respect you. It is for you to give the Orders and if they are bungled – except for the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Speaker you can sack anyone and everyone. Therefore with this terrific power you must combine urbanity, kindness and if possible Olympic calm. . . . Besides you won't get the best results by irascibility and rudeness. They will breed either dislike or a slave mentality. Please forgive your loving devoted and watchful Clemmie'.

'Winston Churchill', Ed Morrow the American broadcaster based in London in 1940 observed, 'mobilised the English language in defence of the free world against the tyranny of Nazism – and much else besides'. In Clemmie, Churchill was fortunate to have a devoted partner unafraid to remind him that the qualities of sound leadership were needed more than ever in a time of crisis. And great leader that he was, Churchill had the good sense to heed such wise counsel. 'God knows where we should have been without him', commented Field Marshall Lord Alanbrooke of Brookeborough, Chief of the Imperial General Staff in his memoirs, in 'deep-rooted admiration' of the way in which Churchill's leadership averted defeat in 1941, as the nation's darkest hour turned into its finest (Alanbrooke, 2001; Churchill, 1996; Soames ed., 1998).

It is of little wonder then why Churchill – and leaders of similar ilk such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. – should have been the subject of so many research inquiries into leadership. If we can identify the distinguishing characteristics which set leaders of this stature apart, it was reasoned, then we can look for these factors when selecting future leaders. These endeavours were not nearly so straightforward in practice, however. On the contrary, the quest to reach an understanding of leadership – on its nature and essence, its style and meaning, its exercise and practice – has come to resemble the pursuit of the Holy Grail. The source of the difficulty, as Warren Bennis (cited in Syrett and Hogg, 1992) puts it, lies in the fact that ‘leadership is an endless subject and endlessly interesting because you can never get your conceptual arms fully around it. . . . I always feel like a lepidopterist chasing a butterfly.’ And as is often the case in such pursuits, opinion on the subject has moved full circle. Thus where leadership was once perceived as the preserve of the few who were born to the role it is now widely regarded as an attribute that can be acquired – or learned – and therefore open to all (Bolden et al., 2015, 2008).

Leadership has itself, in the process, become a growth business, not least for HEIs themselves. University business schools have become veritable ‘cash cows’ for their institutions as literally hundreds of courses on the subject have been established worldwide, usually in response to overwhelming demand from private organisations who themselves have, in turn, often set up their own in-house leadership development programmes. All these programmes to a greater or lesser extent have been created in the belief, quite rightly, that leadership and management capacity is a critical determinant of organisational success. A view which many argue, and most agree, holds equally true for the public sector as well as the private one. As the late Tory Education Minister Sir Keith Joseph used to say, the nearest thing we have in education to a magic wand is an outstanding head teacher. And this is even more the case given the new tough environment in which public services now operate. One in which consumer demands for tailor-made service, employee expectations of empowerment, and governmental insistence on ‘value-for-money’, all vie for attention, under the critical gaze of a voracious media.

Either way, it is a principle that the government has taken to heart and rendered it a lynchpin of their public sector ‘modernisation’ agenda. And *prima facie* there appears to be good reason for them doing so. For we now live in a time when waiting lists for GP appointments and NHS treatment are longer than ever, fire safety regulations for high-rise tower blocks are seriously questioned, passenger complaints on overcrowded trains are at an all-time high, and so on. We should be wary, however, of a knee-jerk reaction in which a ‘private sector knows best’ approach – or copycat management style – is adopted. After all, much the same pejorative discourse on the management and provision of public services dominated the politics and newspapers of all major cities in nineteenth-century Britain and America. And yet today their legacy is widely regarded as the ‘unheralded triumph’ of the Victorian Age (Teaford, 1984).

We should also remember it is now broadly accepted that effective leadership is as much contingent on *context* as it is on personal attributes and qualities. That is, leadership is not simply a matter of who one is, or what one does, but also involves doing the right thing at the right time in the work environment. This applies equally to HE as it does every other working situation, public and private. The point is: how can one lead in a university setting? What is the nature of leadership in such

an environment? In what ways do leadership and management differ in HE? Can one be a leader as well as a manager? How should you lead?

These questions have too often been ducked within HE in the past. HE is not immune from the forces sweeping across other parts of the public sector. Nor do we do ourselves any favours pretending otherwise. Too much academic leadership, as we noted earlier, has been characterised by unprofessionalism; excessively lax and unresponsive at one extreme, or dumbly aggressive and assertive on the other. Both kinds have had devastating consequences in practice. This chapter, and those that follow, seek to confront these issues and address this deficiency.

This third chapter explores the concepts of leadership and management, outlines the similarities and differences between them and articulates the nature of leadership in theory. It also demonstrates how leadership can be applied in practice within the HE context by focusing, in this instance, on leadership in the formulation of departmental strategy.

Leadership versus management

Leaders do the right thing, managers do things right.

Peter Drucker, 1974

Some commentators use the terms 'leadership' and 'management' interchangeably as if they are synonymous with one another, while others use them in a very deliberate sense to convey that they are, in fact, quite different. Still others regard one (leadership) as a subset of the other (management). In academia we tend to shy away from using the terms altogether! It is not surprising then that the layperson's conception of these terms – like that of academia too – is very often an unclear one, if not downright muddled. It is a misperception we need to straighten out.

Organisational effectiveness, it is broadly accepted, is dependent upon both capable leadership and sound management. It does not follow from one or the other, only from the successful combination of the two. Their very complementarity, however – as the *sine qua non* of organisational success – has often deceived us from recognising that there is indeed a very real difference between the two. One, that is, exemplified not only in the characteristics and activities of managers and leaders, but also in the perceptions of them in the workplace, as well as, indeed, in the origins of the words themselves (Biddle and Stewart, 2015; Turner, 1998).

'Manager', for example, is derived from the Latin *manus* (or 'hand') which is the root of the sixteenth-century Italian word, *maneggiare*; a reference to the handling, training and control of horses. British soldiers subsequently brought the word back from Italy and applied it to the handling of armies and the control of ships. Vital duties that are performed by people who became known as 'managers'. The word gradually came to be applied to anyone who had a responsibility for organising activities and controlling their administration. And the activities or functions associated with it – planning, staffing, budgeting, coordinating, decision-making and so on – came to be the guiding principles (and organisational theory) on which the classic business corporation was later formed. This association of management with 'gaining one's ends' through control and organisation and perhaps too, by implication, manipulation also helps explain why, in some HE cultures, the term is often perceived as a pejorative one – indeed is 'a dirty word'.

While management is unfairly (and wrongly) viewed as a simplistic, unnecessary and bureaucratic process, leadership, by contrast, is invariably portrayed as a difficult and noble art. The word ‘leader’ is derived from *laed* – a word common to all the Old North European languages – meaning ‘path’, ‘road’, ‘course of a ship at sea’ or ‘journey’. A leader is, therefore, someone who accompanies people on a journey guiding them to their destination, and, by implication, holds them together as a group while steering them in the right direction. Present-day dictionaries typically define a leader as *one who rules, guides or inspires others*.

Box 3.1 Workplace perceptions of leaders and managers

Managers

Viewed as:

- planners
- controllers
- implementers of policy
- resourcers
- administrators
- people who are results-oriented

A manager

- is a copy
- administers
- maintains
- focuses on systems and structure
- relies on control
- has short-range view
- asks how and when
- has his/her eye on the bottom line
- accepts the status quo
- is the classic good soldier
- does things right

Managers

- plan and budget
- organise and staff
- control and solve problems
- establish order

Leaders

Viewed as:

- motivators
- enablers
- mentors
- communicators
- innovators
- people who are energetic

A leader

- is an original
- innovates
- develops
- focuses on people
- inspires trust
- has long-range perspective
- asks what and why
- has his/her eye on the horizon
- challenges the status quo
- is his/her own person
- does the right thing

Leaders

- set direction
- align people and groups
- motivate and inspire
- produce change

Source: adapted from Biddle and Stewart, 2015; Turner, 1998

This linguistic dichotomy is also mirrored in the workplace perceptions of these activities and analyses of these roles as reported in two national surveys (see Box 3.1). The key difference between the two, exemplified best perhaps in Drucker’s (1974) phrase – ‘leaders do the right thing and managers do things right’ – also

Box 3.2 The leadership and management challenge

Leadership

<i>Style</i>	<i>Strategic vision</i>	<i>Team building</i>	<i>Influencing</i>	<i>Environment building</i>
e.g. making a personal impact, leading by example	e.g. creating a vision of the future and deciding how best to meet objectives by focusing on outcomes	e.g. inspiring people to work together and give of their best	e.g. using negotiation and persuasion to achieve desired outcomes	e.g. creating the conditions to foster creativity, innovation and risk-taking

Management

<i>Change</i>	<i>Complexity</i>	<i>Networks</i>	<i>Ambiguity</i>	<i>Learning</i>
e.g. assessing drivers, communicating, envisioning and delivering	e.g. processing information and ideas	e.g. using others to leverage results, share best practice and learn	e.g. handling difficult situations with limited information	e.g. drawing on experience and new ideas to improve results

highlights the symbiotic nature of their relationship. That is, there is limited value in doing things right if you don't know where you are going. And equally, it is of little use knowing where you're going if you haven't got the wherewithal to get there. The roles, however, are not wholly mutually exclusive and we should be wary of exaggerating the differences between them. And likewise of concluding that an effective manager cannot also be an effective leader or, conversely, that a charismatic leader will necessarily be a poor manager. Each role, after all, poses challenges which draw on complimentary sets of competences (see Box 3.2). It also may not be a question of being one or the other. Indeed, the everyday expectation in the workplace is that individual post holders will be capable and proficient in both. And this is particularly the case for those holding departmental (or 'middle-management') positions, where leadership and management functions are more closely integrated, than at the broader institutional level.

The situation in HE is no different even if we would like to think otherwise. The traditions of academia, like those of other professional groups, have long upheld a separation between leadership and policymaking on the one hand, and policy implementation and administration on the other. A distinction which was manifested clearly in the traditionally separate roles of academics (whose domain included academic leadership and policy formation) and administrators (whose domain included advice on policy and the responsibility for policy execution). And one which lives on in the nomenclature which is still often used, even today, to differentiate between the two. Thus, whether the post is head of a service department of a physical support character (such as residential accommodation or estates), or one essentially academic in nature (such as registry or the library), or indeed an academic department outright, all three post holders are invariably lumped together (and sometimes by the occupants themselves) under the catch-all 'administration' (Warner and Palfreyman, 2001; Whitchurch, 2008). It is only relatively recently that the title of 'manager' has been conferred in some of these areas and not always accepted without reluctance – and the national representative body is still entitled the Association of University Administrators rather than what would be the more accurate epithet: Association of University Managers. It is also even more unusual for a 'dean' or 'head (chair) of department' to be styled 'academic staff manager' or something similar. Even so, the world beyond academia would readily recognise – if the organisation of HE was more transparent – that the functions being carried out by these post holders are very much analogous to those carried out elsewhere in the public and private sectors, by leaders and managers. But what is it that makes for effective leadership and management?

Being an effective leader and manager

'Go to the people
Live amongst them
Start with what they have
Build on what they know
And when the deed is done,
The mission accomplished

Of the best leaders
The people will say,
“We have done it
ourselves”.’

Sun Tzu, Chinese philosopher, c.500BC

[The general should be] ingenious, energetic, careful, full of stamina and presence of mind. . . loving and tough, straightforward and crafty, ready to gamble everything and wishing to have everything, generous and greedy, trusting and suspicious.

Xenophon, Greek historian, 504 BC

I am not a hero but I served in a company of heroes.

