

## ASPECTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Assefa Beyene Bassa<sup>1</sup> and Dr. R. Ranganathan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, India

Email: ase200840@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, India

Email: santha\_rang@yahoo.co.in

### ABSTRACT

*Currently, the complexities inherent in higher education management are enormous. Many scholars agree that institutional environment related factors which are internally and externally driven affecting the performance of this day's higher education institutions. Some of these factors involve massification and expansion of higher education system; reduced public funding; high quality concern; the requirement for more results with less resource (efficiency concern); fast developments in Information & Communication Technology; and effects of globalization. These all require visionary leaders who are able to make strategic changes and respond to their institutions internal and external environments by thinking, planning and implementing strategically. But this could not happen by miracles unless the leaders of this day's universities understand clearly about the major aspects of strategic planning and strategy implementation. Thus, this article which focused on the theoretical review was intended to explore the key aspects of strategic planning and strategy implementation in higher education institutions. Because understanding the basic concepts and the major aspects of strategic planning and strategy implementation can be helpful in at least three ways. First, it helps the leaders of higher education institutions to be more proactive in responding to external pressures; secondly it helps them to guide the strategic planning team and other concerned stakeholders by creating an inspiring strategic vision during the strategic planning process; and finally it helps them to guide, follow up and monitor the strategy implementation processes with expertise.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Planning, Strategy Implementation, Proactive Leadership, HEIs

### INTRODUCTION

The complexities inherent in higher education management are enormous. Higher education faces problems throughout the world: universities are underfunded; raising worries about

quality, the emergence of the knowledge society and social dynamics; fastest growing and changing information and communication technologies; inadequate student support; the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is lamentably small; increasing demands of external stakeholders for knowledge production, wealth creation, and social relevance; and the effects of globalization (Barr, 2005; Romano, 2009; see also Salminen, 2003). These situations have placed excessive pressure on higher education institutions to maintain vigilance and be strategically positioned to seize opportunities and avert threats quickly and efficiently. Thus, the “key to successful institutional leadership, management and advancement is the design and implementation of a functional long range and strategic planning process” (Wilkinson, Taylor, Peterson & Taylor, 2007, 11).

However, the authors observed that there are confusions regarding the aspects of strategic planning in higher education both in the literature and practices. Some say strategic planning in public institutions including higher education institutions starts with vision statement and some others say no it starts with mission statement.

The goal of this article was to provide a brief conceptual image about the major aspects of strategic planning and strategy implementation in higher education institutions. Its framework centred on: describing the concept and benefits of strategic planning, the need for strategic planning, the importance of stakeholders’ participation in strategic planning process, and indicating the major aspects of strategic planning and strategy implementation in higher education institutions.

## **The Concept and Benefits of Strategic Planning in HEIs**

Before attempting to offer a definition of what strategic planning is, it is important to state that when some organizations want to change, they plan for it, and this planned change is part of the overall management approach (Katsioloudes, 2006). Accordingly, Goodstein (1993, 11) defined strategic planning as “the process by which the guiding members of an organization envision the future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future”. Strategic plan, sometimes called a corporate or institutional development plan, details the measures which the institution intends to take to achieve its mission. Its aim is to give the institution guidance and direction (Sallis, 2002).

Simerson (2011) asserted that strategic planning requires strategic thinking, which involves taking a broad set of facts and information into consideration as you strive to understand the present situation and circumstances, identify future trends and formulate future possibilities, decide on your organization’s core values and value proposition, develop or firm up your organization’s mission and vision, determine the means you will employ to attain your vision and accomplish your mission, and identify ways to mitigate or address challenges or obstacles likely to impede your progress or sub-optimize your overall success. It focuses on the awareness of the present and the future situation; it is anticipatory decision-making. The thrust of strategic planning is for the institution to be opportunistic and prepared to seize the moment as events present themselves (Wilkinson et al., 2007; see also Sallis, 2002).

