

A Short Overview of “New” University Strategic Partnerships with Large Companies in the UK

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a short overview of “new” university strategic partnerships with large companies in the UK. It is apparent that there are academic areas where there is considerable existing activity and other areas where there are no links and there could be activity. This provides insight into those large organisations “new” universities should be approaching to develop these activities. The paper relates information on university business partnerships with large companies for internal stakeholders and external collaborators. A qualitative research methodology was used to explore the benefits of “new” university strategic partnerships involving an analysis of the literature investigated, followed by the application of theory to the case study findings. The research investigated how “new” university academic areas could be engaged with businesses in terms of key partnerships with large companies. If the right approach is taken, it is concluded that “new” universities should be able to prepare for strategic partnerships, and likewise, this will be the case for large businesses. Recommendations include the need for “new” universities to develop coordinated schemes so that businesses receive appropriate individual approaches to enable stronger, more formalised relationships to be developed, and to foster groups of individuals at “new” universities with a range of expertise to meet the needs of large companies.

Keywords: “new” university; strategic partnerships; large companies

INTRODUCTION

In response to “new” universities requiring better approaches for “strategic partnerships”, the paper provides an overview of these key partnerships with large companies in the UK. A “new” university in the UK context is deemed a “post 92” university (Thomas and Al-Hasan, 2024). A “strategic partnership” is defined as ‘an arrangement between two companies or organisations to help each other or work together, to make it easier for each of them to achieve the things they want to achieve’ (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026a). The paper notes that there are research areas where there is existing activity, and there are areas where there are no links, and there could be activity. This provides insight into those large organisations “new” universities should be approaching in order to develop activities. Large organisations/enterprises are considered to ‘have more than 250 employees and often carry out transactions at a national and international level with significant influences on the economy’ (MicroBank, 2025).

The paper seeks to answer three important questions regarding how research areas at “new” universities engage with businesses in terms of key partnerships with large companies. These are: (1) what do we

mean by strategic partnerships?, (2) what are the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships?, (3) what are the opportunities for strategic partnership activities?

The objectives of the paper are to provide a greater understanding on “new” university business partnerships with large companies for internal stakeholders and external collaborators. Here ‘a business partnership is a type of business structure in which two or more individuals agree to operate a business together and share its profits, losses and responsibilities’ (Wait, 2025). Internal stakeholders ‘are people whose interest in a company comes through a direct relationship, such as employment, ownership, or investment’ (Fernando, 2025), or ‘a person who works for and owns, or has shares in, a particular company and is likely to want the company to be successful’ (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026b). Also, external collaboration ‘represents sharing knowledge or working with individuals outside the organisation’ (Herrity, Gafner and Eads, 2025). The study has been carried out in three stages and has used the most appropriate methodology to address the three specific research questions outlined above.

The initial stage of the research has considered the nature of “new” university strategic partnerships with large companies and asks the question ‘what do we mean by strategic partnerships?’ These typically involve companies with over 250 employees within a radius of 50 miles of a “new” university. From the company point of view, depending on the type of firm and whether they are involved in Research and Development (R&D), they will probably be interested in Higher Education (HE) skills. Here, ‘R&D in business is the process of investigating new ideas, technologies, and methods to create or improve products, processes, software and services. The process of research and development is often the foundation of breakthrough innovation, and can significantly enhance business growth strategies’ (Thomas, 2025). There is a need for “new” universities to understand existing links and to promote these.

The next stage has provided an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships and asks the question ‘what are the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships?’ This part of the research consisted of an analysis of information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities in relation to strategic partnerships and also large company strengths and weaknesses.

The final stage of the research has identified opportunities for strategic partnerships between “new” universities and large companies and the benefits from the relationship and investigates the question ‘what are the opportunities for strategic partnership activities?’ The objective of this stage of the research has been to investigate business partnership opportunities through two case studies which included one large company in a rural area and one large company in a city area. The application of theory from the findings of the literature has been made in the case studies.

It is important to note here that ‘all large businesses were at one point small or mid-sized businesses that were successful enough to expand. Because of this, they have likely gone through many changes to adapt to their increasing reach and scale’ (Herrity, Eads and Kellog Murray, 2025). The findings of case studies can enable greater understanding of the collation of opportunities for key staff in areas of expertise within “new” universities with those large businesses who would be interested in such collaboration.

It is useful to have details about what companies are doing in terms of research and commercial work. Public organisations can be considered, including the Health sector, National Health Service (NHS) trusts and the Health Boards. Large companies in the local area can be profiled and for those public sector organisations it can be determined whether or not to include these. The postcodes of companies within a 50-mile radius of a “new” university can be compiled. With strategic partners there will be a correlation with distance. Findings can provide insight into

partnerships with those organisations and companies with over 250 employees and a £100,000 turnover in a local area. Data on companies can be obtained from third-party data sources, and this can be correlated with “new” university academic databases.

