

The Contribution of Economic Intelligence in University Governance

L'Apport de l'Intelligence Economique dans la Gouvernance Universitaire

AHDIL IMANE

Professor Researcher

National School of Applied Sciences

Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Khouribga, Morocco

Researcher Laboratory in Economics and Management

i.ahdil@usms.ma

Date de soumission : 29/10/2023

Date d'acceptation : 08/12/2023

Pour citer cet article :

AHDIL.I. (2023) «The Contribution of Economic Intelligence in University Governance», Revue Française d'Economie et de Gestion «Volume 4 : Numéro 12» pp :183 – 195.

Author(s) agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License



Abstract

In a context driven by globalization and the advent of new technologies, a new vocabulary has emerged in recent years of which knowledge management and monitoring are part. If for a long time these concepts remained the preserve of companies, it is important to note that today education is a field where its stakeholders perhaps have the most to gain from its activities. The university academic system, however, struggles to offer students the full range of pragmatic skills essential to the operational implementation of these disciplines in a professional environment.

This study aims to demonstrate how the introduction of economic intelligence will allow a higher education institution to prepare its structures and human resources with a view to proactively providing effective and efficient responses to challenges identified above, while gaining competitive advantages for the institution from this action.

Keywords : Economic intelligence ; strategic monitoring ; higher education ; knowledge management ; educational monitoring

Résumé

Dans un contexte induit par la mondialisation et l'avènement des nouvelles technologies est apparu ces dernières années un nouveau vocabulaire dont le knowledge management et la veille font partie. Si pendant longtemps ces concepts sont demeurés chasse gardée des entreprises, il est important de constater que de nos jours l'éducation est un domaine où ses acteurs ont peut-être le plus à gagner de ses activités. Le système académique universitaire peine cependant à proposer aux étudiants tout l'éventail des compétences pragmatiques indispensables à la mise en place opérationnelle de ces disciplines dans un environnement professionnel.

La présente étude prétend à démontrer de quelle forme l'introduction de l'intelligence économique permettra à une institution de l'enseignement supérieur de préparer ses structures et ses ressources humaines en vue d'apporter, de façon proactive, des réponses efficaces et efficientes aux défis identifiés ci-dessus, tout en retirant de cette action des avantages concurrentiels pour l'institution.

Mots clés : Intelligence économique ; veille stratégique ; enseignement supérieur ; gestion des connaissances ; veille pédagogique.

Introduction

If we seek to characterize the current international context, the globalization of the economy and the globalization of markets are the key expressions of the moment. This context, characterized by the dismantling of borders and the free movement of goods and capital, is therefore distinguished by the acuteness of international competition.

Thus, any organization, whether a country, a bank, or a large company wishing to survive, must submit to the requirement of adapting its strategies and policies to the requirements of the new environment, and this in order to be able to meet the new competitiveness criteria imposed on a global scale.

To face fierce competition and be able to instantly make the right decisions, companies have a perpetual need for information of all kinds. To do this, they must be vigilant in the search and selection of information allowing them to know their progress in relation to their competitors. This type of information is called strategic information. This will help companies make the right decisions to position themselves well among their competitors and thus gain a significant share of the market.

As a result, companies must listen to all the information coming from their environment. economic intelligence makes it possible to achieve this objective. It is the device that allows us to remain attentive to changes occurring in the environment and to anticipate its evolution. It is part of a strategic information management practice.

Thus, strategic monitoring has today become essential to the survival of companies. We could even go so far as to say that only companies that have implemented a strategic monitoring strategy to manage the different flows of information will be able to anticipate changes, predict market developments, identify technological innovations and make the right decisions.

In this context, if for a long time this concept of economic intelligence remained the preserve of companies, it is important to note that today higher education in general, and more particularly the university at the source of knowledge, offers its students, as part of its teaching, an opening to the concepts of knowledge management and monitoring.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are living in a time where they face great pressure to succeed: in increasing their effectiveness and efficiency; to achieve excellence and, at the same time, to guarantee equal opportunities for all stakeholders. The introduction of economic intelligence systems will allow higher education institutions to achieve competitive advantages, seeking to convey a perspective of the current moment that higher education institutions are

going through, a moment characterized by the fact that the use of economic intelligence can, indeed, be a strategic tool for its performance.

