

THE DEGREE OF COMMITMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN JORDAN TO THE STRATEGIC PLANNING STANDARDS

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ABSTRACT: *The main purpose of the present study is to identify the importance of strategic planning, the strategic planning standards and the obstacles against the commitment to strategic planning in the higher education institutions. Thereafter, to shed light on the degree of commitment of the higher education institutions in Jordan to the strategic planning standards. The study has produced a cluster of results and recommendations, the most significant of which is that the higher education institutions in Jordan are highly committed to the strategic planning standards. The researcher also recommends conducting more spaced out studies on all the educational institutions in Jordan to specify the best strategies used in those institutions to be generalized on the rest of the educational institutions.*

KEYWORDS: Degree of Commitment, Higher Education, Institution, Jordan, Strategic Planning,

INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning in higher education is the proper doorway to achieve long – term objectives. It is of the most important tasks of management in modern institutions and a basic element in national activities like education and scientific research which helps to encounter the future snags and challenges that may undermine the teaching process. Strategic planning is also related to the determination of the institution's attitude in the future concerning the mission and objectives it is going to adopt through analyzing the present and future situation of the surrounding context and self – abilities. (Tawfiq, 2004).

Moreover, strategic planning provides the practical, methodological and objective grounds to pursue the implementation mechanism of the activities, the required resources allocation and the level of the needed achievement and performance to realize the goal of those activities. (Ali, 2012). The significance of strategic planning increases in the educational and academic milieu as one of the most important ideal managerial tools and styles to solve multiple problems related to the academic work management within universities to avoid failure and realize the supreme purposes for which universities were established, overcome the hardships related to choosing the appropriate alternatives and strategies and to identify work priorities in those universities. (Ali, 2012).

Thus, we have to concentrate on drawing clear and specific strategies for the higher education institutions in Jordan for its great effect in economic development, its containment and industry of knowledge and its work as a basic tool to transfer the cultural and scientific experiences accumulated through ages. (Albreidi, 2007).

The Study Problem:

Higher education is the core of sustainable development in any country. It is responsible for preparing leaderships in all the productive and service local community sectors. With all the achievements realized by higher education in Jordan through the universities which are spread all over the country, it is still facing hard situations and big challenges that affect its ability to keep up with modern evolutions and fulfill the needs and demands of development. (Al-Ameen, 2009). Therefore, we have to uplift higher education and scientific research on the country's level by means of an integrated civilizational project based on rational management; and since the strategic planning is of the most important tools of the ideal management under those problems, we have to identify the degree of commitment of the higher education institutions in Jordan to the strategic planning standards.

The Study Questions:

- 1- What is the concept of strategic planning.
- 2- What are the strategic planning standards.
- 3- What are the obstacles against commitment to strategic planning in the higher education institutions.
- 4- What is the degree of commitment of the higher education institutes in Jordan to the strategic planning standards.

The Study Objectives:

The importance of this study stems from the significance of its topic which is the higher education institutions represented in the governmental and private universities with their graduates in different vocational, industrial and medical domains together with the consequent impact on the sustainable development of the country. Universities, like other institutions, are liable to future fluctuations and accelerated development in all fields and they have to catch up with the course of development and to face challenges; and since the overstepping of those challenges is the responsibility of the different administrations, the degree of commitment of those administrations to the strategic planning standards has to be verified as one of the most important possible solutions to confront the urgent future challenges and circumstances.

The Study Terminology

- 1- **Strategic Planning:** It is the type of planning which is basically interested in designing strategies that enable the institution to practice optimal utilization to its resources, respond to the variables of the external environment, assess the internal powers and the weakness aspects of the institution, develop visions of the future of those institutions and the used methods to accomplish those tasks, apply those plans through a control and follow up system and determine the necessary changes and amendments that can be performed on those plans. (Al-Dboubi, 2012).

2- Higher Education: This means all academic stages subsequent to general secondary including the Diploma, the Bachelor degree, the Master degree and the Doctorate degree with all their theoretical and applied branches. (Al-Dboubi, 2012).

