

Strategic Planning in an educational development centre: Motivation, management, messiness

“The success of a strategic plan depends on leadership, communication, and assessment.”
- Nauffal & Nasser, 2012

What is Strategic Planning?

- Strategic planning has been described as “anticipatory decision making” (p.16) that pays attention to both the present and the future (Wilkinson, Taylor, Peterson, de Lourdes Machado-Taylor, 2007).
- The process involves strategic thinking, formulating, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and adjusting (Haijing de Haan, 2014).
- “Strategy is planning for the future by outlining key institutional strategies and actions to achieve institutional mission and objectives.” (Shah, 2012, p.26)

Common Types of Strategic Planning

Goals-based strategic planning (the most common type; also called “vision-based”) begins with a vision for the future and works backward to the present. It focuses on an organization's

- Purpose (can include vision and/or values)
- Goals to achieve the purpose
- Strategies to achieve the goals
- Action plans (who will do what and by when)

Issues-based strategic planning

- Examines specific issues currently facing an organization
 - Specifies short-term strategies to address those issues
 - Outlines Action plans to carry out the strategies
- (Mastrodonato, 2007; McNamara, 2010)

Steps in Strategic Planning (Nauffal & Nasser, 2012)

1. Once you have determined you need a strategic plan, the “typical steps” involve:
2. Establish the vision, mission, and value statements
3. Conduct a strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results (SOAR) analysis. (see Note 1)
4. Determine goals guided by vision, mission and values.
5. Identify strategies and other action steps that facilitate the translation of goals into outcomes.
6. Evaluate outcomes.

Confusing Terminology in Strategic Planning

The strategic planning literature differs in how it defines key terms. We have presented one definition of some key terms; but you can find many others!

Mission statement: “A mission statement describes what the organisation does, with whom or for it does it, and, in broad terms, how it does it” (Shapiro, n.d., p.33). Wilkinson et al. (2007) disagree with scholars who state that the mission is “key” to strategic planning; the mission, they say, defines the present. However, a quick internet search of the term “mission statement” typically yields a definition along the lines of: “The mission is a brief statement that describes how the organization will achieve its vision.”

Vision: The vision speaks to the future. It “is a long range picture of how the ‘world will be’ if you are successful in your work. (Prevention by Design, 2006, p.3)

Goals: Goals state the outcomes that the organization intends to achieve at some time in the future.

Objectives: Goals should be objective, measurable, and achievable within the period covered by the strategic plan. They are more specific statements of outcomes than goal statements.

Strategies: General description of the actions you will take to achieve the goals.

Notes:

1. The SOAR process is based on an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach to strategic planning. SOAR focuses an organization on its current strengths and vision of the future for developing its strategic goals. SOAR differs from the commonly used SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis.

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