The various higher education institutions have understood these new requirements and are demanding the implementation of appropriate solutions and have consequently developed economic intelligence approaches that meet their own needs. The effectiveness of such approaches relies on the deployment of environmental monitoring systems which require information management as one of the major levers serving economic performance.

The new challenges of training, the various constraints linked to the access of a growing number of students to higher education, the requirement for methods adapted to diversified audiences lead the University to propose the creation of a cell or observatory for educational monitoring and economic intelligence in order to encourage and assist innovation and adaptation of educational practices, in particular through the use of the possibilities offered by “multimedia supports”.

In this context, a question arises: in what form the introduction of economic intelligence will allow a higher education institution to prepare its structures and human resources with a view to proactively providing effective responses and efficient to the challenges identified above, while gaining competitive advantages for the institution from this action?

This article aims to address this issue. First, we will present the concept of economic intelligence in a concise manner. Secondly, we will present the approach to be applied within universities in order to reposition academic research within the national economic system.

1. ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS : LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. The emergence of the concept of economic intelligence :

There are many definitions that can qualify economic intelligence. The first definition appeared in 1967 in a work by Harold Wilensky. He defines “economic intelligence as the activity of producing knowledge serving the economic and strategic goals of an organization, collected and produced in a legal context and from open sources”.

The report of the Martre commission of the XI Plan defined economic intelligence as follows: « All research, processing and dissemination actions with a view to exploiting information useful to economic actors. These various actions are carried out legally with all the protection guarantees necessary to preserve the company's assets, under the best conditions of quality, deadlines and cost. Useful information is that needed by the different decision-making levels of the company or community, to develop and coherently implement the strategy and tactics

necessary to achieve the objectives defined by the company in the aim of improving its position in its competitive environment. These actions, within the company, are organized in an uninterrupted cycle, generating a shared vision of the objectives to be achieved » (Martre, 1994).

This definition allows us to draw the following conclusions:

- ✓ Economic intelligence is a global approach that concerns the company as well as economic players and communities.
- ✓ The success of an economic intelligence system requires coordination between its different phases (research, processing, dissemination and exploitation).
- ✓ Economic intelligence is different from espionage; it is part of a legal process of searching for information.
- ✓ The research operation must be oriented towards quality information, useful for making strategic decisions.
- ✓ Economic intelligence is a practice aimed at helping decision-makers improve the competitive position of the company.

Since this normative definition proposed by the Martre report, other definitions of the notion of economic intelligence have emerged:

- The definition proposed by the French Association for the Development of Economic Intelligence (AFDIE, 1997): « Economic intelligence is a dynamic of collective construction based on the conviction and responsibility of all, and consists of the appropriation and interpretation of information with a view to immediate and subsequent economic action. Based on the principle of coordination, it is accompanied by an evolution of corporate culture and the ability to build the future in the face of uncertain events. Finally, it makes it possible to take advantage of strategic advantages to build an efficient and sustainable competitive advantage».
- That proposed by the Institute of Advanced National Defense Studies: « An organized approach serving the strategic management of the company aimed at improving its competitiveness through the collection, processing of information and dissemination of knowledge useful for controlling its environment (threats and opportunities); this decision-making process uses specific tools, mobilizes employees and relies on the coordination of internal and external networks » (Bournois; Romani, 2000).

This IHEDN definition was based essentially on definitions given by 950 French business leaders. It differs from that proposed by the Martre report in that it insists on:

- ✓ The organization and formulation of economic intelligence within the company.
- ✓ The important role of economic intelligence in the competitiveness of the company.
- ✓ The creation and dissemination of knowledge and not only useful information.
- ✓ The integration of other elements in the process, these are tools, employees and internal and external networks.

It has limits and does not evoke certain notions that the Martre report had already cited. It does not specify all the functions of economic intelligence and forgets notions such as effectiveness, efficiency and performance of intelligence.

