

ACADEMIC MISSION - FROM AUTOCRACY TO BUREAUCRACY

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Abstract

The mission is generic expression of reason for the existence of an organization. Organizational mission ensure continuity of existence beyond the objectives and targets of activities. It is the expression of an organization's responsibilities towards the environment in which it belongs. As the organization grows and its activities or environmental conditions change, managers adapt their strategies, but stated mission will remain valid for a period of time or unchanged throughout the life of the organization.

All managerial elements of the organization are aligned with stated mission, starting from the organization structure, management behavior or specific business processes. The focus of the mission of an higher education institution on a need or several integrated needs, on customers who manifest this need and on how they can be met, that really means defining of its strategic domain, as a sphere of influence of the organization in their environment.

In this sphere of influence, three components integrate on three levels of the mission: to establish needs; identify the customer type to which an organization address and key competencies that differentiate it from the rest competitors. To that context identifies four specific forms of academic institutions starting from their mission and strategic area: autocratic academic institutions, meritocrate academic institutions, democratic academic institutions, bureaucrats academic institutions.

Keywords: mission, strategy, autocratic institutions, meritocrate, democratic, bureaucrats.

JEL Classification: A2, D4, D7, I2, M

1. Introduction

The mission is the general expression of the reason for the existence of an organization. It ensures the continuity of the organization's existence beyond his objectives and targets of activities. It is the expression of an organization's responsibilities towards the environment in which it belongs.

Formulation and mission statement is widely recognized by scholars and managers as a preliminary step in formulating a deliberate strategy and planning tailored operations. (Bart, 1998)

As the organization grows and its activities or environmental conditions change, managers adapt their strategies, but stated mission will remain valid for a period of time or unchanged throughout the life of the organization.

Strategic targets sets are fixed in direct correlation with the mission, and differentiated by the level of organization, from corporate goals, business goals and functional goals. Changes on the objectives level entail modifications and adaptations of strategic options. Goals change over time is a normal process, generated either by achieving them or by the need for resizing as a result of internal or external influence of their environment.

In these conditions we can say that the mission determines the objectives (targets) and options (strategies), and directs them in time to not lose the essence of their organization. All the elements of the management's organization are aligned with the stated mission, from the structure, managerial behavior or specific business processes. Meanwhile accordance with the mission plan will be also achieved by business portfolio, business behavior and specific services or products. (Bart and Taggar, 1988)

In these circumstances it is essential to carefully define the mission on which depends all activity including financial results. Given the above discussion there are needed some clarification to highlight the links between mission and other strategic and operational management components.

The orientation approach initiative of defining the organization's mission related to customer needs that pled for defining in three key terms of any strategic mission (Thompson and others, 2008; Thomson and Strickland, 1978):

- Identified market needs (what satisfied);
- Targeted customer groups (who will be satisfied);
- Skills and technologies used to satisfy these needs (how to satisfy / what is satisfactory).

Mission focus on a need or more integrated needs, on customers who manifest this need and on how it can actually be met this need that is supposed to be the organization's strategic defining. We can also imagine this area as a sphere of organization influence in the environment in which it exists. In this sphere of influence, three components of the mission integrate on three levels of action.

Setting the manifested needs and the corresponding product by the first part of the mission involves clearly defining corporate direction and strategies of business portfolio management.

By the second component of the mission, customer type identification to which an organization addresses brings into question the organization's specific behavior on the market. Moreover, this business behavior actually means market/business policy of organization.

The third component of the organization's mission, represented by the key competencies that differentiate it from the rest of the competition requires management level its clear guidance on how they will be designed the products or services of the organization and which will be the success markers of the product on the market.