Strategic Planning:

Through functional perspective, strategic planning is defined as: "The process through which the guiding members of an organization can produce a notion for the future of this organization and to place the necessary procedures and processes to realize this future". (Nolan & Pfeiffer. Goodstein). It is also possible to look at strategic planning through the continuous deterministic change perspective as being "A process based on renovation and organizational conversion which can provide the appropriate needed means to accommodate services and activities with the environmental circumstances which are subject to changes. Strategic planning is a framework to improve the programs, management and cooperative relations and to assess the progress of the organization. Peter Drucker presented a comprehensive definition to strategic planning starting from decision making reaching at evaluation and following up as a set of "continuous and organized processes to make constitutive decisions related directly to the future of the organization, regulating the required efforts to accomplish those decisions and the measurement of the outcome of those decisions by means of achieved ones by their specific expectations through a sound system of evaluation and following up". Some go to the extreme in asserting the future of strategic planning and define it as connected long – term high leveled planning activities which focus on what the organization should be in the future irrespective of its current situation. (MacEwan, Charlie, 1995).

Strategic Planning for Education:

Accommodating the results of the external environment assessment of an educational institution with the internal environment resources of said institution is considered as strategic planning. This operation should be able to help the educational institutions utilize the points of strength and limit the points of weakness, in addition to making use of chances and reducing threats. The concept of higher education strategic planning is determined in extensive operations for all the aspects of the university with a future examination where a number of members participate to determine what the university should be when it uses its internal points of strength and the available chances in its external environment. It should also pair the points of strength with the chances to achieve the best results (cope). It can be said that the strategic planning for higher education is "The science and art of directing all the powers of the higher education institution toward the development of strategies and taking the substantial decisions which determine the future of the institution as well as placing the necessary plans to achieve goals and purposes and solve the problems to reach at the desired future". (Al-Rabei'ee, 2006).

Higher Education Strategic Planning Standards:

1- Vision and Mission: Specifying the vision and mission of the institution is the first step for any strategy in the framework of the university's philosophy which represents the context through which the targeted strategies are placed and evaluated.

- 2- Analyzing and surveying the internal and external environment: This takes place through analyzing the information about the external environment of the institution (the economic, social, demographic, political, legal, technological and international context) and industry and the internal factors of the institution (registration, success, failure and graduation averages).
- 3- Analyzing the gap: The assessment of the difference between the present situation and the targeted one to reach at a mechanism to bridge the gap. Accordingly, the university can develop certain strategies, determine the sources to fill the gap and realize the desirable situation.
- 4- Comparison with the best: Measuring and comparing the operations, practices and performance of the university with those of other institutions to determine the best practices. Through the continuous comparison with the best, higher education institutions can determine a helpful standard to specify their goals and purposes.
- 5- Strategic programming: Universities put strategic goals and work plans during the strategic programming phase to confront strategic issues and place intended strategies to achieve their mission.
- 6- Incidental strategies to face the events which differ from those planned for where the university has to respond in a flexible and factual manner.
- 7- Evaluating the strategy: The periodical evaluation for strategies and work plan is very important to give success to the strategic planning process through measuring the performance at least once a year (preferably more) which helps in assessing the impact of the strategy applied by the university and its long – term results as well as its effect on the vision and mission of the university.
- 8- Reviewing the strategic plan after measuring the progress achieved by the university. The university needs to review its strategic plan to perform the needed amendments and concord its activities according to this review. The amended plan must consider the incidental strategies and changes which may affect the targeted situation. (Arabiyat, 2003).

Obstacles against the commitment to strategic planning in the higher education institutions:

First: The rapid growth is students' numbers:

The higher education in Arab countries is described by its rapid growth of students' numbers. However, those numbers are now less than those in the 1970s because of the unemployment problems faced by the graduates and the unavailability of proper jobs with proper wages. This turnout to higher education is because of the great increase in population by the increasing numbers of those who get the secondary certificate and go to universities.

Second: The wide gap between the inputs and outputs of higher education:

This is because of the non – participation of producers, technicians and professionals in designing the educational programs on all levels in addition to the work of many graduates in jobs other than their academic specializations whereby education turned to be a mere social privilege in some majors.

Third: Monadic systematic attitude in the structure of education:

The concept of education in general and the higher education in particular has become a synonym to the scholastic work that dictates information. In addition, the processes of taking decisions, drawing policies, placing educational plans for curricula and assimilating students in all academic stages have all become centralized processes shared by limited categories which are mostly of technical and administrative nature.

Fourth: Problem of admittance in higher education:

Of the great and continuous challenges faced by the planners of higher education are the huge public turnout and the desire to study certain majors like medicine and engineering because of their physical and moral payoff in spite of the existed unemployment among physicians and engineers in the Arab world.

