

# **The “Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer” Framework: Conceptualizing Stakeholder Roles In University Strategic Partnership**

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## **Abstract**

This paper visualises and demonstrates the application of the Catalyst, Enabler, and Enhancer (CEE) framework as a strategic model for managing stakeholder partnerships in higher education. This study employed a qualitative single-case study approach, analysing the strategic planning documents and performance reports of the Faculty of Accountancy (FPN) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). This study maps the FPN's operational initiatives to the three core roles of the CEE framework, i.e. catalyst, enabler and enhancer. This paper provides a replicable model for higher education institutions aiming to transform stakeholder engagement from supplementary activities into a driving force of institutional excellence and societal value.

**Keywords:** *catalyst enabler enhancer (CEE) framework; management of higher education; stakeholder engagement; strategic partnerships; university-industry collaboration; strategic planning*

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently, the era of globalisation and intense competition has forced universities to increasingly embrace strategic planning to navigate a complex environment and fulfil the high expectations of their stakeholders. The cultivation of robust, purposeful partnerships with industry, government, alumni, and the community now forms a cornerstone of this strategic shift. However, establishing these linkages is only a first step, whilst their ultimate value is determined by the strategy behind their design and execution. This article explores the "Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer" (CEE) framework, a conceptual model that offers a sophisticated method for classifying stakeholder roles and leveraging them for institutional advancement. "Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer" (CEE) framework was developed by a team at McKinsey & Company, a global management consulting firm. As a structured guideline for strategic analysis, the Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer (CEE) framework allows organizational leaders to critically evaluate the impacts of technology (Agarwal et al., 2016). We examine its practical application within the Faculty of Accountancy (FPN) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM).

As one of Malaysia's most established and prestigious accounting faculties, FPN has articulated a clear vision, i.e. to become a "Globally Renowned Faculty" by 2025. In achieving this ambition, FPN depends on its strategic planning emphasis on Jaringan Industri dan Keusahawanan (JIK), or Industry and Entrepreneurship Linkages. Moving beyond transactional relationships, FPN has embedded the CEE framework as a central driver of its strategic plan, Faculty of Accountancy's Strategic Planning 2020 - 2025 (PSFPN 2020-2025). This model refines the faculty's role in its ecosystem, dividing it into three separate groups, yet interconnected. The groups are the "Catalyst" that proactively initiates strategic collaborations; the "Enabler" that facilitates value-driven partnerships in areas like fundraising and community development; and the "Enhancer" that serves as a definitive hub of expertise for its partners.

This article suggests that the CEE framework provides a replicable model for transforming stakeholder management from a supplementary activity into a fundamental strategic objective. This study demonstrates how this framework surpasses conventional partnership model by analysing the FPN's implementation, where staff embody the CEE principles to achieve "Talent Excellence". It promotes a synergistic ecosystem in which the university does not merely interact with its stakeholders but actively initiate new ventures, enables mutual success, and enhances shared value, thereby securing a sustainable competitive advantage in the global academic arena.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Strategic Alignment and Stakeholder Integration in Higher Education**

In today's world, we increasingly see Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as pivotal leaders in the global pursuit of a sustainable future. To fulfil this potential, they must fundamentally reimagine their role, transforming from isolated "ivory towers" into vibrant, collaborative hubs that co-create value alongside their communities (Etzkowitz, 2003; Trencher et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2015). This transformation hinges on two critical, interconnected practices: achieving strategic alignment, where

every institutional effort coherently supports overarching sustainability goals (Findler et al., 2023), and fostering stakeholder integration, which entails authentically involving diverse partners in both education and innovation (Grunwald et al., 2024; Leal Filho et al., 2025). The landscape of higher education has undergone a significant transformation, with universities worldwide increasingly adopting strategic management frameworks to enhance quality, ensure sustainability, and achieve global competitiveness. As a systematic process to envision a desired future and translate this vision into goals and objectives, strategic planning is pivotal in higher education (Allison & Kaye, 2015). Central to this paradigm shift is the alignment of institutional objectives with national development agendas and the strategic integration of stakeholders into the university's core functions (Bautista-Puig & Sanz-Casado, 2024). Stakeholders, including students, faculty, industry partners, governments, and local communities, now expect active participation in shaping and implementing sustainability initiatives (Leal Filho et al., 2025).

