

Horizon scanning Transcript

Welcome to this lesson on horizon scanning. This might seem a strange thing to do but I want you to look at the big picture and be as prepared as possible for those things that are going to happen. So I'm not saying have a crystal ball, predict the future exactly. And I'm not saying that the future is some sort of oncoming train, the light at the end of the tunnel. But I am saying that if we go through scenarios and we are as prepared as possible, then we build our resilience in the academic world and also in the world of work and we also have that preparation leads into flexibility.

So we understand our options. So ideally the type of analysis that we're going to do here should be combined with the SWOT analysis. We're going to use PEST. I love this acronym. Makes me think of lots of little critters. But it's really a way of a strategic way of looking at the big picture. So it's another two by two management grid. But this looks at all those big factors and we're certainly not going to know the answer to all of them. But it's being prepared quite often as researcher we're head down, very focused on our particular niche, and we need to come up for air.

As I'm recording this we're going through Brexit. It's definitely going to have an effect on universities whichever way it pans out. Other things to think about when is the country's next local, state, national election. If you're looking to work over seas then you need to look at the political situation there as well. Is that going to change the way that research policy is conducted or education policy which impact on universities. What will the REF evolve into? So REF, research, excellence, framework. A long time ago it was called the RAE. So it's already evolved. REF 2020 still has some surprises in store for us I think. What will happen in that next one? Who knows? So looking at the trends that are happening in the metrics the universities and research measure by.

University politics, always a good one. What's happening in your particular institution that might change your career? Time scales. So the REF we know is a cycle of five years. Other things might happen more quickly. I'm thinking about any other political factors. So really do open this out but looking at those law makes, those policy makers and how they affect our institutions and then that trickle down effect on how it will affect you.

One consideration is student loan pay back and you might have a stack of debt from your student years that you need to pay back. That's an obvious economic need. But thinking why do about that current economy. How's it going? Is it growing? Is it stagnating? Are more people going to university? Are less people going to university? Are there more options in the private sector for you career wise? Your department's performance in the last REF will affect how buoyant it is economically currently. And funding for that department and the university will be dependent on how they do in the next research excellence framework.

So you need to be aware that money is a big driver in research. Hiring and firing cycles. So associated with the REF, there's usually a big of activity before the REF as universities are trying to get brilliant staff in and then it all goes quiet. Very few jobs. It all goes quiet because it's almost as if the university sector is holding its breath. And funding councils. Are they key themes? Where are they going in five years time? Are

they about to announce a new theme? Will that change where you need to position yourself?

Social and cultural. So perhaps the more soft side of this, although I think these can be really difficult, tricky issues for researchers. One thing is are you in a peak or a trough of people your age? Are we short of people age 28, 30, 35 however old you are. What's changing in university demographics? So since I've been in HE, there has been an explosion the number of PhDs and post docs. And that has then created a very broad based pyramid where the lecturers are few and far between and the post docs are a huge chunk.

Will the TEF or the KEF change how people measure university? Will the change the amount of people going to university? So the TEF is the teaching excellence framework. KEF is the knowledge exchange framework. So both of those looking at the teaching impact and the societal impact of what universities do. Is your discipline on the rise? Is it one of those new sexy ones that everyone's interested in? So solar panels. The population can get behind those. They understand them. Attitudes to your work, if you do animal research that may be quite difficult to talk about socially. It might be very unfundable from some people.

And on women's course, gender stereotypes. So we are still very much in the minority in the tops of our universities as women. Slowly it's changing. What movements are helping change those things? So again there's that social side of the factors that affect you.

Technological. That seems slightly odd to mention to a bunch of researchers. But are there new technologies that you could be using that simply make your life a bit easier? So is there a new email app that's going to transform your life? Can you find a to do list that pretty much bullies you into doing things? It might be that simple. But also thinking about what's the new big thing in your field. What new technology is coming out that's actually going to be a game changer. Increasingly we can work remotely. So universities are changing. Labs are changing. Do you need to be in the university every day? Are universities going to move towards hot desking because people aren't in the university every day?

What does that do for research culture for networking? Various other things that technology impacts on. Also student learning. Increasingly online courses like this, students being able to watch their lectures remotely, and for flexibility in the student lifestyle but again no communal getting together for a lecture. And also artificial intelligence. What's that going to mean for the universities of the future? Use the template in do, think, learn to conduct your own PEST analysis. Be quite specific about how it applies to you and your career goals.



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