

THE DEGREE OF POSSESSING STRATEGIC PLANNING SKILLS AMONG ACADEMIC LEADERSHIPS IN JORDANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to identify the degree of possessing strategic planning skills by academic leaders in Jordanian university. Strategic planning is not just a guarantee for an organization to sustain its financial position or supplying it with the ability to sustain its reserves, but it is a systematic process that involves several stages and steps through which the current position of the organization analyzes their strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats they encounters, identifies its vision and aims, chooses the strategic alternatives to achieve the objective effectively within the surrounding environmental conditions, and setting the strategic general plan as well as the strategies related to different functional areas. Other reasons includes preparing the cultural environment of the organization, preparing administrative leaders and improving communications and giving out information which is necessary for making better decisions, and setting executive plans and schedules as well as monitoring, follow-up and evaluating the performance of the organization (Farrah et al. 2001). Hussy (Hussy, 1982, p3) suggested that strategic planning is "an essential part of management, and a vital element because it shows the awareness of the future, and prepares the requirements in dealing with it".

Keywords: Strategic planning, academic leaderships, Jordanian Universities, SOWT analysis

1. Introduction

Due to global variables, the need of education for strategic planning calls for responses to the challenges that faces education, which includes the changes in population, scientific and technological development, and the increasing demand for education and its rising costs. Therefore, strategic planning helps to improve learning conditions, recruits better instructors, attracts excellent students and acquire modern facilities and equipment, as well as financial resources necessary for the achievement of its goals (Dooris et al. 2004).

Strategic planning is a mark of advanced organizations that has a work technique in order to enjoy pioneering or following pioneering organizations. Universities as well as other organizations, seeks superiority and competes in order to achieve good reputation related to instruction, scientific research, community service, which made universities aware of the importance of strategic planning as an effective tool for development and improvement.

Strategic planning is not just a guarantee for the organization to carry on its financial position or supplying it with the ability to sustain its reserves, because it is a systematic process that involves several stages and steps through which the existing position of the organization analyzes its strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats it encounters, identifies its vision and aims, chooses the strategic alternatives to achieve the objective efficiently within the surrounding environmental conditions, and setting the strategic general plan as well as the strategies related to different functional areas. Other reasons includes preparing the cultural environment of the organization, preparing administrative leaders and humanizing communications, providing the information necessary for making better decisions, and setting executive plans and schedules as well as monitoring, reporting-on and assessing the performance of the organization (Farrah et al. 2001). Hussy (Hussy, 1982, p3) suggested that strategic planning is "an essential part of management, and a vital element because it shows the awareness of the future, and prepares the requirements in dealing with it".

2. Research Problem and Questions:

The problem of this study is to identify the degree of possessing strategic planning skills and the role of it to show the extent of link between strategic planning processes and universities performance components among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities. However, the aim of this study is to provide answers to the following questions:

Question one: What is the degree of possessing strategic planning skills among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities?

Question two: What are the possession skills among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities?

Question three: What are the university visions among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities?

Question four: Are there any significant differences in the degree of possessing strategic planning skills due to demographic variable (gender, age, and experiences)?

3. Research Importance:

The significance of this study is taken from these core points:

1. Strategic planning help responsible and decision makers to know the weak points in strategic plans and avoid them to choose a clear indicators which help in shaping a universities' vision and aims which is in line with Jordanian environment.

2. This study may benefit the leaders at the ministry of higher education and scientific research, and the board for the authorization of higher education institutions in Jordan.

3. Leaders and decision makers at universities may benefit due to the fact that strategic planning is an appropriate tools for planning.

4. Put a quality strategy which is based on a comprehensive assessment and which is required to apply the overall quality for universities performance.

5. The researcher believes that strategic planning is still vague, and these studies help in contributing to raising the knowledge about strategic planning.

4. Research Aim and Objective:

1. To identify the degree of possessing strategic planning skills among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities.