Stakeholders must be at the forefront of the strategic planning process for plans to be created and implemented (Snyder, 2015). Effective strategic planning promotes stakeholder collaboration across the institution, community, and external partners to enhance educational offerings and student outcomes (Pritchard et al., 2016; El Zein Badawi, 2020). This collaborative effort also supports the alignment of institutional goals with evolving industry standards and needs, ensuring educational programs remain relevant and effective. The insights and feedback of stakeholders crucially shape the strategic direction and ensure that plans are responsive to stakeholder needs (Falqueto et al., 2020). Moreover, the strategic planning processes often stimulate new initiatives and partnerships able to provide additional institutional resources (David, 2016). Engaging stakeholders in system analysis, vision and goal articulation, action planning, and implementation helps to build trust and ownership within an ever-changing educational landscape (Frantzen, 2018). Grunwald et al. (2024) argue that the mere existence of partnerships is insufficient; their true value is unlocked through strategic conceptualisation and operationalisation. This perspective positions stakeholder management not as an ancillary function but as a "core strategic objective" essential for driving sustainable innovation and securing a competitive advantage (Kohl et al., 2022). This review examines the strategic objectives that guide Malaysian higher education and uses the "Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer" (CEE) framework within this context, highlighting its role as a mechanism for translating high-level policy into actionable stakeholder engagement at the faculty level.

## **National and Institutional Strategic Objectives**

In an era of rapid technological change, intense global competition, and shifting societal demands, higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide face unprecedented pressure to articulate a clear strategic direction (Santoro & Chakrabarti, 2001; Messah & Mucai, 2011). Strategic objectives translate an institution's mission and vision into actionable goals, providing a roadmap for achieving academic excellence and institutional success (Kipasika, 2024). Thus, strategic objectives serve as the critical bridge between an institution's overarching mission and vision and its tangible actions and outcomes. Santoro and Chakrabarti (2001) provide a foundational classification by categorising industrial firms (as key stakeholders of universities) based on their strategic objectives for engaging with university research centres. This classification can be similarly applied to HEIs themselves as collegial players, that is, referred to

often as larger, established institutions with long-term strategic horizons. Their objectives focus on relationship-building, influencing pre-competitive research, and shaping university programmes to secure a future talent pipeline. The primary driver is knowledge access and network influence rather than immediate commercial outcomes. Next are aggressive players, that is referred to as a mixed group of large and small institutions that employ strategic objectives centred on the advancement and commercialisation of both core and non-core technologies. They seek a clear return on investment (ROI) by building skills, accessing facilities, and linking to cutting-edge technologies. The third is targeted players, which refers to the typically smaller institutions, whose strategic objectives are short-term and highly focused on addressing immediate, specific problems central to their primary business. They expect quick paybacks and often rely on consulting-style arrangements with research centres. This classification underscores that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to strategic objectives is ineffective. The fit between an institution's strategic profile and the nature of its partnerships (or its own internal goals) is a key determinant of success (Santoro & Chakrabarti, 2001), a principle that continues to be validated in modern studies of university strategy and stakeholder engagement (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2022; Frolova & Lapina, 2023).

HEIs do not operate in a vacuum, as their performance is increasingly evaluated against their contribution to national goals. Kettunen (2008) proposes a conceptual framework where the "quality map" of an HEI explicitly links the institution's strategic planning to its global, national, and regional environments. In this view, strategic management involves matching "the changing education policy and the regional circumstances to the resources of the institution." This alignment is not merely reactive but a proactive means of ensuring relevance and securing funding a dynamic increasingly driven by national performance-based funding models (Seeber et al., 2022). For instance, national policies focusing on a "knowledge-based economy" might translate into institutional objectives for increasing research volume, patents, and industry collaboration (Kettunen, 2008; Messah and Mucai, 2011). Messah and Mucai (2011) reinforce this based on the Kenyan context, observing that government-mandated performance contracting and national five-year plans have compelled public universities to adopt more strategic, long-term planning. The study highlights that national bodies, like the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), establish regional quality assurance systems that directly shape institutional strategic objectives related to harmonised standards and graduate comparability. In addition, Sakarya University (SAU) in Turkey provides a powerful, real-world example of this mandated alignment (Akyel et al., 2012). The implementation of the Public Financial Management and Control Law (No. 5018) legally obligated all Turkish public universities to create strategic plans. SAU's experience demonstrates how national legislation can be the primary catalyst for the formalisation of strategic planning in HEIs, moving it from a voluntary best practice to a core administrative requirement. Another example such as China's 'Double World-Class' policy, confirm that national mandates continue to be a primary catalyst for the formalisation and reorientation of strategic planning in HEIs worldwide (Wang & Xu, 2023). Furthermore, this alignment now occurs not just at the national level but is also shaped by emerging regional policy frameworks, creating a multi-level governance environment that institutions must navigate (Chou & Ravinet, 2021).