Our various research allows us to retain in this work the following definition of economic intelligence « all the means and techniques implemented by a company to obtain, by legal means, information both on its competitors and on its own strengths and weaknesses. The information sought is that which is needed by managers at the different decision-making levels in order to analyze, develop and implement, in a homogeneous and coherent manner, the means and strategies necessary to achieve the major strategic objectives defined with the aim of essential, improving the overall position of the company and more particularly its positioning in its competitive environment ».

1.2. Summary of the work: Economic intelligence, a lever for university development

Universities seem in recent years to have become the object of renewed interest on the part of analysts of production and knowledge systems. As Benoît Godin and Yves Gingras point out in a journal of Sciences of Society (February 2000): « Rather than focusing exclusively on the importance of R&D activities and technological transfer to industries, recent studies have focused on the role of universities in the knowledge economy».

- **Rowley et al (1998)**, defend that the secret allowing the HEIs to meet expectations, in the information age, consists of always looking towards the future by projecting scenarios which, in view of the knowledge of its external environment and by identifying the possible opportunities that it contains (also taking advantage of the internal resources of the institution), can be used to manage change. The success of an HEIs depends to a large extent on its ability to know what is happening around it and to be attentive to the opportunities that may appear.
- **Hunt et al (1997)** attribute great importance to the development of economic intelligence actions in HEIs, arguing that it is vital to know the external environment that serves as a

medium for the institution, as well as the data that concern its internal culture. They emphasize the idea that this must necessarily be a common practice in all institutions. The external environment of the HEIs is one of the elements which represents for it the highest degree of uncertainty, due to the increasing disruption it presents, evolving much faster than the organizations themselves. The external environment is the main cause of changes in HEIs, not its internal forces. The researchers explain that the only way to manage change is through continuous monitoring of the external environment, seeking to identify challenges and opportunities that will be worked on in accordance with institutional strengths and weaknesses, identified through analysis of internal culture.

- **Kaufman and Herman (1991)** present the main areas that HEIs should monitor, with regard to their external environment:
 - ✓ Analysis of information relating to the behavior and attitudes of certain reference groups towards the education sector. What are their ideas and how they see their future?
 - ✓ Information relating to educational legislation and policies.
 - ✓ Information relating to financing or financial assistance programs.
- This description is completed in the work of **(Hunt et al, 1997)**:
 - ✓ Information relating to economic changes at the local level, geographic region, student market region, national or international level, which may cause changes (positive or negative).
 - ✓ Information relating to the needs of the institution's target audiences, and whether the services offered are in harmony with their expectations.
 - ✓ Information relating to certification and standards transformation organizations.
 - ✓ Information relating to competition, and more particularly on financing, recruitment of teachers and employees, programs and services.
 - ✓ Information relating to the aspects to which people attribute the highest value.

2. ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE AT THE SERVICE OF UNIVERSITY ACTORS

If the business world today recognizes the need to integrate economic intelligence into its development policy, that of public research still remains relatively little aware of it, generally considering itself distant from economic and political concerns, aware of its duty of dissemination and free access to the knowledge and knowledge produced.

Taking economic intelligence into account in an establishment's policy consists of determining and applying an approach aimed at placing academic research within the national economic system. The governance of establishments can use the recommendations in this article to

establish a master plan for economic intelligence, to be broken down into its different components, according to the structure of the establishment.

2.1. The Fundamentals for implementing a economic intelligence policy

Economic intelligence, within a research establishment, cannot be implemented without generating certain procedural and structural changes. New roles, new tasks and new working relationships will therefore have to be invented.

Basic considerations that may be helpful when introducing a economic Intelligence system are:

