

## Comparative Comparison of Strategic Thinking in the Management and Planning of Universities Inside and Outside the Country

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**Abstract.** In the light of various studies carried out in various socio-economic areas, scientific and cultural development has been introduced as a prerequisite and fundamental factor for sustainable development of the societies. Obviously, universities, as a "scientific and intellectual command center of the society" have a

fundamental and unique role and function. In order to achieve this, the most significant and fundamental problem or challenge of universities is the lack of a comprehensive and long-term plan that can clarify the prospects for university development, providing a reasonable and reliable framework for different types of activities such as educational, research, technology and support-staff activities. Since the strategic thinking in the management and planning of universities can be used as a solution to the challenges of the present age and to the strategic requirements of higher education institutions both inside and outside the country, so: The present study aims to "compare comparative strategic thinking in the management and planning of universities inside and outside the country "with the aim of identifying the main and subcomponents of management and strategic planning. This research is a comparative study in the field of university management. The research data have been analyzed to extract the main and subcomponents of strategic management using "factor analysis". The research findings showed that there are 6 main components and 6 sub-components in the comparative comparison of the strategic thinking in the strategic management and planning of universities inside and outside the country.

**Keywords:** Strategic Management; Major Components; Sub-Components; Strategic Thinking; Comparative Study

## 1. Introduction

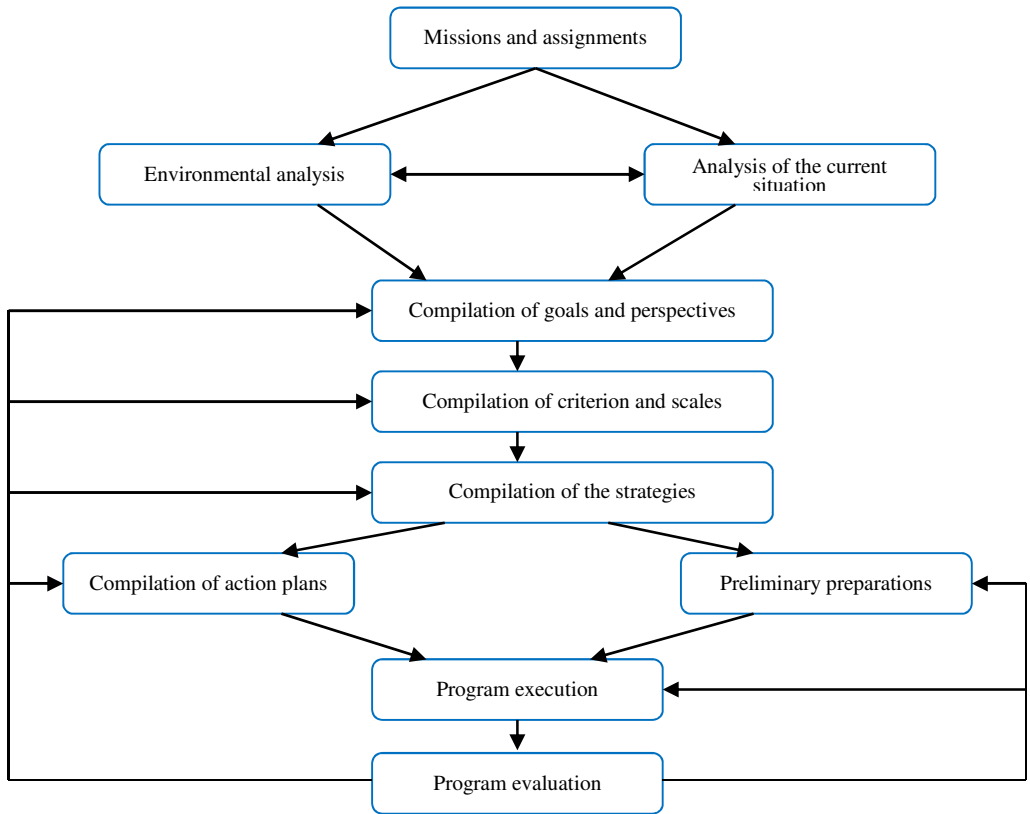
Strategic management and planning is a comprehensive and far-reaching approach. It is fundamentally based on "strategic thinking," and is a way for scholars to analyze the issues in a comprehensive, regular and systematic framework, that can provide a platform for the challenges and barriers of Higher Education and Universities. In fact, in the form of the "National Document for the Development of Higher Education in Iran", the major and strategic paths of the future developments of the universities and higher education and research institutes of the country are identified, and the possibility of "synergy" of the forces and efforts is provided. (Bendy, 2015). Also, the use of strategic management in organizations has many advantages, including giving organizations, especially educational organizations, the ability to have the influence

