Peer-Reviewed Articles

What’s in a name? A comparative study of the traditional public university and the corporate university

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Abstract: This paper offers a comparative study of the traditional ‘public university’ sector with the developing sector of the ‘corporate university’. The criteria for comparison include historical development, student body, research and production of knowledge, and issues of ownership and control. The conclusions drawn are that, while there are some similarities, there are many differences which raise questions as to the appropriateness of the corporate bodies adopting the term ‘university’.

Keywords: corporate university, university, stakeholders, students, education

The role of the university in British society is changing. Over the last century it has developed in size from educating a small privileged elite, to educating approximately 35 percent of the population (see, for example, Smith 1999). It has developed in scope from offering classics, philosophy, theology, through the natural sciences, to offering a wide range of courses, including such specialist streams as equine studies and landscape architecture (see, for example, Scott 1984). It has developed in nature, altering the balance between liberal and vocational focus (see, for example, Ainley 1994), and it has developed in structure, from the split university-polytechnic sector to a single university status (although it is arguable that this has not been achieved, as the sector is now notionally split into ‘old’ universities and ‘new’ universities).

In addition to the changes in the sector, there has been a proliferation of ‘other’ forms of university emerging. For example, the government is launching the ‘University for Industry’, although it is questionable whether it will be allowed to market itself under the title of university (Kingston 1999). There are also a number of corporate universities, concepts which are difficult to define. Essentially they are wholly training/education/learning/knowledge management facilities providing education and services for members of their organisations.

The exact form that they take, or what they look like, is difficult to pin down. We have ‘Unipart University’ (known as the Unipart U), which is a physical training space subsuming the ground floor of Unipart HQ at Cowley, Oxford, with other learning centres/stations distributed throughout the various sites. The BAe ‘Virtual University’ has some full-time faculty members, but does not exist in bricks and mortar as it is a combination of industry – university partnerships. There is a UK branch of ‘Motorola University’ which is run out of an office in London, and so on.
While these new-found ‘universities’ do institutionalise education, it is questionable whether they are universities in the traditional sense of the word. It is the comparison of the traditional, public university and the corporate university that is the focus of this paper. In the wider search for the ‘ideal’ form of university in the future, what do the traditional and corporate models have to offer? The comparison is made on the basis of the origins from which they took their title, their historical development, their respective aims and outcomes, the level of education that they aspire to, the size and diversity of their student bodies, the protocol surrounding knowledge generation, issues surrounding ownership and control, including notions of academic freedom, and how they link with other public universities. Each is discussed in turn with a summary comparative table in conclusion.

While there is a plethora of literature on both the traditionalist philosophy surrounding universities and contemporary philosophy, the same is not true of the corporate university. Much of the data presented in this paper has been collected through telephone conversations, personal introductions, and conference attendance, as few secondary data were available. Indeed, simply identifying which organisations have a corporate university is not straightforward. Consequently the sample selected was based largely on those who have raised public awareness of their existence. Of these, two were investigated in more detail: BAE to represent the ‘virtual’ element and Unipart to represent the work-based model.

The World Wide Web proved a more lucrative source of secondary data than printed sources, although much has been written about university-industry partnerships. While questions surround the validity and reliability of web-based data as it is an unpoliced open forum, in this case it was the corporate universities’ own web sites that were being interrogated and therefore their offerings have been taken at face value. While many of the corporate universities approached were only too willing to answer my questions, they were often unable to do so as the questions had never been considered. It would have been easy to conclude early on that there was a lack of transparency in corporate universities, but this conclusion was challenged as research progressed. Whether greater consideration of the questions would have altered the answers does raise concerns as to the reliability of the data. Hence, it is important to note that this is exploratory research resulting in formative modelling at this time only.

**The University for Industry: a misplaced intention**

This paper may seem incomplete without mention of ‘The University for Industry’ (UfI). Despite its title, it is not a corporate university nor is it a public university in the traditional derivative of the word. It is, however, a public body currently with the title of university, although, as Kingston (1999) advises, the name may not hold for much longer.

