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Evaluation of public strategic planning models for Turkish Universities

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Abstract

Strategic planning in higher education institution is a systematic planning process designed to guide decisions about the improvement of education and training, research and development, and application and service processes. It also provides the allocation of financial and other resources, and the procurement of new resources. There are two fundamental regulations in Turkey which oblige universities to prepare strategic plans and set methods of preparation. These regulations have some points in common as well as differences. This paper aims to analyze these two approaches by addressing differences and similarities, and discuss jointly applicability of them. Preparing reports according to both DPT and YÖDEK models causes trouble in practice for universities. Therefore, a single model to be prepared jointly by relevant ministries and the Council of Higher Education should be formed instead of implementation two distinctive models. This integrated model also facilitates benchmarking by determining common targets and indicators for higher education institutions.

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1. Introduction

Strategic planning was first developed for and used in the business-related firms in order to increase profits (Piorun, 2011). Like any business, universities must also use strategic planning in order to grow and prosper. Strategic planning is vital to the success of the universities as it allows the institution to analyze the present and forecast the future in order to create and sustain competitive advantages (Fathi and Wilson, 2009). Nevertheless, tight operating budgets, heavy workloads, and confusion about how to effectively perform strategic planning are all contributing factors which can cause leaders of nonprofit organizations to shy away from strategic planning initiatives (Ronchetti, 2006). Strategic planning is a means of establishing major directions for the university. Through strategic planning, resources are concentrated in a limited number of major directions in order to maximize benefits to stakeholders (Paris, 2003).

There are two fundamental regulations in Turkey which oblige universities to prepare strategic plans and set methods of preparation. The first one is Public Finance Management and Control Law with the law number of 5018. The law obliges all public institutes to prepare strategic plans and submit them to Minister of Development. Public Finance Management and Control Law (No: 5018) and Regulations on Principles and Basis of Strategic Planning in Public Administrations have become effective since 01 January 2005. Strategic plan is defined by the law as “strategic plan is a plan that comprises medium and long term aims of public institutes, basic principles and policies, target and priorities, performance indicators, pursued methods and resource allocations”. Minister of Development has issued a guidebook to help public institutions to prepare strategic plans in accordance with the Law of 5018 (DPT, 2006). The regulations provided by the Ministry of Development are called as DPT Model in this study.

The second one of two main regulations has been issued by The Council of Higher Education (CoHE, YÖK). The CoHE is an autonomous corporate public body which is responsible for the planning, coordination, governance and supervision of higher education within the provisions set forth in the Constitution of the Turkish Republic and the Higher Education Law. According to the regulations, an independent Commission (the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education-YÖDEK), which has also been an associate member of ENQA (the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) since 2007, consisting of ten members has started operations to run, coordinate and stipulate procedures for internal and external assessment activities within the framework of regulations. The regulations has been prepared taking into consideration the developments in the world and especially in Bologna Process in Europe and defines the general principles of assessment of education, training and research activities and administrative services, improvement of quality of higher education institutions as well as approval and recognition of their level of quality through an independent external assessment (Eriş and Durman, 2011). YÖDEK has also issued academic evaluation and quality improvement guidebook for higher education institutions to use in their preparations of strategic plans (YÖDEK, 2007).

As a result of legal positions of universities as both a public and higher education institution, they are obliged to observe both aforementioned legal documents. These regulations have some points in common as well as differences. This poses some problems for universities during their strategic planning process. Therefore, this paper aims to analyze these two approaches by addressing differences and similarities, and discuss jointly applicability of them.

2. Literature Review

The purpose of strategic planning is to align the institution with the external environment. Environmental change is inevitable and it will always impact organizations eventually. Because of the legislation, as well as economic and social pressures, strategic planning process is a focal point for the successful management of higher education institutions. Therefore, works on strategic planning in universities has increased in Turkey as in the World. However, according to Fathi and Wilson (2009), there is currently no clarity on the major determinants of success for strategic planning in universities. This paper aims to set forth the key determinants to help universities to prepare strategic plans fulfilling the requirements of both legal documents.