2. To test if strategic planning is raising the efficiency and effectiveness of academic leaderships in Jordanian universities.

3. To identify the impediments that affects in applying strategic planning in Jordanian universities.

4. To examine the role of strategic planning in Jordanian universities performance according to these fields" i.e. the vision, aims, objectives/ universities rang/ universities sources and services.

5. Theoretical Framework:

Jordan has followed other countries in adopting the procedure of strategic planning in higher education. The King Hussein's fund for excellence, in cooperation with a group of consultants from the "Centre of Quality Assurance in International Education" held several workshops for

training (on how to prepare strategic plans for universities) whereby 18 universities participated (Al-Hussein Fund for Excellence, 2007) in the workshop. In response to the governmental directions concerning the necessity of setting a comprehensive strategic plan for the development of higher education sector and scientific research during the years (2007-2012), a conference was held on 13th May 2014, in which agreement on general guidelines was reached, as well as the main mechanism desired for higher education in Jordan. This is to achieve a high-quality education which is capable of producing people that are qualified to satisfy the needs of the community. Therefore, a national team was established for setting the required national strategy to be a reference where higher education organizations (institutions) commit themselves to (Ministry of higher education and scientific research, 2007). The ministry of higher education and scientific research held a workshop for universities under the title of "*Strategic planning for higher education institutions*" in the 1st and 2nd of December 2007, with the objective of training experts at Jordanian universities on setting strategic plans for their universities.

6. Previous studies:

Zaidoun, Waleed, (2001), clearly stated the needs of Strategic Administration and Institutional performance and the analytical study of the actuality of the industrial companies in Jordan. However, this study exposures the following results: The Company is implementing and practicing the strategic management process using its three stages. The hypotheses test results shows that there is a direct correlation between the provisions of the requirements of strategic management and the institutional performance of the Jordanian industrial public shareholding companies. The study recommends rising the concentration of the senior managements of the companies to hold up to the most up-to-date ideas while practicing administrative process either in terms of strategic management or other modern administrative methods. However, increasing the implementation of the concepts of strategic management at public and private sectors companies in a way includes other vital concepts of strategic administration. Also, it recommends the requirement for the senior management in the companies to be committed to the main administrative functions of planning, leadership, guidance, organization and monitoring during their administrative practices, and that this commitment has to expand to all managerial levels which form the organizational structure

Alkhateeb, saleh,(2003) made a study on Strategic Planning and Institutional Performance of the analytical Study for Jordanian Medication Industry sector The study aims at recognizing the institutional performance of companies included in this study, recognizing the most important factors

taken into consideration while performing the operation of the strategic planning, and recognizing the effect of the practice of strategic planning operation on the institutional performance. This study emanates from the proportion of 52% of the managers of the Jordanian medication companies who do not appreciate the scientific meaning of the strategic planning concept. The result of hypotheses tests shows that there are no statistical relation between the practice degree of the strategic planning and the institutional performance of these companies. Thus, the study recommends the need to increase attention in the strategic planning theme, and to find equal opportunities of growth and professional development for all the employees of both sexes, to assurance achieving their work satisfaction so as to raise the professional affiliation levels and the institutional performance as well, and to perform more studies and researches on the topic to prove the nature of the relation between strategic planning and institutional performance.

The study by Al-Harithy (2006) was aimed at revealing the degree of availability of strategic planning indexes at the female colleges in Saudi universities. Data were collected using a questionnaire which was distributed to the respondents (sample size, $n = 215$) including deans, heads of departments, and lecturers. Hence, the results of the study showed that the degree of strategic planning indexes availability at females' colleges was reasonable in terms of future vision, values, and strategic objectives.

Al-Dajny (2007) study was aimed at identifying the reality of strategic planning at the Islamic University in Gaza by analyzing the strategic plan under the Quality standards permitted by the national board of Quality and Accreditation. Data were collected via a questionnaire. Sample of the study consisted of 117 subjects. Outcomes of the study showed the clarity of the strategic planning concept among the administrations of the university, as can be seen from 89.75% of the study population who carry out strategic planning. Results also showed the weakness of expressing some factors of the vision and objectives.

