THAILAND-EUROPEAN UNION
Policy Dialogues Support Facility

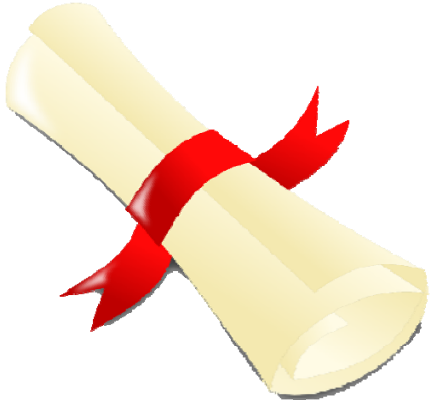
Leadership and System Design for promoting Academic Excellence in Research

Round Table Discussion – October 2015

Prof. Tom Barnes

What is Academic Excellence in Research?

- Ideas for their own sake?
- Recognition by peers? National? International?
- Publication in the 'best' journals?
- Large numbers of citations?
- A high grading in an assessment exercise?
- Research results have 'Impact'?
- Large grants to support the work?



Definition of Scholarship

Boyer, 1990

- ***The scholarship of Discovery***

  … comes closest to what is meant when academics speak of "research."

  The commitment to knowledge for its own sake, to freedom of inquiry and to following, in a disciplined fashion, an investigation wherever it may lead.

- ***The scholarship of Integration***

  … giving meaning to isolated facts, putting them in perspective.

  Making connections across the disciplines, placing the specialities in larger context, illuminating data in a revealing way, often educating nonspecialists, too.

- ***The scholarship of Application***

  … the scholar asks, "How can knowledge be responsibly applied to consequential problems?

  How can knowledge be helpful to individuals as well as institutions?" And further, "Can social problems themselves define an agenda for scholarly investigation?“ (Very relevant to engagement)

- ***The scholarship of Teaching***

  … the work of the professor becomes consequential only as it is understood by others.

  When defined as scholarship teaching both educates and entices future scholars. Indeed, as Aristotle said, "Teaching is the highest form of understanding."

Some definitions of Research – International/National

Frascati – OECD:

"Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of the stock of knowledge to devise new applications."

UK - Research Excellence Framework (REF):

"A process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared"

Australia – Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA):

"The creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative."

Some definitions of Research - Universities

UK – Imperial College:

"Original investigation undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding. Research in this context specifically excludes routine testing and routine analysis of materials, components and processes (such as for the maintenance of national standards), as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques. It also excludes the development of teaching materials that do not embody original research."

USA – Pennsylvania State University:

"Research is a systematic inquiry to describe, explain, predict and control the observed phenomenon. Research involves inductive and deductive methods (Babbie, 1998). Inductive methods analyze the observed phenomenon and identify the general principles, structures, or processes underlying the phenomenon observed; deductive methods verify the hypothesized principles through observations. The purposes are different: one is to develop explanations, and the other is to test the validity of the explanations."

Types of Research

Frascati

Basic research

is experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundation of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view.

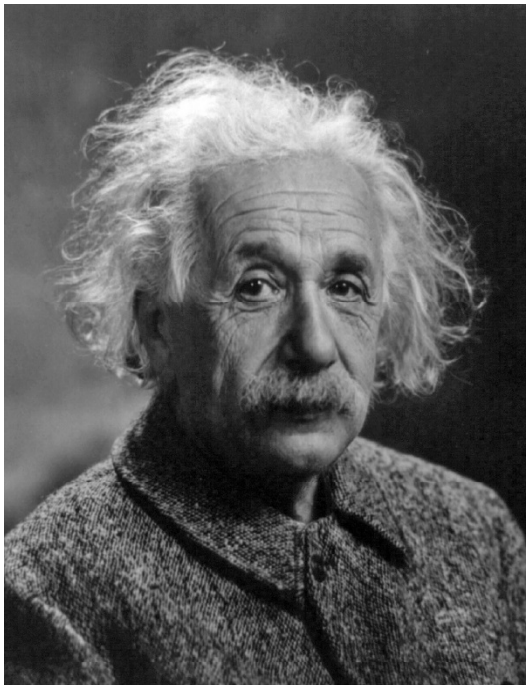
Applied research

is also original investigation undertaken in order to acquire new knowledge. It is, however, directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective.

Experimental development

is systematic work, drawing on existing knowledge gained from research and/or practical experience, which is directed to producing new materials, products or devices, to installing new processes, systems and services, or to improving substantially those already produced or installed. R&D covers both formal R&D in R&D units and informal or occasional R&D in other units.

Motivation to become a researcher?

