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The Role of Strategic Planning in Achieving Institutional Excellence in the UAE Institutions

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Abstract

Strategic planning is one of the integral components of the success of any institution across the globe. The importance of strategic planning stems from the fact that it enables institutions to identify the opportunities and risks that exist in their external environment, in addition to analysing the strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment of the institution in order to identify appropriate alternatives and make rational decisions to achieve its objectives. This study aims to identify the role of strategic planning in achieving institutional excellence in the UAE institutions. To achieve this objective, the researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach to analyse the data that was collected through the questionnaire. The sample of the study consisted of the senior managers at Abu Municipality. The study reached several recommendations, the most important of which is that there is a need to provide specialists in the field of strategic planning with specialized knowledge and expertise in all matters related to strategic planning in government organizations. There is also a need to increase interest in surveying and interdisciplinary analysis before preparing and developing strategic plans.

Keywords: Institutional Excellence, Strategic Planning, UAE

Introduction

Strategic planning has become an urgent necessity and an indispensable element in all operations. It has also taken the lead in the administrative process, especially in light of the changes and shifts in daily life. Therefore, randomness is no longer suitable as a basis for the any administration that seeks to achieve excellence. Rather, predicting possible crises and overcoming them is better than waiting for it to occur and then dealing with it. The process of strategic planning to confront potential crises is also considered one of the most important factors that help the concerned administrations to deal with potential crises in the most effective and efficient manner possible. These administrations are able to deal with the crisis in an organized manner and making optimal use of the available energies and resources, in order to ensure that the institution continues to perform its work during crises (Al-Sahmi, 2019).

Researchers from different fields asserted that excellence can only be achieved through strategic planning, preparation and continuous effort from all members of the organization

as a whole, and the senior management bears a primary responsibility in creating the appropriate organizational environment to accommodate the idea of excellence and achieve it in reality, and to adapt to the highly complex business environment and rapid change, It has become imperative for every organization to seek survival and stability by having a strong and effective management system to keep pace with success and progress.

The researcher justifies the use of strategic planning in organizations to the complex and intertwined relationships in the economic, political, social, cultural, technological, security and other areas that affect institutional excellence, as today's organizations are exposed to many risks as a result of the uncertainty in the external environment. Strategic planning becomes necessary to predict what future conditions will be and prepare to develop plans, programs, and scenarios that ensure the achievement of strategic objectives.

Literature Review

Khudair's (2017) examined the relationship of strategic planning with institutional excellence in tourism companies on the ground and sought to explore the extent to which strategic planning plays its role in achieving institutional excellence for the tourism companies under study. The study relied on designing a questionnaire that contains questions to be applied to the respondents. In order to reveal the relationship and the impact of strategic planning in achieving institutional excellence in the companies under study, the questionnaire was measured through the SPSS statistical program, and the appropriate statistical tests were adopted to reach valuable indications and indicators that support the subject of the study. The study showed the presence of strategic planning in the study sample's companies. As it turned out, the five areas of strategic planning were remarkably found in the tourism companies under study. It also became clear that institutional excellence is present and evident in these companies. The study concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between strategic planning and institutional excellence for the study sample of tourism companies, which results in distinction in the overall performance and reflects on its profitability, market share, and attractiveness rates for employment. The study recommended the need to develop executive plans to implement the set strategies while activating follow-up and interim evaluation systems to ensure good implementation of the strategies.

Mahmoud's (2018) aimed to define the role and importance of foreseeing the future through successful strategic planning, and shed light on the basic ingredients for making success that stand out in its ability to foresee the future to develop appropriate plans to confront that future and understand its prospects and challenges through clear and accurate visions. The study also presented the most used future foresight methods in forward-looking studies and their role in the successful planning of the organization. The study concluded that future foresight provides those involved in the planning process with an important aspect of knowledge base that requires the formulation of strategies for future plans. It also concluded that there are basic ingredients for the success of the planning process, such as clarity of objectives, continuity of information, flexibility of the plan, among others. Therefore, study consumer behaviour is significant for this process (Alsharif et al., 2021a; 2021b; 2022; 2023). Also, it is significant to study the emotional of individuals (Ahmed et al., 2021a; 2021b; 2022, 2023a; 2023b). The study recommended that leaders or planners should realize that the present alone is not sufficient to create permanent success, but it is sufficient for temporary success, and they shall have a clear vision for the future to achieve permanent success in the future.