Fifth: The freeware of education and its dependency to the state. There are many negative aspects of the freeware of education which are considered of the obstacles and challenges to the planning strategies in higher education of which:

- Bureaucracy: which makes the planning and reforming process difficult and slow.
- Centralization of decision making: Whereupon universities created in the same country recurrent versions of colleges, systems, curricula and university books....etc.
- Singularity and control of decision making: The first decision is for the higher administrator, who was appointed and not elected, and when he / she realizes the source of their power, they do not pay attention to the opinion of the group like the university councils for example.
- The preoccupation of the management in the ballooned routine administrative problems which prevent the administrators from following up the planning, researching and developing acts.

Sixth: The limitedness of development in the content of higher education.

Higher education has developed in Arab countries and this resulted in opening applied colleges and majors and expanding their fields for the purposes of development, but it remained slow in amending the traditional majors of both the theoretical and applied colleges even though some limited amendments were arranged. This resulted in the hang back of the higher education contents and curricula which are originally imported.

Seventh: cognitive progress and rapid technical development:

No sooner we witness new scientific discoveries than they are replaced by more developed and complicated ones which leads us to an accumulation of knowledge as a direct or indirect result of higher education which prepares scientists and researchers and includes scientific research centers with all its operations an outputs of scientific discoveries.

Eighth: The high costs of higher education:

Monetary inflation and price rise directly affect higher education because of its need to costly equipment and facilities in addition to the rise of the teaching, administrative and service bodies salaries (Arafeh, 2009; Al-Rabee', 2006; Arabiyat, 2003).

Statistical approaches:

Having applied the study tool in its final form and attained the required data, the researcher entered the data to the statistical program (SPSS)¹ to perform the necessary tests represented in the following:

- 1- Calculating Chronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient to verify the reliability of the tool.
- 2- Frequencies, means, standard deviations and percentages of the study sample and tool.
- 3- T – test.

METHODOLOGY

The study population and tool: The study population consisted of the employees of Jerash University management in the academic year (2016 / 2017) who counted (80) employees while the sample incorporated (63) employees from the university management who were chosen following the random cluster method representing (%78) of the local population.

The study tool:

In order to achieve the expected objectives of this study and to answer its questions, the researcher prepared a questionnaire based on the former literature and studies which were conducted on the largest Jordanian universities. (annex No.1).

Reliability of the study tool:

The researcher used the internal consistency reliability equation (split – half) to find and correct the study tool through Spearman Brown equation. The following table shows the values of the split – half reliability and the corrected reliability.

Table No. (1) The study tool reliability coefficient

Split – half reliability coefficient	Corrected reliability coefficient
0.89	0.94

$$\text{Corrected reliability equation} = 2 \times \text{split – half reliability coefficient} / 1 + \text{split – half coefficient}$$

Data analysis and hypotheses test:**First: Descriptive statistical results:****Table No. (2) The demographic features of the members of the study sample under study**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Academic qualification	Diploma	21	33.3 %
	Bachelor's degree	36	57.1%
	Higher studies	6	9.5%
Gender	Male	33	52.4%
	Female	30	47.6%
Years of experience	Less than 5 years	9	14.3%
	From 5 to 15 years	45	71.4%
	16 years and more	9	14.3%
Total		63	100%

The previous table points out that the distribution of the sample members was as follows:

(%66.6) of them have a bachelor degree or Master degree, the majority of them have more than five years' experience in the university management field at (%85.7). Considering these statistics, we can say that the study sample have enough knowledge, experience and qualifications to understand the study questions, answer the items of its tool and realize its importance in the field of scientific and practical research.

Second: The Study results**a- Description of the study data:**

No.	Item	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
1	The university management is committed to specifying the vision and mission through its university philosophy.	3.59	0.99
2	The university management analyzes information about the external environment of the institution prior to planning its strategies	3.85	1.01
3	The university management analyzes information between about the internal environment of the institution prior to planning its strategies	3.57	1.07
4	The management assesses the difference the present and targeted situation to reach at a mechanism to bridge the gap and achieve the desirable situation	3.61	0.86
5	The university management measures and compares the operations, practices and performance of the university with other institutions to determine the best practices	3.52	1.03
6	The university management places strategic goals and work plans during the strategic planning phase to confront the strategic issues	3.19	1.03
7	The university management places intended strategies to realize its mission	2.15	0.48
8	The university management adopts incidental strategies to confront events that differ from those planned for by the university	2.33	0.73
9	The university management practices periodical assessment to the strategies and work plans to give success to the strategic planning process	2.33	0.85
10	The university management is committed to review the strategic plan after measuring the progress achieved by the university in its plan.	3.14	1.31
11	The university management considers the incidental modified plan and the changes that affect the targeted situation	3.71	4.55
Total		3.18	1.26