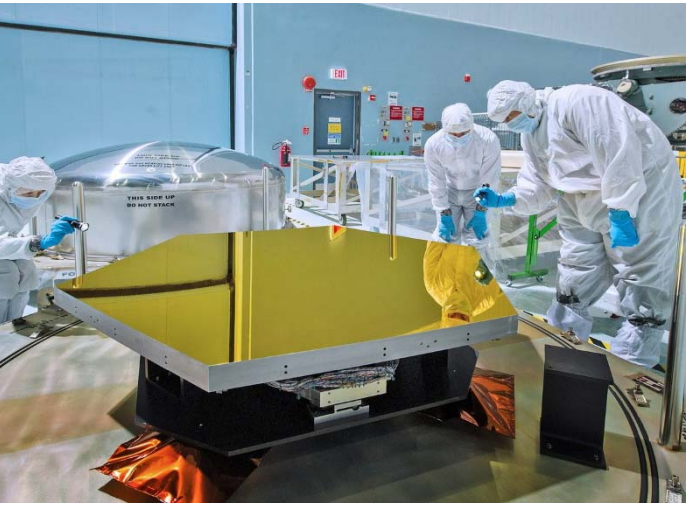


Money?

Reputation?

Career?

Institutional Rules?



Assessment Exercises?

Interest???!!

Motivation to become a researcher …

“ … the freedom to explore down an avenue and investigate an area and then present it to someone else in a way that I thought was interesting ...”

“... I was really, really interested in the kinds of things that were going on research-wise in the department ...”

“... the intellectual challenge; something that I enjoyed where I could develop my ideas - with all the ups and downs that research has ...”

“... the motivation for carrying out research comes from one's inner self ...”

(from interviews at the University of Southampton and others)

What is in the research landscape?

Curiosity

Integrity Ethics

Inspiration

Reputation

Publication

Recognition

Evaluation/
Assessment

Competition

Researcher
Development

Collaboration

ouragement Training

Resources
(Time +)

Funding

Relevance

tainability/
Pipeline

Information

Impact

Translation/
Commercialisation

Components of a system for research excellence

- **Leadership**
- **People**
- **Culture**
- **Resources**
- **Structure**
  - **Not all institutions can be all things to all stakeholders**
- **Recognition**
  - **Differentiation of role is not classification of excellence**
- **Measurement and Feedback**

… and the most important of these is …?

‘Glue’

- Common understanding
- Understood and accepted strategies
- Clear priorities
- Critical mass
- Collaboration
- The right kind of competition
  - Enhances collaboration and information exchange rather than destroys them!
- Stability
- Funding