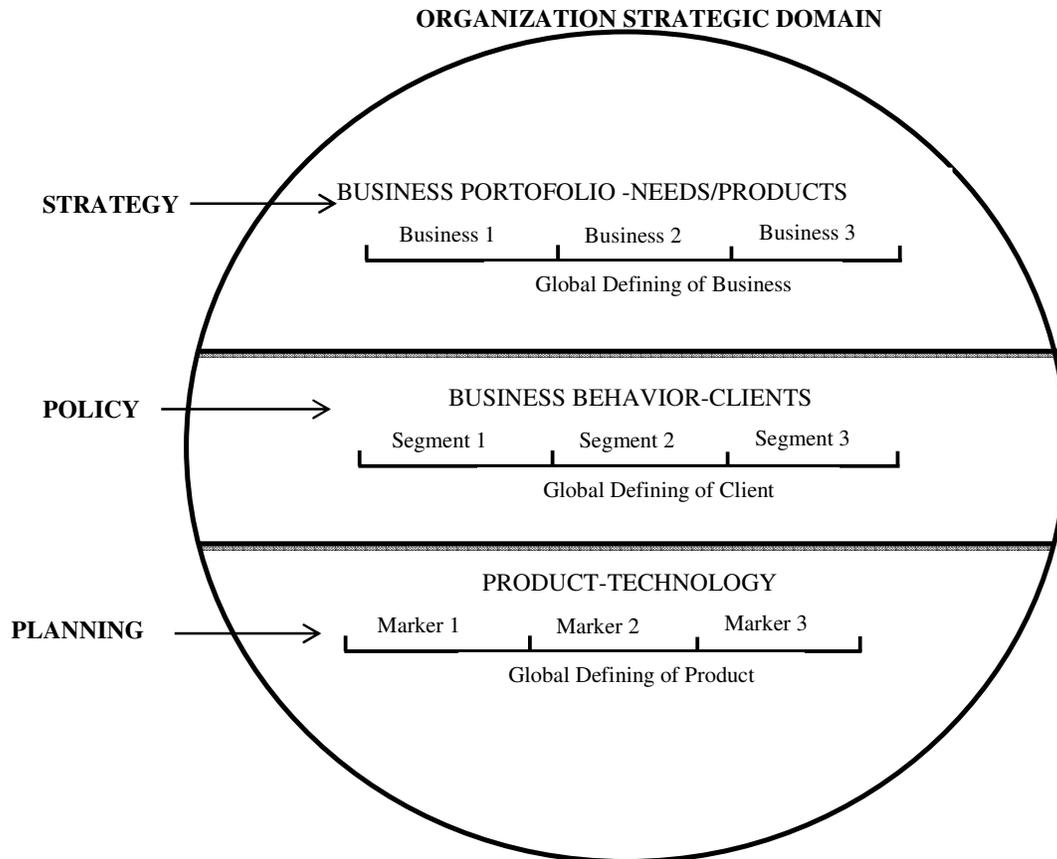


Figure no1. Components defining the organization's mission

2. Defining the organization's portfolio for private and public organizations

The first and most important element that defines the purposes of organization is expressed through what it creates or otherwise his portfolio.

If in private organizations there is complete freedom in terms of choosing and defining their portfolio, for public organizations there are numerous legal restrictions and even impositions in choosing and defining activities portofolio. Many areas including education, even in private organizations, impose portofolio's selection and limits.

The choice with regard to the portofolio is maded in relation to groups of interest that the organization depends. Guidance of an organization activity to a major purpose may only be valid if this purpose addresses the needs of the beneficiaries or clients. (Bart, 1998)

But, the second defining direction of the organization can be considered the purpose established in favor of founders or shareholders. Consistently followed the mission will do so according to the best interests of the owners.

And the second way of formal or informal defining in most organizations is often the one chosen rather than a goal having at its heart the client (beneficiary). In this situation, the private for-profit organizations main purpose is that of ensuring fair and equitable earnings of its shareholders through the deployment of profitable activity and efficient coordination. (Gumport, 2000)

In organizations of a public character, examples of which are educational institutions, founder or "shareholder" can be considered the state as representative of society at large. Being non-profit organizations, while pursuing one's own purpose, the state or society does not pursue financial profit but rather the social-cultural benefits, with numerous politico-legal or demographic implications.