Study of Abdel-Hadi (2023) aimed to identify the nature of institutional excellence and its importance in the Egyptian government sector, and to highlight the requirements for achieving it and the elements of excellence in government institutions with reference to the criteria and requirements of the Egypt Award for Excellence in the government sector. This study relied on the descriptive analytical approach to achieve the objectives of the study. The study reached several results, the most important of which is the existence of a statistically significant correlation between institutional excellence and performance improvement in government institutions. The study recommended that government institutions in Egypt seek to establish an annual internal award for institutional excellence, while relying on the criteria and requirements of the Egypt Award for Government Excellence, and setting incentive programs for distinguished employees.

Moses Study (2018) aimed to deepen scientific knowledge of applied tools for using future science methodologies in security policies and planning. It also aimed to localize these tools in the UAE through the application and understanding of the basic concepts of estimating and analysing information to prepare it in the appropriate form for future science studies. The study concluded that no strategy in shaping the future can succeed or reach its objectives in overcoming the achievement gap without sufficient depth in removing challenges and obstacles. Security services, for example, have a great responsibility to prepare forward-looking visions based on scientific pillars. To achieve this, one of the requirements of strategic planning is to gather security competencies while giving a specific role to each of them represented in presenting action plans and mechanisms for study, because future studies do not depend on ideas in minds, but rather ideas raised by everyone. The first requirements of a student of future science are to be have intellectual creativity and generate future ideas.

Methodology

This is a quantitative study, it aims to achieve its objectives through the descriptive analytical approach. This approach is appropriate to the nature of the study and its problem. Al-Bayati (2018) defined the quantitative approach as a method that relies on studying the phenomenon as it exists in reality. It is also concerned with describing it as an accurately and expressing it qualitatively or quantitatively. The qualitative approach describes the phenomenon and clarifies its characteristics, while the quantitative approach gives it a numerical description that shows the magnitude of this phenomenon, its size, or the degree of its association with other phenomena.

Al-Tal (2015) argued that the analytical descriptive approach is related to human studies that require analysis and interpretation in an organized scientific way to reach a specific social or humanitarian problem in which practical solutions can be found. It gives it a numerical description, and it also shows the amount or level of this phenomenon or problem under study and the degree of its connection with other phenomena as it relies on the basis of collecting information and data about the problem of the study. The researcher organized the data he obtained and in a way that serves the quality of this research to reach the results that help him understand the problem and generalize its results, after analysis, to the study community.

In collecting data about the phenomenon of the study – the researcher will rely on two main sources, Secondary sources, which are those related to the review of previous literature, studies, books, foreign and Arabic references, and scientific periodicals, in addition to the primary sources of data represented in the questionnaire tool, through which the

researcher can collect all information and data related to the role of strategic planning in achieving institutional excellence in the UAE institutions, then analysing this data and drawing its results based on statistical analysis programs (SPSS) and then interpreting them in the light of the results of the study. The Sample of the study consisted of the senior managers at Abu Municipality. A questionnaire, the main tool of the study, were distributed to the sample to analyse their reactions and reach the recommendations of the study.

Discussion

The Concept of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is one of the most important administrative activities used to monitor and determine the priorities of institutions, in addition to focusing on the energies and resources available in the institution, and ensuring that the work team seeks to achieve the main objectives. It is one of the most important tools that contribute to achieving the aspirations of institutions. A major institution, whether it is security, service, industrial, commercial, or any other, is almost devoid of the strategic planning process.

There have been several definitions of strategic planning. Al-Shammari (2020) defined it as “the process that includes the main objectives of the institution, and defines policies and strategies that control operations, and implement material and human resources to achieve the objectives of the institution.” Al-Zoubi (2016) defined it as “a deep and comprehensive thinking of the ideal situation in which should be in the distant future. It includes drawing different scenarios for this future, and then planning to take advantage of any available opportunity, while avoiding future risks that the institution may encounter”.

Jawad (2017) defined strategic planning as “a continuous and systematic process in which the managers of the institution make decisions related to the future and development of this institution, in addition to taking clear actions in order to achieve the its objectives of reach and high levels of success.”