Bawady (2008) study was aimed at analyzing the internal environment of Hadramout's university and the factors of strategic planning therein. This is to release the weaknesses and strengths on the components of the organizational environment of the university, and the components of the strategic planning at the university. Data were collected using a questionnaire which was sent to the subjects of the study ($n = 114$). Thus, the results of this study exposed the agreement among the members of the population of the study on the weakness of the internal environment components and the components of strategic planning at the university. In addition, the university is not yet capable in adopting the strategic method to overcome the obstacles it encounters.

Jaradat, M (2011), study aims at identifying the level of self-assessment skills amongs academic leaders at Jerash University – Jordan. In order to achieve the objective of this study, a questionnaire was handed out to 30 respondents (deans and departmental heads) at Jerash University. Following the data collection and processing, findings revealed that the level of self-assessment skills among the sample population was intermediate in general while planning, implementing and evaluating skills ranked at a higher level. Therefore, this study makes numerous recommendations, including running training workshops on the procedures of self-assessment studies.

Al-Hawamdeh, B and Al-Hawamdeh, Z (2012), study aims at identifying the degree of strategic planning skills among academic leaders at Jordanian private universities. To achieve the objective of the study, a questionnaire was developed, and its validity and reliability was checked. The sample of the study consists of 150 subjects, who are selected using random stratified sample from Jordanian private universities (Jerash, Irbid, Philadelphia, Zarqa', Isra' and Zaitounah). In conducting statistical analysis, results showed that the degree of strategic planning skills among academic leaders at private Jordanian universities is moderate in general, high for the vision and purposes domains, and moderate for values, procedural plans and environmental analysis (SWOT analysis). The study provided a set of recommendations including providing training courses in strategic planning and conducting assessment studies for the strategic plans.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2012): In recognizing both the difficulty of skills policies and the potential for peer learning, the OECD has developed a global Skills Strategy which has helped several countries to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their national skills systems, benchmark them internationally, and develop policies that can convert better skills into better jobs, economic growth and social inclusion. However, this paper presents a strategy that will help countries reach the goal of having and making the best use of a high-quality pool of skills. The OECD Skills Strategy transforms the focus from the traditional measures of skills, such as years of initial education and training or qualifications reached, to a much broader viewpoint which includes the skills people can acquire, use, maintain and also lose in an entire lifetime. Without sufficient investment in skills, people languish on the margins of society, and technological progress does not translate into economic growth, and countries can no longer compete in an increasingly knowledge-based global society. In addition, the book points out that for skills to maintain their value, they must be continuously maintained and upgraded throughout life so that people can collaborate, compete and attach in ways that drive economies and societies forward.

Parente, Diane H. et al (2012) study shows that the aim of this paper is to investigate whether managers can acquire strategic skills using management education methods in lieu of experience. It demonstrates that experienced-based pedagogical methods can be effective in developing traditional skills or "hard" skills and "soft" skills such as interpersonal communication, which thus assist in the acquisition of strategic skills. Design/methodology/approach –This paper uses data from questionnaires and achievement scores from capstone classes to determine whether the revelation of an experiential technique called large-scale simulation can lead students to acquire traditional, soft and strategic managerial skill sets. Findings – The results show that soft and traditional skills are complementary, as they together lead to better acquisition of strategic skills and also, mastering soft skills may enhance the mastery of traditional skills. Research limitations/implications – A limitation of the research stems from the use of students as research subjects. While this limits generalizability, it is important to remember that many of such students become successful managers in large and small organizations, partly due to their educational background. Hence, replicating these results with graduate and executive students is well required. Practical implications – A key practical implication is that organizations may be able to effectively enhance their own experienced-based developmental efforts for their managerial personnel with course-based learning. Originality/value – The paper's findings support an option for many firms, although this has not received much direct empirical support. Additionally, the results support the increasing emphasis placed on soft skills, suggesting that the development of strategic skills may help managers grasp the bigger-picture implications