## **Conceptualizing Stakeholder Roles: Beyond Traditional Linkages**

The traditional model of the university, focused primarily on the dual mission of teaching and research within an ivory tower, is undergoing a profound transformation. However, driven by globalisation, the knowledge economy, and pressing societal challenges like sustainability, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are now expected to engage with a complex web of external communities (Jongbloed et al., 2008; Yarime et al., 2012; and Civera & Freeman, 2019). Jongbloed et al. (2008), Yarime et al. (2012), and Civera & Freeman (2019) argued that a paradigm shift is occurring from viewing stakeholders as external entities to be managed, towards recognising them as active, interdependent partners in a collaborative process of value creation which is a perspective that is central to modern conceptualizations of the university's mission (Compagnucci and Spigarelli, 2022). Jongbloed et al. (2008) effectively adapt Mitchell, Agle, and Wood's (1997) theory of stakeholder salience to the HEI context. This model classifies stakeholders based on their possession of three attributes, i.e. power (the ability to influence the university), legitimacy (the socially accepted and expected nature of the relationship), and urgency (the time-sensitivity of their claims). This classification helps universities identify "definitive stakeholders" who possess all three attributes and thus require immediate attention, moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to a more strategic prioritisation (Frolova and Lapina, 2023). Aside from that, Yarime et al. (2012) highlighted that transdisciplinary, i.e. goes beyond sciences, organises processes of mutual learning among science and society. It integrates experiential knowledge from practitioners with scientific knowledge from researchers to address real-world, "ill-defined" problems, thus transforming stakeholders from subjects of study into partners in the research and learning process (Konsti-Laakso and Pihkala, 2023).

However, a purely managerial, firm-centric view is increasingly seen as limited. Civera & Freeman (2019) critique this perspective for reinforcing power imbalances and potentially marginalising stakeholders who lack formal power or legitimacy but are nonetheless affected by or essential to the university's mission, a challenge that remains as a main concern in engagement literature (Benneworth and Cunha, 2023). They recommended a shift from stakeholder management to stakeholder engagement. Engagement is characterised as a "moral partnership of equals" (Greenwood, 2007, cited in Civera & Freeman, 2019), emphasising continuous dialogue, mutual learning, and empowerment. According to Civera & Freeman (2019), this is not about managing claims but about building lasting relationships based on trust and a commitment to joint value creation, a principle that defines the emerging concept of the 'stakeholder university' (Kohl et al., 2022). Furthermore, Civera & Freeman (2019) proposed that the focus shifts from the university's perspective to that of the industry or society at large, where alliances between the university, government, NGOs, and businesses work towards common goals. While stakeholder collaboration is a well-established practice in higher education, contemporary strategic management demands a more nuanced and purposeful approach. This implicitly supports a shift from viewing partnerships as mere transactional linkages to seeing them as integral components of a synergistic ecosystem (Kitagawa et al., 2022).

## **Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) Partnership Landscape**

Strategic partnerships are no longer peripheral activities but core to fulfilling universities' missions in research, teaching, and impact (Perkmann et al., 2013). It is