Gordon Brown (1997) – the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer – called for a ‘skills ladder of opportunity that will allow the many, by their own efforts, to benefit from opportunities once open only to a few’ (in Robertson 1998:5). This clearly sets a challenge to the established public university sector, implying that UfI will offer to everyone what the current universities offer only to a few. However, this is not the case.
The University for Industry is not a ‘university’, not is it ‘for’ anything, and it is not limited to ‘industry’. Hillman (1996a) himself recognises these limitations (and he is part of the IPPR body instigating the initiative). It is not a ‘university’ because it is not a self-sufficient academic body providing higher education, nor is it a centre of research. Instead, it is a brokerage of information, courses, and training services (Robertson 1998). It is supposed to be promoting lifelong learning in individuals, but putting the word ‘for’ in its title detracts from this aim as it implies there is a specific purpose or outcome to be obtained from the learning. Following a similar rationale, it is also not for ‘industry’ as this detracts from the individual focus of the learning and excludes many of the people that UfI is aiming to bring back into the education fold, i.e. those who are unemployed, returning to work, learners with disabilities.

So why exactly is it called the University for Industry? The best Hillman (1996b) can suggest is that it is a working title useful in conveying the ambition and resonance of the project until a better title can be found. While it may have these aspirations, the Dearing inquiry into higher education suggested that UfI ‘consider alternative titles which might better convey their true nature and prestige’ (NCIHE 1997: 16). He was concerned that the low level of programmes that UfI intends to offer was a misuse of the ‘University’ title.

There appears to be no apparent basis of comparison between the public universities, the corporate universities and the University for Industry, and so for the purposes of this study UfI has been excluded forthwith. Other ‘exclusions’ worthy of note but beyond the scope of this paper are the Open University and the private universities such as Buckingham University.

**The idea of a university**

Newman (1853:1) starts his philosophy on education by stating ‘university is a place of teaching universal knowledge’. The object of the education is clearly intellectual, not moral, and ‘the very name of University is consistent with restrictions of any kind’ (ibid.: 25). Newman goes on to develop nine discourses which support the ideal that ‘truth is the object of knowledge’ (ibid.: 41) and reason is the means by which this is achieved. He argues strongly for a university based on liberal educational principles, claiming that ‘knowledge is capable of being its own end’ (ibid.: 78). With regard to any vocational element, Newman claims ‘intellectual culture is its own end; for what has its end in itself, has its use in itself also… therefore liberal education encompasses utility education (ibid.: 115).

Jaspers brings a more scientific perspective to the idea of a university. He views the university as:

> An institution uniting people professionally dedicated to the quest and transmission of truth in scientific terms.

> Because truth is accessible to systematic search, research is the foremost concern of the university… The university’s second concern is teaching, because truth must also be transmitted.

*(Jaspers 1960:21)*
This contrasts with Newman’s view of the role of the university as primarily for the ‘diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement’ (1853:1). Newman viewed the role of the university as developing a ‘philosophical habit’ (ibid.: 77) in its students, while Jaspers views the university as a research and dissemination institution providing ‘a kind of knowledge which is methodical, cogent and universally valid’ (1960: 21). As such, he suggests that three elements are required at a university and the three cannot exist in isolation. The spirit of the university would perish if any were not present:

1. professional training
2. education of the man
3. research

Taking these three criteria literally, it could be argued that large organisations such as British Aerospace, Hoffman La Roche and IBM could be classified as universities. They all offer professional training to members of staff. They all undertake research and development in their fields. With regard to the education of the whole man, Larsson (1997) views learning as the responsibility of the individual, observing that everyday life is enough in itself to produce a widening gap in knowledge between those who choose to learn and those who do not. Even without educational intervention, learning will occur because it is a part of every person’s everyday life. Hence, provided employees take responsibility for their own learnings, they could develop their education ‘of the whole man’ simply through their experience of work and life. Clearly this is not what Jaspers intends, as it opens the door for every organisation to call itself a university. Hence there is a need for every person at the university to be undertaking all three tasks.

This narrows the scope somewhat within organisations but does not necessarily rule out the corporate university. The BAe Virtual University, founded in April 1998, for example, does not restrict itself to the provision of education and training but addresses the wider scope of employee development and technology research (BAe 1998). However, the British Aerospace University functions as an intermediary link between the organisation and academic institutions which is why their university is only ‘virtual’. The networking structure is the ‘virtual’ element, the ‘university’ element the public universities with whom the organisation is collaborating.

Despite its dependence on the university sector the BAe Virtual University has a clearly stated mission which has little to do with the liberal idea of the university proposed by Newman or the foundations set down by Jaspers. Kenney-Wallace (1999) describes the Virtual University as ‘a business strategy towards international competitiveness’, based upon British Aerospace becoming ‘the Benchmark’ through individual and corporate learning, research and technology, and its mission is ‘to tailor learning and technology acquisition across British Aerospace in a far reaching initiative to secure the Company’s competitive position in the next millennium’ (BAe 1998). Newman’s rhetoric on restrictions being inconsistent with universities is challenged here. The ‘tailoring’ of learning and technology acquisition for competitive advantage is not merely restrictive but prescriptive and is contrary to fundamental liberal principles of education.