Herrmann, Katharina; Komm, Asmus; Smit, Sven. McKinsey Quarterly (2012) discusses correlations between leadership and growth as gleaned from integrating and analyzing two databases, one on growth performance and the other including the performance appraisals of executives. Executives with high scores across all areas of competency are rare, suggesting that firms should improve and employ staff with specific skills that are correlated with growth. However, the authors' research shows that among all competencies, the most associated with improved performance was the ability to understand customers' needs.

INSET: Two unique performance databases.

Nadera Nofan Mryan (2012) present the vital elements of strategic planning through the construction of a flexible strategy, and the demonstration of its importance as a competitive advantage and a significant means to boost and strengthen such methods to be permanently adapted by the business organizations. The researcher discusses the impact of strategic planning on the performance of Jordanian banks. At all the Jordanian trade

banks listed on the Amman Stock Exchange, 14 banks have been undertaken, and 138 questionnaires which consists of 48 questions distributed on dependent and independent factors, was distributed on the sample study of all the banks. The study findings show that there is a statistically significant relation between Research and Development processes and the Central Bank Monitoring with regard to the competitive advantages of the bank. The study also recommends the supply of financial allocations for the strategic planning goals with the need to attract the human competences specialized, and to provide modern technologies required for the success of the strategic planning processes.

7. Design and methodology

Research approach

Survey approach was used in this research because this study depends on the documentation of previous studies in developing conceptual model, formulation hypotheses and in conducting the results (Sekaran, 2006). Quantitative approach is an appropriate design for this study because this approach well-being can be summarized as follows: questionnaires on well-being can be used with extensive samples, they can be easily adapted to a variety of settings, and can be applied in various cross-sectional and longitudinal studies (Hascher, 2008).

The researcher uses a deductive approach which is more likely to work with quantitative data to answer the questions about relationships among the essential factors with the purpose of explaining, predicting and controlling phenomena. Thus, the aim of a deductive approach is to reach the logical conclusion by a logical generalization (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001).

Population of the study

The population of the study consists of all Jordanian public universities. Therefore, the research population consists of all academic administrations whose number are (7) public universities, and the academic administrations number are (563) leadership.

Sampling method

The sample of the study consists of (100) academic leaders, who were selected using random stratified sample from the academic administrations at the Jordanian public universities (Al-AIByat University, University of Jordan, Al-Blaqa University, Al-Hussan' University, Mu'tah University Al-Yarmouk University and University of science and technology) for the academic session (year) 2013/2014.

Data collections method

The researcher used descriptive analytical method to determine the research problem which talks about the degree of possessing strategic planning skills among academic leaderships in Jordanian universities. Hence, descriptive and analytical method are data collection methods used in studying the accurate descriptions of the phenomena which through it can achieve considerable progress in dilemmas solving through the perception of the researcher to the present situation and identifies the relationships between phenomena which endeavors to put a predication about related events. (Allam, 2010). Thus, the researcher designs a questionnaire

A questionnaire is established through reviewing theoretical literature and the revision of previous studies that addressed the strategic planning, such as the studies of Al-Harithy (2006), Al-Dajny (2006) and Badawi (2008). The questionnaire is divided into two main parts, the first part includes (gender, age, and experience); while the second part includes (20) items which measures the degree of processing the strategic planning skills among academic leaderships at Jordanian universities.

Data analysis tools and Techniques

The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) in analyzing the data. To test the hypotheses of the research frequency and means, t-test and (ANOVA) were applied.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To check the validity and reliability of the instrument, Content Validity is developed and check by specialists (3) in Jordanian University, while to check the reliability, Cronbach Alpha was calculated (0.82).