they, themselves, rather than just reacting to the ruling forces and simply responding to the changing conditions that govern them. (Sandeep, 2013). Due to these advantages and competencies, it is possible to use strategic management to form and the impact the cultural situation of the country for the universities of the country. The present research is based on the facts and necessities of that mentioned above. Studies in the field of planning and university management of the country emphasize the existence of the structural problems due to the lack of strategic planning and management (Campbell, 2016). The findings show that for university planners and administrators, the perspectives and development horizons of the university are not clear and are generally involved with everyday issues, and naturally traditional, cross-sectional and superficial solutions. Thus, in explaining the fundamental problem of this research, one can say despite the fact that universities in the country face a variety of micro and macro problems in different areas of human, financial, planning, executive, evaluation, and etc., the most important and most difficult problem of universities is the lack of a comprehensive and a long-term plan, to clarify the prospects for university development, as well as provide a reasonable and reliable frame work for education, research, technology and support activities. Therefore, this kind of project is under consideration in the field of "strategic planning of higher education". (Mehralizadeh et al., 2013). The final product of this process is a set of missions and assignments of the organization, its quantitative and qualitative objectives for a five-year period, and finally strategies, operational plans and executive actions for achieving the goals. In this regard, with a long-term and strategic look, the compilation of a twenty-year vision document was a valuable step in directing the country's activities to achieve development. One of the main aspects of the document is its special attention to Iran's position in the 1404 horizons of science and technology. One of the five main axes of the 20-year vision of the country in the 1404 horizon is the achievement of the first position of science and technology in the region. The recent experience of organizations shows that achieving the big goals and continuous responsiveness to the needs of the audiences and customers, in chaotic environments, is only realized in the context of strategic planning

(Mehralizadeh, 2006). In this study, by using strategic management and planning theories and models, we compared the strategic thinking in managing the universities inside and outside the country. For this purpose, the main and subcomponents of management strategies and strategic planning theories applied in universities inside and outside the country were extracted and used for this comparative study.

## **2. Literature review**

The main objective of this study is "The comparison of strategic thinking in the management and planning of universities inside and outside of the country". For this purpose, after studying 43 patterns and models related to the strategic planning process, which included several academic management, strategic patterns in Iran and abroad, briefly, we refer to 4 patterns and strategic management models that include 2 strategic university management models in Iran and 2 patterns abroad. Al-Zahra University, as the only university specializing in girls, is one of the universities that since about a decade ago, put strategic planning and long-term development plan as a necessity and priority on its agenda. Accordingly, a systematic study has been carried out to identify and gather information for the compilation of long-term university development plan. After studying the published documents of the strategic planning of this university, the long-term planning process can be illustrated in figure 1 (Mohammadi and Papari, 1393). Since 1994, the university has had a four-year medium-term programs, and, in order to demonstrate its overall orientation on the path of excellence and progress, the written document "Twenty years development prospect of ShahidBeheshti university" was prepared and has provided a guide for administrators, vice-chancellors, and university planners to compile midterm and operational programs. The compliance with the provisions of this document is mandatory. Figure 2 shows the content of the development perspective: (Mohammadi and Papari, 1393)