Strategic planning presents a unique challenge to most organizations today, whether they are private, public, or nonprofit entities. Ronchetti (2006), proposed an integrated balanced scorecard strategic planning model for nonprofit organizations. Similarly Pidcock (2001) investigates strategic planning as carried out in a new university in response to requirements brought in by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in 1998. The model also requires that the planning process focuses on the institution's core purpose. This study investigates the match at a new university between the model identified and actual practice, largely using semi-structured interviews based on purposive sampling, but also referring to internal documentation. Furthermore Yarmohammadian *et al.* (2011) investigates application of strategic planning models to a great non-governmental university over Iran. Methodology was a R&D in two phases: a-comparative research for reviewing experiences of other universities through the world and b- designing and developing a comprehensive model relevant and fit for the circumstances of non-governmental universities in Iran.

Machado *et al.* (2004) investigated the status of the strategic planning in Portuguese Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The purpose of the study was to measure the level of HEI engagement in institutional planning as evidenced in the perceptions of rectors and presidents, who were surveyed. The investigation also examined the level of involvement of institutions and measured the perceptions of institutional leaders about the benefits and effectiveness of planning. The methodology involved developing, piloting and administering a survey to rectors and presidents. As a consequence, they highlighted perceptions regarding the benefits of strategic planning and also problems affecting the process of strategic planning which were experienced by all HEIs in Portugal.

Asan and Tanyaş (2007) suggested a methodology that focuses on the vision and the deployment of strategies throughout the organization by merging Balanced Scorecard and Hoshin Kanri. The proposed methodology begins with the selection of strategic objectives according to the Balanced Scorecard perspectives, which is followed by the generation of the strategy map. The developed strategies are then deployed down to implementation plans which are reviewed by Hoshin Kanri, and the outcomes are evaluated by utilizing both tools. The implementation of the proposed methodology is illustrated based on an Engineering Management Graduate Program (EngMan). Finally, using the proposed methodology, implementation plans for the management of EngMan are realized, facilitating EngMan to attain its vision in the long term.

Sullivan and Richardson (2011) provided leaders of continuing education enterprises with an integrated model for sustaining strategic planning initiatives for American colleges and universities. The authors provided a model designed to move beyond the traditional strategic planning processes by aligning strategic planning initiatives with continuing higher education practice, employee performance, and outcomes assessment.

As Penbek *et al.* (2011) stated Bologna Process is a complicated change process which aims to bring many opportunities and help to improve the university. Since then an effective strategic management is necessary to lead this planned change in order to get beneficial outcomes. For this reason they investigated the interdependence of strategic management and planned organizational change for universities during the Bologna Process.

Today, strategic planning approaches are implemented taking into consideration different areas of activities in universities. Especially as a result of increasing importance of Distance Learning in Universities, Strategic planning draws attention to this subject (Howell et al., 2004; Kilfoil, 2003). Besides, Yarmohammadian *et al.* (2011) evaluated the quality of education through Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) model in department of medical records in four medical universities across Iran. All four universities were relatively favorable in nine dimensions and there is not any difference among them. As a result they found that there is difference between view point of students and scientific board members. Piorun (2011) also proposed a multicase approach which was used to explore evaluation methods being used in academic medical libraries that are engaged in strategic planning, including where in the planning and implementation process evaluation is being incorporated and how the evaluation data are collected, analyzed, and incorporated into future strategic planning processes.

3. Methodology

5018 numbered Public Finance Management and Control Law imposes public institutions within the scope of their progress plans and programs, respective regulations and basic principles to prepare strategic plans through collaborative methods with the aims of:

- Constituting missions and visions,
- Establishing strategic goals and measurable targets,
- Measuring performances by determined indicators,
- Monitoring and evaluating implementation.