While the BAe Virtual University may set out with the best of intentions with regard to the education and development of the workforce, its mission is restricted by the boundaries it sets itself and, as such, despite its close links with the public university sector, it is difficult to see how it can truly regard itself as falling within the ideological bounds of what constitutes a
university. The title of university in this instance could be a marketing tool to encourage buy-in to the education and training programmes that the company wants to run. Dr Kenny-Wallace (Managing Director and Vice Chancellor of the Virtual University) claims that ‘it captures the imagination of BAE staff. I think it’s a wonderful thing in society to create a deeper love of learning’ (Midgley 1999: vi). While everyone in education would heartily support the final statement it is questionable whether giving a workplace education initiative the title of university would achieve this. As David Thomas, Head of Leadership and Capability at British Telecom claims, ‘a corporate university is not a geographical place, a corporate training department (except in the United States), or a real university. … The corporate university is a good brand, and Americans are good at brands’ (Thomas 1999).

Actually defining what a corporate university is still remains a difficult task. Meister (1998) takes a fairly contentious view, setting corporate universities against public provision by suggesting that they developed out of dissatisfaction with post-secondary education combined with a need for lifelong learning. Thomas (1999) takes much broader view, suggesting it may be all or any of the following:

- a partnership with universities and other suppliers
- a focus for learning and development for employees
- a system of knowledge management
- a centre of excellence

While this may help to clarify the direction or philosophy of the corporate university, it is still broad enough in its scope to include such a multitude of activities that any business could claim to be operating as one. And perhaps this is the point. Nokia, Ericsson and Enron are all in the fast-moving worlds of datacoms and telecoms. The rate of change in their marketplace is phenomenal and their vision of the ‘corporate university’ was very different. First, they saw no need to call it a corporate university at all. Second, ‘it’ had to be a flexible framework that adapted with the pace of change and allowed people to develop, capture and share knowledge in new ways. Finally, they did not want to reinvent the wheel in any way whatsoever. They view the international university market as something to draw on rather than recreate. The Unipart University or BAe Virtual University was too static a model for them. But each model or configuration has its place; the Nokia vision would have been inappropriate at Unipart, for example.

While these differing perspectives offer variety they do not help in defining the concept. Perhaps it would be better defined as a set of continua including, for example:

1. Bricks and mortar through to virtual (Thomas 1999)
2. Encompasses some employees through to encompasses all employees (Ball 1999)
3. Produces measurable benefits through to produces a feel-good factor (ibid.)
4. Is a corporate training department through to being a system of knowledge management
5. Is self-contained through to works solely in partnerships

Where each organisation fits on each continuum is for them to decide. Essentially the corporate university is the mechanism by which organisations are trying to make learning part of everyday activities so that they can become ‘learning organisations’, acting as agents of change (see, for example, Pedler et al. 1991).
Historical development

Dunbabin (1999) recognised the start of the university sector as being as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries, although their form was not recognised as such at that time. It was only in the fourteenth century that the noun *universitas* was applied, as it was to describe any privileged corporate body, only to be ‘narrowed down’ to refer to an ‘academic community specialising in higher education’ just before the fifteenth century (ibid.: 30). Minogue (1973) argues that the universities had their roots in religion and certainly Newman’s development of Dublin University was entwined in theological ideology and reasoning. However, Minogue’s view of religion differed greatly from Newman’s marrying of religion and theology. Minogue views religion as a philosophical viewpoint:

Religion is, then, whatever imaginative apprehension we have of the value of our lives, and while we have seen that it is an error actually to identify religion with belief it is nevertheless true that religions naturally tend towards the raising of wider questions, tend towards the pursuit of truth and development of philosophical issues.

*(Minogue 1973: 37)*

Minogue views the further expansion of the university sector through the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries as stemming from a desire for something different from the ‘intellectual inheritance’ incumbent at the time. There are tones of radical underpinning in Minogue’s work, suggesting the development of the university sector was somewhat of a revolt against the elite tutoring system operating at that time.

The university sector developed to a point where it provided higher education to approximately 3.5 percent of the 18 year old population in the early 1960s. Halsey (1993) suggests that, after the Second World War, economic and social indicators suggested a need for expansion in higher education. This expansion was politically driven and saw entry selection shift away from the control of academics in universities towards examination results and admissions tutors. In 1998, approximately 16 percent of 21 year olds in Britain obtained a degree through a university (OECD 1992, in Halsey 1993).