Major Dick Winters, Easy Company commander
(aka ‘Band of Brothers’), 506th Parachute Regiment,
US Army, 1944–45 (cited in the *Times*, 12 January, 2011)

Table 3.1 Overview of twentieth- and early twenty-first-century theories of leadership

<i>Period</i>	<i>Theory / approach</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Advocates</i>
Up to late 1940s	Trait theories	Effective leaders are simply ‘great men’	Hunt (1992)
Late 1940s to late 1960s	Behavioural theories	Effective leaders display ‘initiation of structure’ and consideration	Adair (1983); Blake and Mouton (see Blake and McCanse, 1991); Likert (1967); Mintzberg (1973)
Late 1960s to present	Contingency theories	Effective leadership is a product of a ‘perfect match’ between personality and context	Fiedler (1978); Hersey and Blanchard (1992); House (1988); Vroom & Yetton (1973)
Late 1960s to present	Power and Influence theories	Effective leadership is exercised through the judicious use of power and influence	Bass (1985); Bennis and Nanus (1985); Burns (1978); Kouzes and Posner (1985)
1970s to present	Cultural and symbolic theories	Effective leadership is exercised through the ‘management of meaning’	Deal and Kennedy (1982); Smith and Peterson (1988)
	Transactional theories	Effective leadership is a process of social exchange	Hollander (1978)
	Transformational theories	Effective leadership is the product of a leader’s charismatic personality	Burns, (1978)

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Theory / approach</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Advocates</i>
1980s to present	Cognitive theories	Effective leadership is exercised through the nurturing of perception	Cohen and March (1986); Hunt (1992)
1990s to present	Organisational theories	Effective leadership is linked to organisation building and transformation	Kakabadse and Kakabadse (1998); Senge (1995); Turner (1998)
1990s to present	Social-identity theories	Effective leadership is a shared, distributive and collective phenomenon	Gronn (2000, 2002); Spillane (2006); Woods (2004)
2000 to present	Positive psychology theories	Effective leadership is a product of nurturing a positive climate, relationships, communications and a sense of community.	Cameron (2008)

Sources: adapted from Bolden et al., 2015, 2011 and 2008; Kakabadse and Kakabadse, 1998.

Leadership is one of those rare topics – like war and peace, with which it has been particularly associated – which has enthralled and fascinated scholar and public alike, ever since records began. An attraction which remains as powerful today – if perhaps not more so – than it has ever been. Popular debate on the subject dates back as far as Homer and his peers, while the first scholarly output can be traced to Plutarch and the biographies of great persons he penned in the first century AD.

Proper scientific research on leadership, however, only really began at the start of the twentieth century. Since then, literally thousands of formal research studies have been carried out which have, in turn, spawned a whole host of theories. Nevertheless the mystique of leadership has remained intact, for none of these theories have fully explained the phenomenon. Rather the inquiries that generated them were as much a reflection of the way in which our assessment of leadership roles has changed over time, as they were an impartial examination of the intrinsic nature of the subject itself (see Table 3.1) (Sashkin, 2003).

Either way, the quest to determine just what makes a leader effective – and the reason the subject is still so compelling (that, and the corporate and societal needs of the early twenty-first century) – is because it remains as elusive today as it has ever been. This is not to say our understanding of leadership has not advanced. On the contrary, the substantive research to date has yielded an array of illuminating insights into the subject. And it is to an initial consideration of this work we turn first. What can the received theoretical wisdom tell us about leadership and management in practice?

The 'great person' approach

The first serious researchers into leadership (in the 1920s) assumed, as alluded to earlier, that effective leaders were born, not made, and as such set out to identify their distinguishing traits. This so-called 'great person' approach (the individuals were almost invariably male, but not exclusively so) dominated research inquiries for the next two decades and gave birth to what critics later dubbed the 'myth of the heroic leader'. Based on the concept of the military hero, this cult was buttressed by the reading public's penchant for biographies – and has been bolstered still further in recent times, by the contemporary practice of headhunters who, in seeking to 'fit' (literally, 'the right person to the right job'), have lent even greater credibility, however unwittingly, to the mystique of searching for the 'great person'. Such inquiries have generated all kinds of epiphenomena: the greatest American Presidents were stubborn and grumpy; the British boardroom executive today is more than likely 'a mummy's boy', and so on (Brodie, 2001; Freaan, 2001). They also indicated that leaders were generally a bit smarter, a bit more outgoing, slightly more inventive, and even a little taller than the average. None of these traits however, or any others, stood out sufficiently as to be clearly or strongly associated with leadership.

Behavioural theories

The focus of leadership research therefore changed. By the late 1940s researchers became less concerned with identifying individual traits of leadership – who leaders are – and more interested in leadership behaviour: *what leaders do* and how they do it; their actions and the style in which they perform these actions. These inquiries identified two essential aspects of effective managerial leadership: *task-oriented* behaviour (the importance of leaders providing clear instructions and directions) and *relationship-oriented* behaviour (the need for leaders to provide personal support and encouragement). Initially it appeared that the puzzle of leadership was finally resolved. For if everyone simply learned how to engage in these two types of leader behaviour, and did so with sufficient acumen, then there would be no shortage of successful leaders. In practice, however, the benefits of such leadership proved to be quite limited and did not ensure outstanding performance on the part of either followers or leaders.

Situational leadership

The emphasis within research therefore shifted again, and the 1960s witnessed the emergence of a new perspective stressing the importance of situational factors (or 'contingencies'); the nature of the task, the type of external environment, the abilities of followers and so on. If effective leadership is not *who they are* or *what they do* it was reasoned then perhaps it arises from the interaction between leaders, followers and situations and involves leaders *doing the right thing at the right time*. The most influential of these contingency theories has been the situational leadership model developed by Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2015) which also forms the basis of – and lends its name to – one of the most-widely used management improvement approaches in the world today.

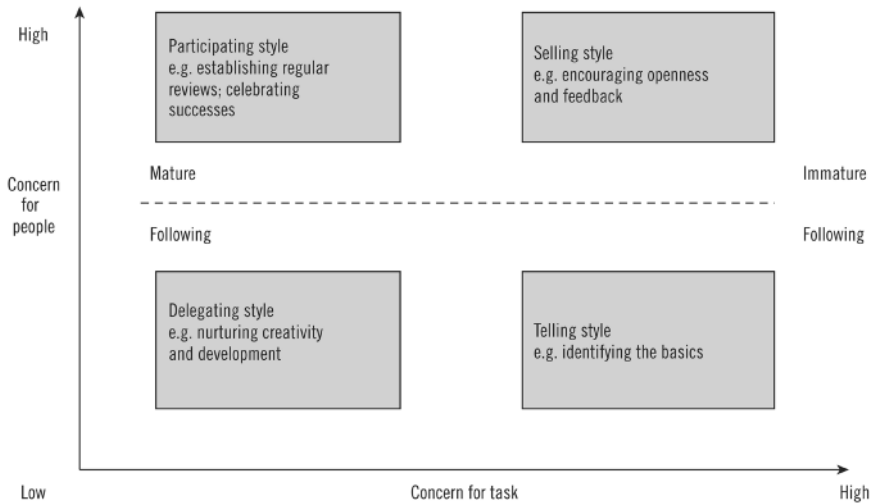


Figure 3.1 Situational leadership: leadership style and follower ‘maturity’

Source: adapted from Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2015.

In essence, Hersey et al. argue that a leader’s style – whether ‘participating’, ‘delegating’, ‘selling’ or ‘telling’ – varies according to the degree of a subordinate’s ability and willingness to undertake the task at hand. And their model reflects this proposition. That is, it incorporates the two dimensions on leadership behaviour we identified above and also includes a third; an environmental variable denoting follower ‘maturity’ or ‘readiness’. Managers can then use the model, not only to assess the willingness and capability of followers to do a job, but also to determine what combination of task and relationship behaviour will be most effective in a particular situation. Indeed, in emphasising the importance of flexibility in leadership behaviour (in contrast to earlier searches for an all-purpose leadership style) and by demonstrating the potential for facilitating follower ‘maturity’ this model gave managers their first real *practical* insight into enhancing their effectiveness as leaders. A model which is readily understood and which managers find as relevant and useful today, as their predecessors did when it was originally conceived (see Figure 3.1).

Transformational and transactional leadership

Further insight came from an unlikely quarter, if not an unfamiliar source – the American historian, James MacGregor Burns (1978) in his examination of distinguished national, social and moral leaders. In Burns’s view, such leaders were so successful because they were able to transcend the customary (Hobbesian) norms of traditional leadership – i.e. the self-interested *transaction* of rewards and benefits in exchange for compliance and loyalty – by engaging with their supporters on a ‘higher’ plane. By appealing that is to their altruistic motivations (to their notions of liberty, justice, equality and the like) rather than their self-interested ones of money, status, praise and so on. In doing so, a cycle of mutual reinforcement was set in train, in which both leaders and followers raised each other’s motivations and sense of purpose. To such an extent indeed that their behaviour and

aspirations were *transformed* well beyond their original expectations. This notion of leadership – as transformation – was, of course, not a new one. The emotional appeal and power of leadership based on charisma (or ‘god-like gift’), for instance, is an idea of ancient pedigree. Particularly germane at moments of crisis it is also one which we have indeed witnessed ourselves in recent times, in the aftermath of the atrocities of September 11th, 2001 and the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting in Paris in January, 2015 as well as in the stunning election victory of President Barack Obama in November, 2008.

Burns’s critique, however, provided us with the first clear delineation between leadership as a moral process – or *transformational* one – as distinct from that which is essentially *transactional* or exchange-based in nature. A distinction which some argued mirrored the essential difference between leadership and management (they were, in Burns’s view, the opposite ends of his transactional-transformational continuum). A view disputed by others, notably Bass (1985) and Kotter (1990), who persuasively argue that transactional strategies, such as rewards for good performance, are not only compatible with transformational leadership but indeed, as we noted earlier, are an essential corollary to it, if organisational effectiveness is to be realised. Where the substantive difference between leadership and management really lies, these commentators imply – and this is significant – is the way in which these individuals are *perceived by their staff*. For while a management relationship can be conducted in a cool, job-oriented and perfectly satisfactory (transactional) manner to both parties, a leadership relationship cannot. The latter, if it is to succeed – that is, if followers are going to give their consent to be lead (or transformed) – has to involve the emotions. Thus, for effective managers to become equally effective leaders there must be warmth, inspiration and a stirring of the blood in their relationship with their staff.

For this reason still others have used Burns’s typology as the basis for developing new approaches to leadership in practice: these models of new leadership – the visionary leader, the ‘learning organisation’ leader, the liberating leader, the discretionary leader and the collective leader – which have come to dominate contemporary thinking on the subject. All these approaches are grounded to varying degrees in transformational theory and as such this literature is often suffused with a quasi-religious, moralistic fervour. What practical insights though do they offer us on effective leadership?

Box 3.3 The visionary leader

The behaviours, personal characteristics and culture-building activities common to all effective transformational leaders

Behaviours

- 1 Focus: providing a clear focus on key issues and concerns, i.e. on the right things
- 2 Communication: getting everyone to understand this focus through effective organisational communication practices

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- 3 Consistency: acting consistently, over time, so as to develop trust
- 4 Respect: demonstrating, through actions, care and respect for the organisation's members
- 5 Empowerment: creating empowering opportunities that involve the organisation's members in making the right things their own priorities

Personal characteristics

- 1 Self-confidence: a grounded belief in one's ability to make a positive difference
- 2 Being comfortable with empowerment: a grounded belief in the ability of others to make a positive difference
- 3 A long-term vision span (c.10 years)

Culture building

A propensity for building strong cultures by instilling assumptions, values and beliefs that support four key organisational functions: managing change, achieving goals, coordinating teamwork and maintaining a vibrant organisational culture.

Source: adapted from Sashkin and Sashkin, 2003; Sashkin, 1995.

Models of new leadership

The visionary leader

Based on the work of Warren Bennis (1985), James Kouzes and Barry Posner (2017), Marshall Sashkin and W.E. Rosenbach (1993), Visionary Leadership Theory is the most comprehensive attempt to focus Burns's initial ideas on organisations. Its exponents argue that if leadership is to be effective then it has to be based on not just one but three major aspects of transformational leadership: behaviours, personal characteristics, and organisational culture-building activities. The implication is a clear one. To be an effective leader you must have the requisite qualities listed in Box 3.3. Daunting as this may initially appear, however, the model's advocates do insist that these qualities are all competences we can learn to develop: that the goal of the self-actualising visionary leader is indeed one within all our reach.

The 'learning organisation' leader

The role and nature of leadership as well as the expectations of it are, as one would expect, different in the context of the learning organisation. Popularised in the 1990s by Peter Senge (2006) among others, the 'learning organisation' was grounded in the widespread belief that 'the rate at which organisations learn may become the only sustainable source of competitive advantage in the future'; that in a context of rapid change only organisations capable of flexibility, adaptivity and productivity

could expect to flourish. As such, many enterprises sought to establish themselves as 'learning organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking were nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together'.