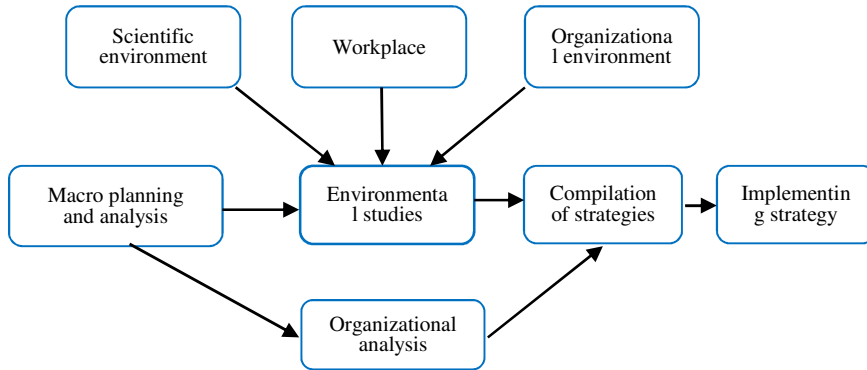
**Figure 1.** Long-term development planning process of al-zahra university.  
 (Report of the Long-Term Development Program of Alzahra University - Third Report: Strategic Planning - 1996)



**Figure 2.** Twenty years development prospect of shahid beheshti university, 2004.

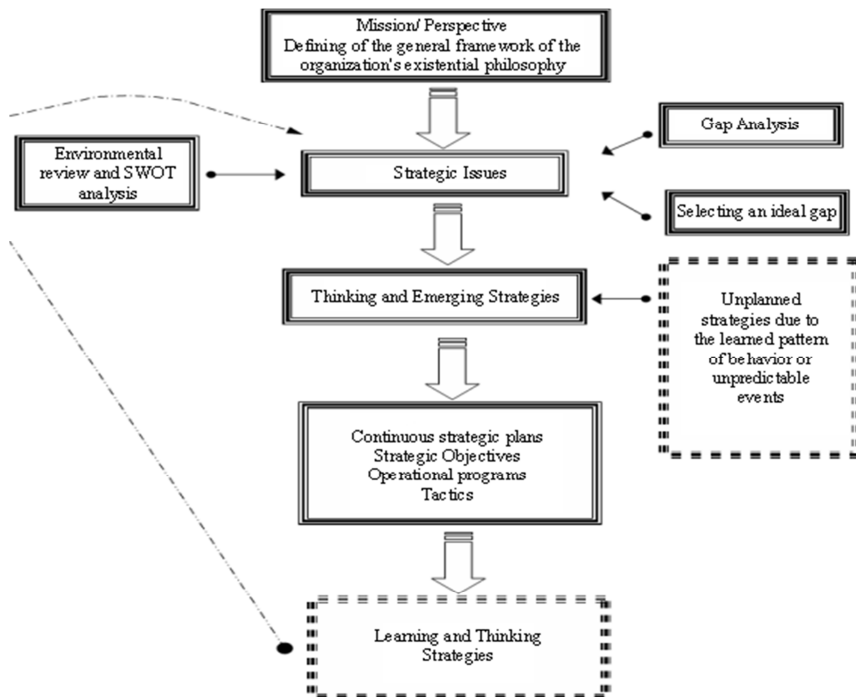
The florida university has seriously considered the development of the university's strategic development plan since the 1990s. Thus, the Strategic Management Committee of the florida university was established to enter the third millennium. The above-mentioned committee developed a strategic management model for florida university based on the general models of strategic management. The

model is presented in figure 3 (Alvani, 1380).



**Figure 3.** The strategic management model of the university of florida (Keller, 1983).

The strategic planning process at northridge, california state university is clearly shown in figure 4 (Ghourchian, 1994).