The Robbins report (1963) led to the development by Anthony Crosland of the polytechnic sector around 1965. Booth (1999) argues that this new sector introduced a broader range of courses and students into higher education, developing new course patterns such as modular courses. In 1992 the polytechnics were given university status and the ‘university’ population expanded threefold overnight.

It was around this time that the corporate university idea started to gain popularity. While Walt Disney was an early starter, developing the idea of Disney University in 1995 (operationalising it in the 1960s, offering its Mousters and Ducktorate degrees), it was 1989 when Motorola renamed its training and education centre the ‘Motorola University’ in the US and the Unipart University appeared in Britain in 1993. British Aerospace was a later development in 1997/98. The corporate universities evolved from on-site developments of training centres into workshops education initiatives with broader aims and scope. They assumed the title of university because of their cultural impact in creating a ‘community or corporation of learning after the original Medical Latin concept of Universitas’ (Motorola website) or because they are ‘creating and developing a concept’ (Unipart 1999).
Aiming to expand the knowledge base and competitiveness of their respective companies, the corporate university’s roots stem from very different historical bases from those of the public university sector. Certainly there is no hint of Minogue’s revolutionary undertones, although the corporations concerned do concede that they view their universities as agents of change.

Walton (1999) recognises three phases of development in the corporate university sector: first-generation corporate universities typically offered specified training modules, much like a corporate training centre, for example Disney University; the second generation saw expansion into a broader framework of education and human resource development, attempting to embed work-based learning such as TQM initiatives, for example Motorola University; the third generation are the virtual universities which view the concept as a process rather than a campus. Their development has moved from training centres to a learning process and the developmental focus has shifted somewhat from the organisation to the individual for the organisation.

Ownership and control

Kerr (1995) describes the issue of ownership and control as a cliché. He claims that universities picture themselves as radical institutions when they are exceedingly conservative in their conduct and that they picture themselves as autonomous when historically the evidence suggests that they have always responded to the needs and desires of external groups and stakeholders.

Scott suggests that the original purpose of the university was neither liberal nor scientific but political: ‘The most important product of the medieval university was clearly the idea itself of a university, and the separation of intellectual authority from the political power on which this depended’ (1984: 26). Obviously this cannot be achieved within the bounds of the corporate university. The intellectual authority is at least directed if not controlled by the power sources in the organisation, even if the corporate university operates through a network of partnerships with public universities. A picture emerges whereby a bespoke tailored course is developed to meet the organisation’s needs and is delivered according to the organisation’s wishes. The only element beyond the control of the organisation is the validation process. Wild (1999) recognises the benefits of these tailored programmes in terms of economic success and the development of managerial skill. However, he warns that they are not substitutes for open programmes and achieve different things’ (1999: vii).

This separation of ownership and control is also discussed by Jaspers who views the relationship in part as inseparable. He holds that universities owe their whole existence to society, for which research is the payback, and academic freedom is defined within very clear boundaries:

Academic freedom means the freedom of student and teacher to do research in their own way and teach as they see fit. As for actual subject matter, that the state leaves to each individual. This defines the freedom which it generates against all interference, including its own … It does not mean the right to say what one pleases.

(Jaspers 1960: 142)
In the corporate university this academic freedom does not exist. In corporate-public university partnerships this academic freedom is limited. Wild suggests that the role of public universities in these partnerships is to bring ‘academic substance, quality, transferability and standing to what otherwise might be a particular company training initiative’ (1999: vii). British Aerospace (1999a) claim they achieve ‘balance’ between the academic content brought by their partnership organisations and the unique requirements of the company. Whether or not they can achieve this will depend largely on whether or not the partnership organisation allows them to. With such partnership arrangements being so lucrative to public universities, a loss of a little control may seem a small price to pay at the time but it goes against the fundamental principle of separation of ownership and control in universities outlined by Scott above.

Level of educational outcome

Barnett (1990) raises the question of what does and does not fall within the bounds of a legitimate subject for the academic community to study. Over the last 100 years various professional studies have joined the natural sciences and social sciences in universities and the process of study has been widening. One of the many offerings of knowledge presented by Barnett is that of knowledge-oriented activities producing a developmental process which, as a process, is not value-free (1990: 43-4). Given this, the subject matter of the corporate university may fall within the bounds of knowledge accepted within the public university sector, although whether the criteria regarding objectivity would be met may again be dependent on the degree of separation of ownership and control.