The findings of the research will be of both academic and practical significance, contributing to understanding processes involved in the “new” university-industry inter-relationship with regard to industry partnerships with large companies. In this context, ‘industry-university collaboration is fundamental to technological development, scientific progress and economic growth. This synergy works both ways by enabling the formation of highly qualified professionals, progress in research, the development of innovative technologies, knowledge transfer, and the promotion of scientific and technological entrepreneurship’ (Molina, 2023). The following section considers the nature of university strategic partnerships with large companies applicable to “new” universities in the UK.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH LARGE COMPANIES

A university strategic partnership with a large company is a formal alliance between the two organisations and is commonly formalised by one or more contracts. This takes place when each organisation possesses assets that will be of strategic importance to the other but does not want to develop them on an internal basis. According to Ahmad (2008), the term strategic partnership refers to ‘collaborative efforts between two or more firms that pool their resources in an effort to achieve mutually compatible goals that they could not achieve alone’ (Hunt et al, 2002). Furthermore, Elmuti et al (2005) have observed that a strategic partnership generally represents inter-firm cooperative agreements aimed at achieving competitive advantage for partners. Ahmad (2008) further observes that researchers have described a university-industry partnership (UIP) more or less in a similar fashion. A UIP, according to Gray and Walters (1998), is predominantly an organisational structure such as an arrangement to initiate, maintain and streamline interaction between university and industry. Aldrich and Herker (1977) have regarded this fairly specific organisational set up as a boundary spanning construct with goals, mission, objectives and a structure. For the partnership to be strategic, both entities will be responsive to dynamic changing environments, embracing a future orientation. The success of a strategic partnership will depend on making decisions to ensure the ability to successfully respond to changing circumstances in the long term (Bryson, 2004; Wheelan and Hungar, 2000).

The operation of a strategic partnership will involve resolving issues regarding technology transfer, intellectual property ownership, co-invention, opportunity rights, duration and termination. Since the relations can be complicated, they can involve considerable negotiations. Some partnerships can include a third party, and good examples of these are those with research councils.

A typical university will have strategic alliances across a number of industry sectors. The partnerships will enable the university to develop opportunities to raise its institutional profile to provide high quality services for students.

Partnerships will take different forms and will include public sector bodies and commercial organisations. A strategic partnership will involve a number of development steps and these are shown in Figure 1.

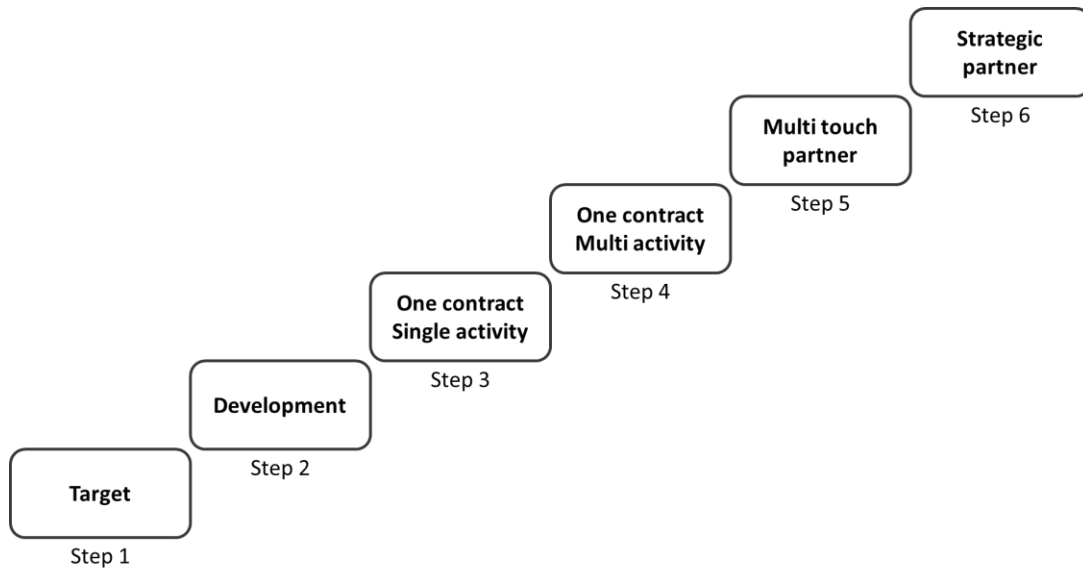


FIGURE 1: Strategic Partnership Development Steps (Based on Coventry, 2011).

The basic components of the university industry strategic partnership development process are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