Procedure of the study

After checking the validity and reliability of the study, selecting the study sample, and including the required approval to conduct the study, (120) questionnaire were sent to the subjects from the academic leaders at the Jordanian private universities, and (100) questionnaires were returned ((82) Responses). To identify the degree of possession, means were calculated as follows:

- Means less than (2.33) weak degree.
- Means range (2.34 – 3.66) Medium degree.
- Means more than (3.36) High degree.

8. Findings of the Study

Sample Characteristics

Demographic characteristics:

Table (1): Demographic characteristics for participant Table (1) shows that:

- For gender variable, the highest category (male) by frequency (65) percentage (65.0%) , but the lowest category (female) by frequency (35) percentage (35.0%).
- For age variable, the highest category ((40-45) years) by frequency (45) percentage (45.0%), then category ((35-40) years) by frequency (33) percentage (33.0%), but the lowest category ((45-50) years old) by frequency (22) percentage (22.0%).
- For experience variable, the highest category ((4-6) years) by frequency (42) percentage (%42.0), then category (3 years experience and less) by frequency (17) percentage (17.0%), then ((7-9) years) category frequency reached (16) by percentage (16.0%), then category ((10-12) years) by frequency (13) percentage (13.0%), but the lowest category (more of 12 years) by frequency (12) percentage (12.0%).

Questions and Answers

Question one: What is the degree of possessing strategic planning skills among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities?

In answering this question, the means and standard deviation for each domain of the degree of possessing strategic planning skills is totaled; table (2) shows that.

Table (2):

Table (2) shows that the highest means reached (3.73) out of (5) for domains (2) "the university vision" by high agreement degree, but the lowest means was (3.71) for domain (1) "possession skills" by high agreement degree.

Also, the total means for the degree of possessing strategic planning skills reached (3.71) by high agreement degree.

Question two: What are the possession skills among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities?

In answering this question, the means and standard deviation for each item of possession skills is totaled; table (3) shows that.

Table (3):

Table (3) shows that the highest means reached (4.19) out of (5) for item (1), "I possess the skill of clarifying the scope of work at present in the future" by high agreement degree; then for items (7), "I possess the skill of specifying goals based on available recourses" by high agreement degree

(means 3.90); then for item (12), " I possess the skill of setting schedule for the strategic plan " by high agreement degree (means 3.78). But the lowest means was (3.38) for item (2), "I possess the skill of involving those concerned with forming the mission" by medium agreement degree.

Therefore, the total mean for possession skills domain reached (3.71) by high agreement degree.

Question three: What are the university visions among academic leaderships at the Jordanian universities?

In answering this question, the means and standard deviation for each item of the university vision is totaled; table (3) shows that.

Table (4):

Table (4) shows that the highest means reached (4.05) out of (5) for item (6), "the university determines its aims in light of a valuable resources" by high agreement degree; then for items (1), "the university vision determines the activity field and its strategic destination in future " by high agreement degree (means 3.84); then for item (2) "the university vision consolidates the employee's opinions around future trends" by high agreement degree (means 3.82). But the lowest means was (3.20) for item (8), "the university take into account the clarity for the formulation of the objectives" by medium agreement degree.

The total means for the university vision domain reached (3.73) by high agreement degree.

Question four: Are there any significant differences in the degree of possessing strategic planning skills due to demographic variable (gender, age, and experiences)?

In answering this question, the means and standard deviation for the variables uses (independent- sample T.test) for gender and uses (One- Way ANOVA) for age and experience variables.

- Gender variable

Table (5) shows that:

- There are no statistic significant difference in the degree of possessing strategic planning skills, due to gender variable, whenever t. value was (0.572) by significant (0.569).

Age variable:

Table (6): the result of (One- Way ANOVA) for total due to age variable

Table (6) shows that:

- There are no statistic significant difference in the degree of possessing strategic planning skills, due to age variable, whenever f. value was (0.201) by significant (0.818).