Pattison (1965) distinguishes between the ‘lower states of education’ and what he refers to as ‘superior education’ in his exploration of the university. In the former the student is passive and the education does not touch his mind. ‘His understanding is exercised in bare apprehension of given facts and relations. His will is exercised in prompt obedience to a rule’ (1965: 126). In the latter the mind is roused as it becomes conscious of a force within itself which becomes active, combining, analysing and imposing itself on phenomena. ‘This is the life the Higher Education aspires to promote, this is the power which it cherishes and cultivates, this the faculty to which it appeal’ (Pattison 1965: 127). Pattison’s ideas build on Newman’s ideas of ‘intellectual culture’ (1853: 101) and Jaspers’ ideas of educating the whole man. ‘Man’s humanity requires his realisation of the absolute. Without it all would be meaningless’ (Jaspers 1960: 64).

The attainment of this level of educational achievement in the corporate university is rare. It is not what the corporate university is aiming to achieve, although elements of it may occur as a by-product. The Unipart University, for example, offers around 180 different courses which have been designed and are taught by Unipart managers and staff (Unipart 1999). While there may be elements of superior education and intellectual culture within this, it is not the aim of the ‘university’ and it is certainly not the desired outcome. The Unipart University’s mission is ‘to develop, train and inspire people to achieve World Class performance within UGC (Unipart Group of Companies) and amongst its stakeholders’ (ibid.). It is improved performance which is the focus of this university, not improved intellect. While improved intellect may lead to improved performance, the relationship is not necessarily reciprocal.
Cable & Wireless College has been in existence on its Coventry campus since 1993. It offers a range of courses along similar lines to the corporate universities but focuses specifically on communications angles. Uniquely, it also offers courses on an open access basis. However, it maintains its title of college rather than adopting the popular university title. When asked why, their answer was simply ‘we’re not an academic institution’. Pushed further, they said that they do not award degrees and it would not be their intention to do so. It became apparent on further questioning that there had never actually been a conscious decision taken not to become the Cable and Wireless University. The point had never been raised. This conclusion is drawn on the basis that, when the question regarding the title of college was asked of both the college and the head office, nobody knew the answer, responders became mildly hostile to the question and then passed you to someone else who ‘may be able to help’. Clearly the question had never been asked because at Cable & Wireless universities were regarded as academic institutions and colleges were where training took place.

The BAe Virtual University does meet the requirement of ‘higher’ levels of educational attainment. It prospectus (BAe 1996b) offers a wide range of degrees at master’s level as well as professional qualifications and courses. This is largely the result of its ‘virtual’ nature, as it is merely a framework organisation for developing partnerships with public education providers and tailoring or ‘balancing’ their courses with the organisation’s needs (BAe 199a9).

The ‘usefulness’ of the education

The one area in which all corporate universities conform is that of the usefulness of the education provided by the institution. The Unipart University offers 180 courses which have been developed and delivered by Unipart managers and staff. They claim that the ‘courses are designed to be practical so that attendees “train for work” and can apply “this morning’s learning to this afternoon’s job”’ (Unipart 1999). The BAe Virtual University offers learning opportunities which are ‘relevant to the business’ (BAe 1999) and has gone so far as to develop a bespoke engineering degree with Loughborough University to meet a specific need of the business (Midgley 1999: vi). GEC are similarly developing an MSc in International Technology Management which will be delivered and awarded by three different universities in three different countries with Warwick University being responsible for overseeing the quality of the programme (Davies 1999). The Motorola University has the objective of being the ‘preferred provider of choice for Motorola's educational content, services, learning solutions and support’ (Staunton 1999). Motorola University adopts the slogan ‘right knowledge, right now’ and sets out to prove that they are better than local providers when it comes to educating Motorolans (ibid.). They even have the Motorola University Press.

These initiatives contrast starkly with Newman’s (1853) extreme liberal stance that knowledge is its own end. As Barnett asks, ‘what ought we to do to see that a higher education fulfils its emancipatory promise, so that it does more than providing qualified manpower for the state, and acting as a cultural finishing school?’ (1970: 78)

Birch (1988) searches for a more purposeful liberal education, arguing that the intellectual skills developed need to be exercised and suggests they are exercised within a problem-solving framework. Birch (1998: 44) identifies four skills which stem from liberal education but can be applied to problem-based learning:
1. An ability to conceptualise.
2. An ability to seek out and master the knowledge base requisite to opening up a problem
3. An ability to translate this analysis through imaginative conjecture into solutions
4. An ability to evaluate and synthesize outcomes as a basis for learning and, where appropriate, action.

