

Framing alternative policies to achieve university mission: a case study of a Chinese regional university

Zhenping Zhang

Department DEMS, University of Palermo, Italy
 Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, China
 Postal address: Via Rocco Jemma 88, Palermo, Italy
 Phone: 086-18510771265
 Email: robert_zhangzhenping@foxmail.com;

Haiyan Yan

School of Management, Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, China
 Postal address: Wenxiang Road 1900, Shanghai, China
 Phone: 086-13761890328
 Email: yanhelen@163.com;

Jiayin Qi

School of Management, Shanghai University of International Business and Economics, China
 Postal address: Wenxiang Road 1900, Shanghai, China
 Phone: 086-13911608278
 Email: qijiayin@139.com;

Enzo Bivona

Department DEMS, University of Palermo, Italy
 Postal address: Via Rocco Jemma 88, Palermo, Italy
 Phone: 039-3384381446
 Email: enzo.bivona@unipa.it;

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Starting from 1995, China launched a series of incentive projects to steer the development of universities towards expressed priorities (“211” in 1995, “985” in 1998 and “double first-rate” in 2017). These policies has formulated universities’ management strategy and generated fierce competition among universities regarding both student enrollment and research productivity. However, we found that the university in the aforementioned projects are always the same with few exceptions (see Table 1), which replicate the so-called "success to successful" system archetype. In this sense, what impact does these policies has on the development of universities, especially the universities that are not selected in the incentive project? How should these universities cope with the challenge to achieve university mission? University management is characterized by multi-subjects, multi-objects and intense interactions among them, which is dynamic and long-term in nature. Therefore, a Dynamic Performance Management perspective (Bianchi, 2016) is adopted to frame the development of university and the impact of incentive project is evaluated. At last, alternative polices are suggested for regional universities to achieve university mission.

Table 1 The Comparison of Universities Selected in Incentive Projects

Type of University/ Incentive project	Double first-rate	985	211	Other
First-rate University-Class A	36	36	36	0
First-rate University-Class B	6	3	6	0
First-rate Discipline University	95	0	70	25
Non first-rate university	0	0	0	2777

A causal loop diagram can be seen in Figure 1. There are three sub-systems in the diagram: teaching, research and MBA training, which form a couple of reinforcing loops. In the MBA sub-system, an

increase of investment in MBA can add new MBA courses and activities, which can promote MBA attractiveness. This helps to enroll more MBA students, thus more MBA tuition to improve liquidity (see R1). Similarly, R2 is driven by investment in teaching and R3 is driven by investment in research. However, there is a trade-off between teaching and research. The increase of students' courses and activities may increase the teaching pressure, which undermines the research productivity. Lower research productivity leads to less published papers and citations, which in turn reduces the liquidity to be invested in teaching (see B1). An insight model is built based on causal loop diagram and the framework of Dynamic Performance Management (see Figure 2).

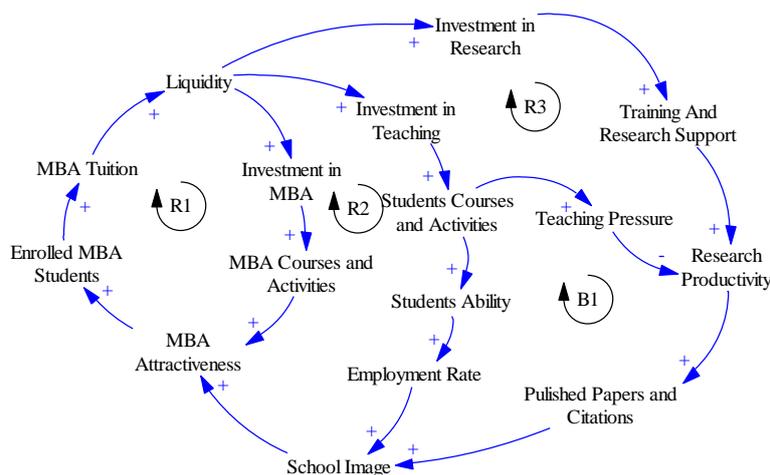


Figure 1 Causal Loop Diagram of School of Management in SUIBE

Dynamic Performance Management is applied to a case study of a Chinese regional university. Based on the insight model, we found that the incentive projects prevent regional university from achieving mission by undermining the strategic resources of regional university, in particular the allocated resources and university image. Alternative policies can be outlined for regional university to cope with the challenge. On one hand, improving the efficiency of spending by making a balance between teaching and research investment. On the other hand, seeking for new resources and opportunities outside the public funding system.

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