Historically strategic planning’s roots are in the arena of large-scale military operations. Most of the literature on strategic planning concentrated on the military, national-international statesmanship, and the corporate world until the past thirty years or so (Michael, 2003). According to Mintzberg (1994) formalized strategic planning grew out of

budget exercises in the America of the 1950s and spread rapidly. By the mid-1960s and throughout the 70s, strategic planning (in many forms) was occurring in most large corporations. Strategic planning at that time was about notions such as strategic niche; competitive position; shareholder values; Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat analyses; and core competencies (Michael, 2003).

In universities strategic plan is a means to the creation of a corporate identity with a sense of common purpose bringing together all staff and students. By setting future direction and goals, it generates a sense of “stretch” and ambition within an institution (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Funding, accountability, integrity and leadership will be at the forefront in redefining academe in the 21st century. Higher education and the institutions that represent it cannot maintain the status quo and expect to survive, let alone prosper (Wilkinson et al., 2007, 11). In this case, strategic leadership makes intentional change as a function of strategic change and thereby builds the change agenda into the leadership process through which an institution designs its future in a challenging world (Morrill, 2007, 250).

Regarding the importance of strategic planning in higher education institutions of the current era, Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson (2003) eloquently explained that strategic planning in higher education in the current era takes on even greater importance today than it did even a decade ago. The changing needs of higher education and society, the growth of information technology, the communications revolution, fluctuations in access to financial and human resources, and the rapid pace of change in other aspects of the environment in which higher education operates, give strategic planning an added urgency. More than this, however, in the prevailing environment of fierce competition for outstanding staff, students and resources, strategic planning is about positioning, defining, or discovering the institution’s niche, and seeking to be the best in what it can do. Therefore, an understanding of future direction and environmental scanning, and the ability to anticipate events prior to their occurrence are important elements of strategic positioning for the success of higher education institutions in their ever changing internal and external environments (Ramsden, 1998; Levine, 2006; Gumpert, 2000).

In a competitive market for education the production of a strategic plan assumes considerable importance. Without it the institution lacks direction. The real significance strategic plan is that it directs senior managers’ attention away from day-to-day issues and forces a re-examination of the main purposes of the institution and its key relationships with its customers (Sallis, 2002, 119).

### **Why Strategic Planning in Higher Education Institutions?**

In higher education, bettering one’s condition includes hiring better faculty, recruiting stronger students, upgrading facilities, strengthening academic programs and student services, and acquiring the resources needed to accomplish these things. Since most institutions of higher education share a similar mission and compete for these same objectives, an essential part of strategic planning involves shaping the institution in ways that ensure mission attainment by capturing and maintaining a market niche in the quest for resources, faculty, and students (Dooris, Kelley, & Trainer, 2002). Strategic plan provides a helpful form of information, able to communicate the aims, objectives, aspirations, and philosophy of the university, and in this way may strengthen external links and/or break

down barriers (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Moreover, it provides a clear direction for an institution and allows its leaders to chart the proper course (Wilkinson et al., 2007, 13).

According to Peterson (1980, 114), the fundamental purpose of strategic planning in higher education is to provide an ongoing process of examination and evaluation of an institution's strengths, weaknesses, goals, resource requirements and future prospects, and to set out a coherent plan to respond to the findings and build a stronger, more effective institution. For Paris (2003) strategic planning is a means of establishing major directions for the university, college/school or department. Taken together, strategic planning and continuous quality improvement can dramatically improve the ability of the institution to meet the needs of its internal and external stakeholders.

Universities engaged in strategic planning as means to "make beneficial, strategic changes to adapt to the rapidly shifting environment" (Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1997). Therefore, in academic institutions strategic planning is about identifying some common directions for the department, division, school or college based on needs of the external and internal stakeholders (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002).

Hence, through strategic planning, resources are concentrated in a limited number of major directions in order to maximize benefits to stakeholders-those we exist to serve and who are affected by the choices we make (Paris, 2003). It brings together-resource allocation, and accountability within a single integrated, corporate process linking academic, financial, and physical aspects. Consequently, a strategic plan provides a link between academic planning (such as student numbers, courses, and research), financial planning (projected income and expenditure), and physical planning (buildings and infrastructure), and will also guide the overall allocation of funds within the university (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Thus, it involves shifting the leaders and managers' position so that they consider the overall context and aspects of their institution rather than one particular part, aspect, situation, or circumstance.