essential to conceptualise the distinct, yet complementary roles stakeholders play to understand the dynamics within these complex collaborations. To establish the strategic partnership between the HEIs and the stakeholders, the HEIs need to provide the initial spark, vision, and motivation for the partnership. This role is called "Catalyst", which is characterised by identifying a strategic need or opportunity and championing the collaborative endeavour. The Catalyst often emerges from leadership positions, such as a visionary dean, a proactive department head, or a senior industry figure who recognises the mutual benefit of collaboration. Their role aligns with the concept of "academic entrepreneurs" or "boundary spanners" who operate at the interface of different organisations, brokering relationships and building trust (Meyer, 2010, Giones et al., 2023). The Catalyst role is central to the initial phase of partnership formation. As described by Ankrah & Omar (2015), this phase involves "scanning and searching" for potential partners and "negotiating and selling" the partnership idea. In addition, Bercovitz and Feldman (2011) proved that key faculty members often act as "academic entrepreneurs," catalysing relationships with industry by leveraging their research reputation and networks and supported by Giones et al. (2023). Besides, Galan-Muros and Davey (2019) positioned the catalyst as often being an external pressure or an internal strategic goal that leadership acts upon. Furthermore, Corsaro and Maggioni (2022) found that pre-existing, trust-based personal relationships between academics and industry managers are the most frequent catalyst for initiating formal partnerships, often preceding any institutional strategy, and is supported with the findings by Freitas et al. (2023). This is evident in companies that establish dedicated 'strategic university relations' functions (Caniels & van den Bosch, 2021) and in the increasing formalization of this catalyst function through dedicated roles that coordinate the initiation and management of complex collaborations (Alexander et al., 2024).

Besides the Catalyst (the initiator), there must be entities that provide the essential infrastructure, resources, and legitimacy required for the partnership to function formally, which is also known as the "Enabler". This role is often procedural, structural, and financial, creating the "container" within which the collaboration occurs. They are typically institutional entities rather than individuals, which include university research offices, technology transfer offices (TTOs), and faculty administration (Alexander et al., 2024). It provides the critical resources such as funding, legal frameworks (contracts, IP agreements), project management support, and ethical approval processes (Perkmann et al., 2013). At a macro level, government bodies and funding councils are typical Enablers. Through policy instruments and strategic funding programs, they create the incentive structures and regulatory environments that make partnerships attractive and feasible (Bozeman & Boardman, 2014; Cai & Mountford, 2023). They provide the legitimacy and strategic alignment that encourage universities and firms to invest in collaboration. Miller et al. (2021) clearly delineated the enabler role of Technology Transfer Offices (TTOs). It compares how different national policy frameworks (government as macro-enabler) shape the practices and effectiveness of TTOs (institutional enablers) in supporting the partnership process from invention disclosure to commercialisation (Miller et al., 2021). Additionally, Rossi and Rosli (2022) highlighted a critical enabler function, i.e. the development of metrics and evaluation systems. By creating legitimate ways to measure impact, universities and funders enable the justification, management, and continued funding of strategic partnerships (Rossi and Rosli, 2022; Laudel & Weyer, 2023).

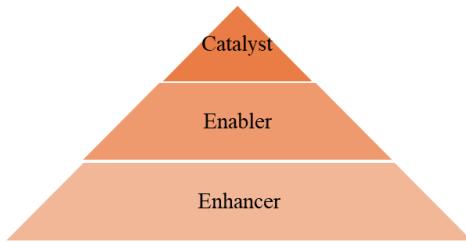
In addition to Enabler (the infrastructure provider), there is a need for the "Enhancer", also known as the value optimiser. The Enhancer is responsible for the ongoing optimisation, deepening, and sustainability of the partnership. This role focuses on the qualitative aspects of the collaboration, ensuring it delivers maximum value and evolves. This includes faculty and students engaged in joint research, curriculum co-development, and student placements. Fischer et al. (2023) explicitly identify students (from undergraduates to PhDs) as critical yet often overlooked enhancers, which are supported by their position as key network-builders and future academic entrepreneurs within innovation ecosystems (Giones et al., 2023). Their engagement in projects, internships, and thesis research builds human capital, fosters innovation, and creates lasting networks that sustain and deepen partnerships over time. Besides, Enhancers work on building social capital, trust, and mutual understanding as the factors repeatedly identified as critical for long-term partnership success (Plewa et al., 2013; Freitas et al., 2023). They are key to moving a partnership from a single project to a strategic alliance. They help in identifying new opportunities for collaboration, foster a sense of shared ownership, and work to embed the partnership into the core activities of both organisations. Tartari and Breschi (2012) and Kobylinski et al. (2023) showed that sustained, trust-based relationships between individual scientists and industry counterparts (the Enhancers) lead to more productive and impactful outcomes over time than one-off, transactional contracts, that is consistently emphasized in contemporary analyses of collaboration success (Alexander et al., 2024).