**Figure 4.** Strategic planning process modeling at the northridge, california state university

### 3. Method

The present study aims to "compare comparative strategic thinking in the management and planning of universities inside and outside the country "with the aim of identifying the main and subcomponents of management and strategic planning. This research is a comparative study in the field of university management. In order to understand the main components of strategic planning, library study method, collection, and review of documents related to the theoretical foundations and research backgrounds were used. After this study, the indicators or key components of strategic planning were extracted. The research data have been analyzed to extract the main and subcomponents of strategic management using "factor analysis". Then the points of presence and difference of the main component's variables with regard to the factor loads are presented, respectively (Mehralizadeh, 2013).

### 4. Findings

The findings of this study are presented in two sections. Comparison of strategic thinking in the management and planning of universities inside and outside the country. Then, the variables of the main components with regard to the factor loads are presented.

**Table 1.** The Main and subcomponent extracted from management experiences, and strategic planning

"Strategic Management and Strategic Planning for Higher Education in Iran (University Patterns in Iran)"		
Pattern	Main Components	Subcomponents
1. Alzahra University (1996)	1- Compilation of Missions and assignments 2- Environmental analysis of the current situation 3- Compilation of goals and perspectives 4- Compilation of criteria and scales 5-Compilation of the	- External and internal environment analysis - Analyzing organizational needs - Integration of needs - Science production - Improvement of living condition

Pattern	Main Components	Subcomponents
	strategies 6- Compilation of action plans 7- Preliminary preparations 8- Program execution 9- Program evaluation	
2. ShahidBeheshti University (2004)	1- Compilation of Ideas 2-Compilation of Goals 3- Determining Strategies 4- Determining Executive Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Compilation of perspectives</li> <li>- Establish long-term and short-term goals</li> <li>- Development of operational programs</li> <li>- Science production</li> <li>- Improving the living conditions and political activity</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** The Main and subcomponent extracted from management experiences, and strategic planning, at universities outside the country

Strategic Management and Strategic Planning for Higher Education in the " " world (University Patterns in the world)		
Pattern	Main Components	Subcomponents
1. Florida University (2000):	1. Macro Planning, and situation analysis 2. Environmental studies 3. Organizational analysis 4. Compiling strategies 5. Implementing the strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Goals / Perspectives / Analysis of relationships with other universities / Attention to technological advancements</li> <li>-Organizational environment /Work environment / Scientific environment</li> <li>-Strengths/ Weaknesses /Opportunities / Threats</li> <li>- Improving political activities and livelihoods/production of science</li> </ul>
2. Northridge, California State University:	1. Mission and vision 2. Environmental review and SWOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continuous strategic plans</li> <li>Strategic Objectives</li> <li>Operational programs</li> <li>-Tactics</li> </ul>



Pattern	Main Components	Subcomponents
	analysis 3. Strategic Issues (Thinking and Emerging Strategies)	- Learning and Strategic Thinking

**Table 3.** Main component variables with respect to their factor loads

Components	Variable	Factor Loads
1. Axis values (Ruling values and beliefs) (11 variables)	1. Promote spiritual and Islamic values in order to preserve human dignity, social justice, and national identity	0.906
	2. Self-sacrifice in solving social needs / Liability and accountability of the university to stakeholder expectations.	0.900
	3. Creativity and Innovation in Education and Research	0.886
	4. Law, discipline, conscience, integrity, and honesty in performing duties.	0.875
	5. Expression and presentation of thoughts and considerations based on Islamic worldview	0.865
	6. Pivotal wisdom and intellectuality	0.846
	7. Establishing an evaluation system and meritocracy	0.779
	8. The culture of free thought, critique, and problem-solving	0.765
	9-Academic authority and acceptance in national and international arenas	0.736
	10-Continuous productivity, optimal use of resources and environmental protection	0.688
	11. Emphasis on improving the quality of teaching processes - learning with an organizational learning approach	0.656
2. Mission statement (12 variables)	1. Developing knowledge boundaries	0.903
	2. Cultivating experienced, creative, reflective, and committed human resources in different fields of modern and rational science and technology.	0.874
	3. Improving the academic quality of life	0.864