On the other hand, The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) set forth a Strategic Management Model for higher education institutes within the scope of YÖDEK regulation in order to:

- Improve the quality of academic and administrative services,
- Develop cooperation on quality assurance between countries in terms of universities within Bologna process.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze similarities and differences of strategic planning approaches within the frame of strategic management. In this study, these approaches are compared in the context of scopes, aims, principles, processes and applicability. Furthermore, feedback procedures and relation with budget, self-evaluation, environmental scanning, determining targets, identifying and monitoring performance indicators are the other comparison criteria. This study will propose to introduce strengths and weakness of these two approaches on the basis of the comparisons and to bring forward some conclusions for Turkish universities in establishing and implementing their strategic planning process that should be in accordance with both regulations.

3.1. DPT Model

Within the framework of public management and public financial management reforms, achieving financial discipline within the process of budget preparation and implementation at the macro level, distributing resources according to strategic priorities, monitoring whether or not these resources are used efficiently and developing accountability based on this have come forth as the main subjects for the public enterprises. Therefore, the Undersecretariat of Minister of Development has prepared the guide in order to provide guidance to public administrations in the strategic planning process in accordance with the Law of 5018 (DPT, 2006). The guide as well as related law and bylaws have been examined with

regard to aims, scopes, implementation process, components and applicability of this model in light of the universities. The results of this evaluation are as follows:

1. The aims of the model are to provide guidance to public administrations in the strategic planning process. “Strategic planning” has been adopted as fundamental instrument towards ensuring that public administrations provide services in a planned manner, develop policies, base the determined policies on concrete work programs and budgets, and monitor and evaluate implementation effectively. While bringing efficiency to public financial management, strategic planning will also support the development and strengthening of corporate culture and identity. In the Law no 5018, strategic plans are defined as follows: “the plans of public administrations containing their medium and long term goals, basic principles and policies, objectives and priorities, performance measures, and methods to be followed in order to achieve them as well as resource distributions”. Strategic plans, which will be prepared by public administrations within the framework of national level development plans and strategies, will increase the efficiency of the planning and implementation process and contribute to the rational use of resources in general together with programs, sectoral master plans, regional plans and provincial development plans.
2. The scopes of the model: As this model is based on the legal obligation (Law No: 5018), all public agencies and institutes in Turkey have to implement it to prepare their strategic plans and set methods of preparation. So this model covers all public institutions as well as the universities.
3. The implementation process of the model is described in the related guide in detail. The strategic plans, which are prepared and sent by the public institutions to the Ministry of Development, are examined with regards to this model and the informational feedback is provided to the public institutions. Furthermore, the institutions report the degree of implementation of the goals and objectives determined in the strategic plan in line with the degree of realization of the budget annually through the Budget Performance Program to the Ministry of Finance. The other feedback mechanism for the implementation of the strategic plan is the Administration Activity Report prepared by the public institution in accordance with the Law 5018.
4. The components and basic steps of the strategic planning process in the model are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Strategic Management Process (DPT, 2006).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and Programs • Stakeholders Analysis • SWOT Analysis 	SITUATION ANALYSIS	Where are we?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of existence of the agency • Basic Principles 	MISSION AND VALUES	Where do we want to go?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desired future 	VISION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives to be achieved in the medium run • Specific, concrete and measurable objectives 	GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	How can we get there?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods to reach the goals and objectives 	STRATEGIES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed work plans • Cost determination • Performance program • Budgeting 	ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS	How can we get there?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting • Comparison 	MONITORING	How can we monitor and evaluate our success?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback • Determination of measurement methods • Performance indicators • Evaluation of progress and outcomes towards 	PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION	

implementation		
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Therefore, the following basic concepts constitute the model:

- Situation Analysis,
- The participation of the stakeholders,
- Mission, vision and values,
- Goals,
- Objectives under the each goals,
- Measurement criteria unless the objective is measurable,
- Strategies,
- Estimated cost table of the activities and projects required for each objectives for the five year period.

In addition to these components, the model also recommends the internal analysis.

5. The applicability of the model for the higher education institutions are described below:

- It provides the common strategic planning framework for all Public Agencies and Institutions.
- There are the detailed analyses such as stakeholder analysis, internal analysis, environmental analysis, regulations analysis as the situation analysis in the model.
- This model contains the accurate feedback mechanisms from the different perspectives such as the Budget Performance Program and the Administration Activity Report.
- It also defines the relationship between the budget and the strategic plan.