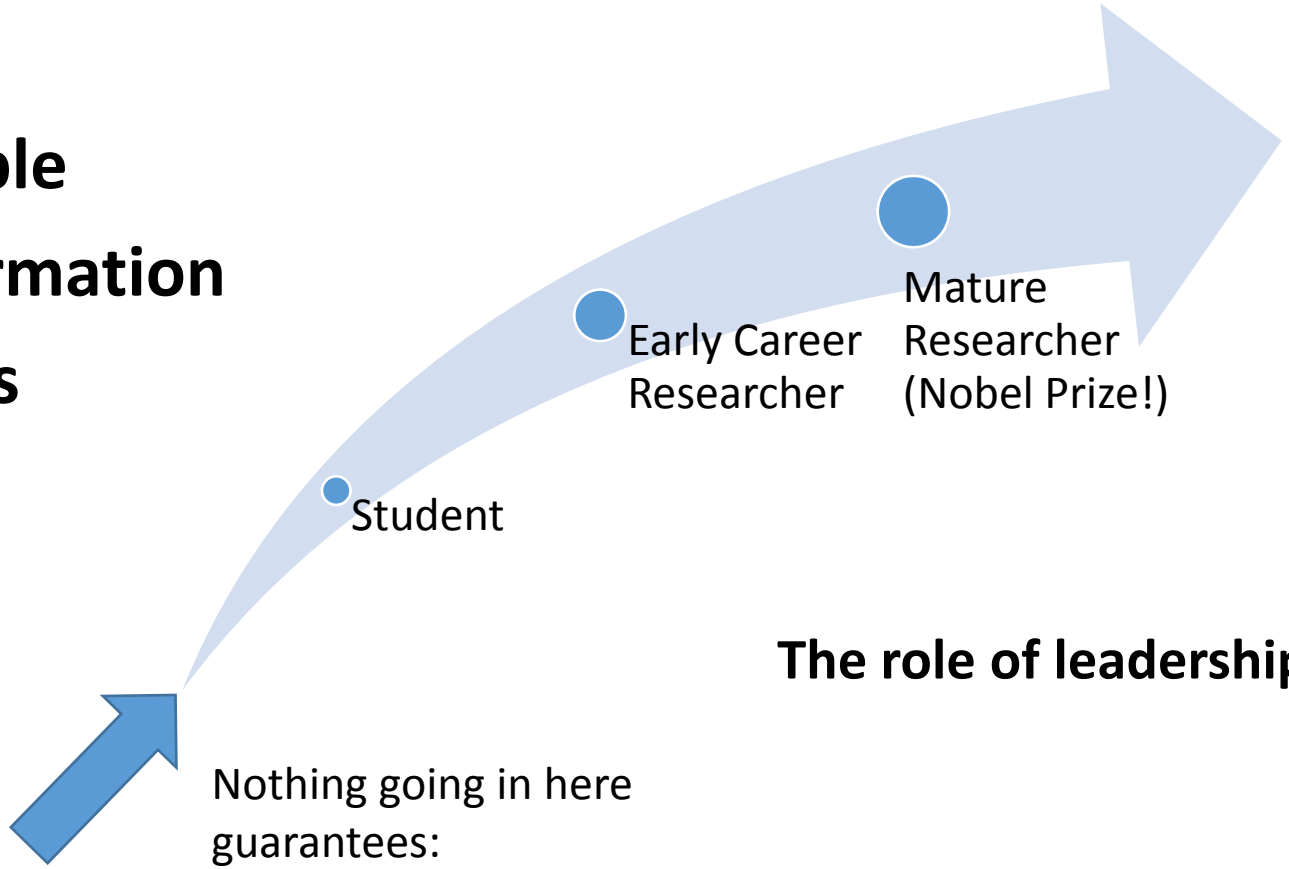
Sustainability

It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves.

William Shakespeare

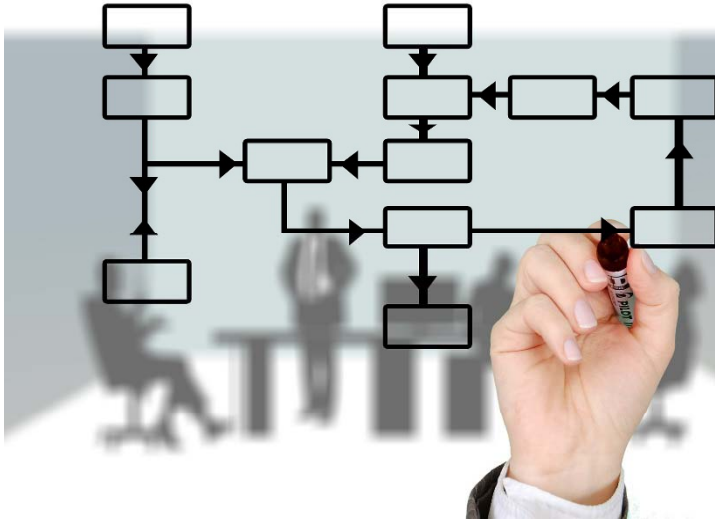
The pipeline of:

- **People**
- **Information**
- **Ideas**



The role of leadership

What is in the research landscape?



Relevant at every level of the research system

… System designers beware!!!

Curiosity

tegrity Ethics

Inspiration

Reputation

Publication

Recognition

Evaluation/
Assessment

Competition

Researcher
Development

Collaboration

Resources
(Time +)

Funding

Encouragement Training

Relevance

Sustainability/
Pipeline

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Impact

Building blocks of the system

National

- National Strategy and Policies
- Promotion/Measurement of Quality
- Resourcing, funding, and recognition
- Integration of the players

Regional

- Integration with national policies
- The German model – regional policies and initiatives support national directions

Building blocks of the system

Institutional

- Visible leadership and promotion of research excellence critical at this level
- The institution's ecosystems – and their relationships with outside players: engagement
- Model external systems to an extent, with institutional culture superimposed
  - Promote and measure quality
  - Resourcing, funding, and recognition
  - Support for researchers – new and mature
- Link to external players and policy initiatives
- Select and develop 'leaders on the ground'

Departmental and/or Group level

- Where 'leadership on the ground' happens

'Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they ca accomplish.'

Sam Walton

Case Study: Promotion of Researcher Development: Vitae

A Charity, initially government funded and setup as a national initiative, to promote development of researchers and research careers

What we do

Vitae brings together all those with a stake in realising the potential of researchers. We establish partnerships to champion the needs of researchers and demonstrate their impact on economies and society. Together we develop policy and practice to effect real and lasting change. We provide online information, advice and resources for higher education institutions and researchers on professional development and careers.

- Advice for researchers at all levels
- Championing of researchers and research careers
- Training materials – research methods, research careers, leadership development
- Policy Development
- Ethics and Research Integrity

etc. etc.

https://www.vitae.ac.uk/

Evaluation and rewarding research quality - Examples

Research Excellence Framework

- Peer Review supported by bibliometrics
- Work of individual researchers evaluated
- Evaluations reported in aggregate – not individually
- World Leading – Nationally Recognised – Unclassified
- Includes Evaluation of 'Impact' and 'Research Environment'
- Some funding for research in universities distributed on the basis of the results

Excellence in Research for Australia

- Strong contribution from bibliometrics supported by peer evaluation of nominated samples of research work
- Informs block funding for research in Australian universities
- Informs areas for future investment in large research initiatives
- No 'Impact' measure
- Evaluations reported in aggregate

Performance Based Research Fund – New Zealand

- Peer Review with some bibliometric support
- Individual researchers evaluated on the basis of Evidence Portfolios
- Some research funding distributed to universities on the basis of the results

Discussion

Discussion – some possible suggestions

Please feel free to ask questions at any time!

The Thailand Context

Your views
Current state of the system
What is good? - What might be improved?
What might be the overall direction of change?

The International Experience

What is good? - What might be improved?
What parts might be relevant/applicable to Thailand?
What parts of the Thai experience could inform international practice?

Change

What overall direction?
Priorities?
Top down? - Bottom up? - Where do they meet?