

Strategic Planning for Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

The institutions of current education play a central role in the progress and development of nation, due to their education aimed at preparing and training human energies that lead social and economic development. Scientific research aimed at exploring the depths of knowledge and finding solutions to renewable needs and serving the community that aims to meet its requirements on the basis of Partnership with both institutions and individuals.

As a result of the challenges that higher education institutions faced during the previous decades in their internal and external environment such as globalization, the information and communication revolution and the knowledge revolution, along with, response to urgent challenges such as lack of financial support, rapid technical progress and demographic changes. Many universities and higher institutes tend to use strategic planning to overcome these strategic changes, and continuously adapting to a rapidly changing environment.

These challenges require higher education institutions to adapt themselves, develop their curricula, and modify their methods

accordingly. Adjusting its institutions in this way must have a method and a scientific approach based on methods, entrances, projection, prediction etc. This task is for a strategic planner, whose task is not easy, due to the constant changes in the world and new development every day. This led to the multiplicity of parties involved in the strategic planning process, which can be summarized in three: inputs - operations - outputs. Education planning is a rational process that targets specific scientific and social goals and uses special means to achieve the goals in its best use (1).

Strategic planning has become the comprehensive view of all education and education related problems, it is the main tool and means of development and it has a role in the growth of the economy and social life, as well as, its role in the growth of culture and civilization in general. Therefore, countries resort to it to search for guidance and solutions to the economic, political and social problems they face (2).

Strategic planning represents a next stage to the quantitative and qualitative stages of the development of planning assessment, which is based on planning, calculating the changing environmental conditions and the needs of the labor market. Taking into account the future quality of lifestyle in the society, the steps include:

1. analyzing the elements of the internal and external surrounding environment analyzing and identifying the necessary sources (aids - facilities etc.).
2. analyzing competitive opportunities.
3. analyzing the sources of strength and weakness of the institution.
4. formulating goals (currently and in the future) (3).

Through Use of scientific method, it is possible to develop plans and strategies find alternatives for decision-making, solve emerging problems, and analyze processes, quantitative and qualitative research methods (4)

Research problem

Higher education in all its scientific and technical institutions - like other aspects of human activity - is witnessing an unprecedented phase of change. Where it has become very difficult to predict the future, and strategic planning has become an effective means of integrity and maintaining progress. As it is a continuous process through which higher education can maintain the advancement of its development in the future, by making changes that are compatible with the rapid transformations in its internal and external environments (5).

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The need for strategic planning has increased as a result of the processes of development and modernization that higher education institutions are witnessing. The problems and challenges they face related to several axes: the first, is scientific research, which suffers from a lack of knowledge necessary to conduct scientific research, and the absence of scientific cooperation between institutions at the local and international levels. Secondly, teaching process, where it suffers from the stereotypical syllabi, the use of traditional teaching methods. Finally, community service, there is a weak connection between the research carried out by faculty members and development plans, and the clear separation between higher education institutions and many community institutions (6).

Based on the foregoing, it becomes clear that strategic planning is a necessity for higher education, to achieve the desired development, and to face the successive societal changes such as globalization, the communications revolution, and the technological revolution, etc.

The research can be summed up in to these questions:

1. what is the concept of strategic planning and what are the terms associated with it?
2. What are the characteristics and objectives of strategic planning?
3. What is the importance of strategic planning and its benefits?
4. What are the justifications for adopting strategic planning in higher education?
5. What is the relationship of strategic planning with other education planning approaches
6. What are the strategic planning processes?
7. What are the obstacles to implementation strategic planning in higher education?

Research aims

The research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Knowing the concept of strategic planning and related terminology.
2. Standing on the characteristics and objective of strategic planning.
3. Determine the importance of strategic planning and its benefits.
4. Determine the justification for the adoption of strategic planning higher education.
5. A presentation of the strategic planning relationship with other educational planning.
6. Address strategic planning processes.
7. Identify obstacles to when applying strategic planning in higher education

Research importance

The importance of the current research lies in its attempt to address an important issue on the grounds that the developmental situation of any nation must be played by the university in it; It is no longer seen as the traditional view that it is a "scientific institution" only, but also as an "economic institution" with the same importance. This is what many developed and developing countries have noticed, and the importance of the current research is summed up in:

1. This research may open up broader horizons in the field of strategic planning. It is considered an extension of previous studies in the field of strategic planning for educational systems and at the same time it is a prelude to other new studies.
2. The current research may benefit the authorities concerned with planning university education, its institutions, and those in charge of its administration. Where he contributes to the overall concept of strategic planning and the importance and operations, etc.