However, there are some problems about the implementation of this model in higher education institutions and the issues that need to be improved. Regarding the universities, the weaknesses of the model are listed below:

- Although this model provides the general framework for the public institutions for strategic planning, it does not consider the different characteristics of the various types of the institutions such as universities, and does not provide the implementation flexibly.
- Despite the fact that it contains the feedback mechanisms, the results are not evaluated by related authorities effectively. That is the reason that there is a need for additional adjustments for monitoring of feedback mechanism of this model.
- While this model belongs to the Ministry of Development, the performance evaluation stages of the model are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance. So this causes conflicts during the implementation of the model.
- Since this model is too general, the benchmarking between equivalent public institutions cannot be performed effectively.

3.2. YÖDEK Model

The second regulations examined in this study are provided by YÖDEK. The YÖDEK model is evaluated under the same titles as in the previous model, and consequences are given below:

1. The Aim of the Model: The model explains the basic principles for the effective execution of the activities for Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement in higher education institutions.
2. The Scope of the Model: The Model covers the Higher Education Institutions. The model is supported by YÖDEK regulations and guidebook which explain the preparation and execution of the model (YÖDEK, 2007). The model evaluates not only academic side of higher education institutions but also administrative side.
3. The Implementation Process of the Model: The model is composed of two integrated processes namely strategic planning process and execution process, as illustrated in Fig. 1. These processes are explained in the YÖDEK guidebook in detail. Furthermore the monitoring of the implementation process is provided by feedback procedure through preparing the report of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement periodically, and submitting it to the YÖDEK commission. The report is abbreviated in Turkish as ADEK report. The performance indicators which are required by ADEK report are given in YÖDEK guidebook. The model proposes resource planning and budgeting of the activities and the projects, however, the ADEK report does not monitor the usage of those resources.

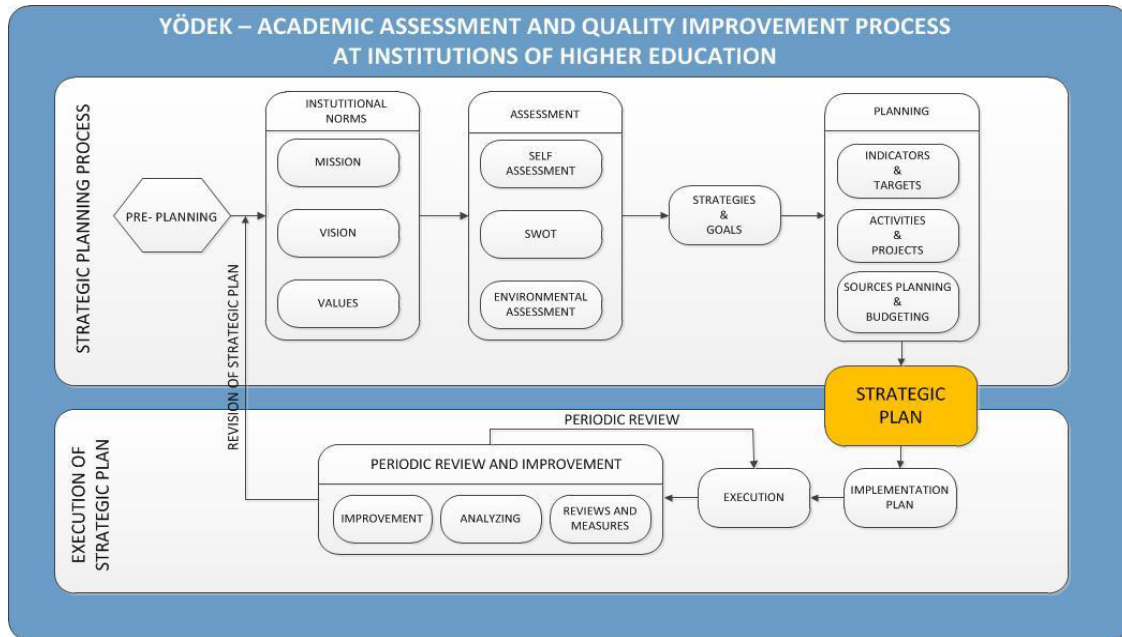


Fig 1. The Process of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvements at Institutions of Higher Education (YÖDEK, 2007)