Hence, effective planning, according to Taylor & Miroiu (2002), helps institutions to identify what makes them distinctive and what they have in common with other institutions, and therefore it helps them to maintain their individuality.

## **Major Aspects of Strategic Planning Process in HEIs**

Successful strategic planning is inclusive, allowing every major stakeholder-management, teaching and research staff, support staff, students, the council, and other interested parties and stakeholders-an opportunity to participate...invariably, there will be 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' input ( Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003, 22; see also Ugboro, Obeng & Spann, 2011; Birnbaum, 1991a; Simerson, 2011; Mintzberg, 1994).

According to Balogun & Johnson, effective modern university is likely to involve all key stakeholders in the development and implementation of strategy and policy. Academics should be at the heart of planning and decision making in their organization and be encouraged to contribute on a systematic basis to achieve effective educational and research outcomes for their organization (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; see also Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Moreover, as to Dill (1996, 51) it is necessary to design a process that integrates the organization and encourages cooperation. If the planners succeed in incorporating these elements, strategic planning could be an important tool in integrating highly fragmented organizations such as universities.

There are many models of strategic planning that have been designed, developed and implemented by higher education institutions, however in this paper, the author reviewed major aspects of strategic planning which are commonly touched within various models without sticking on to a given model. Thus the following are major aspects of strategic planning and strategy implantation in higher education institutions. They involve: mission statement and institutional values (What are we doing and why do we exist?); situational analysis (Who we are and what our environment is?); institutional vision, strategic goals and objectives (Where we want to go?); strategy formulation by integrating quality issues and resource allocation (How can we get there?); as well as the strategy implementation monitoring and evaluation processes (How will we tell if we have achieved?).

## **Mission Statement and Identification of Institutional Values (What are we doing and why do we exist?)**

An organization's mission is a statement of the purpose and the reason for existence of the organization (Wilkinson et al., 2007). It is significant that virtually all strategic planning models begin with reviewing, refining or creating the mission statement based on stakeholders and their needs. The mission statement then becomes the foundation upon which all subsequent planning builds (Hinton, 2012; Paris, 2003). The mission statement should describe briefly the key characteristics of the university and should encapsulate the essential philosophy and *raison d'être* of the institution. The description might include whether the university sees itself primarily as: – international, national, regional, or local in focus; teaching-based or research-based; broadly based in subject terms or more specialized (Taylor, J. and Miroiu, 2002; Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003). For publicly controlled institutions, this statement of purpose may be dictated by the state, but for all institutions the statement serves as the explanation for the existence of the organization (Hinton, 2012).

According to (Sallis, 2002, 120), the mission statement is closely linked to the vision, and provides a clear direction for the present and the future. The mission statement makes it clear why an institution is different from all the others. Colleges and universities that align their mission with their educational policies and programs generally are more effective and efficient (Birnbaum 1991b; Bolman and Deal, 1991). A compelling sense of strategic mission provides more than just an effective benchmark for decision making. It answers to deeper features of the human constitution and the need for meaning (Morrill, 2007). The Statement may also refer to broad social or economic aspirations, such as the commitment to increasing educational opportunities or the creation of wealth through research, innovation and technology transfer (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002).

The values of an organization are the principles through which it operates and seeks to achieve the vision and its mission. They express the beliefs and aspirations of the institution (Sallis, 2002). Accordingly, higher learning institutions have complex layers within their identities, including value systems that are split at the root between academic and organizational commitments (Morrill, 2007). Values explain what the institution stands for and the way in which it intends to conduct its activities (Hinton, 2012, 10). Incongruence, chaos and confusion result when organizational decisions are made that are not in keeping with the core values and tenets of the organization (Wilkinson et al., 2007).

For Hill & Jones (2008), the values of an organization state how managers and employees should conduct themselves, how they should do business, and what kind of organization they should build to help achieve its mission. Insofar as they help drive and shape behavior within the organization, values are commonly seen as the bedrock of an organizational culture—the set of values, norms, and standards that control how employees work to achieve an organization’s mission and goals. Therefore, without a clear understanding of the institution’s core beliefs and values, decision-making has no underpinning or consistency.