Box 3.4 The leader's new work: building learning organisations

The learning organisation

Based on five disciplines (or component technologies)

Each 'discipline' is a series of principles and guiding practices to master:

- 1 Personal mastery
- 2 Mental models
- 3 Building shared vision
- 4 Team learning
- 5 Systems thinking – the conceptual cornerstone that integrates the first four

New roles of leader

Leader as designer – teacher – steward

New skills of leadership

Building shared vision

- encouraging personal vision
- communicating and asking for support
- visioning as an ongoing process
- blending extrinsic and intrinsic visions
- distinguishing positive from negative visions

Surfacing and testing mental models

- seeing leaps of abstraction
- balancing inquiry and advocacy
- distinguishing espoused theory from theory in use
- recognising and defusing defensive routines

Systems thinking

- seeing interrelationships, not things, and processes, not snapshots
- moving beyond blame

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- distinguishing details complexity from dynamic complexity
- focusing on areas of high leverage
- avoiding symptomatic solutions

Source: adapted from Senge, 2006; 1990.

The implications for leadership in such settings are quite profound. In the first instance Senge (1990) argues would-be learning organisations need to abandon the traditional conception of leadership (one that is ‘based on assumptions of people’s powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders’) and embrace a new view that centres on ‘subtler and more important tasks’. In Senge’s model, leadership is focused on three critical roles – those of *designer*, *teacher* and *steward* (or servant). These functions in themselves are not new, in the sense that they each have antecedents in the ways leaders have contributed to building organisations in the past, but in the context of the learning organisation they take on new meaning since they demand new skills: to ‘build shared vision’, ‘surface and test mental models’ and develop ‘systems thinking’ (see Box 3.4).

Leadership is also a distributive phenomenon in Senge’s model. That is, if organisations really wish ‘to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at *all* levels’, then leadership must be devolved throughout the organisation via a web of executive leaders, local-line leaders and internal networkers. Only then, when these leadership criteria are met, Senge maintains, will enterprises have the opportunity to establish a ‘learning organisation’. To become that is masters of ‘generative’ learning and not simply of ‘adaptive’ or survival learning (Senge, 2006).

The liberating leader

Box 3.5 Characteristics of the liberating organisation

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
A flat organisational structure	to cut out functionalism, bureaucracy and the worship of status
Inversion of the pyramid	leaders and managers support employees who interface directly with customers, i.e. ‘leadership from behind’
Organisational democracy	to value the contribution of all alike and to promote their self-esteem; colleagues not subordinates
A liberating climate	to encourage healthy development and growth
Genuine empowerment	the unequivocal transfer of authority, responsibility and resources to those closest to each group of tasks
A ‘blame-free’ culture	to use mistakes as learning opportunities, not to levy punishment

Self-managed teams	independent workgroups with the authority and responsibility to achieve their agreed targets
Mutual trust	the rock upon which all effective working relationships are built
Ownership	established through shared information, the provision of user-friendly procedures and the celebration of successes
Vision	an inspirational view of the future, communicated to all, that acts as an organisational head group, lighting the path ahead
Values	the principles, beliefs and standards to which the organisation holds
Communication	to be open, comprehensive and without hidden agendas; clarifying rather than clouding and natural without affectation
Development	an integral part of working, managing and leading. Coaching and encouragement to learn are second nature
Innovation Attitude	sensible risk-taking is encouraged and fear is banished proposed changes are seen as challenges to be met and managed rather than opposed

Source: adapted from Biddle and Stewart, 2015; Turner, 1998.

The concept of the leader as liberator developed, like that of the 'learning organisation' leader, as a response to the sweeping changes in the external environment (in working patterns, access to information, the nature of competition, global economics, and so on) which had affected all organisation by the new millennium. In this instance, however, the source of competitive advantage was perceived to be, not so much the rate of organisational learning, as the degree to which organisations 'unlock the potential and creative energies of all their employees'. Or, put another way, the extent to which they establish a 'liberating organisation', one which 'creates a climate of trust, empowerment and stability by devolving authority and responsibility and harnesses the latent energy within its walls' (See Box 3.5) (Turner, 1998).

Box 3.6 Profile of the liberating leader

Liberates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not blame people for mistakes • Encourages the people closest to the job to take their own decisions • Listens to their staff • Encourages full and open communication • Operates systems based on trust, rather than suspicion • Encourages staff to develop new ideas
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(continued)

(continued)

Encourages and supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepts responsibility for the actions of their staff • Gives praise where it is due • Recognises and acts to minimise other people's stress • Supports staff when they need support • Regularly meets with individuals to clarify direction • Makes people feel important and shows that they have faith in them
Achieves purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves results • Agrees demanding targets with individuals or teams • Consults those affected before making decisions • Is willing to take unpopular decisions in order to move forward • Seeks out future challenges/opportunities • Regularly communicates an inspirational view of the future • Constantly seeks to improve the way things are done
Develops people and teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages other people to learn • Encourages people to work together as a team • Regularly meets with the team, as a whole, to review progress • Takes time to develop and guide their staff • Deals effectively with breaches in standards of behaviour • Treats other people's mistakes as learning opportunities
Example to others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively encourages feedback on their own performance • Communicates an air of enthusiasm • Works on their own learning • Practises what they preach • Openly admits mistakes • Sets a good example to others by their own behaviour
Relationships built on trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not put self-interest before the interests of their staff • Keeps promises and does what they say they will do • Is in touch with, and sensitive to, people's feelings • Is calm in a crisis, and when under pressure • Is honest and truthful • Does not take personal credit for other people's work • Is always fair

Source: adapted from Biddle and Stewart, 2015; Turner, 1998.

In this environment, leadership, like in Senge's model, is not confined to the top. Indeed, in its outright rejection of position, status and hierarchy and its commitment to 'democracy at work', the 'liberating organisation' takes Senge's notion of devolved leadership a stage further – by fostering liberating leadership at all levels. Such leadership – as the name implies and as the ideal behavioural profile outlines – is modelled on the assumption that effective practice is about *what leaders do and the way they do it which, in turn reflects what they believe* – self-belief, belief in, and beliefs about, others, and belief in fairness (see Box 3.6). Liberating leaders then jettison old-style command-and-control ways of working. They

create situations where continuous improvement can occur; demonstrate, by their own behaviour, how people can be liberated to maximise their skills; recognise the need for continuing change and urge everyone to meet the challenges that this brings; and, finally, act as facilitators, coaches and supporters, encouraging those closest to the tasks to take their own decisions.

Dismissed by some as a fanciful New Utopia, the supporters of the model view it as 'a managerial blueprint for the new millennium'; one that can be customised to meet the needs of all organisations. And given the substantial number of organisations that have successfully adopted it there is every reason to believe they may well be right.

The discretionary leader

The 'liberating organisation' and the 'learning organisation' concepts both share a common belief in the ability of individuals to shift perspectives and make themselves and their organisations more effective. The same is equally true of the concept of the discretionary leader. Though in this case the focus is not so much on the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to leadership, characteristic of the two grand schemes above, but rather on the scope for – and use of – discretion on the part of individual leaders per se.

Taking its cue from Socrates, that no one remains 'within a box' unless they are bounded by their own perspective, the discretionary concept recognises that – while the scope for discretion is more limited at the lower levels of an organisation where roles are more prescribed – individual leaders in all cases can, and indeed should, draw on the wide range of approaches open to them in fulfilling their roles. And the key to effective leadership in fact lies in *the flexibility as well as ability of leaders to utilise the most appropriate approach according to the context in which they operate*. In other words, it recognises that not only do different organisations require different types of leadership but since modern-day organisations are invariably characterised by diversity, dissension and difference, then leaders also need to be able to reconcile contradictions *within* the same organisation. In addition, since no one individual, no matter how gifted, is likely to be able to fully appreciate the different requirements of different contexts, this model also emphasises the need for leadership based on, and around, teamwork (Kakabadse, 1998, 2001).

These emphases – on the individual and collective contextualisation of leadership – constitute, the model's advocates maintain, the best way forward for organisations seeking to master the internal and external repercussions of the 'new economy'. And, by implication, those individual leaders who choose not to exercise their discretionary roles will, like their organisations, suffer the consequences.

The collective leader

Box 3.7 The collective leader: developing and sustaining shared leadership

Guiding principle

Leadership is a group quality, a set of functions which must be carried out by the group

(continued)

*(continued)***Common dimensions**

- 1 Context – leadership relies less on positional power and more on placing trust in expertise.
- 2 Culture – leadership relies less on control and more on respect for experience and expertise.
- 3 Change – leadership is recognised as emanating from multiple levels and functions as a mix of top-down, bottom-up and middle-out contributions.
- 4 Relationship – leadership is based on collaborations between individuals that together contribute to a collective identity.

Associated criteria that underpin a collective approach to shared leadership:

- 1 People – the conscious involvement of a broad range of experts contributing their knowledge.
- 2 Processes – that enable individuals to share their expertise across traditional functions and structures.
- 3 Professional development – geared towards developing individual and collective skills, traits and behaviours.
- 4 Resources – that encourage collaboration, networks and partnerships.

Source: adapted from Bolden et al., 2015.

Advocates of collective or shared leadership have taken the concept of discretionary leader a stage further. Derivative of social-identity theory (that as a group we are motivated to have a positive and distinctive self-concept as in ‘us physicists’, ‘us lecturers’, ‘us managers’ etc.) the shared leadership concept views ‘leadership as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group’ (Gronn, 2000). A perspective that not only shifts the focus on leadership from person and position to process, but is a leadership style that, its advocates maintain, is better suited and far more effective to the contemporary workplace where the need to influence and collaborate across organisational and professional boundaries is more pressing than ever.

Shared leadership has emerged as a popular alternative to heroic and individual approaches to leadership in many public, private and not-for-profit sectors in the UK, USA, Australia and elsewhere. And it has been advocated as such within HE too as ‘an alternative to the discourse of “managerialism” that has become increasingly prevalent within the sector and as a means of reconnecting academics with a sense of collegiality, citizenship and community’ (Bolden, 2015; Macfarlane, 2012) (see Box 3.7).

Box 3.8 The positive leader: strategies for effective performance

Key strategies

Effective leadership is demonstrated through the realisation of four key strategies:

- 1 Positive climate – through the exercise of compassion, forgiveness and gratitude.
- 2 Positive relationships – through the creation of ‘energy networks’ (i.e. those interactions we have that make us feel more motivated and optimistic).
- 3 Positive communication – supporting collaborations and emphasising what others see as their strengths and major contributions.
- 4 Positive meaning – building a sense of community, recognising what people see as their calling, and grounding actions in a set of shared values.

Principles of positive leadership

Positive leaders:

- 1 Place greater emphasis on developing what’s already working than on correcting what’s flawed.
- 2 Encourage everyone in a supervisory position to devote time to their best performers rather than having their energy drained by troublemakers or chronically dissatisfied employees.
- 3 Personalise the type of guidance they give to each employee rather than assuming that a single leadership style works equally well for all people.
- 4 Adopt a systems approach, emphasising the efficient operation of the group as well as the unique contributions of each member.
- 5 Are future-oriented and proactive, constantly exploring what’s possible instead of being bound by past decisions and disappointments.
- 6 Emphasise rewards and recognitions over punishments and penalties.
- 7 Are at least as people-oriented as they are goal-oriented.
- 8 Prefer team-based and collaborative approaches to rigid hierarchies and lines of command.
- 9 Treat each member of a group as a rational, capable member of the team not as someone who needs to be led or manipulated.
- 10 Rely on subtle guidance rather than the ‘my way or the highway’ style of management adopted by authoritarian leaders.

Source: adapted from Buller, 2013.

A similar aspiration lies behind the concept of positive leadership. Grounded in the positive psychology movement, rather than the traditional (or behavioural) approach to psychology, positive leadership is a conscious rejection of the deficit model of leadership and management. The positive leader, as implied by the label, leads with a positive bias seeking to identify strengths (What's right? And how can I make it even better?), rather than a negative bias focused on solving problems (What's wrong? And how can I fix it?) (Buller, 2013; Cameron, 2008) (See Box 3.8).

