

# Senior Administrators as legitimate partners in the strategic management of the University of Education, Winneba; an inside view

Samuel Abieku Hammond\*<sup>1</sup> & Reginald Sitsofe Kwaku Agbo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Division of Operations, University of Education, Winneba. Email: sahammond@uew.edu.gh

<sup>2</sup>University Printing Press, University of Education, Winneba. Email: rskagbo@uew.edu.gh

\*Corresponding Author

## **Abstract**

*Strategic management of institutions of higher education largely unfold in the context of funding, increased emphasis on efficiency of resources, utilisation and management, and a strengthening of policy and planning roles of key administrators. Administrators in the Senior Member category are key in the planning and implementation of strategic management of the University. This paper attempts to tell the role played by Senior administrators in the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) as key partners in the strategic management of the institution. Senior Members in the UEW administration numbering 68, provided the data on the role they play in the strategic management of UEW and Version 16 of SPSS was used to analyse the data. It was realised that Senior Member administrators of UEW facilitate and implement the strategic plans and therefore play a very critical role in the strategic management of the university and, therefore should be considered as legitimate partners in the strategic management of UEW.*

*Key words: Senior administrators, Strategic Planning, Strategic Management, University Management and Administration,*

## **Introduction**

Globally, universities are the highest institution of learning. They are mandated to spearhead the education of all to the benefit of society. The role of universities in every nation underpin the development, growth and transformation of individuals and the nation at large. Today, universities all over the world are considered to play a major role in economic development of nations, advancement of knowledge and the development of the human resource.

According to Trowler and Knight, (2000) academic institutions such as universities are complex social and activity systems involving a number of interrelated variables and functioning within a larger dynamic environment. Universities can be viewed from a variety of perspectives, - as a community, an institution, a corporation, an organisation and sometimes as a political system. All the above concepts can be noticed and they coexist within universities. By their mission, vision and core values of universities, one can realise that universities have unique goals, changing environment, human resource needs, infrastructure, funding and various challenges.

De Boer, H.; Jongbloed, B.; Enders, J.; File, J. (ed.), (2010) wrote that governance of Institutions of higher learning has fundamentally changed since 1980s' from a classical form of regulation dominated by a single actor, the state, to forms in which various actors at various system levels coordinate the system. They added that

law, governmental guidelines and budgeting are still of high relevance for most institutions of higher learning and there has also been a number of buffer institutions such as quality assurance agencies or research funding organisations, Gender sections and many others which support the action of institutions of higher learning.

Most educationist agree that in Africa, universities are expected to adapt to African circumstances such as producing human capital, promoting economic development and championing ethical and moral values of society and pass it on to the generations while fostering teaching and research. Such ideals are linked to the mandates of most institutions of higher learning in Ghana and University of Education Winneba is no exception.

It is also important to note that Universities also consume a considerable amount of funds. Education policy and development is entirely dependent on the provision of funds. The appropriate allocation and utilization of resources ensures a smooth interaction of the various sectors of the university systems. These suggest that university affairs require a clear management structure to ensure a successful operation. The above attributes and role mandate of institutions of higher learning necessitates highly professional and competent management and administrative structures to keep the institutions moving from one stage of development to another.

### **Strategic Management of Institutions of Higher Learning**

Universities are not managed ordinarily but strategically managed. Strategy is defined as a set of objectives that focuses on activities of an institution tending to reach medium to long term success. Strategies are created by the top managers in a highly participatory and communicative process. Top managers act on middle management policy suggestions, verifies and bundles them (Nickel, 2011). According to Nickel (2011) strategies of Institutions of Higher Learning should address the following questions:

- (1) which core competences could we base our activities in the next 5-10 years?
- (2) How do we meet competitive demands compared to other institutions?
- (3) In which established or new fields do we want to operate in the next 5- 10 years to ensure institutional success?
- (4) How do we fulfill our social responsibility in those fields?