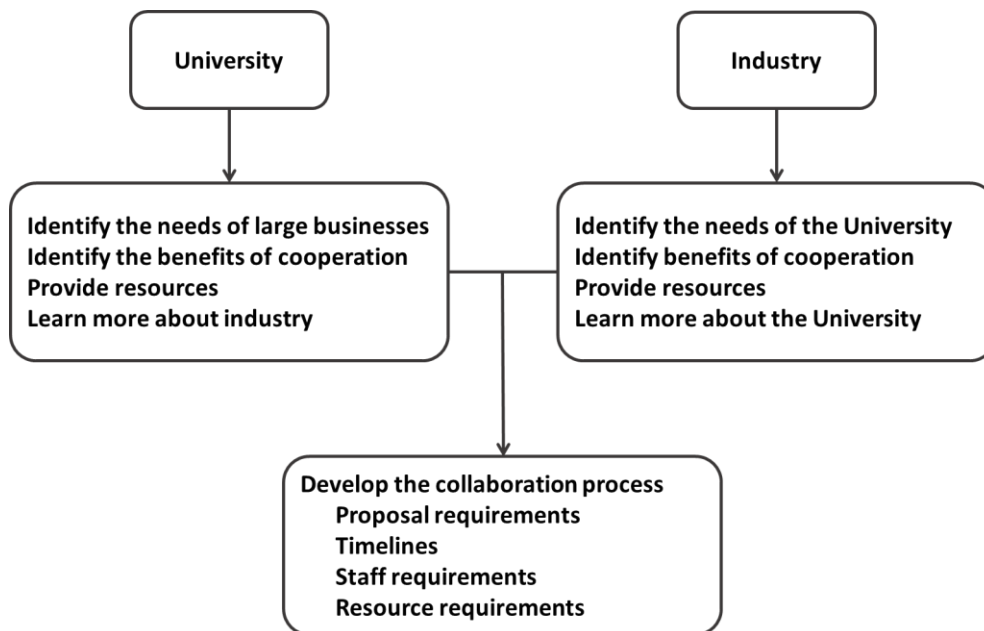


FIGURE 2: University-industry strategic partnership development process (Sources: Mead et al, 2000; Ahmad, 2008).

The partnership development process entails a methodology that can promote a knowledge-sharing climate for the development of working partnerships. The aims of the methodology are: implementation of a partnership development framework at all university levels; formalisation of multi touch and strategic collaborations; an increase in the number of partners at all phases of partnership development; the improvement of knowledge sharing for future and current

partnerships; improvement of current knowledge management systems to enhance internal communication; development of an information sharing and improved partnership working culture; and mapping companies and organisations the university is working with to be informed of partnership status (Coventry, 2011).

By following such a methodology, it will be possible to maximise opportunities for staff and students by

actively forging strategic partnerships on a local, regional and international basis. Within the local area and the wider region, it will be possible to work in partnership with key policy makers, agencies and businesses to create innovation. This can be achieved through knowledge creation from research and technology transfer, knowledge transfer involving education and lifelong learning and community and cultural development (Liverpool, 2011). By doing this, strategic partnerships will be built with industry to encourage a move from supporting individual projects on an ad hoc one-off basis to longer-term alliances aligning partnership long-term strategic visions (Heriot-Watt, 2011). Partnerships can focus on connecting larger businesses to the significant value of expertise, knowledge and research residing in the university. Examples are cooperative learning opportunities, collaborative activities to enable university knowledge, research, and expertise to be transferred quickly to the marketplace, research and learning opportunities and aligning university interest with business partners (MNSU, 2011).

Whereas many partnerships involve research projects, course attendance, or single project collaboration, a strategic partnership will extend beyond the basic customer-supplier relationship to a situation where the university and the company/organisation undertake work together in a mutually sustained, beneficial way (Loughborough, 2011). It will be strategic since working together will help both partners attain business goals, and no two partnerships will be similar. Strategic partnerships may also include working with other universities. Partnerships may include: licensing and joint Intellectual Property (IP) development; bilateral partnerships; open innovation clubs; open innovation centres; and gateways (Cranfield, 2011).

Strategic partnerships will be networked at an institutional level through targeted activity involving research cooperation, curriculum development and collaborative programme development. During a partnership, a university will be able to involve people at different levels and departments to create a multidimensional relationship. Tangible outputs will have to be delivered and may include: improved networking between partners; joint research findings and publications; new techniques, changed practices and systems; involvement of research management and administration within partners; newly-produced courses, modules or materials; and professional development (British Council, 2011).

Through the development of broad-based and in-depth relationships between a university and a large organisation, which are based on shared strategic goals for current and future challenges, there will be collaborative opportunities for:

- Fundamental and applied research projects of joint interest to enable companies to gain a competitive advantage by direct research

contracts or leveraging funding from charities, government departments or research councils.

- Graduate recruits with requisite knowledge and skills through customising courses and joint curriculum planning at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- The development of people at all levels in a company to enhance diversity of talent through leadership training and continuing management education.
- World-class expertise accessed through consulting, often for fast turnaround projects and feasibility studies.
- Intellectual property (IP) can be exploited through the commercialisation of research outcomes, exploiting routes to market for discoveries and inventions, licensing technology opportunities and the formation of spinout companies.
- Transfer of knowledge into large organisations through schemes such as Industrial Co-operative Awards in Science and Technology (CASE) awards and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs).
- Creation of new businesses.
- Networking with large organisations from different sectors in consortia and through world-class research institutes and centres of excellence (Lancaster, 2011).

According to the Reference for Business, the benefits of strategic partnerships include: sharing of risk and cost for long-term research; access to complementary capabilities; access to specialised skills; access to new suppliers and markets; access to state-of-the-art facilities; and creating new opportunities for technological learning (Carayannis and Alexander, 2011).