- Strong commitment from the management of the establishment: Management must support efforts in terms of economic Intelligence in a cohesive manner and must endeavor to encourage its mode of operation to all staff.
- Staff awareness and training: Everyone must know the sources, be encouraged to learn about the university's strategy and pass on any information to the people concerned. Training and raising awareness among staff in the culture of sharing information, setting up a recognition system, encouraging and motivating staff are important elements for the success of the process.
- A team approach: It is recommended to involve as many people as possible in the organization of a economic Intelligence system because all sectors of the research establishment must feel concerned by such a project: administration, human resources, teachers, students, communication... Employees must be taught how they can play a role, why their contribution is necessary for the smooth running of the project and how this meets the establishment's objectives.
- Communication: Communication is the key to the success of any economic Intelligence activity. Ensure adequate communication through the use of e-mail, Intranet, bulletin board, meetings, newsletters. Setting up an intranet can also increase accessibility to information, especially when linked to databases, but staff must be motivated and encouraged to participate fully. Information must go down but also up within the institute.
- Creation of an economic intelligence unit or observatory: The new challenges of training, the various constraints linked to the access of a growing number of students to higher education, the requirement for adapted methods to diverse audiences lead the University to propose the creation of a monitoring center in order to encourage and help innovation and adaptation of educational practices, in particular through the use of the possibilities offered by "supports multimedia".
- Definition of an economic intelligence charter and its deployment at all levels.

2.2. Economic Intelligence at the service of Higher Education Institutions

In this period of phenomenal growth in information, the University must demonstrate imagination and creativity to succeed in fulfilling the various mandates entrusted to it. The integration of economic intelligence tools into teaching activities is seen as the solution to the educational problems that beset the University. The dissemination of knowledge, through these tools, can make it possible to increase accessibility to knowledge, the enrichment of training content, the dynamics and permanent updating of knowledge, the individualization of learning, the adaptation of the university organization to the new socio-economic conditions of the student clientele and greater interactivity between the professor and the student, a possible solution to supervision problems.

This new policy involves in particular good management of key areas of the establishment, including educational monitoring, protection of sensitive data, intellectual property policy, but also the international promotion of excellence in training and research. provided by the establishment.

2.2.1 Educational monitoring

« Educational monitoring is defined as the intelligence process which consists of detecting internal and external signals, weak or strong, likely to affect the university in its mission. Monitoring must become a second state that inhabits us and helps us ensure the survival of our institutions and consolidate our strategic positions » (Rapport d'activité annuelle de Assemblée Nationale du Québec, 2013).

It consists of the collection, dissemination and optimal sharing of information within the research establishment in order to have a good understanding of its socio-economic environment, and in particular to identify technological development opportunities, to monitor developments in public policies and economic and international contexts. Knowing your environment well, knowing your cooperation partners and their government's scientific and innovation policy well, allows you to make more effective and fruitful cooperation choices. This objective requires monitoring of the following areas:

- developments in research subjects, major international trends.
- the position of the establishment in the international and national environments.
- the quality of an establishment's scientific partners with the aim of avoiding getting bogged down in unproductive cooperation.
- sociological monitoring and monitoring of public opinions.

- country analysis: legal, political, economic environment, scientific indicators (publications, patents, etc.).
 - the research and training programs of foreign countries and establishments, in order to take advantage of interesting cooperation opportunities.
 - economic intelligence practices in foreign research establishments.
 - the image and reputation of the research establishment
 - national, European and international regulatory and normative monitoring, particularly in terms of valorization and innovation
 - detection of plagiarism of scientific articles, or improper use of the name of an establishment.
- The establishment of an educational monitoring system within HEIs can be developed in four stages:

1. Define the needs, orientations and scope of monitoring, in line with the scientific and technical programming, as well as with the establishment's intangible heritage management policy and the international cooperation policy.
2. Translate the issues, defined previously, into areas of surveillance (types of information to collect, sources of information to request).
3. Process, analyze and clean the information collected according to its relevance and reliability and processed.
4. Distribution to recipients.

2.2.2 Intellectual property policy

Intangible heritage (know-how, patents, databases, research results, information on research partnerships, copyright on literary works, etc.) must be protected. Very strategic information must be subject to legal or operational protection aimed at preserving its integrity, confidentiality and availability. Indeed, information must be archived, saved, classified and transferred in a very methodical manner while maintaining its confidentiality. Then, they must be accessible and available. Access to premises where strategic information is located must in particular be highly regulated and controlled. Staff must also be made highly aware of confidentiality rules.

Indeed, intellectual property policies should mainly aim to:

- manage the exploitation of intellectual property created within the institution.
- promote scientific and technical progress.
- ensure that the discoveries, inventions and creations of staff and students are used in ways that best serve the interests of the public.