Nickel (2011) added that Strategic Management is of utmost importance for every Institution of Higher Education which understand itself as an autonomous actor, making independent decisions regarding goals, successes and failures while maintaining accountability regarding those outcomes. It is a continuous planning, monitoring, analysis and assessment of all that is necessary for an organisation to meet its goals and objectives. The Management Study Guide (MSG) also defined Strategic Management as a bundle of decisions and acts which a Manager undertakes and which decides the result of the firms performance. The Manager must have a thorough knowledge and analysis of the general and competitive organisational environment so as to take right decisions. The Wikipedia explained Strategic Management as the formulation and implementation of the major goals and initiatives taken by a company's top Management on behalf of owners, based on consideration of resources and assessment of the internal and external environs in which the organisation operates. All the above point to the fact that corporate entities have numerous demands and challenges. They need to strategize in order to stay in competition. Strategic Management has to do with high level planning and decision making on the achievement of the targeted goals of the entity. Tabatoni and Barblan (2002) wrote that the main target of strategic management is to lead people involved in the development of the organisation and help them concentrate on the organisation's image. This also suggest that the personnel at the helm of affairs of the entity needs to use high level strategies to manage and keep the entity in competition.

De Boer, et al, (2010) indicated that strategy can exist at different levels within an institution. The Strategic Management process encompasses 3 levels strategy- Corporate level, Business level and Operational level. These 3 types of strategy should be integrated in a means-end fashion to accomplish objectives and create sustainable competitive advantage (Chakravarthy & Henderson, 2007, Shermerhorn, 2012)

Nickel (2011) defined strategy as a set of objectives that focuses on the activities of an institution tending to reach medium or long term success. She added that, strategic plan helps leaders to choose between important and unimportant demands and to give members and stakeholders of their organisation an orientation by formulating an explicit directions. Watson (2000), on the other side asserts that managing strategy is supposed to be the most important thing a university does; it allows all of its main activities (teaching, research, social and economic service) to be realised. Tabatoni (2002), further indicated that strategic management in a higher education institution can be characterised as forward-thinking, leading towards those institutional policies that aims for increasing the university's potential for change, a constant concern for quality along with propagation of evaluation methods and quality standards being at the heart of education managers.

### **Strategic Management of Universities**

The sustainability of higher education and its reforms are supposed to be directly related to the level of professionalism of higher education management that has to behave proactively and entrepreneurially Huisman & Pausits , (2010).

In view of all the above and in order to be able to act successfully in a complex environment with large number of heterogeneous demands, all institutions of higher learning have structured a hierarchy of the management board or team. The widely known ones include the University Council or the Board of governance. The key personalities here may include the Chancellor, the Chairman of the University Council, the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar, The Finance Officer, the Librarian, the Development Officer and the Internal Auditor, as the case may be for most universities including University of Education, Winneba. As earlier indicated, universities have their mission, vision and goals to achieve and in order to achieve them, the Principal Officers or the key decision makers also known as the University Council are appointed and entrusted with responsibilities to make recommendations on the organisation and management of the institution. Then comes the main stream administrators and professionals who implement the decisions and recommendations made by the university governing council. Some of their responsibilities include organising admissions, maintenance of official records, maintenance and audit of financial flows and records, maintenance and construction of campus buildings, maintenance of the campus grounds, safety and security, Supervision and support of campus computers and network, fundraising from private individuals and foundations, research administration, public affairs, student services, protocol issues and making proposals for the development of the university for the consideration of Management. All these are handled by the administration which constitute the non- teaching staff.

According to history, the early colleges and universities' administration were typically run by the college president all alone, but with the increase in enrolment and the demand for expanded services, one man or few men could no longer handle all the administrative functions. The heterogeneous demands in the institutions of higher learning such as a university require for very professional and competent administrative staff to undertake wide variety of duties including those performed by data entry clerks, analysts, secretaries, personal assistants and executives. For an administrator in a university, some other job responsibilities include organising and servicing committee and board meetings (producing agenda and taking minutes ), handling correspondence, research and report writing, preparing statistics and handling data such as attendance figures, purchasing equipment, processing invoices, liaising with potential students /,and other institutions, helping with course approval and evaluation activities, formulating and implementing regulations/ policies, time tabling , planning events, administering and coordinating student recruitment, examinations and assessment. The administrator in a university setting should be highly skilful in Information Technology, numeracy, time management, negotiation and communication. Good interpersonal relations is also highly essential. It was in this direction that Tavernier, (2005 indicated that 'Modern universities are sophisticated multi-level organisations and complex pattern of various contributory factors form the background of educational management. The administrators form the backbone of the university management and their role cannot be disputed due to the fact that the volume and complex of work cannot be handled all by the principal officers alone. Secondly, the

academic staff have so much to do in terms of preparation to teach, teaching, assessing the students and also conducting research.

