STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR GOVERNANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT
The strategic planning process is basically a matching process involving an institution’s internal resources and its external opportunities. The strategic planning process can be helpful as a process which involves matching the institution’s capabilities with its threats & opportunities within the context of an institutional mission. The importance of good strategic planning is recognized throughout higher education. Good progress has been made over a long period to improve the rigour of strategic planning. But the challenges and opportunities facing higher education are growing every year. The widespread use of strategic planning is a fairly recent development in Indian universities. India is heading towards transforming itself into a knowledge society and for those reasons various processes are to be kept in convergence with one another. Higher education system provides a strong base to achieve these goals. To meet the modern trends, it is imperative to critically estimate the present status of the university education in terms of strategic planning and the mode of governance. In this context, the present paper is an endeavour to study the existing practices adopted for formulating strategic planning in higher education system and to add insights into the existing knowledge of strategic planning for governance in higher education system.

Keywords: Strategic Planning; Higher Education System; Governance; Threats and Opportunities

INTRODUCTION
Strategic planning aims to direct the activities of an organisation towards the attainment of strategic objectives. It is concerned with the setting of objectives, the development of procedures for implementing the objectives and monitoring the extent to which they are achieved. The Plan consists of statements of intent in the context of the environment in which the organisation will be operating and is developed by consultation with all levels of the organisation. Plans differ in structure, but commonly contain a mission, vision, values, strategic directions, objectives, key strategies, performance outcomes, operational plans and accountabilities. Strategic planning is a complex and a participatory process designed to scan the environment and create mission, vision and strategies, capable to enhance institutional capacity and make university more attractive and competitive in the market.
The widespread use of strategic planning is a fairly recent development in Indian universities. It is viewed with some skepticism by a number of academics but is widely embraced by the senior administration. It is essential in the current difficult circumstances that universities face, so a good planning requires an understanding of the context in which the universities operates. Strategic planning refers to mechanisms for overall progress towards the targets, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating this progress. At a level below the overall strategic plan universities generally have subordinate plans for research management, building intelligentsia, capital development and so on, and also plan for individual faculties or divisions of the university.

The following definitions, when combined, characterize a comprehensive strategic planning process. Strategic planning is:

- A rational analysis of the opportunities offered by an environment and of strengths and weaknesses of the firm, and selection of a match (strategic) between the two which best satisfied the objective of the firm (Ansoff, 1976).

- The process of determining what an organization does, what it will do in the future, and how it will manage to do it. (Bryson, 1988).

- Disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide an organization, what it does and why it does it (Bryson, 1988).

- The continuous process of making present entrepreneurial (risk-taking) decisions systematically and with the greatest knowledge of their futurity; organizing systematically the efforts needed to carry out these decisions; and measuring the results of these decisions against the expectations through organized, systematic feedback (Drucker, 1974).

- The systematic and purposeful determination of objective, sloughing off past practices, being willing to systematically abandon various elements to reach new goals, look for new and different ways to attain objectives rather than to believe that doing more of the same will suffice; and finally, to think through the time dimensions and as, “when do we start work to get results when we need them” (Drucker, 1974).

- One which develops and maintains a strategic fit between the organization and its changing marketing opportunities (Koter and Murphy, 1981).

- Motivated by the desire for selectively rational and focused institutional decision-making, and concentrates on key operating decisions facing the institution in the intermediate future (Neufeld, 1993).

- The goals of strategic planning are broadly defined such that institutions can flexibly respond to changing conditions and demands. Options are defined with an appreciation of internal and external environmental constraints and opportunities (Neufeld, 1993).

Governance refers to the distribution of authority and functions among the units within a larger entity, the modes of communication and control among them, and the conduct of relationships between the entity and the surrounding environment.