Mission subordination for any purpose other than the consumer satisfaction of needs in an area is on one hand a perversion of nature organizations, on the other hand a sure path to achieve their own incompetence of the organization and its failure in the medium and long term. Ecologically speaking the entity purpose at any level of existence in the universe is subordinate to the needs of the ecosystem. Any deviation from this rule leads to the elimination of the perverted entity out of system, for it exclusive personal purposes. Even organizations of a public nature must serve superior needs for overall human system. Awareness and integration for these needs and values of a public institution mission is a difficult and superficial mated stage.

Aside mission imposition from the outside of the organization or in the relation to its internal needs it is also important the intensity of negotiating of this mission and thus the portfolio of organisation. Regarding the degree of negotiation, both in private and public organizations there is one intense negotiation especially in large sized and important organizations as well as their markets are bigger.

If the decision is taken starting from the external orientation and needs identified in the client, it will take into account a multitude of needs that can be unified in a unitary concept, and as such a intense negotiation among different categories of needs that can be included in defining the strategic area of the organization. Practically the definition may be precise, narrow, naming the group or groups of products and services it produces or more generally, broadly indicating the field or "industry" that is part of it work as a whole.

On the one hand, some concentrated mission with a narrow operating domain may cause danger for the organization of not having a comprehensive view on the market and ignore so, opportunities and threats which occur at the scale of a field and not in that of a group of specific "products".

On the other hand for the definition only in the broad sense of the organization's mission that may generate confusion caused by too vague character of the area where the organization operates and intends to operate in the future.

Starting from this premise we argue that the size of private organizations and his market dimension and resources are limited the mission defining will be narrow and for large organizations and markets it will be a broad mission. The specific market will be one larger, the number and needs of the actors involved in negotiating increases also widening mission definition area.

In the public organizations there is a similar situation, meaning that if the served market is extended and the needs tend to multiply requires an expansion of the field to manage a successful negotiation between different social options. This expansion of educational market in various states has led educational institutions to rethink and resize strategic area, but there still are multiple problems in defining their strategic domain by including all the needs from educational market and related products.

Even if the academic organizations, for customer none of educational or research service, have no great significance. The customer wants to know what this service will serve him tomorrow. Everything interests him are his own values (his own needs, his own reality) and these values are more important than values of the academic community members or state itself.

For the situation when the decision on defining strategic domain is established from internal orientation of organization and from negotiation of visions and benefits of the stakeholders will be taken into account opinions of each pressure group leading organization. As the private organization develops the number of stakeholders increases, either by increasing the number of shareholders, increasing interest and pressure of prescribers or the emergence of strategic moves of competitors in various areas.

In the case of defining the mission from outside it is necessary to include in the private organizations as many involved groups of stakeholders to avoid their withdrawal and loss of support or even turn them into criticism or aggressive competitors. A hierarchy bargaining power of stakeholders across the organization places first shareholders or associates through their representatives in the board of management. This category is followed by the organization's employees represented by its management and particularly by top managers and the unions. The third category that negotiating power is the direct partners in the value chain and the fourth category gathers supporters (activist organizations, followers). As the organization will increase in size the degree of negotiation grows for stakeholders with minor ratings.

For organizations with a public specific the key groups of stakeholders are differently represented. For example, in education the group of shareholders is represented by the concerned ministries and by the transfer of property by institution board, which is very powerful in defining the strategic area of small institutions, other interest groups are weak or reduced bargaining power. (Füssel and Neave, 1996)

More the public institution like educational type agrow in size the next group of stakeholders involved will be that of employees through various formulas type council staff, representative unions or various managerial positions involved in the formulation of development directions. (Oosterlinck 2002)

Now internal organizational culture is strong enough that it can be intensely expressed diverse points of view on the future development of the organization/institution including the employees.

On the next development stage an educational institution will internalize increasingly more partnership relations with other institutions and even private organizations that become sponsors or donors, and these partners will have increasingly more opportunity to influence the development directions.

Later stages will be the emergence and involvement in developing the institution of associative structures resulting from external interests (of students, parents, students, employers) who manage to negotiate and to impose increasingly more in guidelines development from an internal position of the institution.

