

Taking Social Science Scholarship In New Directions

Terence Gomez

Social & Behavioral Science Research Cluster



University of Malaya

Context and Problem

Most developing countries, including Malaysia, caught in middle income trap; limited capacity to innovate, due also to poor R&D.

US: serious problem with declining quality of innovation (*Newsweek*, November 2009). US – wants to improve Maths & Science.

Singapore & China wants to improve problem solving (by enhancing creativity) & business studies.

Much evidence that there's little creativity & innovation capacity among entrepreneurs & graduates.

Knowledge, Creativity & Innovation

- In “innovative” communities – similar historical trends:
 - a) sufficient government funding for research, enhanced R&D;
 - b) emphasis on high quality education.
- Much debate – in US & China – on link between education & innovation. Need to transform method of tutelage to enhance quality of human capital through holistic curriculum from young.
- Structure of curriculum (& research) – too dichotomized: not just between disciplines in social sciences. Also between sciences & social sciences.

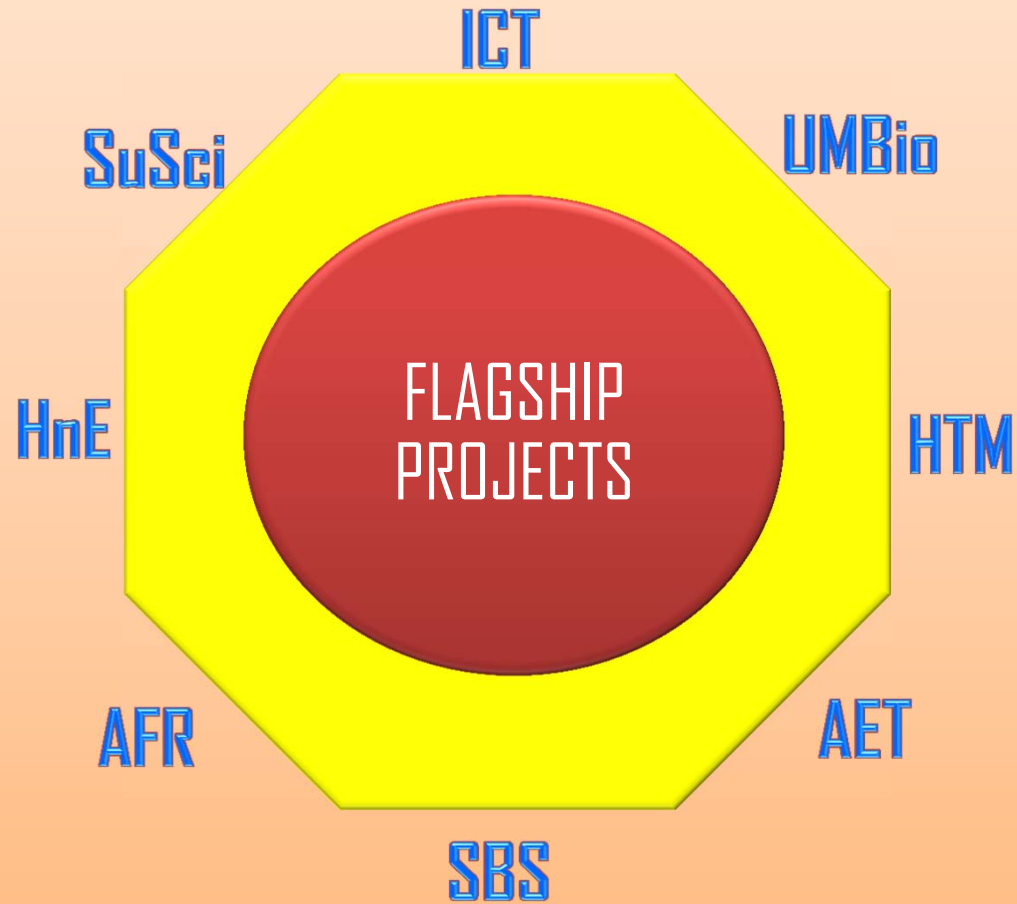
Curriculum Reconstruction, New Form of Scholarship

- New multi-disciplinary approach to scholarship required.
- International baccalaureate (IB) as a curriculum for the young should be considered & actively pursued. Expose them to science & humanities from primary until pre-tertiary education.
- Need to actively consider fostering & nurturing liberal arts education, with a stress on training the young in both the sciences & social sciences in early tertiary education.
- China & Singapore – universities actively promoting liberal arts education after actively focusing on science & technology for decades.
- Key lesson here: need to reform curricula to ensure knowledge flows smoothly between disciplines to nurture creativity & innovation.