## **Situational Analysis (Who we are and What Our Environment is?)**

The basic strengths of strategic planning are its abilities to help better align the organization with its environment (that set of internal and external forces that can positively or negatively affect the activities of an organization). This rubric is true in business and it is also true in the academy (Rowley & Sherman, 2001).

Effective planning in universities involves an internal focus on the campus and an external focus on the environment. The latter process is dealt with through environmental scanning. A campus cannot be strategically positioned to take advantage of future opportunities without anticipating their occurrence (Wilkinson et al., 2007). These authors further explained that by utilizing an environmental scanning process coupled with continual self-assessment and the use of key performance indicators, an institution can be proactive and strategically positioned to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves.

To be a competent academic leader requires close and constant study of the outside world (the rest of your university, and the economic and political context in which it sits) as well as the inner world (the resources you control and staff with whom you work) (Ramsden, 1998, 13). The strengths and weaknesses exercise is essentially an internal audit of how effectively the institution performs. The threats and opportunities aspect concentrates on the external or environmental context in which the institution operates (Sallis, 2002). Before an institution can determine where it wants to go, there must be a shared understanding about what the institution is, what its strengths and weakness are, and how it is unique. There also has to be an understanding of the institution’s external environment and how that arena could change over time (Hinton, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2007).

Internal data on the organization includes financial data, key assets, and information on quality of services, leadership competencies, human resources and skills, conduciveness of organizational structure, performance processes and system. A thorough analysis of internal data reveals an organization’s strengths and weaknesses, both of which affect its ability to meet its mission. Strengths of an organization are essentially just what you would think they are: positive attributes or abilities unique to the organization that in some way enhance the organization’s ability to achieve its objectives. Weaknesses are simply internal negative attributes or perhaps inabilities unique to the organization that in some way have led (or will probably lead) to the organization’s failure to achieve its objectives (Kaleba, 2006; Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003; Hinton, 2012; Morrill, 2007; Simerson, 2011).

By establishing an environmental scanning process, institutions develop an early warning system to identify and monitor opportunities and threats that need to be anticipated as the campus strategically positions itself in the planning process (Hinton, 2012; Wilkinson et al., 2007; Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003). Opportunities are external to the

organization and are defined as any factor or situation that might be expected to aid the organization's efforts to achieve their objectives. Threats can be any factor or situation that might be expected to hinder efforts to achieve the organization's objectives (Hinton, 2012; Simerson, 2011). The aim of SWOT analysis exercise is to maximize strengths, minimize weaknesses, reduce threats and build on the opportunities (Hinton, 2012; Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003; Sallis, 2002).

## **Institutional Vision, Strategic Goals and Objectives (Where We Want to Go?)**

### **Institutional Vision**

The vision statement is an institution's clear description of what it intends to become within a certain timeframe. The vision statement defines the institution's strategic position in the future and the specific elements of that position with relationship to the mission statement (Hinton, 2012, 10). Visions are at the heart of leadership; they are about committing, animating, believing, hoping, exciting, inspiring. In all organizations, but perhaps especially in universities, a vision draws its power to motivate from being both intellectually and emotionally engaging (Nanus, 1992; Ramsden, 1998). The vision sets the mark and is the guide for the development of strategic goals, institutional decision-making and policy development (Wilkinson 2007, 48). The vision of an organization lays out some desired future state; it articulates, often in bold terms, what the organization would like to achieve (Hill & Jones, 2008; Nanus, 1992).

Constructing a long-term strategy or vision requires identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses (Rowley et al., 1997). By the same token Hinton pinpointed that the vision statement is the expression of institution aspiration, and is based on analysis of the institution's environment (Hinton, 2012, 9). According to Hinterhuber & Popp (1991) a vision is not a goal, but rather an orientation point that triggers movement in a specific direction: if the vision is borne by a sense of reality and appeals to both the emotions and intelligence of an organization's employees, it can be a directing force with a powerful integration effect.

The vision should inspire, challenge and focus the institution. It needs to be memorable and easily understood. Part of its purpose is to mobilize the campus community to focus on excellence as it formulates its hopes and plans for the future (Hafner, 2000). Ramsden (1998) emphasized that a vision is a picture of the future that you want to produce; an ideal image, a picture of excellence, a distinctive pattern that makes your department or your course or your research team different.