Accordingly, strategic planning is the activities that lead the institutional objectives through strategies to achieve them, which is a developmental process for the objectives and plans of the institution. Strategic planning is the development and formation of long-term plans to deal effectively with opportunities and threats in the external environment surrounding the institution in light of the strengths and weaknesses of the resources owned by the institution in its internal environment (El-Din, 2020).

Through the previous definitions of strategic planning, the researcher can define it as “the continuous process by which the leaders and members of the institution make decisions related to the future of the organization and define the programs, initiatives, projects, procedures, and policies required to achieve the objectives of the institution to ultimately achieve excellence and leadership in performance.”

The Principles of Institutional Excellence

Strategic planning plays a effective role in achieving institutional excellence in government institutions. This principles of institutional excellence can be summarised as follows:

1. It is concern with results: the institution reviews its policies and strategy in light of the feedback. The institution can flexible, quick to adapt, and highly capable of responding immediately to the requirements of the partners, and can identify the current and future expectations for them (Abu Al-Nasr, 2018).

2. It focuses on customer service: This is done by adding real value to them on an ongoing basis, identifying the needs of customers and understanding their requirements on an ongoing basis, not only the current ones but their future expectations as well, and working to identify and diagnose obstacles, mistakes, and delays, in an effort to formulate a distinguished relationship With all customers (Bin Abboud, 2019).
3. Leadership and steadfastness of its objectives, which is the ability to achieve specific strategic objectives by defining the future path of the institution and formulating its vision and mission, as well as the ability of leaders and officials to motivate others and sharpen their efforts towards achieving their vision and career objectives (Bo Medin, 2017).
4. Management through processes and facts so that decision-making is based on facts and reliable information taken from the results of performance measurement, indicators of efficiency of processes and systems, in addition to defining the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. It is governed by the authority of business interdependence, it simplifies procedures and enhances transparency and team spirit to reach customers with the highest required degrees of effectiveness and efficiency. This happens in practice by designing coherent administrative processes based on the actual needs of customers and applying them to the fullest (Hassan, 2019).
5. Employee development and involvement: The institution, after being fully aware of the importance of its resources and its role in achieving sustainable institutional excellence, identifies and understands the requirements of employees in terms of the skills required now and in the future to implement institutional policies, strategies, and objectives. Accordingly, operations are re-engineered, those with the required skills are employed, and their capabilities are developed to achieve the objectives of the institution (Zayed, 2017).
6. Learning, creativity, innovation, and continuous improvement: The institution manages change, and it is required to open to the ideas and opinions of all concerned to benefit from it, and that relations in this case are characterized by openness, complete trust, and mutual respect, thus achieving excellence in performance through employees looking for knowledge and transform them into innovations that will create the required added value for all customers and stakeholders of the institution (Al-Otaibi, 2015).
7. Partnership development in concept and practice: Here, the institution carries out the process of developing and maintaining long-term partnership relations through which benefits are exchanged by both parties. Such a relationship can be formulated with customers, the community, suppliers, and other institutions. The relationship is characterized by trust and mutual respect (Al-Meligy, 2019).
8. Social Responsibility: the institution takes all its measures and practices within a framework of transparency and full responsibility towards the environmental, social, economic, cultural and educational roles in society that it would like to play within its societal environment (Jawdah, 2016).

Overview of Institutional Excellence in the UAE

The fourth-generation system for government excellence in the United Arab Emirates is characterized by a number of features that make it unique and through which it ensures the achievement of added value for the government institutions that implement the system. Here are some of the features of the UAE approved characteristics of institutional excellence (Sheikh Khalifa Government Excellence Program, 2023)

1. Focus on innovation: it aims to achieve sustainability in the field of entrepreneurship, the fourth generation system for government excellence in the UAE focuses on the importance of continuous development of capabilities based on learning from performance results that are constantly monitored from local and international best practices by using innovative methods and with the active participation of the concerned customers and the community.

2. Taking into account the difference and specificity in the nature of the work of government institutions: The government excellence system in the UAE was designed to take into account the difference and specificity in the nature of the work of government institutions, so that the focus is on areas that help the government achieve its goals entrusted to it, each in its field of work and specialization in a manner that guarantees justice in the comparison between the performance of different government institutions, regardless of the nature of their work, as some standards have been identified in the system so that they apply only to some institutions based on the nature of the work of the institution and its tasks according to the founding decree, while the rest of the standards are considered mandatory for all institutions.

