From local imperative to global significance: the University of Johannesburg scenario

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Abstract
This paper reports on the extraordinary progress made by a merged educational institution in a developingcountry amidst significant social and economic challenges. With a clear strategic focus and a committed-to-success leadership team, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) realized most of its initial goals in less than half the time planned. The institution's commitment to excellence, innovation and quality assurance supports its ambitious goals.

Within a developing economy, the South African Higher Education sector faces harsh realities. Diminishing state subsidies (in real terms) requires an innovative approach to generating additional income streams for the institution, whilst maintaining focus on its core business, namely producing a high quality academic output. The unsatisfactory quality and throughput of the state secondary-school system, poses a threat to the sustainability of the required standards of higher education at many universities in South Africa.Although one of the overt goals of the University of Johannesburg is– and remains - to be an accessible tertiary institution for the disadvantaged youth of the country, UJrecognized early on that it needed to "up its game" in terms of its research profile in order to attract ever more and better human and financial resources. A shift in focus was therefore needed from its inception in 2005 when it started as a "comprehensive" (a state-imposed term) institution, ostensibly focused on teaching and learning in both traditional formative degree programs and vocationally-directed diploma programs, with pockets only of postgraduate training and research activity.

The university now offers a wide range of academic programs (from short courses, certificates, diplomas, junior degrees and postgraduate degrees) and has adopted a very specific modus operandi to realize its objectives and strategically position itself as a global establishment of relevant, quality research and education. Furthermore, because of its geographically significant location in Johannesburg (perceived to be the "economic gateway to Africa"), UJ seeks to fulfill a key role in support of this function.

1. Introduction

As part of the wholesale post-apartheid transformation of Higher Education in South Africa, three universities were merged in 2005 to form the University of Johannesburg (UJ). All three institutions were creatures of the apartheid ideology and had very different institutional cultures and missions. The avowed purpose of the newly established University of Johannesburg (UJ) was to redress the educational inequalities inflicted by South Africa's

previous apartheid regime. Many were cynical about the success of a forced marriage of three very diverse institutions.

The early post-merger years of the University of Johannesburg were fraught with much contestationamong staff, mainly as a result of job insecurities, lack of role clarity and the lack of parity that existed between staff members' salaries, levels of educational qualifications and academic focus. At the time, a new organizational culture had not yet been established, and dedicated diversity and change management was subordinated to structural integration and the design of an appropriate academic architecture. Consequently staff morale was generally low and turnover was high. The new brand of the institution, along with its vision, mission and values, had not yet become embedded and it took some time before material (internal and external) stakeholder buy-in took root.

By 2010, UJ had been able to prove the cynics wrong and the merger was universally hailed as one of the real success stories of the transformation of Higher Education in South Africa. In 2011,steady state had been achieved to the extent that the UJ Council was able to approve an ambitious strategy document, the "Strategic Thrusts 2011 – 2020" that was meant to lay the foundations for its future global competitiveness. It was envisioned that the university would reach these objectives by 2020.However, a unified vision and dedicated management team saw to it that many of its strategic objectives were reached, in many instances amazingly so, by as early as the end of 2013. The success of this strategy is illustrated by UJ claiming a position in the top 4% of the world's university rankings (according to the QS World University Ranking System) in 2013 (at its first and 61st position among the universities in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries. The decision by President Barack Obama to choose the Soweto Campus of UJ as the site for his interaction with African youth in June 2013 and his acceptance of an honorary doctorate awarded to him by UJ personified the enhanced standing UJ had achieved.

Within little more than two years, UJ had substantially outperformed its own 10-year strategy and gained become a global competitor, to the extent that its Council recognized the need for its Strategic Objectives to be re-formulated. In November 2013, therefore, the UJ Council adopted a new set of six strategic objectives for 2025 to drive its vision of becoming a pan-African center of global excellence and stature.

This paper investigates the innovation management strategies that contributed to the increased global stature of the University of Johannesburg within the constraints of a developing economy.

2. The merger challenges

Educational systems of countries have always served as one of the most important and sensitive barometers of their prosperity, integrity, development and sustainability. Developed countries have proven over many decades that the foundationsof excellence lie in the education of their population. With the global spotlight on the various ways and means of creating and managing knowledge effectively, education is rapidly becoming the main economic resource of first-world countries, thereby enhancing the financial wellbeing and equality amongst their citizens (Barnard, 2005). Generating and applying knowledge means generating revenue, which, in turn, stimulates development. This is also evident in developing countries, where a direct correlation exists between poverty and crime on the one hand and low levels of education on the other (NUA, 1998).