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine the conceptualisation and application of the "Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer" (CEE) framework within a specific institutional context. The case study approach is appropriate for this investigation because it enables a detailed examination of complex, real-world phenomena in their natural context (Yin, 2018). This methodology is especially valuable for understanding the processes i.e. the "how" and "why", behind the implementation and perceived success of a strategic framework like CEE (Ridder, 2023).

Figure 1 portrays the CEE framework where the enhancer and enabler provide the foundation for successful catalyst. In this framework, the Catalyst initiates partnerships with strategic vision. However, these initiatives depend entirely on the Enabler, which provides essential institutional infrastructure and funding, and the Enhancer, which builds the necessary trust and shared values. Without this support, the Catalyst's efforts may be temporary or fail to integrate effectively. For this study, the subject is the Faculty of Accountancy (Fakulti Perakaunan, FPN) at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), one of Malaysia's oldest and largest accounting faculties. FPN was selected as an exemplary and revelatory case (Yin, 2018) precisely because its strategic planning documents explicitly articulate and operationalise the CEE model as a core driver for managing stakeholder relationships, particularly within its focus area of Jaringan Industri dan Keusahawanan (JIK), or Industry and Entrepreneurship Linkages. Here, the CEE framework works as a structured process that turns national goals for employability and university-business collaboration into specific, faculty-level projects. Consequently, this research will analyze how the three connected roles of Catalyst, Enabler, and Enhancer are defined, work together, and

help reach strategic goals at FPN. The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how the framework functions in practice within a major Malaysian university.



**Figure 1: Catalyst, Enabler and Enhancer (CEE) Framework**

## Data Sources and Collection

This study is based on an extensive analysis of institutional documents provided by FPN. The primary sources for this study are internal strategic and performance evaluation reports prepared by the faculty for the university's prestigious Anugerah Kualiti Naib Canselor (AKNC) or Vice-Chancellor's Quality Awards. These documents, which include "PROFIL AKNC 2024," "FPN\_AKNC2024\_H1," "FPN\_AKNC2024\_K2," and "Laporan AKNC FACT 2023," serve as the repository of data for this analysis. These reports were chosen for their depth and authoritativeness, as they represent the faculty's official, structured articulation of its strategic planning, implementation, monitoring, and performance outcomes. Specifically, the documents detail is:

- The alignment of FPN's strategic plans (PSFPN2020-2025 and PSFPN2022) with national and university-level strategic documents, such as the 11th Malaysia Plan (RMK-11) and the UiTM 2025 Strategic Plan (PSUiTM2025).
- The conceptual definition of the CEE framework, where Catalyst refers to initiating strategic cooperation, Enabler signifies facilitating value-driven partnerships, and Enhancer positions the faculty as a hub of expertise.
- The systematic implementation of strategic initiatives and projects designed to operationalise the CEE framework, such as "Dynamic Linkages," "Impactful USR/KTP Program," and "Empowering Alumni".
- The mechanisms for deploying and integrating these strategic objectives include the mobilisation of human resources through "Talent Clusters".
- The processes for performance measurement, monitoring, risk management, and continuous improvement are related to its strategic goals.

## Data Analysis

The analysis follows a thematic approach, where the content of the source documents was systematically coded and categorised according to the core components of the CEE framework. The process involved:

- Identifying Conceptual Definitions: Isolating explicit definitions and descriptions of the "Catalyst," "Enabler," and "Enhancer" roles within the FPN's strategic documents.

- Mapping Strategic Projects to the CEE Framework: Linking specific projects and initiatives (e.g., Research Grant Venture, FACT Young Entrepreneur, Alumni Ambassadors) to their intended function as a catalyst, enabler, or enhancer.
- Analysing Implementation Mechanisms: Examining how the faculty leverages its human resources (e.g., Talent Excellence, Talent Clusters) and organisational structure to execute the CEE-driven strategies.
- Synthesising Performance Outcomes: Aggregating reported outcomes, such as i-Score achievements, research grant generation, and stakeholder engagement metrics, to evaluate the effectiveness of the framework's application.