### **Administrators at UEW**

Looking at the chain of command for management of universities, the next in the line of command immediately behind the university council are the administrators which some people term as ‘middle managers’. The Administrative staff in UEW comprise of main stream administrators and professionals alike. The professionals include accountants, auditors, architects, engineers and medical officers. The implication is that they all play administrative roles in different capacities. It is important to also note that the administrative staff strength comprise of Senior Members, Senior Staff and Junior Staff. The Senior Members by ranks are higher than Senior Staff. The senior members are all second degree holders and could be associated with or be described as the ‘engine room’ or the core of the entire administration of the University. The Senior Staff actually do and push through all the clerical works in support of the senior members.

A look at table 1 below indicate that over the past ten years, the administrative staff strength has increased consistently. This could be a clear indication that the heterogeneous needs and challenges of the University keeps expanding.

**Table 1. showing the Administrative staff strength of UEW for the last 10 years.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Senior Staff</b>	<b>Senior Members (Non-teaching)</b>
2008	221	86
2009	272	85
2010	294	107
2011	332	124
2012	355	129
2013	427	142
2014	461	158
2015	468	166
2016	502	149
2017	550	141

*(Source: Planning Unit, UEW)*

Below is the current population of the administrative staff of University of Education, Winneba by campuses.

**Table 2: Current Administrative Staff population of Senior Staff and Senior Member (non-teaching), 2017 by campuses**

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Senior Staff</b>	<b>Senior Members (Non-teaching)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Ajumako	26	7	<b>33</b>
Mampong	56	13	<b>69</b>
Kumasi	55	32	<b>87</b>
Winneba	113	89	<b>202</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>691</b>

*(Source: Planning Office, UEW)*

### **Statement of the problem**

The highest policy/ decision making body of a university is the university governing council and the principal officers of a university include The Chancellor, The Chairman of the Governing council, the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor and, the Registrar who acts as their Secretary. These Principal officials have enormous task to maintain and develop the university with its core mandate. The Registrar is saddled with the entire secretariat work in the university and also in charge of all administrative matters of the university on daily basis. This task at this position is huge and complex. The Registrar's office is actually the nerve centre of the university. For example, over 98% of all internal and external correspondence of the entire university are processed in the various units, Offices, Sections, Departments and Divisions under the Registrar's office. As the administrative centre, the Registry implements and supervises the implementation of policies of the university. This makes the Registry very important and therefore employs a large number of personnel who constitute largely the non- teaching staff of the university. Among this category of staff are juniors, senior staff and senior members as well as professionals and main stream administrators. Senior Administrators deal with implementation of policies and procedures per their positions. However, their input towards strategic management of the University seem not to be really known and appreciated by all.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this write-up is;

- To tell the role played by senior administrators as key partners in the management activities of the University.
- To describe the extent to which administrators are involved in the strategic management of the University.

### **Objective**

To use the responses of senior administrators to show the amount of work contributions they offer in the strategic management of the University.

### **Research Question**

To what extent are the Senior administrators involved in the strategic management of the university?

### **Methodology**

The study used a survey method. The population for the study was 141 (Senior Members-non teaching). Sixty eight senior members (non-teaching) were targeted and purposively sampled for this study. Questionnaires was used to elicit the responses on various issues concerning the strategic plan

### **Data analysis**

Version 16 of the Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) was used to generate the means of the responses based on the Likert scale below:

1. very strongly disagree,
2. strongly disagree,
3. disagree,
4. agree,
5. strongly agree and
6. very strongly agree.

**Results and Discussions**

The object of this paper was to use the responses of Senior administrators to show the amount of work contributions they offer in the strategic management of the University.