Innovative Education

- What is needed: **enabling framework** for close collaboration between scientists & social scientists to analyse complex problems that require new ways of determining solutions.
- Framework must ensure knowledge flows smoothly between disciplines to generate ideas & solutions to complex problems.
- Multi-disciplinary research involving humanities and sciences will:
 - a) provide holistic approach to social problems too complex to be tackled by any single discipline;
 - b) change nature of scholarship & improve innovation among graduates entering the market as well as enhance R&D
- Government funding now primarily for multi-disciplinary projects. In near future, will emphasise funding research institutes; not universities

Research clusters



Notes: 8 Research Clusters

SuSci: Sustainability Science

HnE: Humanities & Ethics

AET: Advanced Engineering & Technology

HTM: Health & Translational Medicine

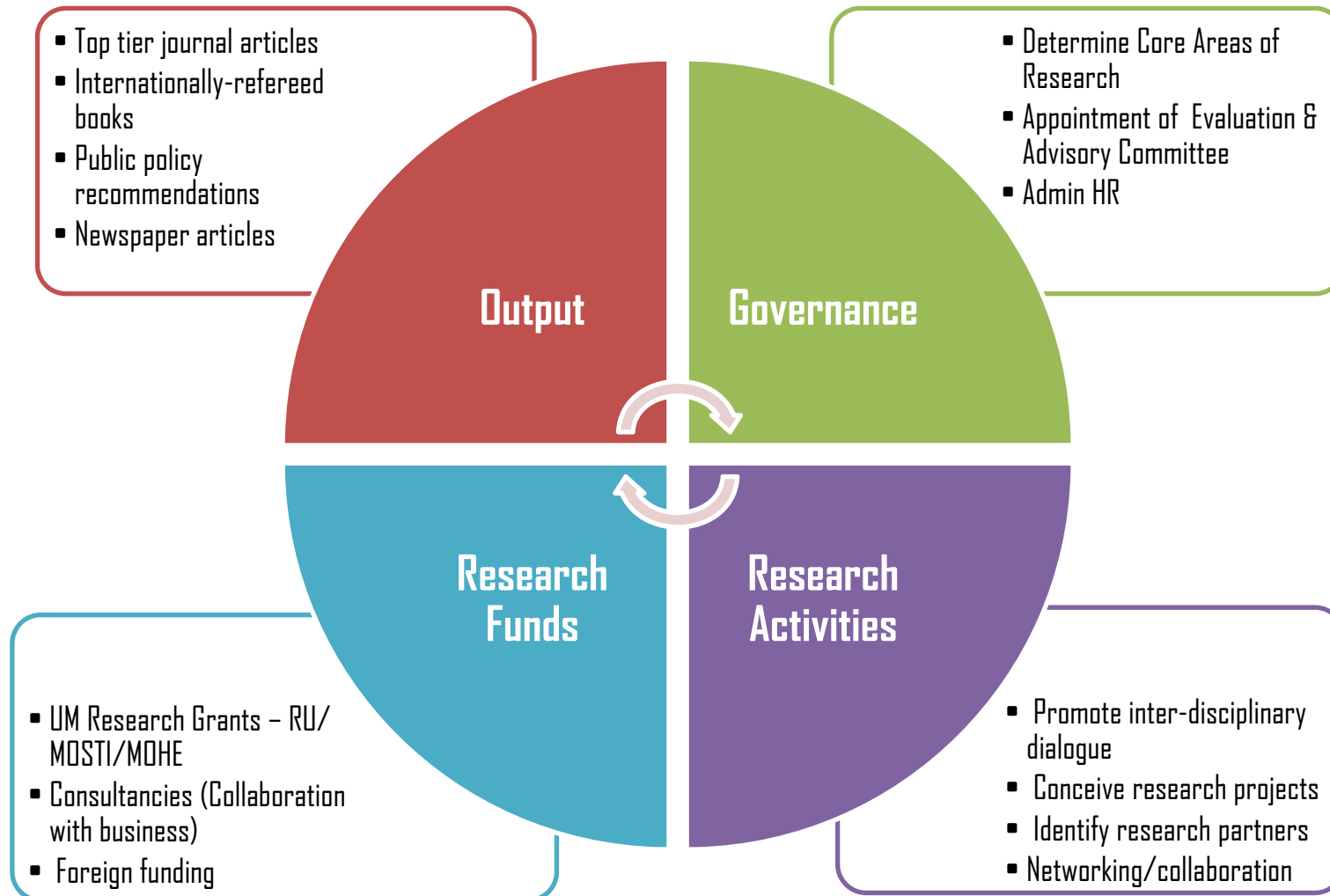
AFR: Advanced Fundamental Research

SBS: Social & Behavioral Science

UMBio: Biotechnology & Bioproducts

ICT : ICT & Computational Science

Core Dimensions of Research Clusters



Output

Research

- Generate new theoretical and empirical knowledge through internationally-refereed articles and books to advance UM's international reputation in social science research (High quality scholarship)