Owing to the political turmoil and economic restraints that generally characterise developing countries, tertiary education invariably becomes a commodity that is accessible only

to a small elitist group with enough financial resources to secure their and their offspring's education. South Africa is no exception in this regard. The primary and secondary educational sectors are relatively affordable and, as a result, more accessible to the masses.However, the high fees and stringent entrance requirements of the tertiary-education sector create exclusivity. Even with substantial government subsidies/grants and the availability of a host of privately-funded scholarships and bursaries, the tuition fees and living costs for full-time students at most tertiary institutions are simply beyondthe means of the majority of the disadvantaged population, whose members are struggling just to make ends meet (Osin, 1998 – these observations made in 1998 still hold true, depressingly so, 16 years later).

Despite the above deterrents, the tertiary education system in South Africa, which traditionallyconsisted of universities and technikons, has for years delivered a vast pool of human resources to feed the professional job market. Universities, however, are perceived by the general public to have a more academic, theoretical and research-orientated focus, providing degree qualifications, whereastechnikons were perceived to have a more practical and career-focused, vocational approach to Higher Education, providing diploma qualifications and some postgraduate degree qualifications (Department of Education, 2002:3). In addition, the entrance requirements (e.g. subjects required and Academic Performance Scores) of universities have always been relatively higher than those of technikons, resulting in the popular perception that university qualifications are more difficult to obtain than technikon qualifications.

Based on the European model of Higher Education, South African tertiary institutions have been cultivated to strive towards first-world university functionality. This culture has supported the elitist and exclusive nature of academic advancement to such an extent that the historically disadvantaged institutions have been falling further and further behind in their pursuit of sustainability (The World Bank, 2000:10). The disadvantaged institutions became the "hotbeds ofstudent resistance" (Department of Education, 2002:1) during the Apartheid era. The precepts of historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions differed substantially as far as their student recruitment, entrance and degree-fulfilling requirements, resource generation and utilisation and general management was concerned. It is believed that the Apartheid government did not deem the empowerment of the disadvantaged institutions to be a high priority for economic growth. Instead, it focused intensively on the outputs from the "historically white" institutions, thereby continuously increasing the quality/output-gap amongst the advantaged and disadvantaged institutions. Major changes to remedy these imbalances were inevitable.

A fundamental transformation of this system was detailed in the Government Notice of June 2002. The Minister of Higher Education announced in the Notice the extent of restructuring and processes needed to be followed in achieving the visionary objectives for eliminating non-functionality, mismanagement and inequality throughout the South African tertiary educational system. This announcement was received with mixed emotions from the relevant stakeholders, as some institutions welcomed the proposed changes, while others (mostly previously advantaged institutions) perceived it as decisions that were based on a purely political ideology (Goldman, 2005). What added to the mixed reception of the announcement was that, whilst most of the proposed changes suggested mergers and incorporations between similar types of institutions (i.e., universities with universities to produce a "University" type and technikons with technikons, to produce a "University of Technology" type), a change that required two different types (with reference to academic offerings and foci) of institutions (i.e. universities and technikons) to merge to form a new-concept institution, namely a "Comprehensive University", for which no official definition existed at the time in the SAHES (Grobbelaar, 2003).

The decision was final and all institutions affected by the mergers were duty-bound to focus their energies on creating viability and sustainability for the new merged institutions, however much of a "forced marriage" some were perceived to be.

> *"Once a merger is decided on, it is necessaryto carefully plan and manage the implementation. Mergers are processes – not events."*(Gorman, 1989).

In the merger process of the University of Johannesburg, many challenges were to be expected. Three very diverse institutional cultures - a high output, research-focused university, a township-based university providing mostly undergraduate opportunities for disadvantaged youth and a vocationally-focused institution providing technical training – had to be unified to establish a healthy organizational culture that was more than the sum of its parts. This was critical in the attempt to turn the low staff morale around as the daily conflicts of the merger process started to take its toll on the personnel of the new institution. A significant disparity existed between staff members of the merging institutions with regard to their very diverse educational qualifications and salaries and their academic foci.

