
**STRATEGY AND ITS FEATURES. ROLE OF STRATEGY
IN MANAGING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
- CHANGE IN ORGANIZATION****Stanisław Malinowski**

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Abstract

Managing a contemporary organization is currently, i.e. at the beginning of the 21st century, a set of numerous actions that must be both coordinated and presented in a form of a cohesive strategy. The article entitled “*Strategy and its Features. Role of Strategy in Managing Higher Education Institution*” is a presentation of the basic features of a strategy and an attempt to implement this strategy to the benefit of managing a specific type of an organization, which undoubtedly is a higher education institution.

Keywords: strategy, management, strategic management

Introduction

Managing a contemporary organization is currently, i.e. at the beginning of the 21st century, a set of numerous actions that must be both coordinated and presented in a form of a cohesive strategy. The article entitled “*Strategy and its Features. Role of Strategy in Managing Higher Education Institution*” is a presentation of the basic features of a strategy and an attempt to implement this strategy to the benefit of managing a specific type of an organization, which undoubtedly is a higher education institution.

1. The essence of strategy. Features of strategic thinking and acting

Strategy is one of the basic instruments of management. An organization owes its market success to choosing the right strategy, while a poorly designed strategy or no strategy at all may lead to the failure of the organization. Etymologically, the term *strategy* comes from Greek *strategom*, meaning the art of warfare. The origins of the strategic approach in management derive from military sciences - namely from the theory of war. The basic definitions of the term strategy are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected definitions of the term strategy

No.	Author	Definition of the strategy
1	A.D. Handler	The process of determining some basic and long-term objectives and in intentions of a company and adopting certain directions of action and allocation of resources necessary to achieve those objectives [8]. The author represents a view that an organization’s strategy results from its relations with the environment [3] He understands the term strategy as a specific developmental pattern of an organization.
2	P.F. Drucker	It consists in analyzing a current situation and changing it if necessary [1,p.123].
3	D.R. Hampon	A unified, forward-looking and integrated plan which a company implements to combine the strategic benefits with environmental challenges, and which ensures that its basic objectives will be achieved thanks to being properly secured by the organization [13, p.143].
4	H. Koontz H. Weihrich	Three aspects: Generally, programs of operation and development of sources to achieve distant objectives; A program of organizational objectives, of changes in the

		<p>organization and the resources which will be employed to achieve the objectives, manners of management allowing to acquire, use and redistribute those resources;</p> <p>Determining essential and long-term objectives of an enterprise and adapting the ways of operation and allocation of resources necessary to achieve those objectives; [1]</p>
5	L.J. Krajewski L.P. Ritzman	A process that determined the organization's missions, warning and adjusting the organization to changes in the environment and identifying its characteristic competences. [13, p.143]
6	J. von Neumann	A complete plan that defines the decision to be made in any possible situation. [13, 123]
7	A. Simon	A series of decisions determining behavior over time [13, 145]
8	S. Tilles	<p>A collection of objectives and main organizational undertakings. Formulation of objectives is primarily the determination of what an enterprise wants to achieve and what it desires to become. An objective must be determined broadly, in an abstractive way, it cannot concentrate just on a single aspect of operations [13, 143]</p>
9	Bo Ekman	A strategy is people - not models or management techniques.

Source: K. Obłój, *Strategia sukcesu firmy*, PWE, Warszawa 2010, p.5

These definitions show the variety of approaches to the discussed issue. On the one hand, the strategy is understood as determining a desired position of a higher education institution on the market in the future towards the environment, as specifying future and long-term objectives of an enterprise along with selection of directions for action, and on the other as adequate allocation of resources necessary to achieve those objectives, as a set of decision-making rules, which an organization uses to identify, interpret and solve specific problems, and manners of conduct, the application of which leads to achievement of the outlined objectives. Formulation of a strategy should be always considered in two dimensions - everyday actions and long-term planning [5, p.148].

Another and extremely interesting definition of a strategy was proposed by *J. Penc*, who argued that a strategy is: “... *an outlined concept of systemic actions consisting in formulation of a set of long-term objectives of an organization and their modification depending on the changes that take place in determination of recourses and means necessary to achieve the objectives as well as ways of conduct (principles of actions, directives, algorithms) ensuring optimum distribution and use intended to flexible response to market challenges and providing an enterprise with advantageous conditions for existence and development*” [12, p.148].

A strategy may be developed throughout years; plenty of people may work over it. It is then created based on systematic planning, bureaucratic to a large extent. Such an approach, sometimes referred to as a planning approach, is characteristic for large organizations and corporations.