Guiding principles of leadership and management

A definitive understanding of leadership, then, continues, as we have seen, to elude analysts. And some maintain that the subject will remain an unexplained phenomenon in perpetuity. Even so, these six models of 'new leadership' along with the received wisdom to date, do provide us with a series of pointers to the nature and exercise of leadership in practice. A set of guiding propositions, if you will, which can aid us in seeking to be effective leaders and managers in practice. These can be summarised as follows:

- 1 Leadership and management are not mutually exclusive. There is no reason why an effective manager cannot also be an effective leader and vice versa. And the workplace expectation – particularly at departmental level – is that individual post holders will be proficient in both capacities. Whether an effective manager does indeed become an effective leader is determined, in the final analysis, by the way they are perceived by their staff ('followers'). It is your colleagues who determine if you are a leader.
- 2 Leadership is not confined to – nor vested in – a single great figure. Nor is it the preserve of – or related to – formal positions in an organisation's hierarchy. Rather it is a distributive phenomenon. The skills of leadership and the exercise of leadership can exist at all levels in an organisation. *Ipsa facto* it is incumbent on those who wish to be genuinely effective to foster these qualities within their department. Effective leaders grow people, bad leaders stunt them.
- 3 The stereotypical young, dynamic whizz-kid is no more representative of effective leadership than is the traditional 'captain-of-the-ship' conception of leadership. Both notions are as unfounded as they are outdated. Leadership is as much to do with groupings and group behaviour – the formation and operation of top teams, departmental teams, project teams and so on – as it is to do with individuals and individual behaviour. Leadership is a 'we-thing' not an 'I-thing'.
- 4 Leaders are, by and large, made not born. They are learners and as such can be helped to develop themselves. In particular to master the key competences associated with transformational leadership, all of which can be learnt, viz.
 - visioning skills; including creative thinking
 - critical evaluation and problem-detection skills
 - communication and linguistic skills
 - expectation-management skills

- empowering skills
 - the confidence to challenge traditional ways of working
- 5 The mastery of competences and the development of self-confidence, however, are not in themselves sufficient to guarantee effective leadership. Not unless individuals are also motivated to that end. To use power and influence that is (publicly) to benefit the organisation and its members, rather than simply (privately) to satisfy their own personal desire for power, status and achievement.
 - 6 The essential attributes of an effective leader are much the same whatever the environment. It is the context (the organisation's particular needs) and the leadership approach taken which are the key variables. As such, effective leaders seek to utilise their discretionary role to the fullest extent. In doing so, they recognise:
 - what works in one context may not do so in another (and equally, what makes you successful in one job may not necessarily do so in another);
 - the need to develop and maintain both a flexible and a broad mindset sufficient to cope with multiple different contexts;
 - the importance of harnessing this (rational) mindset with an equally well-developed sense of emotional intelligence. Of tackling that is both the 'hard' stuff and the 'soft' stuff together with a similar degree of insight and maturity. (Too often in the past leaders have been imbalanced one way or the other. Maximum strategic insight is of little use if combined with limited (emotional) sensitivity. Equally, emotional maturity will only get you so far and no further if you lack strategic organisational insight. One needs to complement the other if leadership is to be effective).
 - 7 Effective leadership is a dynamic process and at best a transformative one. It is about, as the industrialist John Harvey-Jones put it, 'lifting peoples' vision to a higher plane, raising achievement beyond what might normally be expected and getting extraordinary results from ordinary people' – and in the process also transforming oneself as a leader through continued reflection, self-development and personal change (Turner, 1998).
 - 8 Finally, effective leaders – and aspiring ones – accept they will be judged on the results or outcomes they produce, not simply the leadership competences they possess.

In applying these principles, it follows that if individuals are to be effective leaders then they must, in the first instance, understand both themselves and the particular context in which they operate. And this is as true for prospective leaders and managers in HE as it is for aspirants in other environments. We will be focusing on how you should prepare for – and approach – your role in the next chapter. For the moment, we turn to perhaps the most critical aspect of your role, indeed of any leader's role. One that both contributes to, and is shaped by, your own environmental context: i.e. the articulation of a strategic vision for your department. In doing so, this process will, by its very nature, help you to reflect on the challenges you will face and the approach you may wish to adopt as a prospective new leader and manager in HE.

Establishing a vision: developing a strategy for your department

Vision without action is a daydream, action without vision is a nightmare.

Japanese proverb

We live in an age when even a humble sandwich bar cannot open without the fanfare of an accompanying statement of mission or vision. The strength of this trend is matched only by the degree of scepticism which such gestures often engender in their intended audience. Why they have been received in this way is not difficult to discern. Invariably the design of a single individual or group, and often prone to grandiose New-Age rhetoric – if not outright slogans – such statements have quite rightly been regarded as unmerited claims, or unwanted impositions or both by staff and customers alike.

It is also a pattern from which HEIs have not been immune. Their initial attempts to articulate their institutional missions in the early 1990s, for instance, generated statements which, as one reviewer put it, were either ‘unashamedly publicity instruments’ or declarations ‘of a five year plan’ or worse still ‘definitions of the management’s role within the institution, not the institution’s role within HE’. Such initiatives above all bred ‘confusion and fudge’ while spawning apathy and dissent in equal measure (Earwaker, 1991). As relative latecomers to this activity, HEIs have also been surprisingly slow, compared with organisations in the private sector, to learn and adapt from this initial experience. This may in turn be symptomatic of the resistance to the idea of institutional diversity which persists in UK higher education.

Either way, the prevailing scepticism with notions of ‘mission’ and ‘vision’ both within and outside HE, and their collective debasement in the literature on management, cannot and should not detract from the fact they are vitally important, if not desperately important for HE, given, as we noted earlier, the overwhelming pressure on HEIs to change and to diversify. Indeed vision, as we have seen, is at the heart of leadership. A vision is a ‘dream’ – not a pipe-dream – but a realistic long-term ambition; a picture of the future that you want to produce. As in where do you see your department headed? What could it achieve? How could it be special? Distinctive? Cutting edge? Envisioning necessarily calls for creativity, imagination and optimism. More than that, it also requires animation, inspiration and passion on your part if it is to enlist others in ‘building a shared vision’ and agreeing to a strategy which realises this vision. How though should you set about this task? That is, how do you develop a strategic vision? And how do you engender collective ownership of it?

In the first instance, we need to recognise there is no single right way. Some commentators, for example, argue that vision springs from the ‘collective mind’ of the staff group and it is the role of the leader to tease out and articulate these latent ideas. Others maintain the exact opposite: that such visions emanate from the ideas developed by the head of department who then encourage staff to develop a commitment to them. Nearly all agree, however, that shared visions are unlikely to emerge from a series of formal departmental meetings called ‘To develop a Strategic Plan’ (Strike, 2017; Ramsden, 1998). In reality, their emergence varies according to the nature (the culture, needs and organisation) of the particular institutional context. Thus what method works in one environment may not do so in another, and vice versa.

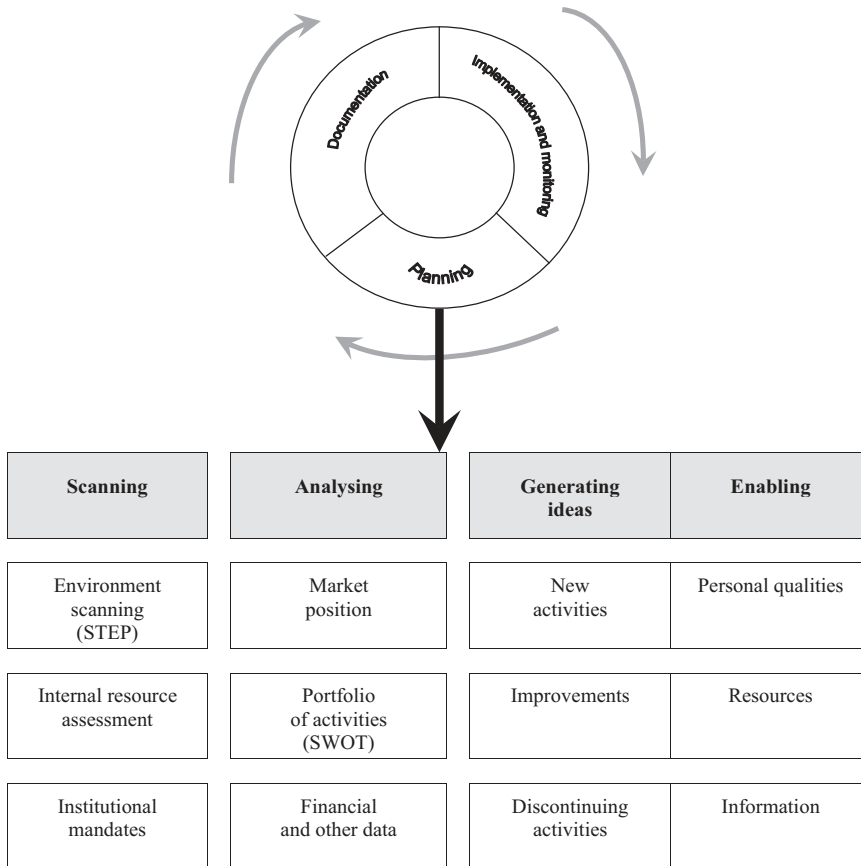


Figure 3.2 The strategic planning process
 Source: adapted from Strike, 2017; HEFCE, 2000a.

The common variable in all cases is the ability and willingness of the leader to take the initiative – and this applies equally to developing the content of a strategic vision, in the first instance, as much as it does to the building of a consensus around it. In the case of the former, if not the latter, there is indeed a set of guiding principles or common framework which you can, and may in fact, be expected to, follow given that HEIs are now invariably held externally accountable – as in the UK since 1992, for example – for producing their own particular institutional plans. Put another way, HEIs in common with other organisations all (or in the great majority of cases) adhere, nuances of style and approach notwithstanding, to a framework which is broadly similar. A three-stage cycle, that is, of planning; documentation; and implementation and monitoring, each with its own particular sub-elements which together provide a comprehensive guide to the process of strategy formulation (see Figure 3.2).

What is strategy?

All of which begs the question – What is strategy? Why do we need it? What is its purpose? How should you formulate it in your department? ‘Strategy’ is another of those terms in management which has come to mean many different things. In essence, the origins of the word relate to ‘generalship’ and political leadership and the process involves standing back from day-to-day activities and taking an overview from the perspective you hold: e.g. organisation-wide, departmental, personal, and so on. In the case of work, it is ‘about defining and agreeing the nature of your organisation or department’. Or as Alexander (2001) suggests, it is ‘the framework which guides those choices that determine the nature and direction of the organisation. It is what an organisation wants to be’. Without a clear goal there is a real danger therefore that your department would simply drift, that you would:

- keep coming across surprises that you would have to respond to;
- fail to optimise your colleagues’ creativity and imagination and your department’s assets;
- have difficulty in cultivating a common sense of purpose and engagement;
- risk colleagues simply focusing on what is in front of them, not lifting their heads up towards the horizon.

The role of strategy then essentially is to:

- facilitate strategic decisions; by providing a framework for choosing;
- arrest strategic drift; by acting as a prompt to assess progress and to identify, build and maintain a leading edge;
- foster coordination; by providing a mechanism for reducing wasted and conflicting efforts;
- enhance motivation; by generating a sense of being in control, on a winning path.

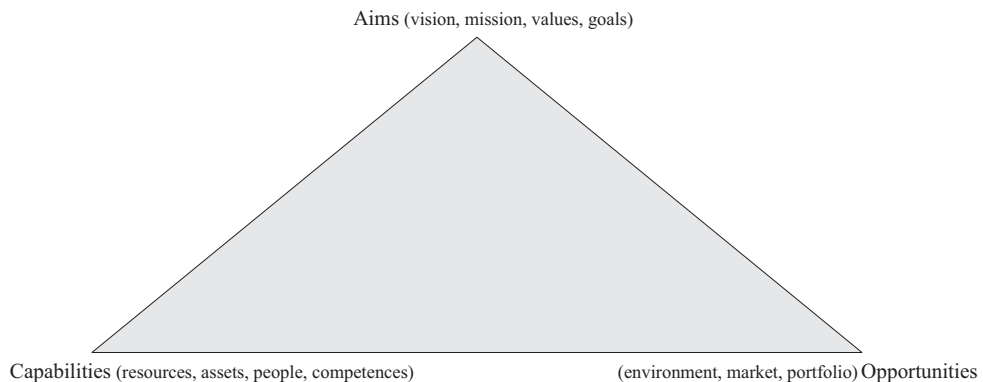


Figure 3.3 Strategy as alignment

Or, put another way, strategy at its simplest – and this is important as it is often overlooked when participants are embroiled in the process – is about ensuring there is alignment between three key elements: aims, capabilities and opportunities (see Figure 3.3). Historically, each element has in turn been regarded as the critical focus of strategy: ‘aims’ in the 1960s by those who believed that once a mission was established and people were ‘on board’ everything else would follow; ‘opportunities’ in the 1970s and early 1980s by Michael Porter and the Boston Consulting Group, who maintained that salvation lay in mastering the forces of competition in the external environment and latterly, ‘capabilities’ by those who argue that organisational success is contingent first and foremost on the effective mobilisation and integration of all internal competences and resources. Nowadays, all three are regarded as significant. None more so than the other – the critical aspect now being their mutual integration rather than their sovereign singularity (Porter, 1998; Kaplan and Norton, 2004; Mintzberg et al, 2008; Bryson, 2011; Strike, 2017).