4. The components of the model are listed below:

- Pre-Planning activities
- Mission, vision, values
- Institutional self assessment: internal and environmental assessment
- Determining strategic goals
- Structuring the strategic plan: indicators and targets, activities and projects, resource planning and budgeting
- Preparing and executing action plan
- Periodic review and improvement

The YÖDEK model also proposes a self assessment approach which includes 10 dimensions as listed below:

- Inputs, Resources and Relations
- Institutional Qualifications and Features
- Education and Training Processes
- Research and Development Processes
- Application and Service Processes
- Administrative and Support Processes
- Managerial Features – Structural
- Managerial Features – Behavioural
- Outputs and Results
- Mission

During self-assessment activities to be conducted at higher education institutions, each subject will be assessed using a five-point Likert scale which scores the presence level comparing to the expected level.

5. There are some strengths and weaknesses about the applicability of the model for the higher education institutions. The strengths are listed below:

- The model proposes an implementation process
- The model gives a standard framework for benchmarking among universities
- The model enables universities to prepare ADEK report easily, from the indicators of the model.

The model was developed for higher education institutions; however, there are some points that need to be improved as listed below:

- The model does not distinguish different programs or departments of the universities since the same specific indicators cannot be suitable for vocational schools, undergraduate programs, master and PhD programs.
- Although the model has been developed so as to contain Bologna process, there are not any indicators that will measure the success of the Bologna process in the performance indicators recommended for the institutions. In other words, goals and indicators that consider the activities of Bologna process have not been recommended in the model. There is a need for an additional report called as BEK (Bologna Coordination Committee) report indicates that ADEK report does not contain the performance indicators related to Bologna process.
- The ten dimensions of the self assessment approach proposed in the model can also be applicable for constructing strategic goals.
- The model proposes resource planning and budgeting of the activities and the projects, however, the YÖDEK guidebook does not address budget integration with activities. In this respect, DPT model should be taken into consideration in budgeting.

4. Conclusion

In this study, two fundamental regulations in Turkey which oblige universities to prepare strategic plans and set methods of preparation are examined and the applicability of the models to the higher education institutions is evaluated. As a result of the evaluation, strengths and weaknesses of both models are determined.

DPT model which provides the common strategic planning framework for all Public Agencies and Institutions contains the detailed analyses such as stakeholder analysis, internal analysis, environmental analysis, regulations analysis as the situation analysis. Furthermore, this model contains the accurate feedback mechanisms such as the Budget Performance Program, the Administration Activity Report by defining the relationship between the budget and the strategic plan. But this model should be detailed with regards to the different types of the public institutions. For example, the guide for the higher education institutions and the guide for the other public institutions should be different. Despite the fact that it contains the feedback mechanisms, the results are not evaluated effectively. That is the reason that there is a need for the additional adjustment for this model.

YÖDEK, as strategic planning model for universities, provides standardization environment for universities to benchmarking. Moreover, YÖDEK also sets up an infrastructure for universities to prepare ADEK reports. However, YÖDEK does not consider distinctive structure of the programs (undergraduate and graduate) and academic institutions (Faculty of Theology, Faculty of Medical, Faculty of Law, etc.). YÖDEK model should be integrated to Bologna process as expected. YÖDEK model should also be

associated with budgeting considering Budget Performance Program which is legal obligation for universities.

For universities, existence of two different models causes trouble in practice. Universities have to prepare their reports according to both DPT and YÖDEK models. Therefore, a single model to be prepared jointly by relevant ministries and the Council of Higher Education should be formed instead of implementation two distinctive models. This integrated model also facilitates benchmarking by determining common targets and indicators for higher education institutions.

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