There exists a definitive relationship between governance and corporate functioning which primarily focus on fairness, transparency, accountability and responsibility. In this regard, there are basic premise and pre-requisites to facilitate corporate governance in a given
institution. These pre-requisites are: A proper system consisting of clearly defined and adequate structure of roles, authority and responsibility. Vision, principles and norms to indicate development path, normative considerations and norms for performance. A proper system of guiding, monitoring reporting and control. On the basis of above, corporate governance in context of Indian university system can be contextualized in terms of different stake-holders comprising of executive administration, the faculty, and other groupings and units, such as students and alumni. The traditional discussion of the basic internal and external relationships of a university focuses on the ways funding agency, and numerous other actors discharge their institutional responsibilities. In the case of a university or multi-campus university system, however, account must be made of the ties to executive and legislative branches of state government and, typically, to a higher education coordinating agency. Therefore, the focus of university “governance” should incorporate structures, processes and activities that are involved in the planning and direction for attaining excellence. This will entail the key principle behind so many recent autonomy reforms – that institutions should, as far as possible, be free to manage their own affairs. The pressures in higher education systems have been caused by the growth in numbers of institutions due to the inexorable increase in participation rates (and the demand for this is to continue in the context of the knowledge economy). Numerous alternatives need to be evolved and to summarize them, together with the new approaches to take strategic initiatives for governance in the university system with the intent for overall institutional excellence.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Strategic planning is a process of defining strategy, direction, and decision making in an organization or an institution on allocating its resources, including its capital and people. It is termed to be the formal consideration of an organization's future course of action. In the contemporary university system, research findings have been indicative that strategic planning is a means of establishing major directions for the university, college/school or department. Through strategic planning, resources are concentrated in a limited number of major directions in order to maximize benefits to stakeholders. In higher education, those stakeholders include students, funding agencies, and society, as well as internal stakeholders such as faculty and staff. Strategic planning is a structured approach to anticipating the future and "exploiting the inevitable." The strategic plan should chart the broad course for the entire institution for the next five years (plan). It is a process for ensuring that the budget follows the plan rather than vice versa. Strategic planning is not just a plan for growth and expansion. A strategic plan can and often does guide retrenchment and reallocation. The purpose of strategic planning is to position our institutions for the future (G. Gregory Lozier & Kumar Chittipeddi, 1986).

Existing research findings reveal that the essence of strategy is differentiation. What makes a university or college or department different from any other? Educational institutions, like other service organizations, can differentiate themselves based on types of programs, delivery systems, student clientele, location, and the like. Similarly, a department or administrative unit involved in strategic planning will identify its unique niche in the larger university community and focus its resources on a limited number of strategic efforts, abandoning activities that could be, should be, or are being done by others (McConkey, 1981). Bryson (1988) points out a valid distinction between long-range planning and the strategic planning. Long-range planning focuses more on specifying goals and objectives, while strategic planning is more focused on identifying and resolving issues. In fact, goals and objectives, which are considered operational planning should not be developed before a
college or university has completed its strategic planning. Therefore, a research study reveals strategic planning is a central component of the strategy literature, and is applied in studies related to planning-performance relationships, competitive advantage, information acquisition and strategic decision-making, generic strategies, contingency modeling, and international studies (Brian Boyd & Elliot, 1998). In a similar research finding, it was observed that strategic planning is assumed a capacity to manage a change on the basis of predefined objectives all reachable through an established process and series of interrelated actions (Anthony & Young, 1982).

Researchers found that strategic planning in universities received increasing emphasis during the 1970s and 1980s in the western countries. Planning models from business and government were frequently used, but these were often too complicated. Successful university planning requires appropriate procedures, wide involvement, trust, recognition of the political reality of universities, emphasis on the process, and proper timing (Holdaway & Meekison, 2002). Another research finding indicates that recent reforms in the education sector have brought radical changes in the structure which resulted in greater competition. As a result universities are compelled to adopt greater market orientation into their strategic planning process in order to acquire a competitive advantage over their rivals (Conway et. al., 1994).