By analysing these internal reports, this study constructs a comprehensive and evidence-based account of how a higher education faculty conceptualises and integrates a sophisticated stakeholder management framework. This methodological approach allows for a deep, contextualised understanding of the CEE model in practice, providing a rich foundation for discussing its broader implications for strategic management in academia.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study has detailed the conceptualisation and implementation of the "Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer" (CEE) framework by the Faculty of Accountancy (FPN) at UiTM. The findings illustrate a structured, holistic approach to stakeholder management that moves beyond conventional university-industry linkages. The framework's success is rooted in its deep alignment with national and institutional strategic imperatives, its systematic deployment through a well-defined human resource structure, and its demonstrable impact on key performance outcomes. This study synthesises these findings to highlight the strategic significance of the CEE model.

The strategic direction of the Faculty of Accountancy (FPN) is explicitly shaped by a hierarchy of national and institutional plans. Key guiding documents include the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) (PPPM(PT)), the 11th Malaysia Plan (RMK-11), and the UiTM 2025 Strategic Plan (PSUiTM2025). The PPPM(PT) emphasises the need for Malaysian universities to achieve global prominence through talent excellence and the creation of innovative ecosystems. Similarly, RMK-11's third strategic thrust focuses on developing holistic, entrepreneurial, and globally competitive human capital. At the institutional level, PSUiTM2025 aims to establish UiTM as a Globally Renowned University, driven by three core pillars: Quality Education, Global Excellence, and Value-Driven initiatives. These documents collectively call for universities to move beyond traditional teaching roles and become dynamic hubs for research, innovation, commercialisation, and impactful community engagement. FPN translates these national and institutional aspirations into its own strategic plan, PSFPN2020-2025. The faculty's focus on Penyelidikan, Penerbitan dan Pengkomersilan (PPP), or Research, Publication, and Commercialisation, is a direct response to these mandates. The goal is to build scholarly expertise, foster academic integrity, and produce high-impact research and innovation that benefits both internal and external stakeholders. This strategic alignment ensures that FPN's operational activities, particularly those involving stakeholder partnerships, contribute directly to broader national goals, such as the government's target of producing 60,000 chartered accountants by 2030.

## The CEE Framework as a Strategic Bridge

A key finding is the role of the CEE framework as a strategic bridge connecting high-level policy with ground-level execution. The faculty's strategic plans (PSFPN2020-2025 and PSFPN2022) are explicitly aligned with national blueprints like the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (PPPM(PT)) and the 11th Malaysia Plan (RMK-11), as well as the overarching UiTM 2025 Strategic Plan (PSUiTM2025). These documents collectively call for universities to become hubs of talent, innovation, and global excellence. The CEE framework provides the conceptual vocabulary and operational logic to translate these broad ambitions into tangible stakeholder engagement projects. It is observed that FPNs adopted the Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer (CEE) framework, which provides a structured model for this advanced form of stakeholder integration. The framework defines three distinct but interconnected roles for the faculty in its interactions with stakeholders:

- **Catalyst:** This role positions the university as a proactive initiator of strategic collaborations. As a catalyst, FPN actively creates opportunities for cooperation rather than passively responding to them, thereby driving the formation of valuable networks with industry, government, and professional bodies. The establishment of Alumni Ambassadors, for instance, acts as a catalyst for leveraging alumni networks for new research and consultancy projects.
- **Enabler:** This dimension emphasises the faculty's function in facilitating value-driven partnerships. By enabling collaborations, FPN ensures that they yield tangible outcomes such as research funding, knowledge transfer to the community, and the development of well-rounded, entrepreneurial graduates. Projects like the "Impactful USR/KTP Program" exemplify this role, where the faculty enables societal upliftment by transferring financial literacy skills to communities like "Asnaf" entrepreneurs.
- **Enhancer:** This role defines the university as a hub of expertise and a primary reference point for its stakeholders. As an enhancer, FPN leverages its deep academic knowledge to add value, improve partner capabilities, and elevate its own reputation. This is demonstrated through expert consultations, curriculum development with industry input, and collaborative teaching, all of which enhance the skills and competencies of staff, students, and partners alike.

This CEE model allows FPN to systematically manage its relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders, who are categorised into internal clients (lecturers and students) and external clients (government agencies, industry, alumni, and the community). By operationalising its strategic focus on Industry and Entrepreneurship Linkages (JIK) through the CEE lens, FPN ensures that every partnership is strategically aligned and contributes to its ultimate vision of becoming a "Globally Renowned Faculty". The framework thus serves as the conceptual bridge between high-level strategic goals and the practical execution of impactful stakeholder engagement.