Baaken and Davey (2008) have reported that there are four strategic instruments for creating and managing a strategic partnering programme, and these are vice rector partnering, partnership stairway, the six golden rules and partnership relationship management. They consider that the focus when building strategic partnerships should be on research and transfer, practice-oriented education and cooperation with companies. The strategic instrument for creating and managing a partnering programme involving the vice rector partnering recognises the importance of partnering at the highest level. The stairway to strategic partnerships is a development of the strategic partnership development steps outlined above, and builds into the process commitment and strategic relevance as part of the methodology. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

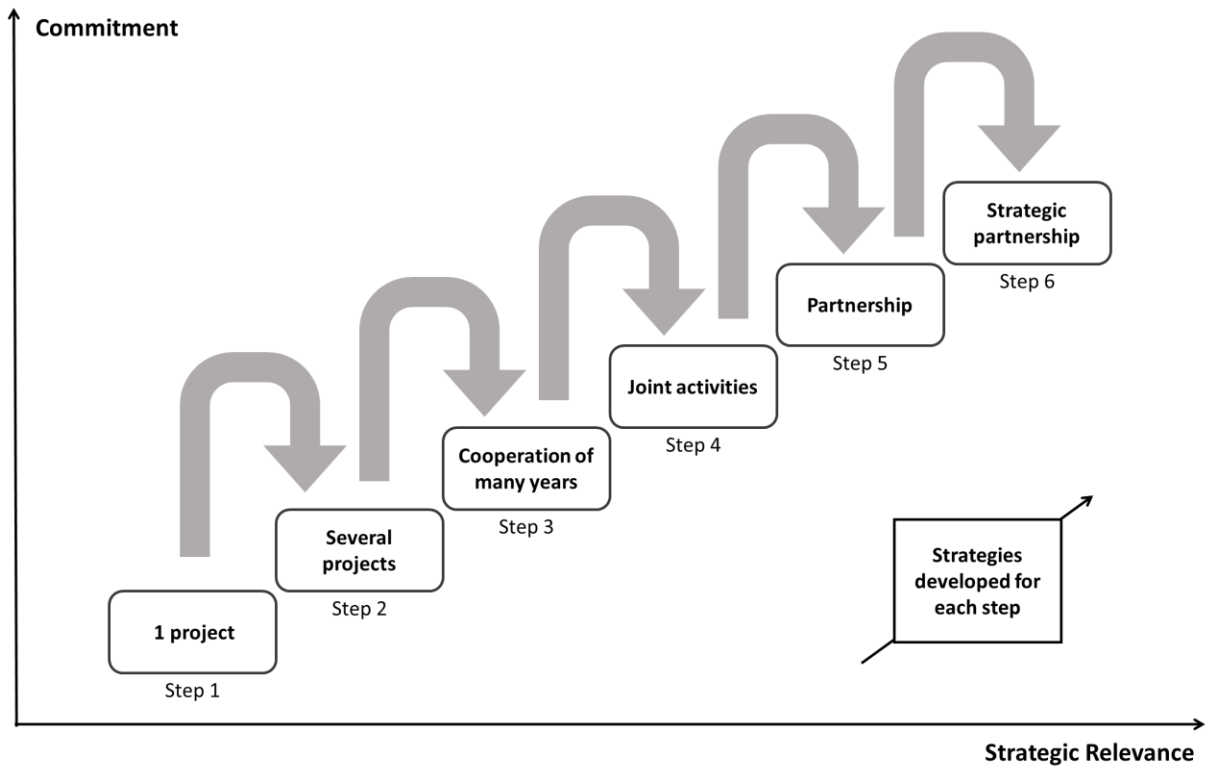


FIGURE 3: Strategic Partnerships Stairway (based on Baaken and Davey, 2008).