Research Methodology

Based on the main objective of the research, which lies in dealing with the strategic planning of higher education, the research uses the descriptive approach. Identifying the concept of strategic planning and its associated terminology, identifying the characteristics and objectives of strategic planning and determining the importance and benefits of it. Determining the justifications for adopting strategic planning in higher education, presenting the relationship of strategic planning with other educational planning approaches. Addressing strategic planning processes and identifying obstacles to the implementation of strategic planning in higher education.

Strategic planning processes

There is no single method that is considered the best approach to strategic planning. Strategic planning can be carried out at all levels, starting from an institution, or an educational system, and ending with society as a whole. Successful strategic planning can answer four main questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be in the future? How do we get there? How can we measure our progress? (7)

The Pennsylvania Center for Quality and Planning (1999) identified the main stages of strategic planning in (8):

Step One: planning a Plan:

This step is the critical first step for the organization, through it, the institution evaluates its willingness to use strategic planning, and design planning processes that are compatible with its purposes, sources, and political environment.

Before starting the first step of planning, leaders must come to an agreement on: the purpose and need to achieve the goal. the readiness of the organization in terms of personnel, financial resources, general culture, principle of commitment, reporting formats, and the time limit for submitting each of the necessary reports during planning process, steps and processes. For the application path to be clear and for the steps to be followed in a logical manner, in order for the strategic planning processes to be implemented.

Most of the common institutional organizations are based on the formation of a coordinating committee responsible for supervising and making decisions. As for the task groups, they work to provide recommendations to the coordinating committee based on a deep study of topics of interest.

Step Two: Gain and Support Commitment:

In this step, the main participants in the planning and implementation process are identified, including legislators, leaders, government employees, or citizens. Among the methods that may be used for the participation of different groups of the society intended by the planning process. strategic planning processes are the following:

- Media announcements, and general meetings to describe strategic planning processes.
- Meetings with different groups, identifying working groups, and periodic publications.
- Establishing offices for guidance and counseling and answering various inquiries.

In order to achieve the commitment of the groups participating in the planning and implementation processes, it must: Continuously emphasize the need for the commitment of the organization's members in general, and the planning team in particular. Also, set a time-bound work schedule, set real and appropriate expectations for the participants in the planning process, and use opportunities to achieve success. Follow-up and continuous communication between the planning team and linking the organization to the surrounding environment.

Step Three: Analyzing the needs and desires of the beneficiaries of the institution's services:

Where the institution must take into account the needs and desires of the beneficiaries of its services. This means that the advice and guidance of the beneficiaries must be taken into account in the planning process and it is necessary for them to participate in setting the institution's mission, vision and values. As well as, they can help in identifying the gap between the expectations and the current performance of the institution.

Step Four: Analyze the strengths and weaknesses in the organization's performance, the opportunities and challenges surrounding it:

To develop a realistic plan, the strengths and weaknesses of the institution's performance must be identified. Also, an analysis of the external environment, to identify the opportunities and challenges that may face the work of the institution in the future. The process of examining strengths and weaknesses should focus on issues such as: building the institution, its prevailing culture, its employees, and its financial condition. Determine the sources of obtaining information to conduct the examination process: employee surveys, beneficiary surveys, political development file, internal databases, annual reports, budget requirements, program evaluation, and internal plans.

As for the analysis of the internal environment, it is considered one of the important and distinctive features of strategic planning, as it determines whether or not the institution performs in light of past trends, current reality, and future possibilities. Some of the strong factors that may affect the organization are demographic changes, economic conditions, organizational changes, and technological developments. Among the sources of obtaining information: government statistical databases and reports, government legislation, laws, budgets, political statements, special studies, and information centers in colleges and universities.

Step Five: Establishing the Strategic Direction:

Determining the strategic direction helps define the identity the organization. Defines what the organization is, and what it seeks to achieve. working to help the organization in : setting

priorities among multiple requests and goals. Judging how to handle and carry out various tasks. Building a spirit of teamwork and raising morale among employees and acquiring the long-term view necessary to achieve real change in the current situation of the organization.