To describe the study data, the researcher found the arithmetic means and standard deviations of each item of the tool. The results are shown in the following table:

Table No. (3) The views of the study sample concerning the degree of commitment of the higher education institutions in Jordan to the strategic planning standards

We notice in the previous table that the arithmetic means ranged between (2.15 – 3.85) and that the highest arithmetic mean was for item No. (2) Which stated: "The university management analyzes information about the external environment of the institution prior to planning its strategies" with an arithmetic mean of (3.85) and a standard deviation of (1.01). The least arithmetic mean was for item No. (7) Which stated: "The university management places intended strategies to realize its mission" with an arithmetic mean of (2.15) and a standard deviation of (0.48) while the general arithmetic mean reached at (3.18) with a standard deviation of (1.26). The former results indicate the commitment of the higher education institutions in Jordan to the strategic planning standards with a high degree.

Third: Data analysis and testing the study hypothesis

Main Hypothesis: There is no statistically significant commitment at ($\alpha=0.05$) by the higher education institutions in Jordan to the strategic planning standards.

Table No. (4) The arithmetic means, standard deviations and T-Value for the study sample's members responses to the study tool

No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	df	T – value	Significance level
63	35.09	6.63	62	43.75	0.000

Viewing the former table, we see that there is statistically significant commitment at Alpha (0.05) by the higher education institutions in Jordan to the strategic planning standards where the calculated significance level was less than Alpha (0.05) and consequently the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and the rejection of the null hypothesis.

THE STUDY RESULTS

- 1- There is high commitment by the Jordanian universities managements to the strategic planning standards.
- 2- Strategic planning helps to cross the incidental obstacles and circumstances confronted by the university.
- 3- Strategic planning supports the teaching environment inside and outside universities and maintains the progress and development in higher education.
- 4- Strategic planning contributes in improving the manner of budget management of the university and limiting the unnecessary expenditures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- Conducting more expanded studies on all the educational institutions in Jordan to identify the best strategies to be generalized on the rest of the educational institution.
- 2- The attempt to find solutions for the obstacles that confine the effectiveness of strategic planning in the higher education institutions in Jordan.

3- Holding training courses for all the administrative cadres in universities to recognize the importance of strategic planning in raising the efficiency of the universities' performance and improving their teaching quality.

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Annex No. (1)

Dear brother / sister

May peace and blessing of Allah be upon you,

With due appreciation and respect, I kindly ask for your cooperation to accomplish this study by filling in the attached questionnaire about the subject of: **The degree of commitment of the higher education institutions in Jordan to the strategic planning standards**, considering that all the information you provide will be handled in complete confidentiality and will not be used except for the scientific research purposes. We promise to furnish you with a copy of the research's results upon its termination.

Please accept our best regards and respect...

Researcher

Khawla Husain alaiwa

Assistant professor – University of Hail

Phone number: 0096562499005

First axis:

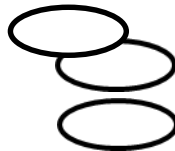
Demographic Data:

Academic qualifications

1- Diploma

2- Bachelor's degree

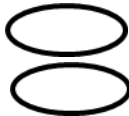
3- Higher education



Gender

1- Male

2- Female

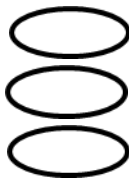


Years of Experience

1- Less than 5 years

2- From 5 to 10 years

3- 16 years and more



No.	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	The university management is committed to specifying the vision and mission through its university philosophy.					
2	The university management analyzes information about the external environment of the institution prior to planning its strategies					
3	The university management analyzes information about the internal environment of the institution prior to planning its strategies					
4	The management assesses the difference between the present and targeted situation to reach at a mechanism to bridge the gap and achieve the desirable situation					
5	The university management measures and compares the operations, practices and performance of the university with other institutions to determine the best practices					
6	The university management places strategic goals and work plans during the strategic planning phase to confront the strategic issues					
7	The university management places intended strategies to realize its mission					
8	The university management adopts incidental strategies to confront events that differ from those planned for by the university					
9	The university management practices periodical assessment to the strategies and work plans to give success to the strategic planning process					
10	The university management is committed to review the strategic plan after measuring the progress achieved by the university in its plan.					
11	The university management considers the incidental modified plan and the changes that affect the targeted situation					