Streamlining and finalizing the organizational design and the most appropriate academic architecture also proved to be a great challenge due to the very different nature and structures of the merging institutions. The efficient management of four campuses required large capital input in an effort to create equality of infrastructure on all four campuses. This was especially problematic as the institution had to dig deep into its own reserves to find ways around the declining (in real terms) subsidy of the government as part of a developing economy. Not only did academic programs and organizational design keep the management of the institution busy, but they also had to find ways to support, academically, economically and financially, the many thousands of disadvantaged students the institution felt itself obliged to provide educational access to. Many of these students were indigent to the point of hunger and sustainable food assistance schemes needed to be instituted. Advanced and innovative academic development and support programs had to be conceptualized and developed to overcome learning barriers brought about by the below-standard secondary state school-system.

3. The mission of the University of Johannesburg

In the years up to 2013 UJ set itself a mission to position itself as a modern African city university, which is cosmopolitan in character, and asserts academic freedom in the liberal, progressive and transformative values it espouses(University of Johannesburg Annual Stakeholder Report, 2013). It aimsto provide education that is affordable and accessible, that is challenging, imaginative and innovative and contributes to a just, responsible and sustainable society. The university strives to offer a comprehensive range of excellent programs and cultivate students with integrity, who are knowledgeable, well-balanced and ethical and confident global citizens. To achieve this mission, the university finalized a set of eight strategic thrusts in 2010 that would guide the realization of these objectivesin the 10 years from 2011-2020. (In November 2012 the UJ Council approved a new Values Charter for the University: its Vision would be "An international university of choice, anchored in Africa, dynamically shaping the future"; its Mission would be "Inspiring its community to transform and serve humanity through innovation and the collaborative pursuit of knowledge"; its four fundamental values would be: "Imagination; Conversation; Regeneration; Ethical Foundation". This Values Charter guides the new Strategic Goals 2025 approved in 2013 by the UJ Council. This paper, however, focuses not on the new strategy and the new Values Charter, but on the years leading up to 2013.)

In the following section, these strategic thrusts are set out and discussed in terms of their key indicators.

3.1 Strategic Thrust 1: Sustained excellence of academic programs, research and community engagement.

Key indicators for Thrust 1 include employeeswho are appropriately qualified and appropriately capacitated in respect of curriculum design and delivery across the range of three tracks of UJ programs, namely general formative, professional and career-specific. They should also beadequately remunerated and incentivized and appropriately supported with respect to relevant UJ services and resources.Students numbers should not exceed 50 000 in terms of total headcount and should display an enrolment profile aligned to UJ's Enrolment Plan. Student recruitment will take place in a focused manner via early (school-level) interventions, if and where appropriate. All students will beprovided with professional guidance and counseling prior to admission to ensure appropriate placement, aimed at optimal academic success and to reduce the dropout rate for the whole university from the current 19% to 16% by 2020.

First year studentsall need to participate in a well-grounded and faculty-specific First Year Experience (FYE) program, the success of which is annually monitored (UJ has in fact gained national prominence for the quality and innovativeness of its FYE program). A special effort will be made to recruit students for post-graduate studies to attain a 16%:84% Postgraduate: Undergraduate profile by 2020 (current profile 13%:87%). In respect of 25% of first-time entering first years by 2020, students must display an Academic performance Scorescore of 35 and higher (this translates into a 70% and higher average). A total of 1 000 first-time students entering first-year by 2020 should be from schools serving the poorest communities (nationally defined and determined), yet are compliant with minimum admission requirements. They should be appropriately prepared for the world of work and for responsible citizenship to ensure a graduate employability rate of at least 80%.

Teaching and learning will be reflective, self-conscious and geared towards producing well-rounded graduates. Academic Development and Support (ADS) will be integrated for a sustained above-the-norm success rate of 80% (from the current average base of 77%) and 11 000 graduates by 2020, from the current 10 300. Teaching and learning excellence and innovation will be actively promoted and incentivized. It must be ensured that all permanent academic staff obtain a masters degree qualification and 50% a doctoral qualification (from the current base of 32%).

By 2020, UJ should also have an institutional research profile that consistently places UJ in the top 6 residential universities in South Africa in terms of aggregate research output and scholarly impact. The institution should achieve an aggregate research output of 700 accredited output units by 2020 and achieve 112 PhD (from current 70) and 672 Masters graduates (from current 320) annually.Innovation and technology transfer will be increasingly enabled and at least 25 productive and mainly self-funded research centers, including centers driven by technological innovation, will be incorporated.The institution will also have at least 15% of academics recognized as rated researchers, from the current base of 5%.