By defining its roles as a Catalyst (initiator of cooperation), Enabler (facilitator of value-driven partnerships), and Enhancer (hub of expertise), FPN has created a purposeful mechanism for every partnership. For example, the faculty acts as a Catalyst through its "Alumni Ambassadors" program, proactively leveraging alumni networks to spark new research and consultancy collaborations. It functions as an Enabler in its "Impactful USR/KTP Program," which facilitates the transfer of

knowledge to communities like "Asnaf" entrepreneurs, thereby creating tangible societal value. Finally, it serves as an Enhancer by drawing on its academic expertise to elevate industry practices and contribute to curriculum development, reinforcing its status as a key reference point in the accounting profession. This multi-faceted approach ensures that partnerships are not ad-hoc but are strategically designed to meet the faculty's goal of becoming a "Globally Renowned Faculty".

## **Operationalizing the Framework: The Centrality of Human Capital**

The successful deployment of the CEE framework is intrinsically linked to FPN's strategic management of its human resources. The sources highlight two critical mechanisms: Talent Clusters and Research Champions. FPN has organised its academic staff into eight specialised "Talent Clusters," such as "Taxation" and "Sustainability & Governance". This structure allows the faculty to strategically deploy specific expertise to relevant projects, matching the right skills with stakeholder needs. For instance, a community project requiring financial literacy training can draw directly from the relevant cluster, ensuring high-quality knowledge transfer. The clusters are a core part of the faculty's ecosystem, enabling it to drive its research, publication, and commercialisation (PPP) agenda effectively.

Complementing this structure is the Research Champion initiative, where selected lecturers are tasked with mentoring colleagues and spearheading new collaborations with industry and academia. This model empowers individuals to act as catalysts and enhances the faculty's capacity for high-impact publication and research grant acquisition. These human-centric initiatives demonstrate that the CEE framework is not merely a theoretical construct but is embedded within a dynamic operational system that mobilises the collective expertise of its staff to achieve strategic objectives.

The effectiveness of the CEE model is evidenced by FPN's impressive and consistently high performance across multiple key indicators. The faculty has achieved a 6-star i-SCORE rating for four consecutive years (2020-2023) and was ranked among the top three PTJs at UiTM in 2023 with a score of 94.9%. This sustained excellence is a direct result of the systematic planning, monitoring, and continuous improvement embedded in its strategic management process. The focus on Industry and Entrepreneurship Linkages (JIK) and Research, Publication, and Commercialisation (PPP), driven by the CEE framework, has yielded significant outcomes. In 2023 alone, FPN staff generated RM6.8 million in research grants, far exceeding the annual target. The faculty also excels in high-impact publications, with a staff-to-publication ratio of 2:1, ranking it among the top three faculties at the university. Furthermore, the commercialisation of research products like i-Asnaf ACT demonstrates the framework's ability to translate academic work into real-world impact, aligning with national innovation goals. These measurable achievements validate the CEE framework as a powerful tool for driving institutional performance and reinforcing the university's role as a vital contributor to national development.

## **Implications for Higher Education**

The case of FPN and its CEE framework offers valuable insights for other higher education institutions seeking to enhance their strategic management of stakeholder relationships. It can be concluded as follows:

- Move Beyond Ad-Hoc Partnerships: The CEE model provides a blueprint for institutionalising stakeholder engagement, moving from opportunistic collaborations to a structured, mission-driven approach.
- Integrate Human Capital into Strategy: The success of the "Talent Clusters" and "Research Champions" highlights the importance of aligning human resource development with strategic goals. By nurturing and deploying expertise strategically, institutions can maximise the impact of their partnerships.
- Create a Clear Line of Sight from Policy to Practice: The FPN case demonstrates the power of explicitly linking faculty-level initiatives to national and university-wide strategic plans. This alignment creates a shared sense of purpose and ensures that operational activities contribute to broader institutional and societal goals.

In summary, the CEE framework is more than just a model for stakeholder classification. It is a comprehensive strategic management philosophy. By positioning itself as a Catalyst, Enabler, and Enhancer, FPN has created a resilient and impactful ecosystem that not only achieves its institutional objectives but also delivers significant value to its students, staff, and external partners.