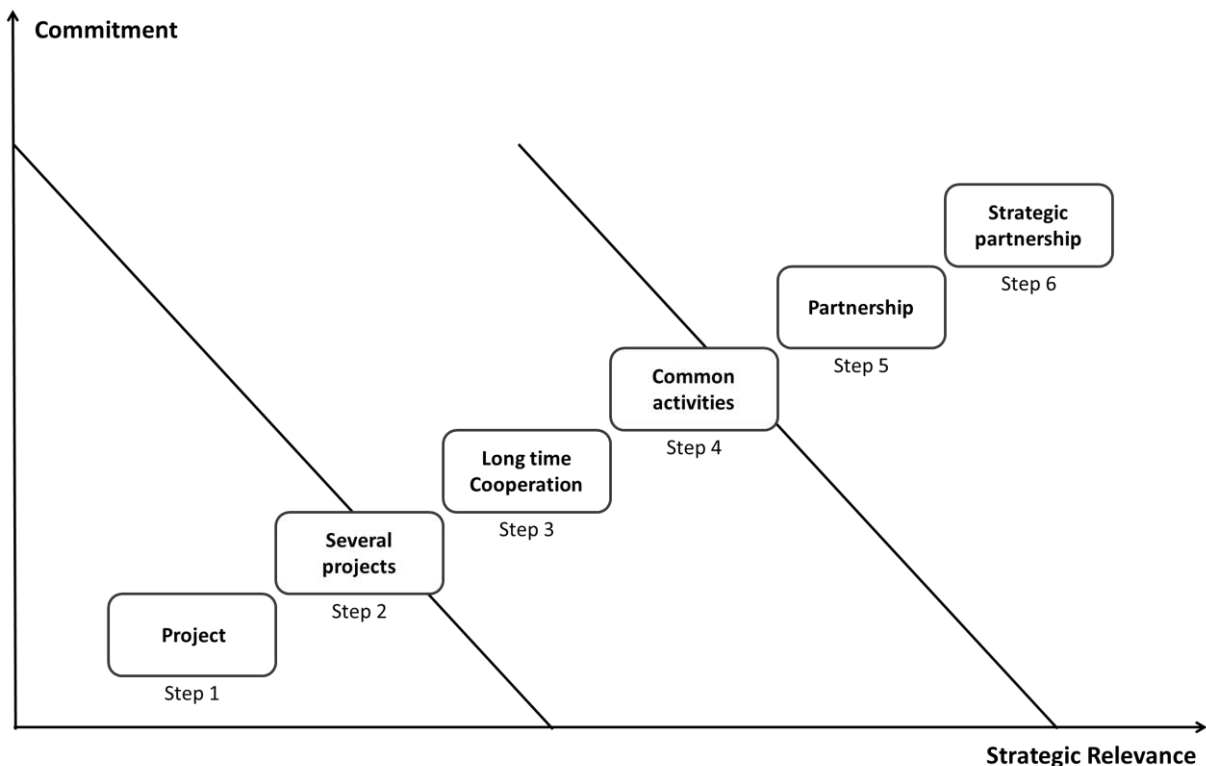


FIGURE 4: Strategic Partnerships Fields by players (based on Baaken and Davey, 2008).

An additional stream of client management can be created in the form of partnership relationship management (PRM). This ameliorates the lack of congruency between customer relationship management (CRM) and key account management (KAM) in terms of partnership development.

Furthermore, there is a need for the creation of a system that allows for the development of key partners from an early stage of involvement to a highly committed stage. This is reflected in the policies identified for each step in Figure 5.