Defining a vision is summed up as "a visualization of an attractive, reliable and realistic future." There are many approaches to developing vision statements, including: reviewing the analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Conducting brainstorming sessions, drawing a schematic vision for the future, and developing a vision for the future through the participation of institutions society. The use of the reports of the planning committees, and the completed tasks they contain, and also, the use of visions developed by other institutions.

The development of the organization's vision is linked to the development of the message, and a good message must answer the following questions: Who are we? Who do we serve? What is the main purpose for which we exist? What are the problems and difficulties for which we were founded? What are we striving to achieve? What makes us special and unique?

Determining the institution's vision and mission is also linked to defining the institution's values, as they are the principles that guide the institution's behavior, and the expressions of values are defined in the form of topics: mutual respect between service providers and beneficiaries, ethical standards that regulate dealing, policies of equal opportunity, and an emphasis on distinguished services.

Step Six: Define Strategic Topics:

Specific strategic issues for the future of the institution, so they must be arranged logically. To enable the organization to carry out its mission. In order for the organization to define and distinguish its strategic issues, it needs to answer the following questions: What is the issue? Why is it a topic? Who said it was an issue? How do we know it is a subject? What factors made it a strategic issue? Can the Foundation do something about this? What are the consequences of not registering this topic?

Step Seven: Develop goals and objectives Performance measures:

Objectives are one of the main tools needed to determine the direction of the organization towards the future. Objectives are general phrases directed at subjects that focus actions towards achieving a specific and clear purpose. The objectives are usually related to strategic issues such as education and public health. When goal statements are developed, the following questions should be taken into account:

1. Are the objectives compatible with the institution's legislative framework, vision, mission and values?
2. Does the achievement of goals help achieve the vision and mission?
3. Do the objectives reflect strategic issues and priorities?
4. Do the goals provide clear directions for action?
5. Are long-term goals unconstrained by time?

The next step is defining objectives, which are defined as "interim, measurable steps towards achieving the organization's vision and long-term goals." It is directly related to the objectives, and is it measurable. It focuses on the results of the organization's performance at the end of the period

specified for the implementation of the plan, and the criteria for writing objectives are:

1. Specific: it reflects the tasks to be carried out, not the methods (strategies) used to achieve it.
2. measurable Objectives must be measurable, as they are the means to make performance measurable.
3. Strong but accessible: the objectives represent criteria for progress, and therefore they must be challenging the capabilities of the organization, but realistically and within the scope of the organization's ability to achieve.
4. Results: it must be specific to results and outputs.
5. Specific time: for each purpose must specify the time for its completion.

Of course, defining goals and objectives will be insufficient without standing on mechanisms for evaluating progress that help in correcting and adjusting in a timely manner. Successful strategic planning processes are built on the basis of accountability, and performance measurement must be part of the strategic plan and used to evaluate performance towards achieving goals and objectives.

Step Eight: Defining Strategies and Action Plans:

The next step, after defining a destination, is determining how to get there. Strategies are means to complete goals and objectives. More than one strategy may be used to accomplish each purpose. Therefore, the specific and available strategies must be reviewed; To ensure that it meets all previously identified goals and objectives, and its effectiveness by identifying the strategies used by another organization to achieve similar goals, and can it be modified or added to outputs. improve its effectiveness? Evaluating the available strategies helps narrow the space for choice and comparison. When doing the evaluation, the following must be taken into account:

1. Does the strategy reflect the institution's legislative framework, vision, mission and values?
2. Is the strategy clearly linked to the achievement of defined goals and objectives?
3. Is the strategy realistic so that political considerations determine staffing and costs?
4. Is the strategy technically practical?
5. Will the strategy be accepted by the beneficiaries?
6. Is the strategy compatible with other strategies used?

Step Nine: implementing the plan:

If an appropriate strategy is chosen, implementation plans must be developed; to provide details of the

implementation of the strategic plan, and implementation plans must specify: the tasks of the work team (employees), implementation steps, work schedule and implementation deadlines, cost and expenditure information, and funding sources.

Step Ten: measuring performance / evaluating results:

Evaluation represents the feedback loop in the strategic planning processes, complementing the cycle that starts from planning and ends with performance. It should be noted that there are three different types of monitoring and evaluation, they are:

1. Performance Monitoring: Performance must be monitored and reported regularly and at frequent intervals. Regular monitoring not only helps to locate problems, but also works to show the strength of the strategy and its usefulness. This type of monitoring must include an answer to the following questions:

- Is the organization progressing towards achieving its vision?
- Does the organization implement its mission?
- Does the organization act in ways consistent with its values?
- Does the organization meet the expectations of the beneficiaries?