An overall strategy of an organization, called the corporate strategy, refers to a whole higher education institution. This is the level where directions and pace of expansion are determined along with the kind or kinds of activity are or will be developed, how and with what intensity. It is also determined how new activities will be created and managed. The following issues must be considered here: operations of the higher education institutions, markets where the company operates, market segmentation, fusion and understandings, establishment of branches.

Development of each organization, regardless of its character and scope of operations should be based on a properly determined strategy. A strategy is an integrated arrangements of objectives and tasks and a package of means that direct and dynamize transformations in a higher education institution in order to implement its mission, improve efficacy and competitive strength and reduce operational uncertainty among others through broadening the possibilities of expansions by diagnosing the environment and making a proper choice on future development. The future is at stake here, and the responsibility is borne by the management to outline possibly the best (optimum) way leading to a better future, a way that they intend to strictly follow and continuously improve. Strategies may be formulated incrementally, namely as a result of evolution of the company’s situation and its response to the environmental changes (an emerging strategy), and in an entrepreneurial way, understood as a well-thought result of a series of various though operations, which results in an intended and consciously formulated concept that is based on analysis and calculation [6, p.34]. These different ways of construing a strategy may be based on reliably analysis of market surroundings, i.e. on a strategic analysis where emphasis is put on its dynamics,

given that evolution and changes in the environment are more significant than principles of conduct inside the organization [12, p.67].

Each strategy must assume a market orientation, constant learning of (paradoxically) a higher education institution and implementation of changes in the curriculum, namely the perspective of the organization's dynamics based on the "7Fs" paradigm of strategic management. This paradigm (the first four "Fs" formulated by R. Kanter and three remaining ones by J. Penc) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. A new paradigm of management (7Fs)

Components	Meaning in strategic management
FOCUS	- A company has a business concept and can manage it efficiently: focusing on implementation of company's objectives and functions by using various core competencies; focusing on the market needs;
FIRST	- To be the first to change and respond to environmental challenges; adopting the simultaneous marketing, introducing innovations quickly and verifying them on the market;
FAST	- Quick adaptation of structures, procedures, people and implementations to the environment; quick introduction of changes by using all sources of innovative concepts; - Quick learning and stimulation of innovations, popularization of the best practices, seeking for possibilities to advance as an organizational value;
FLEXIBILITY	- Flexible thinking and acting, flexible adjustment of company's objectives to the needs of the changing environment; organizing actions around the strengths, outsourcing, creating flexibility as an organizational value;
FRIENDLY	- Creating an organization that serves the environment, is socially responsible, treats profit as one of the main business objectives and not its raison d'etre, takes care of the

	environment and helps solving the local community's issues, leads internal negotiations, takes up an empowerment attitude towards people, protects their workplaces, improves their standard of life at work, recognizes that employees should derive multilateral benefits from the company's success;
FAIRNESS	- Fair and equitable conduct towards employees, business partners, stakeholders and competition; developing an image of a trustworthy and respectful company with high capital of reputation and corporate identity, striving to defeat competition with advantage of value for the client;
FEASIBILITY	- Developing programs and strategies that can be implemented together (with the employees), determining a mission and a vision, working out common fields of development, ensuring contribution of employees to decision-making processes, strengthening partnership relations and stimulating involvement in undertakings, creating a structure that optimizes the achievements of human teams and the organization.

Source: J. Penc, *Kreatywne Kierowanie, Placet, Warszawa 2000, p.73*

All of these actions are necessary for an organization to exist, develop and expand problem-solving possibilities, continuously improve its position towards the environment with continuous disturbances which at the same time are its state of uncertainty and complexity.

Market orientation should be a basis for each well-developed strategy. As stressed by G. Foxal, *"the organizational success depends from adopting market policy instruments, primarily those customers oriented (...). Successful business have managers who rely on their intuition as much as they understand the consumer behaviors, but they also cooperate with users working over implementation of improvements and innovations"* [2, p.259].

Market (or marketing) orientation is based on the fact that the main objective of each higher education institution becomes to define the potential needs in a more effective way than the competition.

The market orientation, which is the client (or customers' needs) orientation, should consider the following principles: [7, p.41,43].