Components	Variable	Factor Loads
	4. Increasing the quality of modern educational and research services and technologies	0.757
	5. Responsiveness to the educational, research, and cultural expectations of the various national, international and stakeholder organizations.	0.729
	6. Transformation of Islamic Azad University of Fars province as a reputable and great scientific center in the country and the region	0.709
	7. Improving the level of welfare, economic, social and cultural development of the community	0.680
	8. Production and dissemination of science and a positive and profound impact on the country	0.653
	9. Maintaining original and Islamic-Iranian identities based on their basic values	0.600
	10. Establishing and adhering to healthy scientific competition with educational and research systems and institutions.	0.563
	11. Provide dynamic, entrepreneurial and adaptable curriculum for the modern knowledge and knowledge age.	0.524
	12. Fill the gap between the new technology and the new generation	0.525
3. perspectives (7 variables)	1. Innovative, research-driven, entrepreneurial and leading in the economic, social and cultural development of the country (competitive advantages [education / research / specialized services])	0.874
	2. Leading in the production of science, theory and thought among competitors/meeting new community expectations and influencing international credibility (university status among domestic and foreign competitors)	0.814
	3-Superior in providing new educational and research services to different classes of society (quality of educational and research services/quality of the occupational life of members, staff, and students)	0.765

Components	Variable	Factor Loads
	4. Job and organizational satisfaction of members and staffs	0.735
	5. Financial affairs (revenues / expenses)	0.677
	6. Equipped with research centers and advanced technology, based on international standards (structural, organizational and managerial characteristics)	0.623
	7. Conditions for recruiting members and staff and admitting students	0.587
4. Macro goals (7 variables)	1. Increasing the contribution of Islamic Azad University in science production	0.872
	2. Improving the quality of education, and faculty members	0.845
	3. Increase the domestic and international scientific and research interaction and collaboration	0.807
	4. Establish and strengthen science and technology parks and research centers	0.756
	5. Using modern knowledge and skills in educational and research activities	0.705
	6. Strengthening and consolidating cultural relations and practices with the Islamic-Iranian approach	0.641
	7. Enhancing the quality of academic life	0.511
5. Strategies (6 variables)	1. The results of the external environment analysis of the university (opportunities/threats).	0.909
	2. Results of the internal environment analysis of the university (strengths/weaknesses)	0.889
	3. The results of the analysis of the national environment	0.856
	4. The results of the analysis of the international environment	0.767
	5. The prospects for university development	0.723
	6-The university organizational Missions (Functions)	0.660
6. Operational Program (6 variables)	1. Predicting quantitative and measurable goals	0.890
	2. Compiling a program based on the perspectives and strategies	0.850

Components	Variable	Factor Loads
	3. Predicting the exact costs of running the program	0.761
	4. Predicting a set of activities and operational events and determine their priority	0.745
	5. Predicting the required human resources and facilities	0.721
	6. Objectives and indicators for the evaluation of activities based on perspectives, goals, and strategies.	0.680

## 5. Conclusions

As we said, in order to conduct a study on "comparative comparisons of strategic thinking in the management and planning of universities inside and outside the country", firstly, by referring to the literature, a set of variables presented in the strategic management models of higher education, both inside and outside the country were identified. In the next step, based on the results of "factor analysis", the points of presence and difference of the main component's variables were introduced. In this way, we can say that the subscribed subjects in the comparative study between strategic management of universities inside and outside the country include the main elements or components: "Values and beliefs of the ruler, missions, perspectives, goals, macro strategy, and the formulation of an operational plan ", which is endorsed and emphasized by all the theories of planning and strategic management in all areas, including higher education and universities.

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