Community Engagement (CE)should also be increasingly recognized and implemented as UJ's third core academic function, and should address the developmental needs of communities by providing them with access to the University's intellectual capital.At least 10% of all academic programswill incorporate service learning efficiently and cost-effectively in their curricula by 2020, from the current base of 4%.

Academic programstrategies ought to improve the depth, stature, relevance and quality of academic programs**.** By 2015 academic programs should have been reviewed to determine their continued strategic significance to the core academic mandate of UJ.Technology-enriched learning in support of the UJ Teaching and Learning Strategy will be enabledand a rigorous application of minimum quality standards and criteria will be ensured.Existing 'strong' programs will be enhanced and sustainedand internal differentiation to position faculties in ways that capitalize on their unique strengths will be promoted.

The following noteworthy goals were achieved way ahead of target:

a) 26% of students achieved an APS score of 35 and higher (against a 2020 target of 25%;
b) A graduate employability rate of 95% was achieved in 2013 (against a 2020 target of 80%);
c) The 2013 average success rate for undergraduate students was 83% (against a 2020 target of 80%);
d) In 2013 11200 students graduated from UJ (against a target of 1100 by 2020);
e) The aggregate accredited research output for 2012 was 775 units (against a 2020 target of 700 units).

3.2 Strategic Thrust 2: A comprehensive institution recognized for the stature and quality of its scientific and technology programs and its scientific and technology-driven research, innovation and technology transfer.

Key indicators for Thrust 2 include scientific and technology programs which have been identified as technology programs for focused developmental trajectories. They musthave a prestige that attracts top performing students andcomprehensively span across the three program tracks (general formative; professional; career and occupation-specific).These programs should also be intellectually challenging, expansive,mostly interdisciplinary and integrate high-level technologies.They will be offered via innovative teaching and learning approaches (e.g., problem-solving, multidisciplinary teams, studio training) and will provide clear articulation pathways into degree and postgraduate studies. Vigorous training in appropriate first year core modules (e.g., math, physics, chemistry, languages, information and communication technologies) will be incorporated. In addition they will empower students to design solutions to problems through innovative thinking.

Highly qualified and innovative academic employeeswill have a critical mass of appropriate expertise to deliver a throughput of top performing undergraduate studentswho areentrepreneurial,innovative and active participants in technology innovation. These graduates will also be a source for producing a critical mass of postgraduate students.

Strategic Partnerships will involve policy-makers, industry, professional boards, government and the private sector to enable collaboration, commercialization and innovation. It will also involve international partners aimed at cutting edge training, innovation and teaching and learning collaboration. Moreover it will enable the establishment of a co-funded Technology Innovation Fund and Technology Innovation Centre to support technology transfer.

3.3 Strategic Thrust 3: Equivalence of all campuses, with dedicated initial focus on the Soweto and Doornfontein (previously disadvantaged) campuses.

Key indicators of Thrust 3 involve a program profile for the UJ Soweto campus that focuses mainly on Education and Leadership Development. It willreflect the comprehensive nature of UJ by offering a good mix of degree and diploma programs at undergraduate and

postgraduate levels andwill encourage strong research activity.Strong community engagement will be enhanced and high quality of infrastructure, service and human resource capacity will be provided. The campus offering will entail programs in the anchor faculties of Education, Humanities, Financial and Economic Sciences and Management. A marketing campaign will be launched to position the Soweto campus as a premier and first choice study destination for Education studies.

The programs profile for Doornfontein campus(DFC) will focuses mainly on Health Sciences along with Engineering and the Built Environment. It will reflect a comprehensive range of professional, career-specific and technology-rich programs, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and embody a strong research activity. Strong community engagement activities will be incorporated and a vital work-integrated learning capacity, that closely replicates a pressurized working environment, will have been established.The campus will function with a high quality infrastructure, service and human resource capacity. This drive will be underpinned by a marketing campaign that positions the DFC as the first choice study destination for relevant Health and Engineering studies.

3.4 Strategic Thrust 4: An international profile of employees, students, scholarly output and institutional reputation.

Key indicators of Thrust 4 comprise an International Office that is well resourced and execute the *Strategy to Enhance the International Profile of UJ.* It will feature a Study Abroad Programthatpresents specially structured seminar programs and focuses on US, Europe and China. The program will be aligned with US and other grade structures to enable credit transfer and encourage internships through semester research credits. Special recruitment agencies will be employed and market related fees would be charged. The program aims for 400 students annually by 2020.