Maassen and Potman (2004) proposed three different, but not necessary independent, models for strategic decision making in higher education as: the linear strategy model, the adaptive strategy model and the interpretive strategy model. It is argued that the latter model can be applied best to higher education institutions. Study further revealed that a concept of institutional isomorphism shall help to explain some of the problems institutions encounter when trying to formulate and implement their strategies. Universities have found themselves in a bonafide competitive market that has forced them to act in a more “business-like” manner. This has compelled them to “think and act strategically.” (Dennis A. Gioia, 1994).

**Governance in University System**

The term ‘governance’ refers to processes of decision-making within an institution. It thus holds implications for the administrative organization which enables an institution to set its policies and objectives, to achieve them, and to monitor its progress towards their achievement. It also refers to the mechanisms whereby those who have been given the responsibility and authority to pursue those policies and objectives are held to account. The adoption of sound principles of governance helps those charged with taking important decisions to identify, assess and manage institutional risk, and to set up sound systems of financial control. Finally, a well-designed structure of governance will serve all members of the institution; but it will also serve the public by virtue of what it does to render an institution accountable to the outside world.

In a global study on university governance, Salmi (2009) picked out the code for special praise. In addition to specific provisions the code sets out the key underlying principles that underpin governance within the university system. These codes include Openness and transparency, Selflessness, Honesty, Leadership, Fairness, Integrity, Independence, Accountability, Objectivity, Efficiency and Effectiveness and Value for money. These principles have been referred to in many subsequent governance codes throughout the higher education institutions in the world. Similarly, it was observed in a similar research finding where Boyd, W.E (2009) observed that academic governance is at the core of an educational institution’s core business, and yet it is often complex. Its value lies in its ability for the
institution to deliver a quality curriculum, and as such requires to be fully understood and implemented by management, administrators and academics alike.

Over the past years, universities have increasingly adopted the idea that the governance of academic research should be subjected to the same governance as for-profit enterprises. This is reflected in procedures transferred from private companies. The most prominent examples are pay-for-performance for scholars according to output measures like rankings, ratings, and competitive fundraising. Overall, the reforms are aimed at the establishment of an “enterprise university” (Bok, 2003; Clark, 1998; Donoghue, 2008; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Khurana, 2007). Research findings suggest that scandals in the private sector and the globalization of research, have contributed significantly to the spread of ideas concerning best practice in university governance. Though, considerable variety in university governing models ranging from faculty to trustee or even stakeholder (Boards. Trakman 2008), European universities have been heavily influenced by the governing models of prominent US universities, and many have reformed their structures accordingly.

In a recent research finding, Fielden, J. (2008) noted following developments in University Governance: i) Legislation that establishes universities as autonomous independent entities ii) Withdrawal of the state from certain detailed control and management functions and the devolution of responsibility to universities themselves iii) The creation of buffer bodies or agencies to carry out some of the detailed financial control and supervision functions in the sector or to provide sector wide services iv) Adoption of funding models that give institutions greater freedoms and that encourage them to develop new sources of income v) Creation of external agencies that monitor the quality of all courses delivered by institutions vi) The development of new forms of accountability through reporting on performance and outcomes in achieving nationally set goals for the sector, as well as institutionally set targets vii) Confirmation of the role of a university board as having overall responsibility to the minister or the buffer body viii) Gradual withdrawal of the state from decisions on the appointment of the chair of the board or president and members of the board ix) Expectations of managerial competence by the board and the president. Similarly, Brewer, C. et. al. (2009) formulated six strategic initiatives to optimize the University governance which are i) Cultivate Learning and Discovery in Undergraduate Education ii) Cultivate Learning and Discovery in Graduate Education iii) Create a Coherent Vision for Research and Creative Scholarship iv) Build Community through Engagement and Outreach v) Embrace Diversity and Global Participation vi) Improve the Workplace Environment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the existing practices adopted for formulating strategic planning in context with paradigms shifts in knowledge economy.
- To examine the inter-relationship between strategic planning and governance so as to evaluate the joint influence on overall institutional excellence.
- To add insights into the existing knowledge of strategic planning for governance in higher education system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is exploratory in nature. The data has been collected from secondary sources only. The data collected from secondary sources were reviewed through secondary review. The sources include books, journals, published and unpublished thesis etc. the scope of the study extends to the higher education system.