If the number of parties involved in negotiating increases the degree of divergence of strategic orientation grows. In these circumstances the strategic domain diversifies and becomes increasingly more comprehensive and is increasingly more difficult to define a comprehensive and intelligible/applicable form.

3. Alternatives for the mission and strategic domain set by universities

By analyzing how strategic domain is defined for an organization with public character suggests a combination of two sets of factors, each comprising two possible situations. It follows, thus four possible distinct formulas to define the mission.

According to the model developed in figure no. 2 we identify a horizontal axis that can measure the influence of internal and external environment on the domain choice and a vertical axis that will scale the degree of negotiating of strategic areas chosen.

On the two axes it will use a numerical system of measuring the two indicators. Thus we consider that a number of 9 participants as possible interest groups. These are: 1) management of the institution (ministry, specialized agency-ARACIS rector/dean/board of directors); 2) community representatives (Senate/teaching councils/unions); 3) employees as members of the community (departments); 4) the student representatives (student associations); 5) students as members of the community (departments and student advisory bodies/coordinators of year); 6) graduates (consultative associative structures); 7) community partners (donors/sponsors); 8) civil society (associations representing the fields of education and science); 9) employers (professional structures).

As negotiation degree (vertical axis) can be considered the number of participants in strategic decision making. The number of participants in decision will increase the mission will be one integrative and more specific or even with the setting of priorities. The number of participants will be lower the fewer areas will be addressed the mission becoming one with general or even unclear definition to the educational market.

Regarding the direction of formulating the strategic area will be established the group with the greatest influence on the final form of the mission, from the major influence of institution's management (group 1) until the major influence of the professional structures (group 9). The internal influences is stronger the both mission and the strategy will be developed in several directions that give it either unclear either highly prioritized appearance. If the external influence will be much stronger then will be more consistent strategic orientation and market adapted defined either generally or more specific based on number of interests involved.

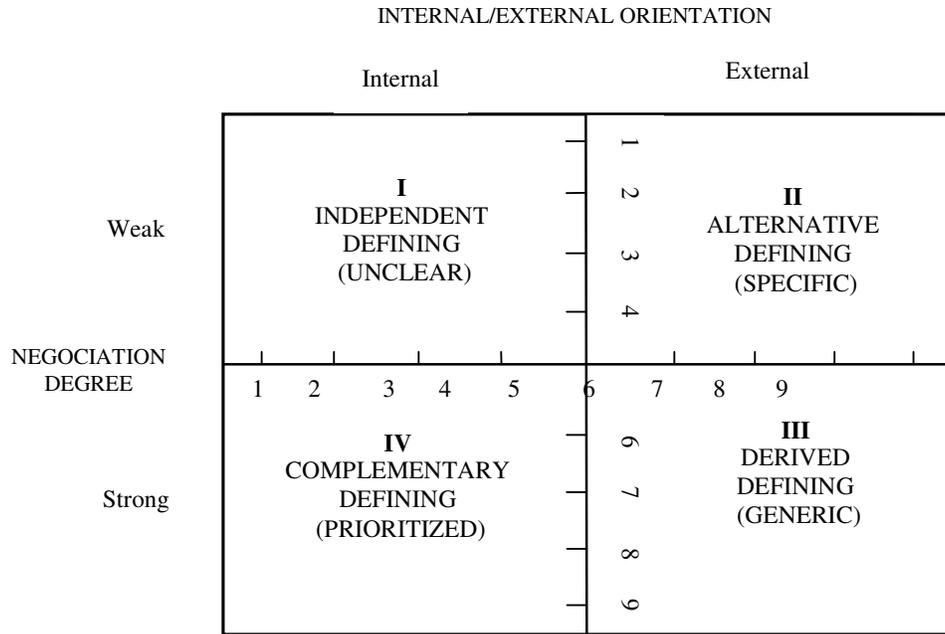


Figure no2. Alternative defining of strategic domain according to the organization's mission