## CONCLUSION

The case of the Faculty of Accountancy (FPN) at UiTM powerfully illustrates the strategic value of the "Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer" (CEE) framework for managing modern higher education institutions. This research has shown that the CEE model is not just a simple list of roles, but a comprehensive strategic philosophy. It provides a clear system for aligning a faculty's daily activities with the larger goals of the university and the nation. By deliberately defining and applying the Catalyst, Enabler, and Enhancer roles, FPN has built a powerful engine for creating partnerships that are purposeful and deliver real value for everyone involved.

The framework's success at FPN rests on three key pillars. The first is its deep integration with strategic planning. The initiatives are not random, they are directly linked to the faculty's main objectives, ensuring every action contributes to the broader mission i.e. from "Dynamic Linkages" to "Impactful USR/KTP Programs," is mapped to the faculty's broader goal of becoming a "Globally Renowned Faculty".

Second is the strategic mobilisation of human capital through structures like "Talent Clusters" and "Research Champions," which ensures that the right expertise is applied to the right challenges, turning strategic plans into tangible results. This human-centric approach transforms abstract goals into concrete actions executed by a competent and motivated workforce.

The third and most convincing pillar is the production of outstanding, measurable outcomes. Achievements like consistent top-tier ratings, significant research grants, and successful commercialized products are clear evidence of the framework's effectiveness. Here, it can be seen from the FPN's consistent achievement of 6-star i-SCORE ratings, its success in securing substantial research grants, and its ability to translate research into commercialised products like i-Asnaf, are direct testaments to the model's efficacy. These achievements underscore the faculty's ability to function

as a true Catalyst for new collaborations, an Enabler of social and economic value, and an Enhancer of professional and academic standards.

Nowadays, where universities are expected to be the engines of innovation and social progress, the CEE framework offers a practical and replicable blueprint for success. The FPN case study demonstrates that a clear conceptual model, when fully integrated into an institution's planning and operations, can transform stakeholder relationships. It moves them beyond simple transactions into deep, synergistic partnerships that create greater value together than they could apart. Ultimately, FPN's experience proves that by consciously adopting the roles of Catalyst, Enabler, and Enhancer, academic institutions can successfully meet their own strategic goals while also fulfilling their vital responsibility to society.

## **LIMITATION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study provides a deep, contextualised examination of the "Catalyst, Enabler, Enhancer" (CEE) framework by analysing its application within a single, high-performing faculty. The primary data source consists of internal strategic planning and award submission documents, which offer an official institutional perspective. While this approach provides a rich, evidence-based account of the framework's conceptualisation and operationalisation, it presents several limitations that open avenues for future research.

First, the study relies exclusively on the faculty's self-reported data. Future research could adopt a multi-stakeholder perspective by incorporating qualitative data from FPN's external partners, including industry leaders, government agencies, alumni, and community representatives. Investigating how these stakeholders perceive and experience FPN's role as a Catalyst, Enabler, and Enhancer would provide a more holistic and validated understanding of the framework's real-world effectiveness and impact.

Second, as a single-case study, the findings are context-specific to FPN's unique environment, strategic priorities, and culture. The generalizability of the CEE framework to other faculties within UiTM or to different universities, both in Malaysia and internationally, remains an open question. Therefore, a compelling direction for future research would be to conduct comparative case studies across different institutional contexts. For example, applying the CEE framework to a science and technology faculty, a private university, or an institution in a different national higher education system would test its robustness and reveal necessary adaptations.

Third, this study focuses on the implementation and outcomes of the framework but does not empirically isolate the causal mechanisms through which the "Talent Clusters" and "Research Champions" contribute to its success. A future longitudinal or mixed-methods study could specifically investigate the dynamics of these human resource mechanisms, exploring how they foster collaboration, innovation, and knowledge transfer, and how their effectiveness can be measured and optimised.

Fourth, future research would be significantly strengthened by incorporating the views of external stakeholders. A multi-stakeholder analysis, gathering data from industry

partners, government bodies, and community organizations, is essential to validate the framework's perceived effectiveness and its actual impact on relationship quality.

In conclusion, while this study establishes the CEE framework as a powerful strategic tool within FPN, it also highlights the need for broader empirical validation. Future research that incorporates external stakeholder voices, tests the model in diverse contexts, and delves deeper into its enabling mechanisms will significantly advance our understanding of strategic stakeholder management in higher education.

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