### **Strategic Goals and Objectives**

The strategic plan is a key document which in effect translates the mission statement into a set of aims and objectives covering the whole university. It introduces an element of analysis and prioritization and should provide a central point of reference from which all the more detailed operational planning and activity should stem (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Once vision, mission and values have been established they need to be translated into achievable goals. It is important that they are expressed in a measurable way so that the eventual outcomes can be evaluated against them. Goals must be realistic and achievable (Sallis, 2002).

Goals are defined as open-ended statements of planned accomplishment, while objectives are defined as being the desired end result of this planned accomplishment. Simply stated, objectives provide specificity generally lacking in a statement of goals (Wilkinson et al., 2007, 12). Clear and consistent objectives, stated in terms of desired outcomes for learning and personal development, are critically important in creating an educationally powerful institution (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The purpose of goals is to specify with precision what must be done if an organization is to attain its mission or vision (Hill & Jones, 2008).

Institutional goals help translate the institutional vision and mission into action. Goals should state clearly the conditions for institutional effectiveness, and the norms and expectations of students and staff. They should reflect the needs of the community and the society as a whole. They should present a broad statement of the aims of the institution (Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003, 18). Morrill (2007) argued that the goals of the academic undertaking need to be explicitly tied to the environmental scan, the capacities and interests of students and faculty, the availability of learning resources, and the ways other academic and university programs will contribute to it and be strengthened by it.

Well-constructed goals provide a means by which the performance of managers can be evaluated (Hill & Jones, 2008). In normal circumstances, the objectives set in the strategic plan should be reviewed on a regular basis, probably annually, and the whole Plan should be subject to full review on a regular cycle, possibly every three years (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). Thus, according to Wilkinson et al. (2007), the goals, objectives and strategies you articulate within the planning model are the defining features of the road to success. These concepts describe in great detail how you will reach your aspirations. Planning must result in actions, and the goals, objectives and strategies set forth are the definition of the action plans. Correctly defined, strategic goals motivate people to achieve them, especially if they incorporate central aspects of the vision of the institution and are understood to be testable hypotheses, not rigid formulae (Morrill, 2007).

### **Institutional Strategies and Resource Allocation (How can we get there?)**

In its simplest terms, the word strategy refers to the method of achievement, a planned operation in the execution of a project. A more comprehensive definition of organizational strategy might be a match between the organization's internal capabilities and its external relationships. This definition takes into account the organization's mission, objectives, and goals (Reeves, 2002; Wilkinson et al., 2007). According to Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel (1998), an organizational strategy serves a number of purposes, such as: 1) ensuring organizational survival; 2) guiding organizational growth and renewal; 3) reducing uncertainty and creating order; 4) communicating direction and focus; 5) building alignment among operating units and individuals; 6) providing a framework for decision making; and 7) creating a competitive advantage over rivals. The strategy of the institution needs to be developed in such ways that the institution can defend itself against the competition and can maximize its attractiveness to its customers (Sallis, 2002).

Morrill (2007) asserted that without financial feasibility, a strategy compromises its credibility and loses an effective mechanism of decision making and leadership. Without a sense of financial capacity, many of the goals in a strategic plan become what its critics complain that they are anyway, either wish lists or a safe place to store the excess baggage of campus opinion and desire. The fundamental purpose of an institutional budget is to support



the core business as embodied in the goals of the institution's strategic plan. It functions best if it reflects the real cost of achieving institutional goals within the context of reasonable expectations about income (Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003, 20).

A strategic plan is of limited value unless it is used in the budget exercise (Paris, 2003). In strategic planning practices most important thing to help achieve intended goals of an institution is linking and supporting the planned initiatives and activities with realistic long-range budget. In plan-based budgeting, the long-range allocation of resources is not only driven by a context that makes reallocation practical, it also provides a blueprint for phasing initiatives so they can be realistically supported by the budget (Hinton, 2012). Knowing how many and what types of students the institution intends to attract, what programs in Student Affairs (including Student Life and Residence Halls) will be needed to support those students, how academic programs may change, what technology initiatives will need to be developed, what types of staffing levels and training are projected, and what types and number of facilities will be required are all part of an institution's ability to anticipate a budget. The information for all these aspects of budgeting does not come together in one place unless the strategic plan integrates them (Hayward, Ncayiyana, and Johnson, 2003; Hinton, 2012).