The application of problem-based learning is one way in which a company-specific curriculum can be brought into courses being tailored to the organisation. While this may fall within the auspices of a corporate university, it has its roots in the industry-university partnerships developed over the past decade, such as the Vauxhall MBA programme at Putteridge Bury, University of Luton. This allows for variation in a course to provide the ‘usefulness’ element to the organisation while remaining in the public university sector.

The concept of mode 1 and mode 2 product of knowledge (Gibbons et al. 1994) synthesizes this analysis. Mode 1 production of knowledge is traditional, disciplinary, in a cognitive context, based largely on scientific principles and distinguishes between fundamentals and applied knowledge. It is institutionally controlled (i.e. by the public universities) and growth of knowledge production is homogenous. Mode 2 production of knowledge, on the other hand, is derived from a broader trans-disciplinary social and economic context. It does not behave according to the scientific method norms and its growth is heterogeneous. It is controlled by success, efficiency, and usefulness, and its raison d’être is enquiry oriented, towards contextualised results. It is this mode 2 knowledge production that the corporate universities seek, while the public universities are primarily concerned with mode 1.

The multiversity: stakeholder analysis

The ‘multiversity’ is essentially an American concept. Kerr (1995: 31) introduces the idea of the ‘multiversity’ being ‘a city of infinite variety’. Essentially the university has multiple stakeholders all of which require different outcomes and as such he recommends that a certain amount of confusion exists ‘for the sake of the preservation of the whole uneasy balance’ (Kerr 1995: 14). Table 1 demonstrates this stakeholder complexity for a British university.

Clearly there are numerous stakeholders with differing inputs all requiring different outputs. A stakeholder analysis of a corporate university would tell a different story (see Table 2). Here we see fewer active stakeholders. Central government fails to make stakeholder status as it has no input. The benefit it accrues is a by-product. Employees of the corporate university trade labour for wages as they do in the public university. Students still supply effort in exchange for education, but in the corporate university it does not cost them anything as the corporate is meeting the costs. Suppliers are still providing goods and services in return for money payment, but, in the case of the corporate university, the public university is included in this group. Local government, professional institutes and research councils have no stake in corporate universities and the stake of the employers changes to one of investment in search of increased return on capital employed, i.e. greater productivity as a result of the education or training resulting in greater profit.
Table 1  Stakeholder analysis for a public university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder group</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central government</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Services (chiefly graduates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry / employers</td>
<td>Research contracts,</td>
<td>Research findings, employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sponsorship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Members, courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional institutes</td>
<td>Advice, money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research councils</td>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Research findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Money, effort</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppliers</td>
<td>Goods / services</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Allen (1988: 27)

Table 2  Stakeholder analysis for a corporate university

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder group</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central government</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Better educated labour force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry / employers</td>
<td>Investment</td>
<td>Profit (through increased output)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional institutes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research councils</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>Education, training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppliers</td>
<td>Goods / services</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Allen (1998: 27)

However, not all the stakeholder differences are represented in terms of inputs and outputs. There are ideological and value differences also. Barnett (1990) raises the point that higher education has an interest in developing students with liberated minds of their own. In contrast, corporate universities have an interest in assimilating individuals into the corporate culture. For example, the GEC MSc in International Technology Management has three bespoke GEC modules focusing on the GEC operating environment, GEC technologies, and GEC corporate culture.

The university in the public domain

In Britain the university sector has recently come under public scrutiny with league tables being published (see, for example, THES 1999), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) inspection reports, and various public inquiries into aspects of the provision of higher education (see, for example, Dearing 1997). The corporate university does not undergo such examination. In fact, finding data on the corporate university has proved exceedingly difficult. There is little published information in the form of text except journalistic-style articles in publications that are not peer reviewed. These are generally targeted at business managers, highlighting successes of ventures. There is little published research in the field.3
While there is an annual survey of 120 US corporate universities carried out by Corporate Exchange Inc., this again focuses on the business management perspective, drawing out best practice rather than developing an educational perspective (see, for example, Meister 2000). There is much about industry-university partnerships especially from the university perspective, but the corporate university remains a mystery. The Internet proves the best source of information in this search. Some of the corporate universities have their own websites, the sophistication of which varies considerably from company to company. Motorola University is by far the most impressive. Indeed, it even allows you to purchase books published by the Motorola University Press and invites you to ask questions by e-mail. In fact, the Motorola University, from a superficial perspective at least, appears to be willing to be scrutinized.