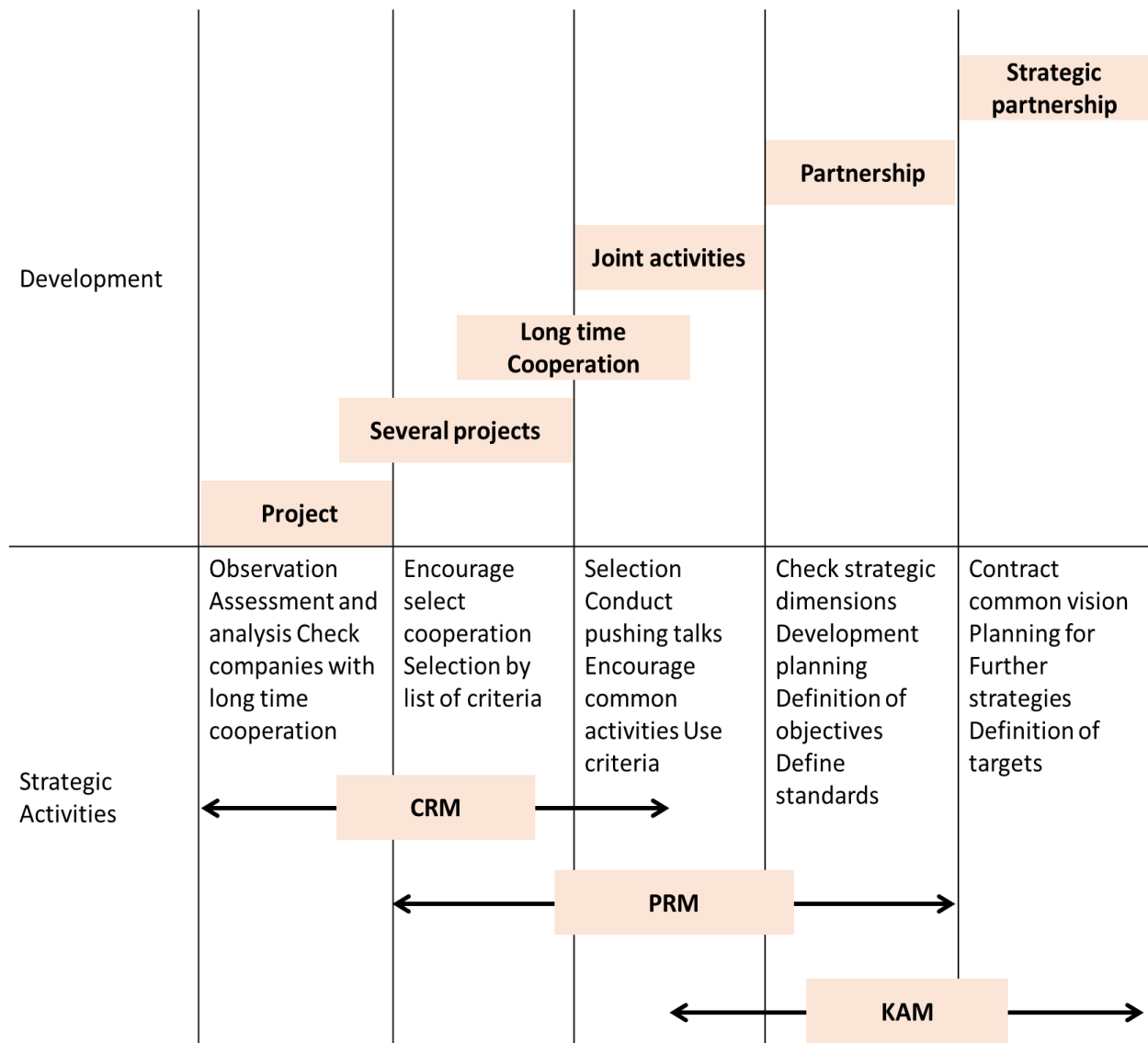


FIGURE 5: Partnership Relationship Management (PRM) and the Partner steps (based on Baaken and Davey, 2008).

Baaken and Davey (2008) further describe the golden rules of partnering as:

- Rule 1 – Both partners must achieve distinctive benefits/advantages through the cooperation and/or partnership. These benefits have to be clearly defined.
- Rule 2 – A strategic cooperation has to be agreed upon by contract. There must be at least one standard-bearer on each side.
- Rule 3 – Always go for the market leader or visionaries first.
- Rule 4 – Act fast, strategic partnerships are developing all the time.
- Rule 5 – Co-operations have to be evaluated and validated after a certain time.

- Rule 6 – The development of a partnership requires individuality when defining the benefits and procedures by Partnership Relationship Management (PRM).

Finally, according to Baaken and Davey (2008), critical success factors involve a team champion, clear objectives and a business concept, mutual trust, appropriate organisational arrangement and a memorandum of understanding and legal agreements on operations.

With regard to the above discussion, the research question arises ‘what are the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships?’ Some suggested strengths and weaknesses applicable to “new” universities (based on Ahmad, 2008) are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: University strengths and weaknesses in relation to strategic partnerships (based on Ahmad, 2008).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Leading researchers in specific areas	Limited institutional research culture
Capable students	Inter-faculty disparities
Some sophisticated equipment	Procedural delays in research funding
Some excellent laboratories	Lack of dynamic administrators
Congenial environment for research	Lack of realisation of potential linkage with large companies

Here, university strengths in relation to strategic partnerships include leading researchers in specific areas, capable students, some sophisticated equipment, some excellent laboratories and a congenial environment for research. Whereas, the weaknesses involve a limited institutional research culture, inter-faculty disparities, procedural delays

in research funding, a lack of dynamic administrators, and a lack of the realisation of a potential linkage with large companies. Several strengths and weaknesses relevant to large companies in relation to strategic partnerships (based on Ahmad, 2008) are provided in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Large company strengths and weaknesses in relation to strategic partnerships? (based on Ahmad, 2008).

Strengths	Weaknesses
Close proximity with University campuses	Lack of confidence and trust in universities
Socio-cultural factors	Lack of interest in local universities
Conducive environment for learning and training	Lack of concern for the collective cause
Practical work life	Lack of realisation of the potential of linkage with universities

The strengths of large companies in relation to strategic partnerships are close proximity with university campuses, social and cultural factors, a conducive environment for learning and training and a practical work life. Alternatively, weaknesses can be a lack of confidence and trust in universities, a lack of interest in local universities, a lack of concern for collective use, and a lack of realisation of the potential linkage with universities. The next section describes the methodology used to answer the questions posed by this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in three stages and used the most appropriate methods to address the research questions: (1) what do we mean by strategic partnerships?, (2) what are the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and “large” companies in relation to strategic partnerships?, (3) what are the opportunities for strategic partnership activities? The three stages are described below.

Stage 1: Nature of “new” university strategic partnerships with large companies

What do we mean by strategic partnerships?

This involved a review of the literature in terms of university strategic partnerships with large companies, strategic partnership development steps (Coventry, 2011), the university industry strategic partnership development process (Mead et al, 2000; Ahmed, 2008), the strategic partnerships stairway (Baaken and Davey, 2008), strategic partnership fields by players (Baaken and Davey, 2008), and

partnership relationship management (PRM) and partner steps (Baaken and Davey, 2008). The literature investigated in this stage of the research was analysed using citation analysis. Citations show ‘authors who have cited ... author’s publications subsequent to their publication (Saunders et al, 2003, p.59). Also, citations ‘provide an indication of the quality and authority of particular published pieces of work by recording the number of times a particular author and work have been referred to by another author, and give reference to these other works’ (Collis and Hussey, 2003, p.93).

Stage 2: Overview of the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships

What are the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships?

This part of the research consisted of an analysis of information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities in relation to strategic partnerships, and also large company strengths and weaknesses.