3. Focusing on the extent to which the main objectives assigned to government institutions: this is achieved in terms of leadership in the areas of work systems, programs, operations, service provision and policy development (capabilities). The government excellence system reflects the importance of focusing on the compatibility of these capabilities with international best practices and their effectiveness in achieving the desired goals and results.

4. Focusing on services and smart transformation: the system focuses on developing government services and delivery channels in order to achieve a pioneering experience for customers and provide them with added value using innovative methods in line with the mechanisms for developing services in accordance with the strategy of the smart government.

5. Performance Management: The system contributes to the development of the performance management philosophy and links it to the achievement of happiness for society in a way that achieves a competitive advantage for the UAE and its government institutions and a leading position in all fields.

6. Pioneering and achieving sustainability in terms of leadership in measuring and monitoring institutional performance: The government excellence system reflects the importance of moving to the stage of results management and the implications of applying processes, programs, services and policies to ensure the well-being and happiness of society, in a way that achieves a competitive advantage for the government institutions and the UAE to achieve advanced levels of leadership in global competitiveness indicators and achieving long-term sustainability of the results.

The role of strategic planning in achieving institutional excellence

The importance of strategic planning stems from the fact that it is not only one of the main administrative functions to achieve institutional excellence but is also considered the first administrative function that precedes all other functions and determines their scope. This means that the objectives that are determined in the strategic planning stage are what determine the size and nature of the personnel required to accomplish them.

Al-Shammari (2020) believes that the importance of strategic planning stems from the fact that it enables institutions to identify the opportunities and risks that exist in their external environment, in addition to analyzing the strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment of the institution in order to identify appropriate alternatives and make rational decisions to achieve its objectives. Thus, it helps the institution to adapt to the external environment.

Al-Juhani (1418) believes that the role of strategic planning in achieving institutional excellence can be summarised as follows:

1. Strategic planning enables the institution to identify its priorities that constitute the core of the institutional work, and enhances the development of effective strategies to bring about positive changes.
2. It helps in achieving an optimal investment of the resources in the institution, including cost reduction.
3. It enables the organization to develop policies and perceptions and build future plans to ensure that there is a link between the message of the institution, its objectives and its regulations, policies, rules and procedures.
4. It works to deepen the understanding of the employees, increase and improve their skills, knowledge and experience, and push them to find constructive solutions to the challenges facing the institution, which generates job satisfaction among employees.

Hegan (2019) also pointed out the importance of strategic planning in achieving institutional excellence through the following points:

1. It helps to clarify the future, predict events, and prepare for them in a way that contributes to taking alternative measures to confront them.
2. It helps the institution to use more rational methods to identify options and alternatives in their work.
3. It helps the institution to benefit greatly from its capabilities and employ them to achieve a better future.
4. It enhances the work of individuals and cooperation in a team spirit, and provide them with experience that motivates them to achieve the objectives of the institution.

The researcher believes that strategic planning improves job performance by uncovering issues essential to its activities, which ultimately leads the institution to achieve institutional excellence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study dealt with the most important perspectives related to strategic planning and institutional excellence. The researcher believes that the leader shall have a clear and appropriate strategic vision based on a future strategic plan that is compatible with the organizational culture, which contributes to the development of the human cadre. The strategic leader shall also be characterized by values, ethics, innovation and flexibility that work on bringing about continuous strategic change and development that leads to achieving quality and excellence in performance. The recommendations of this study are as follows:

- Providing specialists in the field of strategic planning with specialized knowledge and expertise in all matters related to strategic planning in government organizations.
- Increasing interest in surveying and interdisciplinary analysis before preparing and developing strategic plans.
- Increasing openness to the surrounding environment with a high degree of transparency, along with increasing opportunities for internal and external participation.
- Providing the necessary support financial and moral support.
- Binding decisions shall be issued for governmental organizations in the UAE to form a crisis management team in each organization.
- Communicating the message, vision, values, and projects of the strategic plan to all employees through publication, communication, and meetings.

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