1. Customers' needs orientation pertains to all links of value creation in an organization. Orientation is not only the courtesy and maintaining close contacts with customers, but these are all the elements of the value creation process, namely market research and segmentation, feeling the customers' (market) needs, etc.
2. Client care is combined with fulfilling the expectations of the so-called "internal clients". Marketing in an organization is a matter of all, thus attention should be paid to the standard of internal service, meaning one department of the company by the other, and on the motivation of employees to focus on both the internal and external clients satisfaction as it works in both directions: visible satisfaction of purchasers improves motivation of employees in particular when it is combined with bonuses and recognition from the management (everyone does something that another employee needs, thus playing a role of a client), and this turns out to be the key to market success.
3. Clients' needs orientation means continuous tasks. In order to win new clients you need to convince the potentially interested parties to your offer. However, it is necessary to avoid arousing excessive expectations here to avoid disappointment, and the phase of first contacts with new clients requires an in-depth analysis of their needs so you can understand which factors are most important for particular purchasers or groups of purchasers. Client orientation must not mean that you follow the slogan "always do what your client wants". It should mean not only following the client's wishes but also making it easier for the client to orient themselves. The basis of such orientation should be the developing of awareness that the consumers' needs are constantly changing, and thus there is a need to work on actions that lead to such skills which allow to solve the client's issues in the best way possible, among others by offering new products.
4. Nowadays, the marketing orientation, i.e. involvement, way and effectiveness of fulfilling the consumers' needs, absolutely determined the way of achieving the organizational objectives. By adopting this orientation, and organization serves the market environment, and in particular a selected segment of recipients and users of the product. Thanks to using all of its attributes, it also becomes more effective in economic terms.

As suggested by research, higher education institutions which strengthen contacts with clients and offer good service achieve significant benefits and hence take them very seriously. According to German research, 74% of universities clearly improved their market performance thanks to carefully fulfilling the clients' wishes when working over their new

curriculum offering; 57% of them reduced the time of preparatory works and accelerated their innovation searching processes in the curriculum offering of the studies, and 46% of the institution include the clients (students) into the phase of searching for new ideas for a possible future offer, thus minimizing the risk of improper actions [9, pp. 36-37].

Marketing orientation strives for long-term bonds between clients and a higher education institution - the strengthening of the bonds requires a strategic approach allowing to determine the distribution of resources and outline an optimum way of development of these bonds. In such an approach, the organization's management must answer a question of what will changes in terms of clients, the market, market situation, competitors, the previous system of operation, where the higher education institution wants to be for a couple of years and what it needs to achieve the assumed objectives. It must therefore prepare for the foreseeable market changes and build a marketing strategy, namely a client oriented one. Such a strategy includes directions of action and a package of measures required for efficient client service and necessary to maintain or improve its own competitive position on the market [4, pp.8-13].

A market strategy is a functional strategy including ways and means for an organization to adapt to market changes and to influence the market, considering the possible actions from the competitors. It embraces such elements as formulation of marketing objectives, selection of product and market option, shaping of the mix marketing structure intended to achieve the desired competitive positions, the enterprise's ways of planning in particular market segments.

2. Change in the organization - principles for introducing changes

In order to be competitive, each organization must introduce changes in its system, structure and functioning, adapt its own variability to the variability of its environment. As emphasized by Peter Drucker, *"an organization that reinforces the today's vision, efficacy and achievements loses its adaptive capacity and will not be able to survive in a changing tomorrow since a change is the only inseparable human destiny."* [1, p.71]. At any higher education institution, the way of implementing changes may be both a source of successes and serious failures. It depends essentially on the engineering of introduction of these changes. It traditionally means sets of actions which consist in researching, designing, developing and coordinating actions in the field which most often correspond to the specialties of persons with higher technical education. However, it is referred at present to various fields of organizational operation such as management, marketing, team leadership.

It can and should be related to the process of implementing changes in an organization, and understood as knowledge and practical skill of steering, designing, introducing and applying changes in a ways that is friendly for people and effective for an organization. Managers must learn more about the concepts and principles of such engineering so while designing particular solutions that ensure competitiveness on the market, they can win the support of those who will implement them and bear the consequences of their use. The condition of implementing the changes is their comprehensive development also from the social engineering perspective, namely the rational influence on people, their attitudes and social behaviors. Each higher education institution is a complex social system which responds to the implemented changes with defensive actions, causing the so-called resistance to changes. It means an emotional blockage towards the changes, which is developed within the members of the organization fearing that the upcoming change will somehow worsen their current situation [15, p.302].

Changes are usually stressful for those who experience them. They need to enter into new roles and relations, adopt new values and show new types of behaviors and new approaches to work. Managers must provide the employees with a sense of anchoring in the future, formulating a vision of the higher education institution and pointing to the positive elements of the introduced changes, mobilizing for participation in development of a new shape of the organization. The awareness of changes, their inevitability and feeling a real (even difficult) situation improves the employees mobility and motivation, their involvement in implementation of new concepts.