Stage 3: Identification of opportunities for strategic partnerships between “new” universities and large companies, and the benefits from the relationship

What are the opportunities for strategic partnership activities?

The objective of this stage of the research has been to investigate business partnership opportunities through two case studies, which included one large

company in a rural area and one large company in a city area. The application of theory from the findings of the literature has been made in the case studies. The results of the research are presented in the following sections of the paper under the headings of findings, discussion and conclusions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

Research findings are reported in three sections below. The first report on the findings in the literature involved a citation analysis. The second reports on the two case studies undertaken. Finally, the third section provides a conclusion of the findings reporting on the literature and case studies

which have been analysed.

Literature Findings and Analysis

The literature investigated in this research has been analysed involving a citation analysis according to general subject area, specific area, authors, date of publication, number of citations, total citations in the specific area, average number of citations for the specific area, and the level of the average number of citations in the specific area according to moderate (MO) (0-99 citations), medium (ME) (100-399 citations) and high (HI) (400+ citations). The findings according to these parameters are shown in Table 3 below, providing a general citation analysis of the strategic partnerships literature investigated.

TABLE 3: A General Citation Analysis of the Strategic Partnerships Literature investigated applicable to “New” Universities.

General Subject Area	Specific Area	Authors/ Date	Total Citations	Average No. of Citations	Level of Citations Moderate (MO) 0-99	Medium (ME) 100-399	High (HI) 400-0-99
Boundaries	Boundary Spanning	Aldrich & Herker (1977) Langan-Fox et al (2014) Leifer & Huber (1977) Oliver (1993)	1,886	471			HI
Collaborations	Government-University-Industry	Carayannis et al (2018) Horner & Giordano (2016)	88	44	MO		
	Industry-University Collaborations	Ankrah & Al-Tabbaa (2015)	660	660			HI
Partnerships	Strategic Partnerships	Ahmad (2008) Alzbeidi et al (2021) Davey et al (2011) Geddes et al (2006) Henderson et al (2007) Jani et al (2022) Matthews (2014) Russell (2001)	279	35	MO		
Relationships	Inter-organisational Relationships	Golicic et al (2003) Golicic (2005) Saikouk et al (2021) Shuja & Shuja (2023)	534	133		ME	
Strategic Activities	Business Alliances	Hunt et al (2002) Wittmann et al (2009)	571	285		ME	
	Strategic Alliances	Elmuti et al (2005)	157	157		ME	
	Strategic Planning	Bryson (2010) Bryson et al (2018) Bryson and George (2024)	1,065	355		ME	

Citation sources: Google (2026), ResearchGate (2026).

Findings in Table 3 show that areas with a high level (HI) for the average number of citations were Boundary Spanning with 471 and Industry-University Collaborations with 660. Areas with a medium level (ME) were Business Alliances with 285, Inter-organisational Relationships with 133, Strategic Alliances with 157, and Strategic Planning with 355. Those areas with a moderate level (MO) were Government-University-Industry with 44 and Strategic Partnerships with 35. The subject areas of Boundary Spanning and Industry-University Collaborations show there is particular interest in these areas through high average citation levels. Overall, the importance of these areas, as evidenced in the citation analysis, is shown in the section below with the two case studies carried out for this research.

CASE STUDY RESEARCH FINDINGS: PARTNERSHIPS WITH LARGE COMPANIES

Introduction

An analysis of business partnership opportunities has been undertaken through the findings of two case studies, which provide an indication of opportunities for key staff in areas of expertise within universities with those large businesses who are interested in collaboration. The two case studies include one large company in a rural area and one large company in a city area.

Case Study One

- *General Business Information*

The large company in the rural area was a Public Limited Company (PLC) which was established in 1974. The number of full-time employees was 900, who worked in the area of Construction and the company had a turnover of over £20 million. The main product/service was homes, including houses and apartments.

- *Business Engagement Activities*

The boundary spanning activities the company was engaged in and had relationships with universities included company training programmes and student/graduate placements. In the future, they intimated that they would be likely to be in university areas of expertise in Energy and the Environment and Land. The main type of organisation they had contact with and collaborated with was the government, and they were involved in partnerships concerning product development and training.

- *Business Engagement Opportunities*

The strategic activities they indicated they would be interested in being involved in with universities were student/graduate placements.

Case Study Two

- *General Business Information*

The large company in the city area was a UK manufacturing firm which was established in 1976. The number of full-time employees was 600, who worked in Electronics R&D and Manufacturing, and the company had a turnover of £100,000-499,999.

The main products and services were microwave ovens, laptop computers, product research and development and product engineering.

- *Business Engagement Activities*

The boundary spanning activities the company was engaged in and had relationships with were universities, and included company training programmes, management development programmes and consultancy. In the future, they suggested they would be likely to be interested in university areas of expertise in Energy and the Environment, and the Digital Economy. The organisations they had contact with and collaborated with included the government, and they were involved in partnerships concerning business communication.