Public Policies

- Promote societal well-being by providing public policy recommendations based on problem-based and international comparative-type research (Progressive policies)

Education

- Transform methods of scholarship and learning to enhance quality of human capital through innovative and dynamic curriculum (Well-trained graduates)

Industry

- Enhance technological development through university-Industry links that are a platform for R&D that generates new technologies & niche industries (Nurturing entrepreneurial domestic enterprise)

Society

- Alleviate poverty, promote well-being and foster social cohesion (Equitable development & social integration)

Flagship Projects

Objectives

- a) Internationalize UM's research by creating ties with foreign universities;
- b) Projects based on topical major problems in Malaysia & the world;
- c) Bring local & foreign academics into contact with each other; deepens quality of scholarship;
- d) Promote joint PhD research & split PhDs;
- e) Encourage exchange programmes involving academics & students.

Recent Emphasis: Funding for multi-disciplinary research

Encourage large-scale international projects

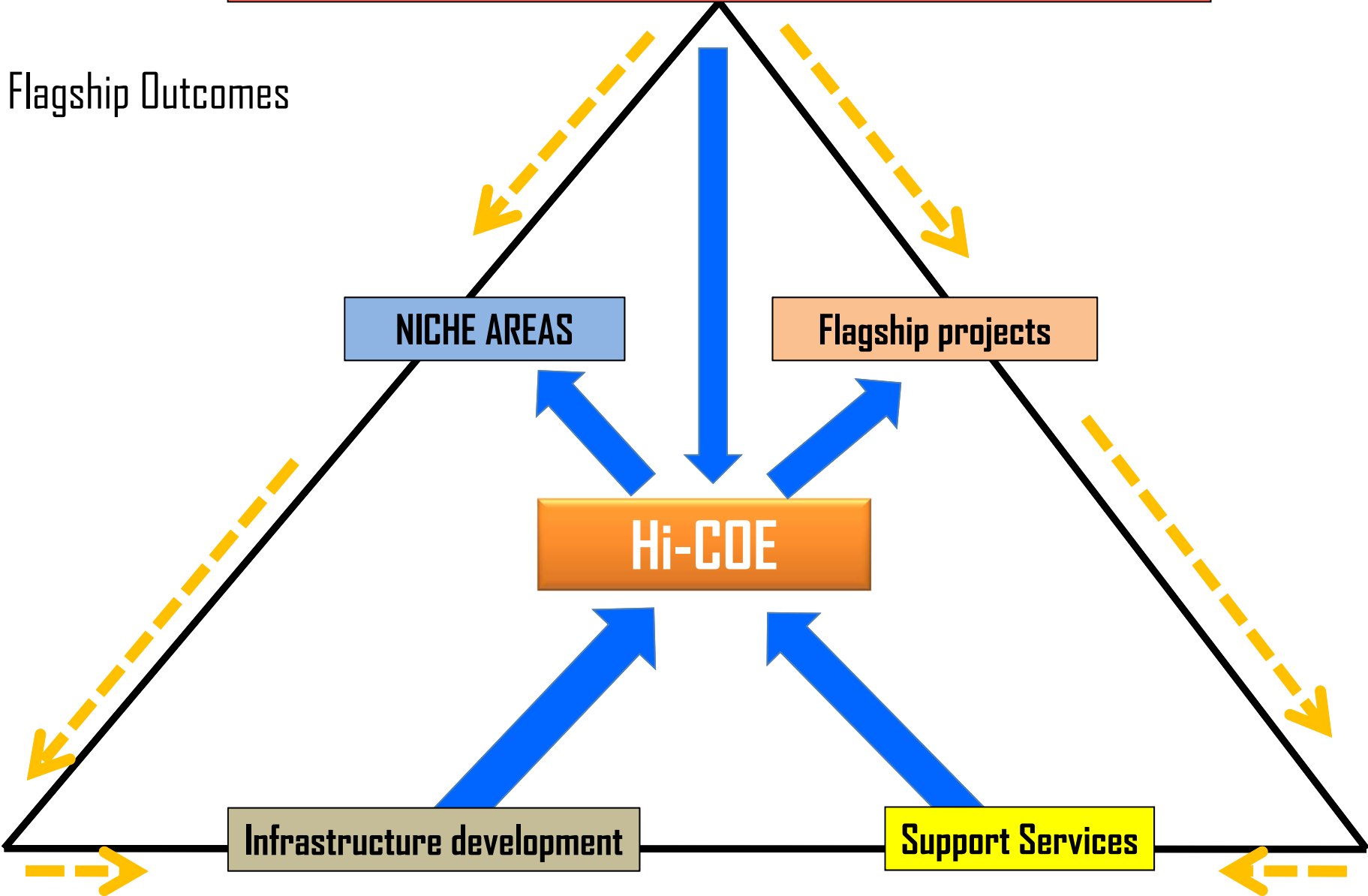
- Will urge conception of projects large in scale, comparative in scope & involving foreign academics. Projects should incorporate doctoral candidates, to groom new breed of scholars.