The model explains the four type of university that J. Olsen identifies them at European level as a result of lobbyists and their involvement at academic level (fig no3) (Olsen 2007)

<i>Autonomy:</i>	University operations and dynamics are governed by internal factors	University operations and dynamics are governed by environmental factors
<i>Conflict:</i>	The University is a self-governing community of scholars <u>Constitutive logic:</u> Free inquiry, truth finding, rationality and expertise. <u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Scientific quality. <u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Constitutive principle of the University as an institution: authority to the best qualified. <u>Change:</u> Driven by the internal dynamics of science. Slow reinterpretation of institutional identity. Rapid and radical change only with performance crises.	The University is an instrument for national political agendas <u>Constitutive logic:</u> Administrative: Implementing predetermined political objectives. <u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Effective and efficient achievement of national purposes. <u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Delegated and based on relative efficiency. <u>Change:</u> Political decisions, priorities, designs as a function of elections, coalition formation and breakdowns and changing political leadership.
Actors have shared norms and objectives	The University is a representative democracy <u>Constitutive logic:</u> Interest representation, elections, bargaining and majority decisions. <u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Who gets what: Accommodating internal interests. <u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Mixed (work-place democracy, functional competence, <i>realpolitik</i>). <u>Change:</u> Depends on bargaining and conflict resolution and changes in power, interests, and alliances.	The University is a service enterprise embedded in competitive markets <u>Constitutive logic:</u> Community service. Part of a system of market exchange and price systems. <u>Criteria of assessment:</u> Meeting community demands. Economy, efficiency, flexibility, survival. <u>Reasons for autonomy:</u> Responsiveness to "stakeholders" and external exigencies, survival. <u>Change:</u> Competitive selection or rational learning. Entrepreneurship and adapting to changing circumstances and sovereign customers.
Actors have conflicting norms and objectives		

According to Olsen, Johan P. *The institutional dynamics of the European university*. Springer Netherlands, 2007. (6)

Figure no3. Types of European universities

4. Conclusions

In evolution a higher education institution can evolve from one small (square I, as shown in Figure no. 2) at one of considerable size (square IV, as shown in Figure no. 2). Both situations can be created by government intervention depending on how it finances the higher education system. Between the two models lies in medium-sized academic institutions that internal factors influence on education system tends to be lower. In our opinion a quality higher education system must be composed of all type of universities and other academic institutions, but should be the predominance of the midsize universities based on identified consumer needs outside these institutions.

The dominance of the small sized type as: local universities, specialized universities (arts, medicine, etc.) or specialized research institutes will result in a lack of development cohesion in this sector; and the predominance of "mammoth" institutions can generate a certain concentration of academic guidelines artificial designed inside these entities.

In this context we identify and characterize four types of academic institutions specific to the four quadrants/squares in figure no 2, starting from their mission and strategic field.

Quadrant I - Autocratic academic institutions

The small academic institutions, specific to first quadrant, will have a strong internal orientation and a reduced ability to negotiate the mission. We can characterize these organizations type as autocratic, being led by a strong leader who impose its own vision on the entire academic community.

Translations of individual vision of a person or a small group of persons in a concrete mission of the institution do not ensure understanding and commitment to this mission to other interests groups. For this reason it will be considered, both by external and by internal groups, as unclear mission, especially as a result of non-specific criteria and values of the organization or environment in which it is part.

Unclear mission, specific to a small organization, is due to confusing them with managers or sometimes with their founders. Organizations based or related solely to one internal group of interests they have the goal to survive as primary care that's mean they are headed for maintaining the continuity of the process that generates organization product. Often there is concern that an assertion of intentions of other interest groups could be counterproductive, and sometimes an aura of secret flatters the manager. There is no time to formalize plans and largely they lack experience and willingness to make a clear exposure on plans and the business to be developed.

As the small organizations are focused on a single individual who is rector/president for university and director for institute and who becomes the main element in decision making, work will not be influenced by the lack of a mission statement to sharing. In real, the organization suffers for failling to state the mission, if the ignorance of the academic community is the result of a state of confusion or a lack of guiding ideas of the rector/president of the university.