International UJ recruitment will result in 8% of all registered students being international students by 2020 (of whom two-thirds are undergraduate) from the current base of 4.6%. The focuses will be on continental (African) students and SA Embassies will be mobilized to assist with recruitment. Research will be undertaken on the attractiveness of UJ to international students. The program will capitalize on English language study and utilize professional recruiters, expos and institutional sites. Relationships with local embassies and government departments will be nurtured.

International postgraduate recruitment will result in 8% of all registered students being international students by 2020 (of which one-third are postgraduate from the current base of 4.6%). Institutions, rather than students, will be used as first contact, and the same undergraduate strategies, if appropriate, will be applied. African staff at UJ will assist with implementation and faculties will market specific postgraduate programs. Bridging programswill have been introduced to facilitate articulation.A priority partnership will beestablished with Africa, but consideration will also be given to Brazil, India and China as well as the USAand Europe, especially Germany. Sufficient funding from potential partners will have been secured to sustain the partnerships.Agreements for resourcing will be highlighted. Partnerships will be reviewed every 3 to 5 years and will be considered by the International Advisory Board prior to approval.

UJ had an international staff complement of 11.5% in 2013, against a target of 10% set for 2020, a clear indication of the enhanced international profile UJ has cultivated in recent years.

3.5 Strategic Thrust 5: A brand that identifies UJ with relevant, accessible and excellent higher education.

This objective involves transforming the UJ Brand Strategyfrom a dynamic and *"vibey"* trendsetter to an established, first-choice university of stature, without loss of momentum. It is also a strategy that uses scholars and their scholarly achievements as brand and market drivers, andwhich incorporates an internal brand campaign that highlights annual themes.

Targeted marketing messages forms part of this thrust that integrate campaigns for different market segments reflecting this change in positioning, namely:

- Undergraduates, to resonate with potential students, parents and teachers, with a focus on technology programs and Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) programs;
- Postgraduates, to resonate with potential postgraduates and alumni;
- Soweto campus, to be positioned as a premier study destination and first choice destination for Education and Leadership studies;
- Doornfontein campus, to improve public perceptions of the location of the campus and position it as the Engineering / Health Sciences campus;
- International, to support international marketing efforts; and
- Internal, to ensure brand alignment with external messaging in the staff and student population and to continue the Brand Champion Program launched in 2010.

3.6 Strategic Thrust 6: Leadership that matters, in the institution and in civil society.

Key indicators entail negotiated and defined leadership roles and responsibilities which are embedded in performance-managed leadership, and are exhibited at all levels. The establishment of a Virtual Leadership Academy,which builds capacity and empowers people to exhibit appropriate leadership qualities, such as visionary thinking, strategy planning and formulation, conflict resolution, employee motivation, emotional intelligence and entrepreneurship. This also aims to enable staff to develop and plan for succession. Another priority is instituting a tailor-made strategy for current and future Student Representative Counsels, House Committees, and other student leadership structures through the Student Leadership Development and Mentoring program.

Efficiency and effectiveness will result from an institution-wide strategy, and apply to both academics and managers. There will be a 5% increase in senior academic employees,in terms of the number of Professors from the current 13% of fulltime contract and permanent academics to 18%. An 11% increaseof Associate Professors from the current 7% of fulltime contract and permanent academics to 18%.

By 2020, all Heads of Departments, Heads of Schools and Vice-Deans will be at the level of Associate Professors or Professors, unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. Environmental scanningwill enhance the institutional knowledge base of people in leadership positions and will be performed periodically and in a formally coordinated way.UJ scholarship will create opportunities for participation by UJ scholars in public debate and dialogue to strengthen national democratic values, support and promote public causes, and disseminate scholarship widely and prominently in the public domain.

An institutional culture will have been created which promotes collegiality, transparency, accountability, and ethical and values-driven behavior. There will be a continuous internal monitoring of employee experience that measures leadership credibility, effectiveness and impact.