Projects should work towards:

- a) incorporating academics in science & social science disciplines;
- b) anchoring networks between UM & foreign universities to cultivate comparative dimension;
- c) encouraging academics to contribute new theoretical & methodological insights in their disciplines to draw attention to value of scholarship undertaken in UM

High Quality Publications; Policy Recommendations

Flagship Outcomes



Core Areas of Multi-disciplinary Research

- Poverty & Development
- Education towards an Innovative Society
- Healthcare & Well-being
- Sustainability Science

Traditional Knowledge

Nurturing Indigenous Niches, R&D and Domestic Industries



Problem Statement

ETP Issues:

- Increase incomes of bottom 40% of population
- Enhance rural infrastructure & increase productivity in agriculture sector
- Overcome poor volume of investment in R&D to bring new products to market
- Tie universities to industry to increase R&D, promote innovation & develop niche industries
- Understand & develop value of traditional knowledge to create high value niche industries

Approach:

- Tackle problems in holistic manner - bring into dialogue social scientists & scientists
- Adopt multi-disciplinary approach to resolve problems
- Catalogue traditional knowledge (TK)
- R&D to verify TK to create niche industries
- Transmit R&D back to local communities to increase production & create spin-offs
- Encourage rural young with tacit knowledge from lived experience of commercial value of TK industries

Outcome:

- Improve incomes of family-based small-scale producers
- Recording history & development of TK
- Greater use of R&D to enhance value of TK
- Increased university-SME links to enhance productivity of rural industries
- Involvement of educated young in rural industries
- Creation of new industries to help diversify economy

Why This Project?

Multi-disciplinary

- Integrates research from various disciplines addressing issues on hardcore poverty, rural underdevelopment, poor R&D, nurturing entrepreneurial SMEs

Multi-institutional

- Research members are experts from local and international universities, government bodies, NGOs

Fundamental

- More comprehensive than past research; answers question of poor productivity among rural industries; potential for applying TK effectively & in sustainable manner

Strength

- Links UM with local communities & SMEs. Learn from countries that have tapped TK to develop indigenous industries

Benefit

- Findings can be implemented to tap into TK and develop rural- and agriculture-based SMEs

Sustainable

- Identify from indigenous communities sustainable development models

Anchor

- Centre for Research in Biotechnology for Agriculture (CEBAR), Centre for Poverty & Development Studies (CPDS) & Mushroom Research Centre

Budget

- RM3.7 million / 2 years

Issues:

- **Population Ageing**
 - Meeting the needs of older people
 - health
 - economics
 - environment
 - social
 - Lack of opportunities for young old to be productive
 - Multidimensional issues experienced by older people
 - Major gaps between policies, legislative and institutional framework



Strategy:

- **Integrated efforts**
 - to identify, evaluate and establish needs (Healthcare, Economics, Built Env, Education)
- Coordinate **multidisciplinary approaches** to management of issues
- Review healthcare and financial framework, amend current legislation
- Introduce ethical framework which correlates with social needs of vulnerable older people (via policies and laws).

HIV / AIDS RESEARCH

Keyword(s): 1. HIV 2. Substance use 3. Antiretrovirals

MISSION

To conduct multi-disciplinary research to address the major health and social issues associated with the HIV epidemic.

OBJECTIVES

1. To conduct research in HIV in the following areas: basic science, epidemiology, clinical and social and behavioural sciences.
2. To translate research findings into Policy and Practice.

Way Forward

- Identifying academics outside UM – domestic and foreign to discuss joint implementation of projects – stressed by government for additional funding
- Promoting joint conceptualization of research ideas – scarcity of expertise in respective institutions for multi-disciplinary research
- Better prospects for international funding
- Regional comparative studies (Africa; Latin America; Indo-China)
- Phd fellowships – Bright Sparks (to groom new breed of students)

Current Projects: Joint Participation

- **Human Rights & Politics**

- a) Religion and human rights in comparative perspective
- b) Politics: Elections and Social Change

- **Economic & Enterprise Development**

- a) Family firms (& business history);
- b) GLCs in the post-neoliberal age
- c) Diaspora & Business: Chinese / Indian enterprise in comparative perspective
- d) China, India & Southeast Asia

- **Public policy & Ethnic Relations:**

- a) Affirmative action & neoliberalism;
- b) Cosmopolitanism (National and ethnic identity)