**Table 3. Senior members' responses to various issues on strategic management**

S/N	Statement	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	Your Department/Unit has a written long-term goals	68	4.99	1.01
2.	The goals of your Department/Unit are set within the University Corporate Strategic plan	68	4.96	1.16
3.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit takes formal responsibility for the goals set to conform with the corporate strategic plan	68	4.90	0.87
4.	The Administrators in the Department/Unit clearly assign lead responsibility for action plan implementation to a person or alternatively to a team in my Department/Unit	68	4.84	0.87
5.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in the administration are the key facilitators and implementers of the University's strategic plan	68	4.81	1.11
6.	Based on review, the strategic diagnosis culminates in identifying key strategic issues. e.g. expansion, profitable improvement, positioning change	68	4.79	1.25
7.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit are indispensable for the strategic planning and implementation to a successful performance in my department /unit	68	4.76	1.29
8.	Your Department/Unit strategic planning is a top priority activity performed on regular basis. e.g. each year	68	4.69	1.08
9.	All staff whose work are affected significantly by the corporate strategic plan participate fully in the planning process	68	4.62	1.38
10.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit make strategic decisions (implementation of action plans) based on the strategic plan	68	4.61	1.21
11.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit always team up to come with the strategic plan to support the management of the University	68	4.50	1.30
12.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit systematically monitor and measure the actual performances versus the goals set within the corporate strategic plan	68	4.47	1.20
13.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit periodically gather and analyse progress on the implementation of the corporate strategic plan	68	4.38	1.26
14.	After completing the internal and external analysis of the Departmental/Unit goals within the corporate strategic plan, the Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit review the mission and goals in the light of apparent threat and/opportunities and strengths	68	4.37	1.23
15.	The Senior staff, Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrar in my Department/Unit follow a defined set of procedures in the strategic planning process	68	4.28	1.16

The mean responses ranged from 4.28 to 4.99 and that corresponds to agree and strongly agree (rounded to the nearest whole number). Thus, in general, the respondents agreed with all the issues raised that bordered on strategic management.

**The knowledge of respondents on the strategic management of the University.**

It was very necessary to determine the respondents' insight knowledge of the strategic planning of their department and that of the University. As such, the following questions were asked:

- (1) Your Department/Unit has a written long-term goals.
- (2) Your Department/Unit Strategic planning is a top priority activity, performed on regular basis, e.g. each year.
- (3) The goals of your department/unit are set within the University Corporate Strategic Plan
- (4) Based on review, the strategic diagnosis culminates in identifying key strategic issues.eg. expansion profitable improvement, positioning change.

The mean responses obtained on each of the above questions were 4.99, 4.69, 4.96, and 4.79 respectively. The responses were all on the higher side indicating very well that the administrators have knowledge about the

### *Senior Administrators as legitimate partners in the strategic management*

strategic planning of their departments and the relationship to the University's Corporate strategic planning and Management. The relevance of the above questions was to tell their knowledge on the strategic management of the University which also underpin how they respond to the questions on their involvement in the entire process.

#### **The level of involvement of respondents in the strategic management of the University.**

The following questions were asked for the respondents to indicate their level of involvement in the strategic planning and management of the University.

- (1) All staff whose work are affected significantly by the corporate strategic plan participate fully in the planning process.
- (2) The Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrars in the department/unit make strategic decisions (implementation action plans) based on the strategic plan.
- (3) The Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrars in my department/unit always team up to come up with the strategic plan to support the management of the university.
- (4) The Assistant/senior/deputy registrar in my department/unit take formal responsibility for the goals set to conform to the corporate.
- (5) The administrators in the department/unit clearly assign lead responsibility for action plan implementation to a person or alternatively to a team in my department/unit.
- (6) The Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrars in the administration are the key facilitators and implementers of the University's Strategic Plan.

Responses on the above questions were all above the mean of 4.50 which indicated that respondents have been involved in making the strategic plans for the University through their departments. They facilitate, plan and implement the strategic planning for the University and therefore are indispensable in that regard.

A close look at the issues that the respondents ranked the highest in order of agreement were:

- The departments had written long-term goals;
- The goals of the departments were set within the University's Corporate Strategic Plan; and
- The administrators in the department/unit clearly assign lead responsibility for action plan implementation to persons or alternatively to teams in the departments/units.

The above questions were asked for the respondents to indicate their knowledge of the Departmental strategic planning and their involvement in the planning and implementation. Importantly, the administrators extract and link their departmental strategic planning to the University's Corporate Strategic plan. This tells the strong linkage from the various departments to the main administration in terms of planning and Strategic Management.

On the other hand, the following issues were ranked just below to the mean of 4.50 in the level of agreement:

- Assistant /Senior/Deputy Registrars in the departments/units follow a defined set of procedures in the strategic planning process;

In agreeing on this issue, it could be realized that some department actually follow a defined set of procedures in the strategic planning process. However, some respondents do not agree that they follow a defined process in the strategic planning process. This calls for further probing on why it was so. In any case, all the processes end up in a uniformed strategic plan that shape the administrative processes of the University.

- After completing the internal and external analysis of the department/unit/ goals within the corporate strategic plan, the Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrars in the department/unit review the mission and goals in light of the apparent threats/opportunities and strength;

The significant disagreement on the above issue by the respondents could be attributed to the fact that here in UEW, monitoring and review of the strategic planning has, in a way, been left to a Monitoring team coordinated

from Planning Unit. However, it could also be that some departments have left the review of the Strategic planning to some personalities and for that matter, some administrators are left out at the review process.