3.7 Strategic Thrust 7: Supportive and engaged alumni that contribute to UJ's reputation and resource base.

Alumni associations of South African Higher Education institutions could become strategically collaborative networks with the understanding that a network-friendly infrastructure should be created and managed effectively (Barnard & Rensleigh, 2006). Key markers for Thrust 7 include campaigns targeted at"new"UJ graduates since 2005,"older"alumni from legacy institutions established in their careers, and high net-worth, influential alumni. Social networking will be utilized to nurture an alumni community that is vibrant and interactive and uses cutting-edge ICTs, strives for a continuous relationship with UJ, and engages in lifelong learning. The development and expansion of affinity groups will receive attention in order to include faculties, sport groups and residences.

An extensive alumni database will have been developed to enable lifecycle management. This database will be continually updated, sustainable and valuable without compromising the privacy and security of the records. Loyalty from graduates will be achieved through positive student experiences and the alumni benefits program. Staff alumni will be involved in the relevant alumni campaigns and will be faculty-based.

3.8 Strategic Thrust 8: Resources that enable UJ's fitness-for-purpose support the achievement of the primary thrusts and facilitate a responsible and responsive institutional citizenship.

A human resource capability that supports the achievement of the primary strategic thrusts is a key indicator for the final thrust. This includes employees who are provided with opportunities for professional and personal development and participate in a performance management system that is developmental and rewards both individual and collective effort. The staff component should be increasingly demographically representative (inclusive of disability) and culturally sensitive, reflect a black academic staff complement of at least 40%, are provided with institutional support for optimal functioning. Respect for human dignity will also be apparent in the staff corps who embraces diversity.

The student body will also be increasingly demographically representative (inclusive of disability), is observant of UJ rules and policies, and responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions. Students should be provided with opportunities for their holistic development and participate actively in leadership, cultural and sporting structures.

Infrastructure will support the teaching and learning, research and innovation strategies of the University and will be equivalent on all campuses. It should also be environmentally sustainable and provide a supporting working and studying environment for people with disabilities.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) will support teaching and learning that is open and ubiquitous, as well as research that fulfills the demands of "supercomputing" required for advanced scientific and technological research. The ICT infrastructure will enable the effective management of information and communication and of institutional business intelligence. A management information system (MIS) will have been implemented by 2020 to support informed decision-making and knowledge management. The effective and efficient operation of administrative and support systems, and of institutional governance, will be ensured.

An organizational design and ethos will have been established that cultivates its employees and students as responsible citizens and is responsive to the challenges of a sustainable environment. It will commit the institution to efficient and effective stakeholder service and provide an accessible and welcoming environment for its students. Furthermore, it will ensure operational systems that are capacitated, agile and responsive and submit systems and structures to regular review to ensure strategic alignment. In addition it will cultivate a culture of appreciation and acknowledgment among employees and students and develop an inclusive and barrier-free working and learning environment for people with disabilities. Implementing an effective workplace program for affected employees will actively support the fight against HIV/AIDS.

To further make UJ the destination of choice for cutting-edge education and scholarship, emphasis will be placed on:

a.) Finance that ensures sustainable and efficient allocation of resources to achieve the UJ vision, mission and goals;

b.) Risk management that ensures sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness, and inherent quality in resource allocation; and

c.) a culture of quality that sustains an increasingly responsive institution-wide quality ethos.

4. Realizing objectives through Innovation

To achieve the listed Strategic Thrusts with their key indicators as noted above, the university had to innovate and rethink its approaches. As a "new kid on the block" it had to establish a recognized brand in order to create positive perceptions about the university. It did so by outsourcing the brand management strategy to an internationally recognized company. Within 12 months of running the amended brand campaign, the university came second (after the University of cape Town) in the Sunday Times' brand recognition awards as being "the coolest brand" amongst all the competing universities in South Africa – a position it has maintained for the last 5 years. More importantly was establishing the credibility of the university as an advocate of sound corporate governance principles. After the university Council approved a range of policies and processes documents, a corporate governance office was established that would co-ordinate and monitor these standard practices for optimal compliance. UJ was recognized in 2013 by an international auditing firm as ranking in the top three South African universities for the quality of its corporate and financial governance.

Creating and actively promoting a culture of transformation was a cornerstone of the new institution. The university was determined to overcome the apartheid baggage of its precursor institutions by building bridges between staff members, departments and faculties. Annual staff days were held where diverse sport activities, foods and music were used to create a collective enthusiasm for the institution amongst the participating staff members in an informal environment. To test the success of these initiatives biennial culture surveys were conducted which provided valuable insights into the motivation levels, experiences and perceived obstacles of staff members. Feedback from these culture surveys (which indicated a steep rise in the "culture index" of the university from a lowly 52% in 2008 to a gratifying 69% in 2012) were used to tweak the existing strategies in order to create a more favorable and transparent working environment for staff, to boost post-merger morale and overcome a pervasive sense of alienation initially experienced by a large number of staff.