Strategic planning must drive resource allocation *not vice versa* (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002). The advantage for the institution using its strategic plan to allocate resources is everyone knows ahead of time which activities have priority and which will be receiving the resources in any given budget year. In addition, because the prioritization of these activities was an institution-wide negotiation, there is some buy-in and some patience with the process (Hinton, 2012, 28). Hence, in higher education institutions budget should follow plans; but not plans follow budget.

### **Strategy Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation-How will we tell if we have achieved?**

The implementation of strategy is arguably the most important stage in the process of strategic planning for one reason: Without successful implementation, an organization's strategy is really nothing more than a fantasy (Hambrick, & Cannella, 1989). Thus, strategy implementation should not be a separate part of the process at all. Rather, it should be considered explicitly in the formulation stage so that any resulting strategy is in fact implementable (Harrison, & John, 1998). Strategy is a description of decisions linked to the mission, information, and results. Strategy implementation requires strategic leadership skills in the organization. According to Reeves (2002), strategic leadership is the simultaneous acts of executing, evaluating, and reformulating strategies, and focusing organizational energy and resources on the most effective strategies.

Planning without action accomplishes nothing. Visionary goals and aspirations must be operationally defined in terms of how they can be accomplished. This is the process of developing action plans. They specify what must be done when, by whom and with what necessary resources (Wilkinson et al., 2007). In addition to understanding the strategic level of planning as the key to transforming an institution's vision, using operational and tactical planning provides the institution with the tools and insight to implement the plan (Hinton, 2012, 27). However, in higher education, commonly, much effort is deployed in the development of plans; much less in ensuring effective implementation. Important factors in

planning are therefore effective leadership and an awareness of institutional culture, including an appreciation of the core values of the organization (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002).

To formulate strategies without some serious thoughts toward implementation seems a serious waste of the strategists' time (Hambrick and Cannella, 1989). Implementing the plan brings commitment, focus and direction. Implementation is the key to making everything else functional (Wilkinson et al., 2007). Action must be the end product of planning, for without action planning is a pointless and empty activity (Hussey, 1998). This author further argued that no organization anywhere in the world has ever added a single penny to its profits from making plans: the rewards are only realized when plans are implemented

The proper alignment of business and human resource strategies is assumed to be a key implementation issue (Rousseau and Wade Benzoni, 1994). A successful operational plan will at least include well-defined goals, objectives, strategies, timeframes, responsible individuals, necessary resources and performance indicators (Wilkinson et al., 2007, 63). Implementing involves the encouragement of various members of the institution to proactively participate in carrying out the plans, inspiration of these members to achieve higher-order personal goals related to the vision, facilitation to realize the new goals in a timely manner by removing road blocks and obstacles, and the ability to provide timely feedback to individuals, teams, and units as to how well they perform in relation to the vision. Therefore, strategic leadership style is the combination of three different individual skills and abilities: visioning; focusing; and implementing (Neumann & Neumann, 1999).

Moreover, institutions need to see whether they are on track in the pursuance of their goals, they need to evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken, and they may have to modify or change their mission, goals or plans if they find themselves in a situation which warrants these changes (Herbst, 2007). Monitoring and evaluation are key elements in strategic planning. If the institution is to be a learning rather than a static organization, a process of evaluation and feedback must be an essential element in its culture. The evaluation process should focus on the customer, and explore two issues: first, the degree to which the institution is meeting the individual requirements of its customers, both internal and external; and second, how far it is achieving its strategic mission and goals (Sallis, 2002, 131).