The strategic planning process

Step 1: *Identify the four or five key aims, capabilities and opportunities of your department – as you see them.*

This simple overview provides us with the ideal starting point for a preliminary analysis of your department. As head of department it is incumbent on you to take the initiative in this regard, in part because your colleagues and those at the head of your institution will expect you to, and in part because you should be at least, if not better, informed than either group on the particular capabilities and opportunities in your area. But most of all because as a putative leader the articulation of a departmental strategic vision should, in the first instance, begin with you – your own *personal* perspective. This is not to say that you should foist your view on that of your colleagues but rather that, if you want them to engage in an informed and meaningful way in this process, then you need to put yourself through the same searching self-examination that you expect of them. The alternative of simply asking staff ‘blind’ to express their views will – like that of an ill-informed student seminar in the hands of a poorly prepared tutor – generate little heat, even less light, excite no one and fail to do justice to the full range of opportunities and issues in the broader environment.

Box 3.9 Your department – as you see it*

Consider the questions below to help you quantify your department’s qualities, values and long-term ambitions and provide a basis to identify key aims, capabilities and opportunities for your department.

-
- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 1 Objectives | Why do you do what you do?
What courses and services do you offer? |
| 2 Market definition | Who are you seeking to attract and why?
– students, researchers, funders, etc. |
-

(continued)

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3	Guiding principles	What are the (genuinely shared) core values of your department?
4	Distinctive competencies	What attributes do you have that others do not?
5	Competitive positioning	What is distinctive about what you do or how you do it? What would be missed if your department didn't exist?
6	Added value	What does your department really contribute to the greater good? How have you helped others to succeed? What do others say about your department?
7	Strategic intent/ vision	What does your department contribute to your university? – To the institutional mission, vision and strategic plan? What will your department look like in 5 years' time? (Be as specific and concrete as possible)

* This process will also help you in developing a positioning statement for your department: i.e. the necessary framework on which to build and enhance your departmental reputation which you can, in turn, use to inform your institutional marketing strategy and brand development. See chapter 10.

Note

Marketing is about getting the right goods and services to the right people at the right place at the right price with the right communication and promotion.

A *brand*, conventionally, is a product or service made distinctive by its positioning relative to the competition and by its personality (both functional and symbolic). Latterly it has typically become imbued with emotion.

Source: adapted from Stamp (2012).

Furthermore, if you are going to be transformative, this self-examination also provides you with the opportunity to kindle your own passion and beliefs in what your department can achieve beyond the mundane. A genuine conviction, that is, which is visible to others and one they can share. In Senge's (1990) terminology you need to 'surface and test' your own 'mental models' first as a means of 'building a vision' you can believe in, as well as potentially share with others. Consider the questions in Box 3.9 – and the illustrative example of heads of department in two contrasting universities outlined in Table 3.2 – to help you tease out the 'mental model' you have of your own department.

Using the overview (Figure 3.3), then, reflect on and write down the four or five key aims, capabilities and opportunities for your department as you perceive them. What assumptions do your perceptions rest on? Are they accurate ones? Are you satisfied all your responses reflect (genuine) reality and not simply wishful thinking or in-house rhetoric? Is there a match between your aims, capabilities and opportunities? If not, how will you achieve alignment?

Step 2: Examine your department systematically and comprehensively

Examine your department from each of the different perspectives – 'scanning', 'analysing' and 'generating ideas' – of the strategic planning model (Figure 3.2). Test, develop and refine your initial self-assessment accordingly.

Table 3.2 Envisioning – a self-assessment by two heads of department

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Teaching-led university</i>	<i>Research-intensive university</i>
Department	Head of business and social sciences in a teaching-led university with a strong commitment to widening participation and community engagement	Head of engineering and sciences in a research-intensive university seeking to secure a place among the top 50 universities in the world
Objectives	We are about creating learning and professional opportunities for all who can benefit. Our focus is on the professions and our local community. Widening participation is achieved by delivering success for our students. We aim to provide the best possible opportunities for them to succeed	We are a knowledge producer that strives to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create, advance and disseminate knowledge • Develop outstanding graduates and scholars to play a full and active role in their chosen field and the wider world
Market definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students who can genuinely benefit from the learning and professional opportunities we offer in line with our mission • External funders, professional bodies, employers and community groups who recognise the value of our offer • New staff who can add value to our current expertise in applied research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A diverse range of research sponsors and funders who recognise our scholarship expertise in research, knowledge transfer and enterprise • New staff at the cutting edge of research with world-class credentials • Students with capacity to realise not only their potential but will also enhance the reputation of the department.
Guiding principles	Quality, professionalism, inclusivity, transparency and mutual respect	Academic excellence, professionalism, community
Distinctive competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very diverse student profile including under-represented minorities • A location in the heart of the community • A well-established two-way exchange programme between staff and regional employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-third of the department’s teaching provision is now online due to the effective integration of a blended learning approach in partnership with an independent publishing company • A prestigious visiting professor scheme that recruits external professional talent working in the field • First-class learning, teaching and research facilities

(continued)

Table 3.2 (continued)

Institution	Teaching-led university	Research-intensive university
Competitive positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognised market leader in charity management, psychology in the community, continuing professional development (CPD) for small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Local provider of public sector management development and civic and community leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first 'port of call' for employers, professional practitioners and government bodies Recognised national and international market leaders in sustainable engineering, transport engineering, medical imaging science and forestry Pioneered successful new research and innovation-led international strategic collaboration
Added value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thriving business alumni network for SMEs Providing opportunity for those who have missed out or foregone such opportunity before Meeting employer expectations and workforce development needs Working with partners to regenerate the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing a leading role in meeting basic needs essential to societal and economic well-being, e.g. renewable energy; food security; health improvement; underground transport viability Fulfilling the specialist workforce needs of the 'expert society' Generating successive financial surpluses that include foreign earnings
Strategic Intent/vision	<p>To be one of the most admired providers of applied business and social sciences in the country for creating learning and professional opportunity and for working with partners to regenerate our local community</p>	<p>To be the best university department in engineering and science research, teaching and enterprise in the country and most admired for our contribution to national societal and economic well-being</p>
5 Years from now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department is a selector (rather than recruiter) – student progression and achievement has improved each year Staff success is recognised through the conferment of external awards External accreditation of programmes rates performance as excellent Staff, students and all external stakeholders are proud to be associated with the department Average income per member of staff is triple their annual salary The department is a recognised leader in its peer group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department is recognised as the leading provider in research, teaching and enterprise Research excellence is recognised through the conferment of external national and international awards The programmes in the academic portfolio are recognised leaders in national and international markets Average income per member is four times their annual salary The department is recognised internationally as much as it is nationally The department has secured a top world 50 place in the league table subject rankings

Table 3.3 The strategic planning process illustrated

1 Scanning	Purpose	Research and analysis	Example of outcome
i) Environmental (STEP) scan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To discern changes in the business environment which are either planned or emergent and which will affect the department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social developments Technological developments Economic change 	<p>The level of mature student participation in HE remains relatively high but has – again – not risen for the third consecutive year, indicating the local market has indeed reached saturation point</p> <p>Emergent growth in number of young, white-collar professionals – a new potential market for CPD provision</p> <p>Latest virtual-learning environment upgrade has enhanced the university’s managed learning environment still further. Strong potential here – that the department has still to recognise – to enhance the student and staff experience while improving quality and resource efficiency (immediate need for staff training and development)</p> <p>UK Research Council decision to consolidate funding for research units achieving the highest ratings benefits the majority but not all disciplines in the department – threat of job losses</p> <p>New tax legislation now makes it easier to attract greater corporate and alumni donations</p> <p>Specific skills demand in key business sectors in local and regional economy still unmet; a shortfall we could make good</p> <p>New government restrictions to limit the entry of foreign nationals may adversely affect our recruitment of international students and potentially eminent researchers</p>
ii) Internal resource assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the resources needs of plans are identified and can be met (i.e., the strategy is deliverable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing resource Staff skills Learning resources 	<p>Pre-entry qualification reform has left prospective entrants, their parents, sponsors and employers more confused than ever.</p> <p>Staffing establishment is fully utilised though workload management is more informal than formal and activity as much self-directed as department-led</p> <p>Majority wedded to conventional pedagogy though some are nationally recognised in teaching. Use of ICT a minority interest. Almost all are dedicated researchers though expertise is limited in commercial and outreach activity</p> <p>Existing stock is more aged and incomplete than ever. Uniform configuration of physical facilities reinforces conventional pedagogical style. Potential for e-learning remains untapped</p>

(continued)

Table 3.3 (continued)

1 Scanning	Research and analysis	Example of outcome
Purpose		
iii) Institutional mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core value/ 'Mission' Strategic orientation 	<p>'To excel as a dynamic learning community'; 'Access and opportunity'; 'The pursuit of excellence'; 'To be No 1'; 'Entrepreneurialism'; Indeterminate, unknown, 'no sense of mission'?</p> <p>(Business Planning Sequence :)</p> <p>Plan II Act II Evaluate (Defender)</p> <p>Act II Evaluate II Plan (Prospector)</p> <p>Evaluate II Plan II Act (Analyser)</p> <p>Act II Plan II Evaluate (Reactor)</p>
2 Analysing		
iv) Market position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and research performance 	<p>Outstanding reputation for teaching reflected in the TEF Gold award and national fellowships through performance rating in REF (4) below what we had anticipated (5). Overall a 'consolidated' market position compared with our rivals elsewhere and relative to the other departments across our university</p>
v) Portfolio analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic programme portfolio <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the most – as well as the least – successful areas of our provision 	<p>Applying the university's new costing and pricing model to our departmental courses indicates that:</p> <p>80% – are consistently successful in academic and financial terms</p> <p>10% – are successful academically but not financially (our 'loss leader' access programme to attract local mature entrants; our singular Master's programme)</p> <p>10% – are successful financially but not academically (our unacceptable drop-out rate – 30% – on the postgraduate diploma)</p> <p>0% – consistently unsuccessful in academic and financial terms (not applicable)</p>
3 Generating ideas		
vi) Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New activities Improvements to existing activities Discontinuation of selected activities 	<p>Articulate and develop new short course portfolio aimed at young, white-collar professionals keen on CPD</p> <p>Reappraise postgraduate diploma and develop local action plan to improve student retention. Develop closer links to – and establish joint projects with – local commerce and industry. Establish e-learning forum to champion the student and staff experience and enhance greater teaching efficiency</p> <p>Replace our singular Master's programme with a series of Master's pathways based on a common foundation year programme</p>

Box 3.10 Reviewing your course portfolio

How might you analyse the success (or not) of your teaching programs?

Agreed criteria might include those used in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF):

- Teaching on my course (NSS)
- Assessment and feedback (NSS)
- Academic support (NSS)
- Non-continuation rate (HESA)
- Employment or further study (DLHE)
- Highly skilled employment or further study (DLHE)

You might also wish to use additional criteria:

- Market demand
- Competitive advantage
- Quality ratings
- Student achievement ('good degrees')
- Graduate starting salaries
- Contribution to scholarship
- Synergy with research
- Centrality to the university's mission
- Cost-effectiveness
- Resource efficiency

Identify and agree which criteria you will use in advance and then apply them in a consistent way.

Consider the degree to which your courses are:

- Market leaders: the courses in which you are recognised as one of the best nationally and internationally;
- Regional winners: the courses in which you are recognised as better than your regional competitors;
- Community developers: the courses you offer which meet local employer and/or student demand.

Take each individual course which you offer and determine which category they fall under in the matrix below:

	Financial success	Financial failure
Academic success	Alpha course	Beta course
Academic failure	Gamma course	Delta course

What does your course portfolio review tell you? What should you do?