Experience variable:

Table (7): the result of (One- Way ANOVA) for each total due to experience variable

Table (7) shows that:

There are no statistic significant difference in the degree of possessing strategic planning skills, due to the experience variable, whenever f. value was (0.338) by significant (0.852)

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Appendix

Table (1): Demographic characteristics for participants

Variable	Categories	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	65.0
	Female	35	35.0
	Total	100	100.0
Age (years)	(40-35) years	33	33.0
	(40-45) years	45	45.0
	(45-50) years old	22	22.0
	Total	100	100.0
Experience	3 years experience and less	17	17.0
	(4-6) years	42	42.0
	(7-9) years	16	16.0
	(10-12) years	13	13.0
	more of 12 years	12	12.0
Total	100	100.0	

Table (2): Means and standard deviation for domains of the degree of possessing strategic planning skills

No	Domains	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Rank	Agreement Degree
1	Possession skills	3.71	0.39	2	High
2	The university vision	3.73	0.45	1	High
	Total Means	3.71	0.33	-	High

Table (3): Means and standard deviation for each item of possession skills domain

No	Items	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Rank	Agreement Degree
1	I possess the skill of clarifying the scope of work at present in the future	4.19	0.95	1	High
2	I possess the skill of involving those concerned with forming the mission	3.38	1.17	12	Medium
3	I possess the skill of forming a clear vision for my place of work	3.61	1.12	9	Medium
4	I possess the skill of forming a mission that reflects the available abilities	3.67	1.13	7	High
5	I possess the skill of involving those concerned with forming the vision	3.57	1.11	11	Medium
6	I possess the skill of employing the capacities of work in a way that enables achieving the goals	3.68	1.02	6	High
7	I possess the skill of specifying goals based on available recourses	3.90	1.01	2	High
8	I possess the skill of distinguishing between goals and purposes	3.77	0.95	4	High
9	I possess the skill of identifying the means which achieves the main purpose	3.65	1.08	8	Medium
10	I possess the skill of classifying strategic topics according to their	3.69	1.12	5	High

levels					
11	I possess the skill of acquiring knowledge of strategic topics affecting the ability of the department to achieve its goals	3.58	1.16	10	Medium
12	I possess the skill of setting a schedule for the strategic plan	3.78	0.85	3	High
Total Means		3.71	0.39	-	High

Table (4): Means and standard deviation for items of the university vision domain

No	Items	Mean	Standard. Deviation	Rank	Agreement Degree
1	The university vision determines the activity field and its strategic destination in the future	3.84	1.03	2	High
2	The university vision consolidates the employee's opinions around future trends.	3.82	0.88	3	High
3	The university establishes its vision clearly	3.63	1.06	7	Medium
4	The university vision shows the aspects that distinguish it from other universities.	3.77	0.93	4	High
5	The university vision is integrated with the aims with which it establishes them	3.76	1.05	5	High
6	The university determines its aims in the light of a valuable resources	4.05	0.73	1	High
7	The university engages the employee in the preparation of the university strategy.	3.74	1.32	6	High
8	The university take into account the clarity for the formulation of the objectives	3.20	1.42	8	Medium
Total Means		3.73	0.45	-	High

Table (5): The result of (independent- sample T.test) for total due to gender variable

Domain	Male		Female		"t" value	Sig
	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation		
The degree of possessing strategic planning skills	3.73	0.35	3.69	0.27	0.572	0.569

Table (6): The result of (One- Way ANOVA) for total due to age variable

Domain	(35-40) years		(40-45) years		(45-50) years old		"F" value	Sig
	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation		
the degree of possessing strategic planning skills	3.73	0.26	3.72	0.35	3.68	0.36	0.201	0.818

Table (7): The result of (One- Way ANOVA) for each total due to experience variable

Domain	3 years and less		(4-6) years		(7-9) years		(10-12) years		more of 12 years		"F" value	Sig
	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation	Mean	standard deviation		
The degree of possessing strategic planning skills	3.72	0.33	3.75	0.37	3.66	0.36	3.67	0.24	3.69	0.15	0.338	0.852