The final stage in the planning process is monitoring. The aim is to assess progress made towards achievement of the targets put forward and thereby to inform the updating and revision of plans, including the introduction of new or amended targets (Taylor & Miroiu, 2002, 68). Regarding the importance of monitoring in the process of strategic implementation, Herbst (2007) opined that good planning practice of the past was unthinkable without monitoring or performance measurement, as unthinkable as driving an automobile without looking where the car is heading and without steering to keep the vehicle on course or out of trouble. Consequently, monitoring and evaluation of strategy implementation processes in higher education institutions are so important to check whether the performance practices of planned initiatives and activities are being carried out as planned.

## CONCLUSION

The challenges arising both from internal and external environments of this day's universities require forward-looking, proactive management strategies by the leaders. It is

difficult to envision a higher education institution committed to continuously improving its services without having clearly set out strategic plan. This article integrated the major aspects and steps of strategic planning and strategy implementation as a frame of reference for higher education institutions. The intention was to identify commonly understood aspects of strategic planning and strategy implementation by the majority of scholars in the area in order to clear out the existing confusions. As strategic planning provides a clear direction for an institution and allows its leaders to map the proper course, the leaders' of higher education institutions have to understand these major aspects of strategic planning. The authors recognize that the higher education institutions that have articulated their priority areas in a well contemplated and formulated strategic plan are in a position to make informed decisions and can successfully accomplish their institutional missions. Therefore, those who are leading the higher education institutions should understand the need to clearly identify their institutional mission; vision, goals and objectives; their priorities and strategic issues for improvement as well as the strategies and actions to accomplish them.

## REFERENCES

1. Balogun, J. and Johnson G. (2004). "Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sense Making". *ACA Management Journal*, 47(4), 523-549.
2. Barr, N. (2005). Financing Higher Education. *Finance and Development*, 42(2), 34-37
3. Birnbaum, R. (1991a). *Faculty in Governance: The Role of Senates and Joint Committees in Academic Decision Making*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
4. Birnbaum, R. (1991b). "The Latent Organizational Functions of the Academic Senate: Why Senates Do Not Work but Will Not Go Away". *The Journal of New Directions for Higher Education*, 75, 7-25.
5. Bolman, L. G., and Deal, T. E. (1991). *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
6. Bok D.C. (2003). *Universities in the marketplace: the commercialization of higher education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
7. Chickering, A. W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and Identity*, 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
8. Dill, D. D. (1996). "Academic planning and organizational design: Lessons from leading American universities". *Higher Education Quarterly*, 50(1), 35-53.
9. Dooris, M. J. Kelley, J. M. & Trainer, J. F. (2002). "Strategic Planning in Higher Education". *New Directions for Higher Education*, 116, 5-11 © John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
10. Goetsch, D.L. (2005). *Effective Leadership: Ten steps for Technical Professions*. New Jersey, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
11. Goodstein, L. P., Nolan, T. and Pfiffer. J. W. (1993). *Applied Strategic Planning*. New York: McGraw Hill.
12. Gumpert, P. J. (2000). "Academic restructuring: Organizational change and institutional imperatives". *Higher Education* (39), 67-91. Kluwer Academic Publishers