(continued)

(continued)

Alpha course

These courses are consistently successful in academic and financial terms and should continue as part of your core strategy.

Beta course

These courses are successful academically but not financially. This may result from poor recruitment or high costs. If so, your initial strategic response should be to tackle these problems. In the longer term, it is legitimate to accept the financial burden of these courses if they secure some other benefit to the department or institution (e.g. loss-making return-to-study access course). Cross-subsidisation can and does cause friction within departments and across institutions, but this can be tempered by making it transparent and explaining the rationale.

Gamma course

These courses are successful financially but not academically. The initial response would be to investigate the reasons for academic under-performance. If the reasons include under-investment, putting that right might jeopardise the courses' current financial success. In the commercial sector companies may well choose to provide a low-quality product, which sells well and is profitable. But in higher education, the assumption is that the department and the institution should reject a strategy of accepting low quality in return for high levels of recruitment or profitability.

Delta course

These courses are consistently unsuccessful in academic and financial terms. The reasons for the lack of success of such programmes should be investigated and, if appropriate, the courses terminated. This can give an opportunity to re-deploy the resources into new development.

You are now in a position to probe, develop, test and refine your ideas further – and just as likely add to them. To do so you need to undertake a more systematic full-blown examination of your department, one that encompasses not simply what is often referred to colloquially as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and STEP (social, technological, economic and political factor) analyses, but all the elements and sub-elements of the strategic planning process identified in Figure 3.2. Thus you need to both research and analyse your department from each of these different perspectives as outlined and exemplified in Table 3.3 (Strike, 2017; Lynch, 2015; Bryson, 2011; Luffman et al., 1996).

A critical aspect of your examination and the one likely to be most contested is your portfolio analysis. An adaptable technique, the purpose of the analysis is to identify the least and most successful areas of your provision: teaching; research; commercial ventures; overseas operations; the provision of services and facilities;

the delivery of teaching programs and so on. In each case, the activity is assessed and ranked based on the criteria that your university has developed for such purposes. These are typically available through your Strategic Planning Office or Finance Department. In the unlikely case that your institution has not developed such criteria you should prompt your immediate line manager, and your Finance Director and Head of Strategic Planning to this effect. Portfolio analysis can be – and is – used with varying degrees of formality from the very simple to the very sophisticated. The common factor is that whatever criteria are used, they are typically drawn up and agreed in advance and then applied in a consistent way in practice. In the case of university-wide services such as Library and Learning Support services, for example, the criteria might include: contribution to the quality of the student, staff or client experience; comparative performance against benchmark; cost-effective delivery; stakeholder feedback and responsiveness to demand. The most common activities of course are your teaching programmes – see Box 3.10 for details of how you can review the efficacy of your course portfolio.

An alternative way of conceiving the strategic planning process – and an extremely useful one for conventional subject departments – is the directional policy matrix developed by Sizer (1982). You can use this matrix to assess the strengths of your own subject area in relation to that of other subjects within your institution, as well as with your counterparts in other HEIs (see Figure 3.4). This involves two key considerations:

- *The significance and attributes of your subject area in general:*
Here you consider areas such as the overall market size, prospects and competition in your subject area, its profile and image, stakeholder attitudes, STEP trends, employment prospects for graduates, cost-effectiveness in general, and so on.
- *The strengths/weaknesses of your own particular university and department in this subject area:*
Here you consider the size and market share of your department, its image and reputation, the number of applications you attract, graduate employment prospects for your students, the nature and diversity of the student body, your teaching and research, the department's success in enterprise, partnerships and cost-effectiveness and so on.

These are complex questions and require considerable reflection. You can make a start by considering the following questions:

- 1 Consider the significance and attributes of your subject area in general. On a scale of 1 to 3 where 1 represents high strength, 2 represents medium strength and 3 represents low strength, where would you rank your subject area?
- 2 Consider the strengths and weaknesses of your own particular university and department within the subject area. Using the same 1 to 3 scale where would you rank your department?
- 3 Where does your subject area and department sit on the matrix grid outlined in Figure 3.4? What are the implications for your subject area and department?

- Market size
- Market competition
- Market prospects
- Cost effectiveness
- Optimal staff resource
- Demographic patterns
- National significance
- Government policy
- Stakeholder attitudes
- STEP: Social, Technological, Economic and Political trends
- Employment prospects
- Image and Perception
- Etc.

SUBJECT AREA STRENGTHS

	High	Medium	Low
High	“A Star” rating! You are at the top of your game. The challenge is to stay on top.	A good performance. Some external factors are beyond your control, but you should seek to consolidate your position and aim for selective growth.	“A Cash Cow” – a strong performance in a difficult environment. Your priority should be to consolidate your position.
Medium	A reasonable performance. Your priority should be to fully realise the potential you see and seek to grow selectively.	A moderate performance. Your priority should be to seek to consolidate your position.	A moderate performance in a difficult external environment. You may be facing planned withdrawal and redeployment in some areas.
Low	“A Problem Child” – a very modest performance in such a favourable environment. You must seek to consolidate your position.	A modest performance in an environment not always favourable. You are likely to be facing planned withdrawal and redeployment in some areas.	“A Dog” – the worst of both worlds. You are very likely to be facing planned withdrawal and redeployment.

UNIVERSITY STRENGTHS IN THE SUBJECT AREA

- Size of department
- Market size and share
- Market image and reputation
- Number of applications
- Nature and Diversity of student body
- Graduate employment
- Cost effectiveness
- Staff Profile
- KEF Outcome
- TEF Assessment
- REF Publications
- Research and Enterprise income
- Research and Enterprise potential
- Range of Partnerships
- Other Resources: human, financial, material

Figure 3.4 Reviewing your subject area
Source: adapted from Sizer, 1982; Porter, 1998

Step 3: *Critically review the mission statement and strategic plan of your HEI.*

There is one recurring theme or constant variable which you need to give the most careful consideration, as it is often the greatest single source of difficulty. We have already alluded to it earlier; it is the degree of 'fit' between your departmental perspective on strategic orientation and that of your institution in the broader sense. We noted in the last chapter how an analysis of organisational culture can generate critical insights into the context in which you operate. In this instance you need to examine in fine detail the more formal aspects of your institution. That is, you need to put aside any scepticism or prejudice you have and critically review the mission and strategy of your HEI.

Such matters, as we noted earlier, have often courted publicity and controversy in equal measure – and with it, to be frank, a good deal of nonsense too. The penchant for mission statements, for example, parallels the trend towards more 'flatter', less hierarchical organisations. And their publication has invariably been designed to exert a centrifugal 'pull' within this new type of institutional environment. If a mission statement is to be useful or effective however, it has, as Colin Marshall, former chairman of BA simply put it, 'to be much more than an outline of good intentions and fine ideas. It should offer a framework for the entire organisation. The values which drive the organisation and the belief that the organisation has in itself and what it can achieve' (quoted in Luffman et al., 1996). Indeed conventional wisdom suggests that any mission worth its salt must have four discrete qualities, viz. an expression of:

- purpose – *why the organisation exists*. An inspiring purpose which avoids playing to the selfish interests of one or another set of stakeholders;
- strategy – *the organisation's competitive position*. The identification and specification of the organisation's strategic position;
- values – *what the organisation believes in*. The moral and cultural values of the organisation identified and expressed in such a way as to engender pride in all employees;
- standards and behaviours – An indication of *the standards and behaviours expected of staff* in pursuing the organisation's strategic goals.

Box 3.11 Strategic planning in your university

- 1 How is strategy developed and revised in your university?
- 2 What role has your department played in the development of your university strategic plan?
- 3 How does your department relate to the rest of your university? Where does it sit (e.g. within a faculty, as a support service, or with an institution-wide portfolio)?

Size and scope

University strategic plans come in all shapes and sizes, though the increasing unpredictability and complexity of the environment in which universities operate has seen a trend towards:

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- Shorter rather than longer documents
- Less detailed forecasting, and planning that is instead more directional in scope
- A focus on identifying:
 - A set of high-level principles for the long term (ten years)
 - A set of objectives for implementing these principles in the shorter term (three to five years)
 - An (annual) operating plan for the actions to be taken in the short term (over the year) to achieve the objectives. (You may already be familiar with annual operating plans through having to develop and complete one for your own area.)

Structure and organisation

The terminology of strategic planning also varies considerably from one institution to the next – but the skeletal framework remains constant:

Vision or aim – Where we are going?

Mission or purpose – Why we are going there?

Values – How will we work and learn and what do we want to be known for?

Stakeholders – Who will benefit?

Objectives, opportunities, priorities, themes, goals – What we have to do to get there?

Enablers, capabilities, resources – How we are going to get there?

Key performance indicators (KPIs) – How will we know when we have got there?

Process

Your university's strategic plan is the product or outcome of your institution's own strategic planning process. This process is likely to have been initiated by your senior management (top-down) but with input across your institution (bottom-up) as well as beyond it (outside-in).

The strategic plan is not a fixed or permanent monolith set in stone for its duration. Far from it. Planning documents are meant to be 'living documents' and planning itself a dynamic process capable of adapting to changing circumstances.

Approach

Typically one or more of the following simultaneously:

Planned strategy

Where we are now? (A) Where do we want to be? (B)

Planning is about how to get from A to B.

It is future-oriented, assumes a high degree of predictability and organisational cohesiveness and is usually accompanied by a series of supporting plans (Library, Estates, HR, Finance, Learning and Teaching et al.). It is consistent with regulatory body requirements.

You are expected to turn the words of the planning documents into results.

Emergent strategy

Acknowledges the shortcomings of a planned strategy – the inability to predict **all** changes that will occur; a paper document captured at a moment in time often for a specific audience.

Accepts that employees will shift the institution incrementally in relation to the changing environment through their day-to-day decision-making.

You are expected to deliver added value within existing constraints.

Realised strategy

Strategy is 'tight/loose':

The purpose and direction is articulated and agreed but the steps taken to achieve them is left open to interpretation by those doing the job.

You have considerable discretion.

What approach(es) does your university take in strategic planning?

What implications does it have for you in your role?

If you are unclear about how your university tackles strategic planning then you should consult your Head of Strategic Planning, Director of Finance or immediate line manager.

So, ask yourself the following questions.

- 1 To what extent does your HEI's mission statement measure up against these four criteria? Where is it deficient? Why? When was it last reviewed and revised?
- 2 Turning to your institution's strategic plan, you need to consider the degree of synchronisation between this and the mission statement. Is the strategic plan a logical corollary to your HEI's mission statement? What and where are the gaps? Are they significant? (See Box 3.11).
- 3 How does your HEI define its market position according to its strategic plan? As a Star (high growth; high market share), a Cash Cow (low growth; high market share); a Problem Child (high growth; low market share) or as a Dog (low growth; low market share) (Porter, 1998)? (See Figure 3.4).
- 4 How does your HEI view its environment according to the plan? As a Defender (of its market position), a Prospector (for market growth) or as an Analyser (of its market position)? Or is it a Reactor (out of step altogether)? What are the implications of this market position and strategic orientation (Miles and Snow, 2003)?

- 5 To what extent does the plan exhibit symmetry and consistency between the 'first-order' (or 'upstream') strategies which identify your HEI's long-term objectives; 'second-order' ones which affect the institution's operation; and finally, 'third-order' (or 'downstream') strategies which determine the most appropriate use of human resources? What are the implications of any inconsistencies (Boxall and Purcell, 2011)?
- 6 What does your HEI's strategic plan imply about the stage of the organisational life cycle of your institution: entrepreneurial – collectivist – formalised and controlled – or adaptive (Cameron and Quinn, 2011)?
- 7 What else does your institutional plan tell you? About: the assumptions and forecasts on which it was based – the integration (or otherwise) of supporting strategies – the capacity for genuine self-critical scrutiny and for stretch (i.e. the scope of institutional ambition) and so on?

Putting together these answers should provide you with significant insight into the self-perception of your HEI. It should demonstrate that there is an informed and meaningful stratagem to underpin your HEI's claim to be a 'research-led' institution, a 'community university' or the 'opportunity university' et al. If not – though this is unlikely – you should seek immediate clarification from your institutional planning director or your line manager. If still not satisfied, then you may want to consider mounting a challenge to the rationale. If so you are likely to make more headway if you remember that (in spite appearances to the contrary) planning documents are meant to be 'living documents' and not unchanging formal monoliths set in stone for the duration of their span.