- protect the rights that researchers and academics can exercise over the results of their work.
- promote, protect, foster and support scientific research.
- establish standards to determine the rights and obligations of the university, the creators of intellectual property and their sponsors for everything relating to inventions, discoveries and work carried out within of the institution.
- ensure compliance with legislation and regulations in force and help the university or research and development institute to ensure funding for its work at all levels of research.
- ensure that institutions are duly informed of the various intellectual property systems in force in the countries in which intellectual property rights are acquired.

Universities and research and development institutes must define the main aspects of intellectual property and adopt detailed policies in this area as part of a comprehensive approach. Each institution will, however, decide, depending on the direction given to research and development activities, the type of intellectual property to be taken into consideration by the policy in question.

2.2.3 International strategy

In a context characterized by the evolution of the higher education market on a global scale and by a considerable increase in the potential of international students on mobility, higher education institutions have integrated the international dimension into their pedagogy and in their operation with the aim of ensuring their presence, their visibility and the demonstration of their quality on the international scene.

International trade can take several forms. Everything must be considered:

- the signing of scientific cooperation agreements with foreign partners (conferences of rectors or establishments teaching), which generally aim to promote exchanges of students and professors or research collaborations.
- welcoming interns or doctoral students in research laboratories.
- Recruitment of foreign teachers to benefit from their experiences and skills.
- Welcoming foreign delegations.
- An interface role between ministries and embassies (relaying information on calls for projects, international or intergovernmental programs).
- Project coordination action

- Sending experts abroad for various missions: participation in higher education reforms, scholarship selection juries, etc.
- The establishment of an information policy on the training offer, a real reception and support system for students, teachers and teacher-researchers, development of specific training.

The international visibility of research establishments is a key issue for research and doctoral training activities which are increasingly internationalized and whose quality is assessed at this level. The doctoral training offer must strive to be readable and attractive: international thesis joint supervision constitutes a structuring tool for cooperation between national and foreign research laboratories, the reception policy for foreign doctoral students must be able to attract the best students in the best possible conditions.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions are experiencing times of great change, especially with the possibilities provided by phenomena such as the Internet, distance learning, and professional education offered by companies themselves. HEIs now have the much more difficult task of successfully proving their importance and of succeeding in guaranteeing a place of choice in the knowledge society.

Governments expect universities to be more involved, more proactive and more participatory in the construction and development of society. If higher education institutions succeed in providing the expected positive response, society will better perceive their importance and will consider it important to create more ways to finance them, because the economy depends more and more on knowledge.

Based on this principle, HEIs must currently know and apply the best practices of educational monitoring and economic intelligence. economic intelligence, as we saw in the second section of this article, allows HEIs to develop skills in research, processing and management of information that create competitive advantage.

There still remains an important point to address: To what extent does this economic intelligence process enable a university information system to evolve into a strategic information system?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AFDIE. (1997). Modèle d'intelligence économique, *Economica*, page 45.
- Aldridge, S. & Rowley, J. (1998). Measuring customer satisfaction in higher

education, *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol. 6 No. 4, pp. 197-204.

- Bournois, F. & Romani, P.J. (2000). *L'intelligence économique et stratégique dans les entreprises françaises*, Edition Economica.
- Godin, B & Gingras, Y. (2000). *Sciences de la Société, Production scientifique et demande sociale, notes de lecture, colloques et congrès*, Presses Universitaires du Mirail.
- Hunt, S.D. (1997). *Resource-Advantage Theory : An Evolutionary Theory of Competitive Firm Behavior ?* *The Journal of Economic Issues*, March, pp.59-77
- Kaufman, R. & Herman, J. (1991). *Strategic planning for a better society*, *Educational Leadership Journal*, v48 n7, p4-8.
- Martre, H. (1994). *Intelligence économique et stratégie des entreprises*, Rapport du Commissariat Général au Plan, Paris, La Documentation Française.
- Wilensky H. (1967). *Organisational intelligence, Knowledge and policy in government and industry*, New York, Basic books.