Another successful innovation initiated by the university was the New Generation Scholarship Program, in terms of which funds were made available to pay postgraduate students (on Master's and Doctoral levels) an annual salary for completing their research

degrees. This program furthermore guaranteed a fulltime academic appointment at the institution for the successful candidates. The principle of "growing your own timber" was supported by this program and has proven to be a successful endeavor for the institution. Together with an active headhunting exercise targeted at accredited research personnel, the university has improved its accredited research output by more than 140% in five years.

To elevate the academic standards of the institution, the UJ engaged in a process of setting minimum qualifications for its academic personnel. It is now required that all academic staff has a minimum qualification on Masters Degree level. A Staff Qualifications Project (SQP) was initiated in 2010 to provide resources and structured opportunity for academic staff to complete postgraduate qualifications (and to create an exit strategy for non-performers). This SQP has proven to be a success and has contributed much to the improved qualifications of faculty and also increased the research output numbers of the institution.

Providing attractive financial research incentives proved to be a powerful initiative by the university to encourage faculty to publish their research in accredited journals. One example of such an incentive is the annual Vice-Chancellor's Distinguished Awards for Outstanding Research to established and developing researchers, worth significant cash amounts reward excellent performance by staff members; another example is a rewards-based incentive scheme for rated researchers to increase their research productivity. The institution also incentivizes its staff through annual performance rewards, based on the achievement of contractually-determined performance goals. Bi-annual performance reviews tracks the progress of each staff member in terms of their agreed-upon deliverables.

Establishing a Commercialization Unit was another initiative undertaken by the university to create alternative income for the institution. By identifying valuable research projects, and capitalizing on them, the university declared its commitment to entrepreneurship and innovation in support of sustainability. Although success here has been limited, an ethos of entrepreneurship and commercialization has been established.

The university has also made it a priority to provide a modern technology infrastructure to students. All first year students are, from 2014, obliged to have tablets or notebooks as part of the teaching and learning process. Students who meet criteria for indigence will be supplied with tablets by the institution. Some 2000 students will be assisted in this way. Significant infrastructure developments and upgrades (collectively in the region of US$100m) have been undertaken on the Doornfontein and Soweto campuses to create equivalence of all four campuses. Furthermore, the institution made significant investments in academic development and student support initiatives, the jewel in the crown being the nationally-acclaimed First Year Experience program, feeding schemes for indigent students (some 2500 students in 2013), and extended programs, bridging programs, postgraduate training workshops and the development of an academic residence culture.

The implementation of innovative strategies assisted the University of Johannesburg to realize many of its set objectives in a much shorter period than planned. The upward mobility of the institution has been recognized internationally: At its first entry, UJ was placed in the top 4% of the world's tertiary institutions in the 2013 QS World University Rankings (and 61st place among universities in the BRICS countries), and the choice by president Barack Obama of the Soweto Campus of UJ as the setting for his engagement with African youth in June 2013, followed by his acceptance of an UJ honorary doctorate. This, and much more, has confirmed the emerging eminence of this newcomer to the national and international higher education sector.

5. Conclusions and recommendations for further research

Although the University of Johannesburg has made great strides in establishing itself as a quality tertiary institution in the first nine years of its existence, its challenges are far from over. The continuous challenges that arise from political and socio-economic turmoil in an African country, requires an agile and flexible approach to strategic planning that allows for swift and practical remedies. In the researchers' opinion, it is precisely this challenging environment that creates the space for robust innovation. In his UJ honorary-doctorate acceptance speech President Obama shared this perspective by commending UJ forits contributions to the development of African leadership. However, for UJ to sustain and improve itself in future, continuous self-assessment exercises need to form an integral part of the institution's annual quality assurance program, along with a sound governance ethos of transparency and ethical leadership.

Training people to become innovative should be a central consideration to ensure the success of organizations, communities and countries. Efforts should consequently be made to create flexible and nimble structures to leverage, preserve, share and apply the knowledge that has been created. Optimizing organizational design to support innovation and knowledge management will therefore be further explored in future research.

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