Quadrant II - Meritocrate academic institutions

The most active academic institutions are the ones medium sized with a pronounced external orientation (characteristic to quadrant II) but maintaining a specific orientation on their strategic area.

In these educational institutions the the most important educational market trends are taken into account in mission formulating, set by various public interest groups focusing on the trend that touches the interests of many stakeholders outside the institution.

We can characterize these institutions as meritocrate academic type, following excellence in areas of work that they undertake. This excellence is due more to the fact that they make educational services different from the great mass of competing institutions.

Finance and development are external sustained so the decisive factor in mission and approach deffinition is the external one. Very often the emergence of such institutions is determined by an external interest group that will coordinate their development. Many US universities operate on this model, especially the private ones included in what is called "Ivy League" as Harvard, Cornell, and Stanford, which developed it with the help of very rich families who were educated in these universities. Usually dominant group in this successful universities category is that of graduates (alumni) and sponsors or private donors, as the case. In these universities the board of donors is created as a model of general meeting of shareholders, which ensure guidance for the university's mission and its strategic field. Following somewhat heterogeneous interests there is opting for a general mission as an expression that contains broad areas of knowledge. Within them are emphasis scientific education rather than training in these areas. This provides a direction of development, trough the expression of standards rather than by suggesting an approach. Seeking flexibility must be maintained within the limits that provides a distinctive touch for organization.

Quadrant III - Democratic academic institutions

Academic institutions specific to quadrant III are large conglomerates that have resulted from the integration or merger of universities, schools or institutes around the shared vision or ideas about progress in a field of knowledge or more.

They have an intense and specific mission that involves indication both of the domain and knowledge-type standards to a very high level defined that includes professional, educational and scientific elements related in a direct

relationship. This type of mission describes the way to ensure the achievement of the desired future and to meet the expectations of the labor market, educational market and the market of fundamental and applied research.

Since the decision makers come and are formed into groups of external stakeholders, there are a common shared vision internally and externally for all groups: teachers, students, graduates, scientific and professional associations, shareholders and financiers. Group cohesion being required by negotiating will reach a specific mission that ensures adherence to certain common shared values. Such mission statement can be assessed by each group easier than a general statement and constitute a prerequisite for achieving effective control.

These academic conglomerates are focused towards performance rather than elitism as a result of strong selection of human resources, usually personalities from various sectors, strong leaders of opinion from each interest group, leaders who would leave their mark by developing academic schools or institutes which they finance by external funds.

Practiced management system is that of "management by out" by attracting any successful project that can adhere to specific values of the institution. The opening to the outside environment is maximized being democratic academic institutions that annually attract large research projects by attracting specialists. When a personality in the field will be attracted, it will represent the interests of financiers and collaborators and will become the default factor influencing strategic direction of the institution.

Quadrant IV - Bureaucratic academic institutions

Specific to quadrant IV these are very large academic institutions. These institutions are university type and tend to move away from external influences returning more towards education component and increasingly less science component and knowledge (progress) component.

If meritocratic and democratic-type institutions predominantly integrate science (fundamental research) and the advance of knowledge (applied research) in these institutions their role became secondary to education, especially due to internal pressure groups.

These institutions are developing in multiple directions tending to occupy the entire spectrum of educational fields being necessary to develop a type of mission with setting of priorities or otherwise with down all fields of activity they are involved. It is the result of intense negotiations between internal groups and their interests and egos.

The number of organizational components like faculty or school type is very large, reason for identifying an increasingly larger bureaucracy that succeeds to integrate the different directions of development of the institution.

The presence within the mission and direction of the institution's development of a hierarchy of areas suggest a clear structure of decision-making power and value system within it and gives its members a default guide of opportunities that are valued internally and the approach to future situations.

From the point of view of the Romanian education system, as a result both of the current legislation and the legacy of earlier communist stage, there are only two types of academic institutions in relation to their mission and strategic direction of development: autocratic small institutions and bureaucratic large institutions.

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