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FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Education is the bedrock for any meaningful development in any nation. This viewpoint was corroborated by many authors and researchers. According to Ayodele (2005), investment in human capital has over the years been recognized to be the bedrock of increased productivity and enhanced economic development. This view was buttressed by Musa (2007) who also viewed education as the bedrock of any human endeavour in achieving the developmental process of any country. From the current review of literature it is evident that India is heading towards transforming itself into a knowledge society and for those reasons various processes are to be kept in convergence with one another. Higher education system, particularly universities provide a strong base to achieve these goals.

Literature revealed that, the issue of effectiveness in the university administration should be seen as a joint responsibility of both staff and students. According to Ezekwem (2009), the impact of the students union government in instilling discipline among students populace cannot be over emphasized. The new market orientation adopted by tertiary institutions in their attempt to survive in an increasing competitive higher education arena is associated with a “customer” focus in educational planning and decision – making (Jones, Shan Isan and Goyan) cited in Adesanoye (2000). In this context, students’ union representatives are allowed to serve as members on some of these universities’ committees.

At the University of Ado-Ekiti for instance, the regulation governing it allows for students representatives to serve as members on the following university committees; the students’ disciplinary committee; where students who breached their matriculation oaths are tried and punished accordingly. The security committee, the student’s electoral committee, ceremony committee and sports committee among others. In the same vein, at the Adekunle Ajasin university, Akungba-Akoko, the university regulation allows that students’ union government be represented on some university committees such as students’ welfare committee, sports committee, ceremony committee, students’ disciplinary committee and environmental committee. It is observed that the participation of students on these committees is to make the student body have a sense of belonging and most especially to see themselves as part of the decision making process in the university system. Akomolafe (2002) opined that participation in decision making gives the participants greater feelings of self-direction and has a positive relationship with motivation.

MAJOR SUGGESTIONS

Universities cannot succeed without sufficient funds and other resources like physical infrastructure, staff, and equipment. A mechanism for funding university activities should be developed both internally and externally. Government should establish a mechanism of funding critical activities that are important to universities and communities yet are not in position to generate quick revenues like research, library, and infrastructure. Competitive grants should be in place for those universities that meet the criteria for such grants. A culture of accountability, correct financial behaviour and effective utilization of funds should be in place. Further, there should be mechanisms for proper human resource management. Matters that ensure effective leadership, communication, staff development and communication should be devised. Remuneration incentives, promotion, workload, work environment, open and participative decision making should be integral to the governance structure. Infrastructure should be supportive in terms of adequacy of space, furniture, equipment, textbooks, and e-learning facilities among others. The ratio of the university population and resources should be optimal more especially those that inhibit effective
service delivery and learning inter alia; the student to lecturer ratios, student to computer ratios, and contact time.

Arising from the established regulations by external organs, university administrators should put in place internal compliance mechanisms that govern the internal conduct among the players. These should include among others, the university charter which spells out the relationship between the university and its stakeholders, standards of service delivery, university performance procedures and commitments, quality committees and compliance groups. Further, there should be both medium and long term plans specifying the objectives to be achieved, measurable indicators and means of performance monitoring, evaluation and communication. The national council of higher education, the department of higher education in the ministry of education should conduct regular checks to ascertain whether universities adhere to their committed standards of performance. These checks should maintain the principle of independence at the same time encouraging universities to be compliant. Incentives should be in place to reward compliant universities like scholarships, library funds, and support to general university infrastructure.

REFERENCES