While the corporate university does not appear to be under public scrutiny, this may be because of a lack of questioning rather than as an attempt to hide something. Certainly the representatives at British Aerospace and Unipart are only too happy to answer any questions put to them and the Motorola web site invites you to do so, although to date their reply has not been forthcoming. Cable & Wireless tried hard but were unable to answer the questions, as they had not asked them of themselves. This is no indictment of Cable & Wireless as they had no need to ask the question. They know what they are about and where they think they are going.

Perhaps the most stark difference about public access to information regarding the various forms of universities is in terms of output, in particular research. Academics in public universities publish their research throughout peer-reviewed journals. It is available for all to see; it is in the public domain. Research carried out in corporate universities, however, is carried out for reasons of competitive advantage. Sharing the results with the competition would defy the point. Hence the research is not published but shared among a community who will benefit from its results. It can even be withheld from patent submission to maintain its secret nature and importance. Motorola does publish some of its knowledge on its in-house Intranet so a good hacker may obtain access.

The concern that arises from this lack of sharing of knowledge in the public domain is the question of what happens to the knowledge generated through university-industry partnerships. While this may be a side issue here, it is a concern that needs airing and discussing if anything other then mode 1 production of knowledge is to be published.

Comparative analysis

A summary comparative table of traditional public and corporate universities has been compiled (Table 3) to ease comparison of similarities and differences. In fact, finding any similarities at all is difficult. Perhaps in the area of ‘linkage with public universities’ there is some similarity in that both will enter partnership arrangements with (other) public universities for research or accreditation purposes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Public university sector</strong></th>
<th><strong>Corporate university</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
<td>Originated from scholarly community, development into corporations named <em>Universitas</em>.</td>
<td>Title conveys culture &amp; community of learning developed in-house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical account</strong></td>
<td>Medieval / classical roots. Development of old uni. sector 17-19th century, new uni. sector 20th century, mass expansion.</td>
<td>Developed from in-house training and education departments; offering new services, creativity, research &amp; development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aims</strong></td>
<td>To provide liberal and / or professional education at a ‘higher’ level to the public.</td>
<td>Expand the knowledge base of their companies, adding to the competitiveness, acting as catalyst for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Qualifications (degrees, professional qualifications) &amp; research.</td>
<td>Raised horizons on what can be achieved, conveys the ethics, values &amp; history of company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of education</strong></td>
<td>Undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral.</td>
<td>Any, from low-level functional training to postgraduate study from partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size &amp; diversity of student body</strong></td>
<td>Any member of the global public who fulfils the entry requirements.</td>
<td>Every employee in the organisation, some guarantee a minimum amount of training per year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge generation</strong></td>
<td>Mode 1 production of knowledge. Some mode 2 through industry partnership arrangements. Published for public consumption, peer reviewed.</td>
<td>Mode 2 production of knowledge. Research shared with partner organisations, in-house publication. Not publicly published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ownership &amp; control</strong></td>
<td>‘Owned’ by the state in terms of funding. Reports publicly &amp; is accountable to state organisations. ‘Control’ is loose due to concept of academic freedom.</td>
<td>Owned by the company, control varies according to the decentralised nature of in-house buying. Always has to be some business justification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links with public universities</strong></td>
<td>Primarily collaboration exists in research projects.</td>
<td>Links regarding delivery of accredited courses and some research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The differences on the other hand are wide ranging: from mode 1 to mode 2 production of knowledge to the concept of divorce of ownership and control. The level of education being offered covers the whole spectrum between the two groups, but there is little overlap and their *raisons d’être* vary from improving competitiveness and change (corporate university) to providing a liberal and/or professional education to the public.

Clearly one of Newman’s core ideas regarding a university was the underpinning value of the student discovering ‘truth’ as the object of knowledge (Newman 1853). In pursuit of this ‘truth’ there must be an element of criticality otherwise the student simply obtains information. Havel distinguishes between truth and information by stating ‘information is portable and transmissible, whereas it is by no means as simple with truth’ (1988: 224).

Barnett claims that truth to an academic is ‘integral to their form of life’ (1990: 54) and goes on to claim that criticism is a key concept in higher education. As individuals develop their abilities to critique society, the values of democracy are preserved. If we prevented people from developing critical thinking skills democracy would be unsustainable. These are the underpinning values of the public university.