- *Business Engagement Opportunities*

The strategic activities they considered they would be interested in being involved in with universities were product development, curriculum/course development, company training programmes, student/graduate placements, collaborative research and clubs/networks, and the company would be interested in being able to crystallise opportunities.

Conclusion

It was useful to have details about what the case study companies were doing in terms of research and commercial work. The findings provide insight into partnerships with those types of organisations and companies interested in undertaking strategic activities with “new” universities. These findings have been analysed according to general business information, business engagement activities and business engagement opportunities. Business engagement activities reported as important by the case study companies included boundary spanning activities, collaboration and partnerships, and business engagement opportunities involved strategic activities. The analysis of business partnership opportunities undertaken through the two case studies gives an indication of the types of opportunities for key staff in areas of expertise within “new” universities with those large businesses who are interested in collaboration.

DISCUSSION

An important aspect influencing the benefits of “new” university strategic partnerships with large companies is the manner in which the structure of the relationship between the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and the large company (LC) is constructed (Golicic, 2005). This relationship can be broken down into the two principal components of magnitude and type (Golicic, Foggin and Mentzer, 2003). These relationships are on a spectrum from transactional to integrated, with most relationships located between the two extremes (Golicic, Foggin and Mentzer, 2003). Furthermore, relationship magnitude is defined “as the degree or extent of closeness or strength of the relationship among organisations” (Golicic, 2005, p. 1).

Golicic, Foggin and Mentzer (2003) have explored contextual drivers that influence relationship magnitude, and eight drivers have been identified, including capabilities, expected benefits, external influence, history, importance, interpersonal interaction, performance and strategy congruence. In this research, we are particularly interested in the expected benefits, and this is where the study focuses.

Large companies have been motivated to enter into partnerships with universities based on the benefits they perceive from the relationship. These might include increased sales, access to technology, and reduced redundancy, for example. Also, large companies might be attracted to strategic partnerships on the expectation that increased benefits result. Again, these may include improved processes, shared risks and rewards, better pricing, higher profits and help from the university.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has provided a short overview of “new” university strategic partnerships with large companies in the UK. The study has identified that there are existing academic areas where there is activity, and there are other areas where there are no links, and there could be activity. This has provided insight into those large organisations that universities should be approaching to develop activities. The objectives are to provide a greater understanding of “new” university business partnerships with large companies, which will be of interest to internal stakeholders and external collaborators.

In answer to the first research question, “What do we mean by strategic partnerships?” it is found that a “new” university strategic partnership with a large company is a formal alliance between the two organisations and is commonly formalised by one or more contracts. This can take place when each organisation possesses assets that will be of strategic importance to the other, but they do not want to develop them on an internal basis.

With regard to the second research question “what are the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships?”, the strengths of “new” universities appear to be leading researchers in specific areas, capable students, some sophisticated equipment, excellent laboratories and a congenial environment for research. On the other hand, weaknesses include a limited institutional research culture, inter-faculty disparities and a lack of realisation of potential linkage with large companies.

The strengths and weaknesses of large companies in relation to strategic partnerships with “new” universities include the benefits of close proximity to the main campus through being located in surrounding areas, and on the other hand, the disadvantage of a lack of the realisation of the potential of linkage with a “new” university. If the right approach is taken “new” universities should be

able to be prepared for strategic partnerships, and likewise, this will be the case for large businesses. The right process involves partnership relationship management (PRM) and the partner steps for the “new” university to benefit from strategic partnerships with companies in the future.

Concerning the third research question, “what are the opportunities for strategic partnership activities?” the findings of the case studies provide a greater understanding of the collation of opportunities for key staff in areas of expertise within “new” universities with those large businesses who would be interested in such collaboration. Partnerships enable “new” universities to develop opportunities to raise their institutional profile and provide high-quality services for students. A typical “new” university will have strategic alliances across a number of industry sectors. The partnerships will enable the university to develop opportunities to raise its institutional profile and provide high-quality services for students.

The following recommendations are made with regard to the findings in this paper:

The benefits of strategic partnerships: Both the “new” university and the large company need to achieve distinctive benefits/advantages through a strategic partnership, and the benefits need to be clearly defined.

Strategic co-operation: The strategic co-operation between the “new” university and the large company needs to be agreed by contract.

Speed of co-operation: There is a need for the “new” university and the large company to act fast since strategic partnerships are developing all the time.

Evaluation and Validation: Strategic partnerships between the “new” university and large companies need to be evaluated and validated.

Critical success factors: Critical success factors need to be taken into account, such as the involvement of a team champion, clear objectives and a business concept, mutual trust, appropriate organisational arrangement and a memorandum of understanding and legal agreements on operations.

Co-ordinated approach: “New” universities need to develop a co-ordinated approach so that businesses receive fewer individual approaches and so that stronger, more formalised relationships can be developed.

Range of expertise: There is a need to develop groups of individuals with a range of expertise to meet the needs of large businesses.

Future research needs to delve deeper into the strengths and weaknesses of “new” universities and large companies in relation to strategic partnerships and the recommendations made by this research. Since this research has involved a qualitative study, it would be beneficial for a quantitative study to be undertaken in the future.

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