13. Hafner, K. (2000). 'Strategic Planning Workshop'. Berkeley, USA. University of California. Available at: <http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/>
14. Hambrick, D. C. & Cannella, A. C. J. (1989). "Strategy Implementation as Substance and Selling". *The Academy of Management Executive*, (3), 278-285.
15. Harrison, J. S. & John, C. H. (1998). *Strategic Management of Organizations and Stakeholders: Theory and Cases*. Mason, OH: South-Western Publishing
16. Hayward, F.M., Ncayiyana, D. J. & Johnson, J. E. (2003). *A Guide to Strategic Planning for African Higher Education Institutions*, Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET). Available at: [www.compress.co.za](http://www.compress.co.za)
17. Herbst, M. (2007). *Financing Public Universities: The Case of Performance Funding*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer
18. Hill, C. W. L., & Jones, G. R. (2008). *Essentials of Strategic Management*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Mason, OH: South-Western, Cengage Learning Available online at: [www.ichapters.com](http://www.ichapters.com).
19. Hinterhuber H. H. & Popp, W. (1991). Strategic Leadership Competence. In Hussey, D. E. (ed.), *International Review of Strategic Management*, 2(1), Wiley, Chichester.
20. Hinton, K. E. (2012). A Practical Guide to Strategic Planning in Higher Education. *Society for College and University Planning*, (1-48). Available at: [www.scup.org](http://www.scup.org)
21. Hussey, D. (1998). *Strategic Management: From theory to implementation*, (Ed.). Oxford: Linacre House
22. Katsioloudes, M. I. (2006). *Strategic Management: Global Cultural Perspectives for Profit and Non-Profit Organizations*. Oxford OX2 8DP, UK: Elsevier Inc.
23. Lerner, A.L. (1999). 'A Strategic Planning Primer for Higher Education'. California State University, Northridge // <http://www.des.calstate.edu/strategic.html>
24. Levine, D. N.(2006). *Powers of the Mind: The Reinvention of Liberal Learning in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
25. Michael J. D. (2003). "Two Decades of Strategic Planning". *Planning for Higher Education*. 31(2), 26-32.
26. Mintzberg, H. (1994). *The rise and fall of strategic planning*. New York: Macmillan, Inc.
27. Mintzberg, H. Ahlstrand, B., & Lampel, J. (1998). *Strategy Safari: A Guided Tour through the Wilds of Strategic Management*. New York: The Free Press.
28. Morrill, R. L. (2007). *Strategic Leadership: Integrating Strategy and Leadership in Colleges and Universities*. Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Available at: <http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com>
29. Nanus, B. 1992, *Visionary Leadership: Creating A Compelling Sense of Direction for year Organization*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
30. Neumann, Y. and Neumann, E.F. (1999). "The president and the college bottom line: the role of strategic leadership styles". *The International Journal of Educational Management*,13(2), 73-79

31. Paris, K. A. (2003). Strategic planning in the university. Wisconsin-Madison (University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents). Retrieved from: WWW.QUALITY.WISC.EDU
32. Peterson, M.W. (1980). *Analyzing Alternative Approaches to Planning. Improving Academic Management*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
33. Ramsden, P. (1998). *Learning to Lead in Higher Education*. New York, NY: Routledge
34. Reeves, D. B. (2002). *The Daily Disciplines of Leadership: How to Improve Student Achievement, Staff Motivation, and Personal Organization*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass
35. Romano, A. (2009). *Open Business Innovation Leadership: The Emergence of the Stakeholder University*. New York, NY: Palgrave McMillan
36. Rousseau, D. M. & Wade Benzoni, K. A. (1994). "Linking Strategy and Human Resource Practices: How Employee and Customer Contracts Are Created", *Human Resource Management (33)*, 463-489.
37. Rowley, D. J., Lujan, H. D., & Dolence, M.G. (1997). *Strategic Change in Colleges and Universities*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
38. Sallis, E. (2002). *Total Quality Management in Education*. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.), London, UK: Kogan Page Ltd
39. Salminen, A. (2003). New public management and Finnish public sector organizations: The case of universities. In A. Amaral, V. L. Meek & I. Larsen (Eds.), *The higher education managerial revolution?* Dordrecht, NE: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
40. Simerson, B. K. (2011). *Strategic Planning: A Practical Guide to Strategy Formulation and Execution*. California: Praeger
41. Smith, L. and Quang D. N. (2005) Processes for Strategic Planning in Vietnam's Higher Education System. In Harman, G., Hayden, M. & Thanh, N. P. (eds.) (2010). *Reforming Higher Education in Vietnam: Challenges and Priorities*, Higher Education Dynamics 29, DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-3694-0\_10,
42. Taylor, J. and Miroiu, A. (2002). *Policy-Making, Strategic Planning, and Management of Higher Education*. Bucharest: UNESCO
43. Ugboro, I. O., Obeng, K., & Spann, O. (2011). "As an Effective Tool of Strategic Management in Public Sector Organizations: Evidence From Public Transit Organizations". *Administration & Society, 43(1)*, 87-123
44. Wilkinson, R.B., Taylor, J. S., Peterson, A. and Taylor, M. L. (2007). *A Practical Guide to Strategic Enrollment Management Planning in Higher Education*. Virginia Beach, VA: EPI International Available at: [www.educationalpolicy.org](http://www.educationalpolicy.org)