Both the public universities and the corporate universities do offer some form of ‘truth’: public universities endeavour to allow students to discover their own ‘truth’ through knowledge while corporate universities offer the organisation’s view of ‘truth’. Both also offer opportunities with regard to developing critically, but in the corporate university it is focused around problem solving and gaining competitive advantage. With regard to the promotion of democracy – is not the inclusion of more Unipart workers in the Unipart decision-making process a promotion of democracy? While these core values may be interpreted to exist within both sectors, how they are operationalised differs. There is a danger with the expansion of the higher education sector that public universities become ‘schools’ pushing through qualifications, while industry becomes the hive of innovative research and development pushing forward the bounds of knowledge. Indeed, it is questionable how far down this road we have travelled.

The corporate universities may have something to offer in terms of learning communities, and they may be having great success in stimulating people to learn who previously would not have entertained the idea. While this is highly commendable it still leaves voids in explaining their assumption of the title ‘university’.

There is an essence of grandeur about the term university: its historical roots in Oxford and Cambridge; the pomp and ceremony surrounding degree confirmations; the spirit of the student and the joy of ‘student days’ enjoyed by so many now at the decision-making end of organisations. Maybe it is this that the corporate universities are trying to capture. British Aerospace certainly provide lavish award ceremonies where they distribute certificates to their employees and their achievements are celebrated. Unipart University have certainly stimulated and developed a ‘can do’ culture, from a defeatist start point, drawing out the ‘go on’ daringness that many undergraduate students have before it is stifled by experience.

Clearly the corporate universities are developing the boundaries of knowledge but it is through mode 2 production, rather than mode 1. While this may be the future for knowledge production it does not share the same historical routes as mode 1 which exists in the public universities.
Within both sectors there is diversity, and some convergence between the two. Clark (1998) highlights the development of ‘entrepreneurial universities’ as one possible model for the future. Warwick and Strathclyde in particular are emulating aspects of the corporate university, the latter with regard to ‘useful’ knowledge production, and the former with regard to exclusive learning communities (ibid.). Within the corporate university sector there is also convergence towards working in partnership with public universities. Indeed, Meister (2000) reports the ‘development of innovative partnerships with institutes of higher education’ as one of the results from the annual survey of US corporate universities, and the corporate universities in Britain are also supporting this assertion (see, for example BAe or Unipart 1999).

Despite these areas of convergence, the comparative evidence is clear. The corporate university and public universities are two very different configurations with different aims, outcomes, and *modus operandi*. While there is certainly room for collaboration between the two, they will always remain separate entities. Even if a degree-awarding body, such as the CNAA, was to be re-established, the corporate universities of Unipart and BAe claim they would not seek to award their own degrees as the feel they would become too insular – Motorola were not too sure. Clearly they serve different purposes and take different forms and neither the public nor the corporate universities would desire to emulate the other. There certainly appears room for both in the educational market-place.

While it may have been with the best of intentions, and created a learning culture with grandeur, corporations’ adoption of the title ‘university’ has dumbed the term down, making it acceptable for the term to be used in a variety of inappropriate ways. The fact that the UK government has joined the onslaught by lowering the value of the term through the ‘University for Industry’ may indicate the government’s intentions for the public university sector in Britain. For those who work in the public university sector the message is clear – the value of service being provided is being diluted and eroded. While the corporate universities appreciate these services greatly, they are also eroding their value by taking the title university themselves.

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BAe (1999a) Achievement through Knowledge, Farnborough: BAe (in-house Virtual University prospectus document).


**Internet Sites**

British Aerospace – [http://www.bae.co.uk](http://www.bae.co.uk)
Cable & Wireless College – [http://www.cwcollege.com](http://www.cwcollege.com)
Corporate University Exchange – [http://www.corpu.com](http://www.corpu.com)
Motorola University – [http://mu.motorola.com](http://mu.motorola.com)
Unipart University – [http://www/unipart.co.uk/aboutugc.htm](http://www/unipart.co.uk/aboutugc.htm)

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1 It is interesting to note that, while Jaspers claims the ideal of uniting ‘people’ above, he chooses to use the word ‘man’ when defining the outcomes. This may stem from the historical development of educational philosophy and the wide use of ‘the educated man’ as a concept, but may also suggest that, despite writing in the 1960s, Jaspers was somewhat removed from the radical voice at that time.

2 Meister’s research is based on the US model of the corporate university.

3 To date, only the research of Meister, which is predominantly based in the USA, has been available.