Step 4: Examine the degree of 'fit' between your departmental perspective on strategic orientation and that of your HEI.

Assuming there is indeed consistency in your HEI's claim, you now need to determine where and how your perspective on your department's strategic orientation measures up against that of your institutional one. There should be an alignment, if not perhaps in the fine detail, between the broad aims, opportunities and capabilities of your department as you see them, and those of your HEI. Put another way, there should be sufficient scope within your HEI's strategic plan to enable you to develop a departmental perspective which, while customised to your particular circumstances, fits comfortably within this overall institutional framework. Again, if not, you need to consider why. Are the differences matters of style or substance? If the latter, you should go back and review your own perceptions once more. If these remain unchanged then you need to consider the implications – political as well as practical – of these differing perspectives and be prepared to spell them out when it comes to articulating your view of the options facing the department.

In practice, substantive differences in the rationale underpinning departmental or institutional strategies are relatively infrequent. More often than not the relationship between the two is characterised by symmetry and consistency. Where significant – and critical – differences do arise, however, (and not surprisingly) is over the extent to which the rationale is perceived to match the everyday reality of institutional life.

Put another way, you may have a mission statement and strategic plan and it may even be pinned to the wall, but far more importantly do the staff in your department – and across your HEI – have a *sense of mission*. Are they driven by a

sense of purpose? Are they aware of how to realise it? In management speak – is the ‘espoused theory’ consistent with the ‘theory in use’?

Step 5: Measure the rhetoric against the reality

Measure the ‘espoused theory’ (the rhetoric) against the ‘theory in use’ (the reality), the knowledge of mission against a sense of mission. Design and formulate your strategic options accordingly – from the perspective of your colleagues. The perceived differences between institutional rhetoric and everyday reality go to the very heart of why mission statements have attracted so much opprobrium – and you need to be especially sensitive to such concerns if you wish to avoid a similar fate in the case of your department. As we all view the world through a different lens so you need to give careful consideration to the style as well as the substance of the options you see facing the department. You will get short shrift from your colleagues, for example, and rightly so, if you propose objectives which, while consistent with your institutional plan, seem hopelessly out of kilter from their perspective; and doubly so if you couch them in language and vocabulary which, while echoing your HEI’s mission, does not resonate with them.

This is not to say you should bow to the status quo or qualify your ideals either. Far from it. Visions and strategic plans – if they are to succeed – are necessarily positive. They anticipate the realisation of an idealised and desirable future state. Equally, they are not concerned with the negative: the problems of the here and now, the raking over of past mistakes or the outlining of reasons why aspirations cannot be realised. Even so, you must remember that if your departmental vision is to be realised then your colleagues will need to believe in it as much as you do. Consequently, you should articulate your vision in the first instance from their ‘world-viewpoint’, not one derived from the ‘infallibility’ of your institutional mission plan, or in anticipation of a leap of faith in, or wholesale conversion to it.

Yet we should also be wary of being overly sceptical – and certainly not cynical – in this regard. HEIs have tended to make heavy weather of their institutional mission plan. Universities are too large and too complex it is often argued, not to say peculiarly distinctive – *sui generis* – and as such are not always conducive environments in which to generate a sense of mission among staff. Evidence from the private sector, however, indicates that this does not always have to be the case; that such reasoning is indeed seriously, if not fatally, flawed. BP, to take one example, has an organisational infrastructure of global proportions, as one would expect of a world leader in the supply and distribution of oil. It has – following its oil-spill catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 – also sought to renew afresh its ambitious global mission: to be performance-driven, progressive, innovative and green. What impresses is the way in which these core values have been disseminated both within and across the organisation. To such an extent, indeed, that first-hand investigation confirms that whether the BP respondent is a Norwegian fitter on a North Sea oil rig, a Belgian engineer in a Dutch oil refinery or a Spanish operative in a Madrid filling station, each is similarly imbued with an acute understanding and genuine commitment to the company’s mission and its values. If BP is able to generate a sense of mission – in spite of the size, complexity and sweep of its global operation – there is no reason, in theory, why HEIs cannot do likewise.

In the case of your department, then, it is important you strike a balance between the need to engage your colleagues on the one hand, and your impulse to embrace your institutional mission on the other. This is something only you can judge, based

on your understanding of your colleagues and the extent of their knowledge and commitment to the institutional mission. You should then articulate your departmental perspective accordingly. Whatever the style or substance of your deliberations you should aim to develop a paragraph or five to six bullet points for each of the sequential elements of the strategic process which follow, viz.

- 1 Where are we now? Analysis (not navel-gazing).
- 2 Where could we go? Option Formulation (not generating confusion).
- 3 Where do we want to go? Option selection (not post-rationalising).
- 4 What will help us get there? Engineering Coherent Support (not changing the rules).
- 5 What do we do today? Implementation (not firefighting).

It is important that you go through each of these stages step by step. You should resist the temptation to skip any of them. That way you will avoid the danger of making assumptions about the status quo on the one hand, and underestimating the potential for – as well as implications of – future developments on the other. In doing so, you should also, as we noted earlier, accentuate the positive. The alternative is to run the risk of lapsing into navel-gazing, generating confusion and becoming mired in firefighting (Strike, 2017; Lynch, 2015; Bryson, 2011; Mintzberg et al., 2008).

Step 6: Identify and set your strategic objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs)

You must also build in to your perspective three aspects which have not always been given due consideration in the past but which are nowadays increasingly expected, if not required, by statutory authorities: i.e. an indicative list of your strategic objectives and key performance indicators along with an assessment of the risks involved.

As for objective setting, the idea, quite correctly, is to provide you with an indicator of progress towards your goal (how we will know when we've got there), an incentive towards achieving it and a means of monitoring your collective activity. Such targets, it is commonly accepted, are most effective if they are SMART ones: i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. And you may well have had experience in developing objectives of this nature in the past. If so, you will know that in practice such targets which claim to be SMART are anything but; that is, they are often written to satisfy 'the system' (rather than address the real task at hand), are invariably inflexible and frequently set goals that are either too high or too low (Bean and Hussey, 2011; Rose, 2000). You should take extra care then to ensure you do not fall into the same trap: i.e. you should develop your indicative targets in such a way as they are not DUMB – defective, unrealistic, misdirected and (perhaps worst of all, simply) bureaucratic.

Genuinely SMART objectives identify how you will turn your words into action and will give you confidence that your actions are purposeful. They are though the means to an end – stages in your journey – but what about the end itself? How will you know whether you have arrived at your destination? The answer lies in key performance indicators. KPIs are:

- measures of success – often quantitative ones – that can be used to assess your progress and ultimately confirm that you have achieved your goals;
- increasingly commonplace in universities and may already be included in your institutional strategic plan as a top-level assessment of your institutional health:

Table 3.4 Setting aims, objectives, KPIs and mitigating risk – a self-assessment by one head of department

Key aim	To establish an academic portfolio of programmes of the highest possible quality and standards to meet individual, regional and national needs and internationally recognised standards			Key performance indicator: KPI
Risk score	20 (Likelihood = Medium/High; Impact = High)			
<i>Smart objectives</i>	<i>Nature of risk</i>	<i>Mitigating the risk</i>		
Develop and agree new course criteria by the end of this academic year (e.g. centrality to mission; quality of the student experience; contribution to scholarship; market demand; comparative advantage; cost-effectiveness)	Failure to achieve consensus on selection criteria for new course development	Set up working group to develop new criteria and seek formal approval of final recommendations	Majority of our programmes are 'selectors' rather than 'recruiters'.	
Modify, merge and discontinue those programmes which do not excel according to the agreed criteria	Resistance to discontinue existing courses	Use new agreed criteria as basis for determining discontinuation (or not) of courses and seek formal approval of recommendations	Greater proportion of our applicants view us as their first-choice university	
Plan and develop new programmes which do excel in terms of these criteria with immediate effect on agreement	New course proposals are supply-led rather than demand-driven	Ensure formal approval is based on selection criteria being applied even-handedly		

(continued)

Table 3.4 (continued)

Key aim	To establish new staff support mechanisms in order to promote pedagogical expertise, innovation and dissemination		KPI
Risk score	15 (Likelihood = Medium; Impact = High)		
<i>Smart objectives</i>	<i>Nature of risk</i>	<i>Mitigating the risk</i>	
Appoint an e-learning champion in each subject area to work with individual programme leaders to establish an e-learning infrastructure for their programme for next academic year Initiate, develop and agree by the end of the year the projects scheme grounded in an inquiry-based learning approach Review and evaluate the peer-observation teaching scheme as an aid to staff development planning and a means of sharing and disseminating good practice in learning and teaching – review to be completed in next six months	Some subjects fail to appoint an e-learning champion New project scheme fails to attract interest Peer-observation review group fails to agree recommendations	Ask Head of e-learning to mediate and agree to initial short-term appointment in first instance Select pilot projects on basis most likely to attract staff interest and involve students Ensure the review is facilitated by a credible independent internal or external peer	Year-on-year increase in level of student satisfaction with course management and learning and teaching Year-on-year increases in the number, diversity and quality of outcomes of staff scholarship in teaching

Key aim	To establish new support mechanisms in order to develop our capacity to improve student retention and completion rates and graduate employment	KPI
Risk score	5 (Likelihood = Low; Impact = High)	
<i>Smart objectives</i>	<i>Mitigating the risk</i>	
<p>Appoint on each course team a member to be the research data analyst on student retention to disseminate and evaluate student progression data to support the development of a departmental approach to student retention</p> <p>Initiate, develop and establish an employer mentoring programme for all students with an initial pilot for black and minority ethnic students – 12 mentor/mentee partnerships to be arranged by end of the year</p> <p>Establish a working group to review and evaluate the student induction and Year 1 experience to make recommendations as appropriate – to allow for implementation for start of next academic year</p>	<p>Some course teams fail to nominate a research data analyst</p> <p>Inability to attract employer interest</p> <p>Recommendations are impracticable</p>	<p>Ask programme leaders to job-share the responsibilities among team as appropriate</p> <p>Seek help from the employer engagement unit or external body brokering industry links</p> <p>Ensure we have reps from outside our department on the initial working group</p>
		Year-on-year improvement in student retention rates and graduate (highly skilled) employment outcomes

(continued)

Table 3.4 (continued)

Key aim	To internationalise all our activities, to prepare our students as global citizens to play a full and active role in the workplace and their community	KPI
Risk score	8 (Likelihood = Low/Medium; Impact = Medium/High)	
Smart objectives	Nature of risk	Mitigating the risk
<p>Establish a working group to develop and articulate the concept of internationalisation and secure agreement on practical guiding principles by the end of this year</p>	<p>Failure to attract sufficient numbers to the working group</p>	<p>Enlist the support of both staff and students for the project as well as credible independent third party.</p> <p>Exceed our benchmark against university peers in the I-Grad Survey of international students</p> <p>Areas of international excellence recognised as such outside the country</p>
<p>Review all our programmes to ensure that internationalisation is valued and assessed in line with these principles</p>	<p>The quality-assurance review fails to keep to schedule</p>	<p>Seek agreement that the key principles should be few in number (4–5). Agree timeline with quality-assurance unit at the outset</p>
<p>Review our existing international partnerships with regard to generating new knowledge, facilitating student and staff exchange and the recruitment of new students. Establish three new international partnerships by end of next year</p>	<p>Review of partnerships fail to agree on outcomes</p>	<p>Ensure the review group has clear terms of reference, a balanced membership and a defined timeline with provision to recommend a number of options along with a preferred one</p>

Key aim	To enhance the staff experience by establishing a Framework of CARE – Communication; Appraisal; Responsiveness; Evaluation		KPI
Risk score	20 (Likelihood = Medium/High; Impact = High)		
<i>Smart objectives</i>	<i>Nature of risk</i>	<i>Mitigating the risk</i>	
Appoint a credible independent external to conduct a new survey of the staff experience in the next six months – through questionnaire and focus groups – that ensures confidentiality	Some staff won't engage and the survey outcomes are much more challenging than expected	Emphasise confidentiality of process. Acknowledge the outcomes and recognise you now have a baseline on which to build	Year-on-year increase in level of staff satisfaction and achievement
Establish a cycle of regular staff forums on a termly basis – starting next term	Staff fail to attend forums	Agree the agenda is set and shared by both parties. Make it an informal social occasion too	
Initiate a programme of 360-degree feedback for senior staff as a means of enhancing leadership and management effectiveness	Senior staff balk at the idea of 360-degree feedback	Reticence is a normal reaction in first-timers. Reassure them it is a learning and development tool conducted by an external independent third party	

financial viability; academic profile and market position; student experience and learning and teaching; research; staff; estates and so on;

- typically simple (and more effective for being so), few in number and focus on key strategic issues;
- not only helpful in measuring progress, but also sharpening attention and focus on key issues, identifying areas of concern, enabling comparison against your university peers (benchmarking) and in prompting a more sophisticated debate on your aspirations.