2. Monitoring processes: implementation processes must also be monitored and evaluated. In doing so, the following questions must be asked and answered:

- Is our situation now better than before the introduction of the principle of planning?
- Will planning again work to achieve where we are? And if so, what have we changed?
- Are the beneficiaries part of the work team? How do we support this relationship.

3. Monitoring the environment: The external world and the surrounding environment are constantly changing, monitoring the external environment needs regular and continuous monitoring, which makes the organization aware of the changes taking place in various fields. Since strategic planning depends on analyzing the external environment to identify opportunities and challenges, changes in that environment may affect the implementation of the plan used.

Obstacles to applying strategic planning in higher education

The challenges facing the introduction of strategic planning in higher education institutions can be summarized as follows (9):

- scientific writings that dealt with this method until recently.

➤ There is a lot of writing which dealt with this method, but the majority of these writings focus on providing specific rules for its application, and provide little about the main element on which the process depends.

➤ This method is still in its early stages. It was only applied a few years ago in the field of public education and has not yet been subjected to the test of time in order for a specific definition to be given to it in the field of higher education.

Among the obstacles that face the use of strategic planning as well (10):

1. The difficulty of developing a strategic planning system that can be implemented with capabilities available.
2. The difficulty of collecting information and data and analyzing them to develop theoretical and applied strategic plans.
3. Weak budget and resources of the institution, and the lack of multiple sources to improve its financial position.
4. Strategic planning requires a lot of time and cost as a result of the discussions to develop the vision, which takes a lot of time, and the need for a huge amount of data and information that requires high costs.
5. The administrative and political instability of the institution negatively affects its implementation.
6. Weak interest in the human element in terms of training and motivation.

Findings and recommendations

This study is a descriptive study and was fully subjected to the descriptive approach, through which he reached the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The poor level of planning practice in all its forms, especially planning in higher education, in a significant degree indicates a deficiency in its application. Factors and obstacles that limit its application vary from one environment to another.
2. The low level of general acceptance of the institution for strategic planning, especially in making strategic decisions, due to the suffering of higher education institutions from some administrative, financial and academic problems resulting from the poor rapid response to the requirements of its application.

Descriptive study proved that the relationship of strategic planning with all its collective and individual dimensions to higher education is a correlation with the surrounding environment that affects and is affected by all variables.

And the thing that is recommended is the application of strategic planning in its correct scientific concept in all institutions of higher education in its academic and technical quality to take advantage of its advantages and benefits in development, enlightenment and achieving the desired goals. As well as working to establish departments, offices and divisions for strategic planning at the level of higher education institutions.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to discover the nature of strategic planning in the field of higher education, where the relevant literature on this subject was questioned, which led to the proposal of a new model for the development of the strategic plan for higher education institutions. As this model will help leaders to develop their perceptions of strategic planning in higher education and discuss the difficulties that they may encounter during the process of developing their plans and identify the main steps of the development planning process. This work is specific because it focuses on one social area and the results cannot be applied immediately to other areas. This limitation can be overcome through future research by applying this proposed model to other areas, strategic planning has the ability to overcome obstacles within complex organizations because they contain a large group of different segments of society as well as a wide range of diverse sciences such as universities, colleges and other technical institutes.

However, negligence and lack of experience in using the basic stages of the process leads many plans to gather dust instead of leading the institution towards achieving its mission and vision, because strategic planning begins with deep knowledge and a clear understanding of the role of strategic motivation, and the planning process is a realistic curved process that depends on surveying internal and external indicators That converts specific goals and objectives and resource allocation into significant results.

The strategic plan begins by creating a statement of the organization's mission and vision, highlighting the main goals and objectives, and establishing the main strategies that adopt indicators to reach the desired achievements of the organization, and among the main reasons for developing the strategic plan is to ensure that each planning component is linked to each other in order to be mutually supportive. The mission statement is a basic building block for the entire process, where the vision statement and strategic objectives must be part of the supporting documents that define the context of the strategic plan. Improvement without a mission, vision, values and strategic goals, or why do they do it? What are they

doing Therefore, strategic planning is a motive for commitment and a clear direction for modern higher education institutions that seek to compete in research and the labor market today and tomorrow.

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