- Assistant/Senior/Deputy Registrars in the departments/units periodically gather and analyze progress on the implementation of the corporate strategic plan.

The above question was very important to describe the extent to which the Senior Administrators implement the strategic plans and what they do afterwards. They are expected to review the mission and goals set in the light of threats, opportunities and strength. They are also expected to gather and analyze progress of the implementation of the corporate Strategic plan. This end of the entire process of strategic management strongly indicate that the Senior administrators are indeed the facilitators, planners, makers, implementers as well as evaluators of the strategic planning and management and therefore are indispensable in the strategic management of the University. However, the issue of administrators meeting to analyze the progress of the implementation also ranked slightly below the mean (4.50). by the responses. An indication that some departments in the University fall short of reviewing the progress of implementation of the strategic plan. This low response may also mean that only a few individuals take charge of the review process and perhaps the mode of reviewing the strategic planning at all the levels need to be reviewed and strengthened.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the analysis indicated that the Senior Administrators of UEW are heavily involved in the Strategic Management of the University. They are the key facilitators and implementers of the University's strategic plan and also assign responsibility for action plan implementation to persons and teams in the Departments. The analysis also indicated that they systematically monitor and measure the actual performances versus the goals set within the corporate strategic plan and this makes them legitimate partners in the Strategic Management of the University. On the other hand the issue of all administrators meeting to review the process of implementation ranked lower (4.37 to the mean of 4.50) by the responses. This outcome may also be a concern to be noted and addressed by the University administrators.

### **References**

- Ahmed, J.U., Ahmed K.U., Shimul, A.S., Zuñiga , R.(2015), *Managing Strategies for Higher Institutions in the UK*, Kerala, SAGE Publications.
- Chakravarthy, B. & Henderson, J. (2007). From a hierarchy to a heterarchy of strategies: Adapting to a changing context. *Management Decision*, 45(3), 642–652.
- De Boer, H.; Jongbloed, B.; Enders, J.; File, J. (ed.) (2010): Progress in higher education reform across Europe. Governance and funding reform. Volume 1: Executive summary main report. Brussels. Online publication: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/governance/vol1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc/governance/vol1_en.pdf), accessed on 3 Oct. 2017
- Ekanem, I. (2007) ""Insider accounts": a qualitative research method for small firms". *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 14 Issue: 1, pp.105-117, <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626000710727926>
- Huisman, J., Pausits, A. (eds) (2010). *Higher Education Management and Development. Compendium for Managers*. New York: Waxmann Publishing Co.
- Nickel, S. (2011), *Strategic Management in Higher Education Institutions:-Approaches, Processes and Tools*,[www.researchgate.net/publications/261020107](http://www.researchgate.net/publications/261020107)
- Schermerhorn, J. R. (2012). *Management*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tabatoni, P., Barblan, A. (2002). Strategic Management, A Tool of Leadership – Concepts and Paradoxes. *Thema*, 2, European University Association, pp. 5-11. [Online] Available at: [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/strategic\\_manag\\_uni\\_insttional\\_devlpt.1069322397877.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/strategic_manag_uni_insttional_devlpt.1069322397877.pdf) [Assessed 18 October 2017].
- Tabatoni, P. (2002). An Explanatory Glossary, *Thema*, 2, European University Association, pp.23-28. [Online] Available at: [http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/strategic\\_manag\\_uni\\_institutional\\_devlpt.1069322397877.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/strategic_manag_uni_institutional_devlpt.1069322397877.pdf) [Accessed 10 October 2017].



*Senior Administrators as legitimate partners in the strategic management*

- Tavernier, K. (2005). Relevance of Strategic Management for Universities, Tijdschrift voor Economie en Management, Vol. L, 5. [Online] Available at: [https://lirias.kuleuven.be/bitstream/123456789/120121/1/tem\\_5\\_05\\_tavernier.pdf](https://lirias.kuleuven.be/bitstream/123456789/120121/1/tem_5_05_tavernier.pdf) [Accessed 20 December 2017].
- Trowler, P. & Knight, P. T. (2000), Coming to know in higher education: theorizing faculty entry to new work contexts.19 (1), pp. 27-42.
- Watson, D. (2000). Managing Strategy. Buckingham:Open University Press.