Therefore, the engineering of changes implementation cannot be limited to the technical and organizational dimension only, but it must reach deep into the specificity of a human factor in an organization, in yet unknown or poorly used areas of managerial knowledge.

In the first group of higher education institution, the objectives implementation rate exceeded 80%, but in the second one it did not reach even 60%. It turned out that this difference was mainly caused by such factors as: general attitude of the employees, their independence and customs in the field of conflict resolution. The analysis showed that reorganization is doomed to failure if its objectives were not agreed on with the employees or when managers did not control the implementation. The research led to the conclusions that *“general attitude of the employees towards changes exerts strong impact on success of the*

reorganization process”, and that *“honesty and fairness in relations between superiors and employees has clear contribution to the success of changes and the other way around: insufficient trust as a feature of organizational culture is one of the reasons for the organization’s failure.”* [14, p.42].

Effective management of an organization requires understanding and anticipating a similar response of the employees to the change. Above all, it requires certain socio-technical rules to be applied in the process of development and implementation of the change. These rules are as follows:

1. Spreading the opinion about the necessity for the changes in the organization, presenting the reasons for implementation and provide the employees with convincing proof that it is impossible to meet the requirements of the market and environment without these changes.
2. Establishing and promoting the vision of future development of the higher education institution, determination of strategic directions, future objectives and tasks the organization must implement, and proposing a future shape of the institution allowing for better adjustment of changes to the assumed strategy and market needs.
3. Determining the scope of the future task according to market criteria and not the internal guidelines of the organization. This scope may be specified by defining and dividing the scopes of strategic interests which are a combination of products and markets of the same features, striving to resign from those organizational units where the costs are higher than achieved income, namely those which have become a burden.
4. Providing real benefits for the higher education institution and employees, arising from the designed change, providing examples of other organizations, in particular the leading ones (benchmarks), which have already implemented the same or similar changes, shows the employees the advantage of the “new” over the “old”.
5. Careful preparation of assumptions and stages for implementation of the change and tasks considered as the most important ones, including the employees in the process of developing a draft of the change so they can report their reservations, concerns and propositions in the right time, as well as consulting with the experts (potentially) to obtain as many professional views on the conditions of the change under development as possible and choose the most advantageous alternative.

6. Assigning professional internal teams taking over all organizational activities in the field of the process of changes, and employing recognized research, design and implementation techniques, or teams specialized in solving a certain type of issues (e.g. quality circles, progress teams, value analysis teams and others).
7. Using the help of external consultation teams which develop a change implementation strategy for an organization, or consulting services from mixed teams (more advantageous) composed of internal experts and external consultants, which makes it much easier to develop a strategy of changes and perform its operational implementation.
8. Including the employees who enjoy authority and respect into the promotion of the change, as people more easily accept the changes and support them more willingly, or even work over their implementation, if they are promoted by trusted and generally respected persons.
9. Creating a work atmosphere (in working groups) that contributed to contacts among employees, openness and mutual trust along with exchange of information, as well as encouraging the employees for participation in the seek for optimum solutions so any doubts, concerns and reservations can be analyzed and overcome together with a superior.
10. Delegating powers and responsibilities as this activates the creative skills and motivates the employees thanks to freedom of deciding and triggering the faith in one's own competence and ability, as well as providing them with courses allowing to develop new skills in order to eliminate the threat of tomorrow uncertainty.
11. Developing a motivating system that will encourage to introduce changes and reward the successes achieved in that scope as it provides personal satisfaction and strengthens the employees involvement in the process of implementing and consolidating the change.
12. Demonstrating the management's support for the implemented changes and focusing the (financial, organizational and staff) efforts on a wide scope of actions performed simultaneously in the whole enterprise.

Conclusions

Creating a real vision requires strategic thinking: developing various options and concepts, identifying the threats and opportunities, determining different objectives, ways of achieving them and paths to success. Strategic thinking allows to control the development of an enterprise in a well-thought and planned manner, improve the structures and kinds of activity, constantly extend the conditions to create a better future. This article is an attempt to analyze the possibilities of transferring a traditional concept of a strategy and strategic thinking formulated for a classic enterprise into the ground of a higher education institution. Furthermore, the author analyzes the conditions for change management in a contemporary higher education institution. It must be stressed that the process of change management in an organization, and even more so in a higher education institution, usually faces strong resistance from the staff themselves. Therefore, it is worth noting that on the one hand that if an organization is willing to develop, it must introduce a series of changes in its operations, and on the other there is this already mentioned natural resistance towards any changes.

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