Identifying KPIs will also help you in the realisation of your department's strategic plan. Quantitative ones for example – linked to the proportion of your budget spent on staff salaries; the amount of teaching and research income you generate and the degree of student satisfaction compared to your peers – are common. That said, KPIs can sometimes be dangerously simplistic and open to contrasting interpretations if not completely thought through. The best safeguard here is to articulate your KPIs with reference to sector norms, benchmarks against your peer competitors or feedback you've received from student, staff or stakeholder surveys (See Table 3.4).

Step 7: Assessing and managing risk

You also need to consider the risk implications of what you propose to do and, equally important, the consequences of *not* undertaking it. The rationale for such risk assessment is to help avoid excessive risk-taking on the one hand, and to facilitate the seizure of new opportunities on the other, while simultaneously reassuring stakeholders you are unlikely to be blown off course by unforeseen circumstances. The irony, of course, is that in the case of many HEIs the greatest single risk facing them is their actual *fear* of taking a risk in the first place. Thus your institutional context – the level of risk maturity and appetite for risk – has important implications for the assessment of risk you undertake for your own departmental strategic plan.

A relatively recent innovation within higher education, risk assessment is nowadays almost universal. Risk is typically defined as: 'the threat or possibility that an action or event will adversely or beneficially affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives' (HEFCE, 2001b). It is very likely therefore that your university

Table 3.5 Risk maturity at your university

<i>Degree of maturity</i>	<i>Risk process</i>	<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Behaviour</i>
1 Risk scepticism	No formal processes	Tend to avoid the issue, or blasé	Lack of engagement – possible ignorance of the consequences
2 Risk awareness	Patchy, use of stand-alone processes	Suspended belief	Reactive, fire-fighting
3 Understanding and application	Tick-box approach	Passive acceptance	Compliance, reliance on registers
4 Embedding and integration	Risk embedded in key business processes	Active engagement	Risk-based decision-making
5 Robust risk management	Regular review and improvement	Committed	Innovation, confident risk-taking

has a ‘Corporate Risk Register’ that identifies all the key risks, and a risk management process designed to:

- identify the principal risks to the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives;
- evaluate the nature and extent of those risks;
- manage those risks efficiently, effectively and economically.

What then is the level of risk maturity at your university?

That is, what is the degree to which risk management is embedded in a robust way in your everyday practice? What implications does your ranking have for the departmental strategic plan you are developing? (See Table 3.5).

In essence, the more robust the risk management the more you can be confident that any new activity you are contemplating (e.g. a collaboration with an overseas partner) its efficacy will be rigorously assessed – and if a sound proposition – will be established on schedule. If risk scepticism prevails, the harder you will need to work to get buy-in for your proposal and the more lobbying you will have to do, and you may even have to use a credible independent third party to offer support for your plans.

What is the appetite for risk at your university?

For example, your institution may or may not:

- have a strong appetite for risk (i.e. the overall level of risk exposure it is prepared to accept);
- view risk and opportunity as two sides of the same coin;
- be conventionally risk-averse.

Table 3.6 Measuring risk

To aid reflection it is common practice to assess each strategic aim and objective in terms of a risk score based on:

- The likelihood or probability of the occurrence happening/not happening;
- The impact it would have on the overall activity of your department.

Consider each of your strategic objectives in turn in relation to these two questions and rate them accordingly on the two axes: Low (1); Medium (3) or High (5).

The table below summarises the risk score you might assign depending on the answer to each of the above questions.

		<i>Impact</i>		
		High (5)	Medium (3)	Low (1)
Likelihood	High (5)	25	15	9
	Medium (3)	15	9	3
	Low (1)	9	3	1

Having assigned individual scores you will then have a risk profile – a ‘traffic light’ view if you will – coded red, amber and green – to guide your actions.

It is those risks you deemed ‘serious’ (red) that you should prioritise and act upon and monitor most closely on a regular basis.

See Table 3.4 for an illustrative example of measuring and mitigating risk.

Risk appetite is typically defined by your governing body following proposals from the university executive. The level of preferred exposure varies between universities and is dependent on numerous factors, as well as the views of funding bodies, banks and other external stakeholders. There is also no standard way of defining the limits of a university's risk appetite – some use a qualitative approach (as in anything deemed to be 'very high' risk) while others apply monetary value. Consult your Corporate Risk Register and university policy on risk management (available from your University Secretary, University Risk Manager or other relevant member of the Senior University Executive) and find out:

- How has your university defined its risk appetite?
- Has it changed with different circumstances? Is it reviewed regularly?
- Do your findings have implications for the departmental strategic plan you are developing?

What is your assessment and mitigation of risk for your departmental plan?

Either way, completing an assessment of risk for your own departmental strategic plan – consciously measuring it and articulating ways of mitigating it – will give you confidence in: what you propose to do; being held accountable for it; the discussions you have with colleagues within and beyond your department in seeking to secure their endorsement, and in managing the implementation of your strategic plan (see Tables 3.6 and 3.4).

Step 8: Agreeing a 'shared vision' for your department.

Your personal perspective on the department completed you are now in an informed position to undertake the most difficult task of this whole process: that of securing the agreement of your colleagues on the best way forward for your department.

Your research and analysis of what the department could and should do will count for nought if you are unable to engage your colleagues in establishing a 'shared vision' on your collective future. There is, as noted earlier, no single right way. However, our understanding of leadership – together with the examples of good practice extant in some HEIs – do provide us with a way forward. You have anyway already taken steps to help you in this regard – through your own self-assessment ('paving the way' – the 'first leadership act' in Senge's view (2006)); and in your willingness to 'encourage the heart' by articulating your vision from your colleagues perspective. You now need to go further and test your 'mental model' with them.

Academic environments, of course, are ones in which critical reasoning is an everyday professional practice and your colleagues may readily engage in reviewing your findings on the basis of your summary outline. A more fruitful way – and one more likely to generate interest and debate, as well as help you crystallise your own thinking more sharply – is to present your findings in a more contestable way through an analytical framework – typically, the time-honoured SWOT analysis. Such analyses also have the advantage of being perceived as even-handed as you have to classify all the outcomes of your scanning and analysing into either one of four categories:

Table 3.7 A SWOT analysis of a UK modern university

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Major provider of high-quality initial teacher training	A financial inheritance which had a weak revenue base and subsequently several broken capital promises which contributed to a poor financial base
Established core areas in arts and health with good regional and national reputation	Deep-rooted post-merger inefficiencies in terms of estate, portfolio, processes and staffing
Some niche areas of high value and strong potential: e.g. forestry, radiography, policing, transport and logistics	Weak and ineffective administration, management information, and ICT functionality
Continuing support of primary funding stakeholders including national and regional bodies	Uncertainty of direction during changes to established and permanent senior management team
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
Up-skilling the regional workforce; working with employers for mutual benefit	Lack of growth in core funding streams with further cuts looming
Academic offer, location and relatively low living costs to attract international students	Unwillingness to change accepted practices, to grasp opportunities
Working with national park service to establish regional centre for the outdoors	Deteriorating relations with trade unions
Developing niche provision in energy-related activity to meet the demands of the long-term new investment in the region	Bad publicity from negatively received changes and potential 'tainted brand'
Chance to do things differently as a distributed university – to be a pioneer – in developing and delivering higher education	

What does the SWOT analysis of your department look like?

- The **Strengths** on which we can build
- The **Weaknesses** we must address
- The **Opportunities** we can exploit
- The **Threats** we must counter

See Table 3.7 for just such a SWOT analysis, for example, of a modern UK university.

More than that – in order to 'enable others to act' – you need to encourage your colleagues to put themselves in your shoes and develop their own indicative 'mental model' of the department. This need not be a grand design, simply a one page summary of their visions and strategies for the department. Either way, their critique of your perspective, along with their own conceptualisation, should enable you to revise, enhance and maybe even dramatically reshape your own initial ideas. This interchange between an individual leader's ideas and the collaborative thought of colleagues is at the heart of vision formation, and it is

contingent on your willingness – as a putative transformational leader – to invite your colleagues to share in the process of leadership.

You could then:

- Use your SWOT analysis of your department as a stimulus prompt on an away-day retreat or as an invitation for comment (or)
- Get your colleagues to develop their own SWOT.
- Invite a small group of your colleagues to develop their own position paper on the department's strategic options.
- Use an issue of common interest (e.g. research excellence; funding opportunity; student feedback; the undergraduate portfolio; staff succession planning) as a means to engage colleagues in a preliminary discussion.
- Divide your colleagues into a number of small groups to focus on a variety of different strategic themes (e.g. departmental reputation; income generation; staff and student experience).
- Invite your colleagues to draw their own picture of your department and the university. You can then share these pictures with your own and discuss the outcomes.
- Invite a small number of colleagues from other departments in your university to conduct an 'appreciative enquiry' of your department.
- Hire an independent third party to facilitate a departmental workshop using proven techniques that facilitate genuine collaborative inquiry: e.g. the World Cafe; Open Space forums; Future Search conferences.
- Set up a Strategic Issues sub-group of your departmental leadership team.
- Organise a Strategic Issues seminar programme with internal and external speakers.
- Establish a small number of focus groups eliciting views from departmental newcomers, established staff and external stakeholders.
- Use every opportunity you get – in one-to-ones; formal committees and departmental forums – to nudge the strategic conversation further.

Strategic planning in practice

We can see these elements and processes at work in the institutional examples of good practice offered by Northeastern University, Boston and George Mason University, Virginia.

Northeastern University, Boston

Northeastern, a large private 'national research university' that is 'student-centred, practice-oriented and urban' with 'a strong community service mission' set itself the goal (as part of its 'self-study for re-accreditation') of 'creating a New Home for Faculty'. A 'home' which envisages faculty working in new ways; where

mentoring, advising, collaboration and curriculum development are recognised, assessed and rewarded along with teaching, research and scholarship as integral elements of professional performance.

(Baer et al., 1998)

The experience of departments in attempting to make this vision a reality, provides us with an illuminating insight on how approaches to departmental planning vary

Table 3.8 Departmental planning at Northeastern University, Boston

Department	Mathematics	Cardiopulmonary sciences
About the department	A large department with an international research reputation and a heavy teaching and community service load	A smaller department oriented towards applied research and professional development
What the chair initially found	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was impossible to generate any interest on the part of departmental colleagues • Staff felt threatened by the prospect of defining departmental goals consistent with the university's mission, as if they were 'losing control over one's life' as one faculty member put it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no problem arousing staff interest. The attraction of a new and different setting (and with it the prospect of greater professional fulfilment) exerted a tremendous 'pull' on colleagues • The main concern was to how best harness this enthusiasm
How the chair attempted to overcome this difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made the process more meaningful by focusing preliminary discussions on an issue (or 'hook') of particular interest to the whole department – in this case the hiring of junior faculty • Sought to give 'ownership' to the department by asking one of his colleagues to write a first draft based on the debate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranged for staff to work through their initial ideas in groups of two to three • Organised a series of departmental retreats (or away days) at which these ideas were presented, discussed and ultimately voted upon formally by department members with all votes carrying equal weight
What the chair concluded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These tactics worked. Staff estrangement was turned round • The process of draft writing and circulation, feedback and revision developed its own momentum and a collective agreement was finally reached • The key was 'to listen and feel the emotions of people in your group, to find an appropriate activity that stimulated the interests of the group and to move ownership of the process in ever-widening circles' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This was in theory a high-risk strategy: there was no guarantee that colleagues would opt for goals consistent with the university's mission. But it did not prove to be a high-risk strategy in practice • There was near unanimity among staff on the agreed goals in line with the university's mission • The process had made her department 'feel more like a team than ever before'

Source: adapted from Baer et al., 1998.

What would be the likely response to such initiatives in your department?

What approach do you think would work best for you?