

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ALIGNING WITH THE MODERN TREND IN EDUCATION

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Abstract: *Education in the future means reconstruction of its system. It means conducting reforms of the system as a whole, as well as the development of the idea of permanent education, coordinated with social needs and changes. The reform is not seen as a limited work but with a mission to create institutional frame for its constant improvements and perfecting. In European integration process educational system needs to be in coordination with criteria and recommendations of European Union, paying attention to indicators of this system, which is defined by EU standards. The model describes five strategic planning processes of strategic management: pre-planning, strategic planning, finalization, implementation, measurement and evaluation. This model can also be used for strategic planning and high school planning. An important feature of planning in this case should be its market orientation. Planning involves the preparation of decisions about what to do in the future, in fact, this means "making tomorrow's decisions today". Control is the process that ensures that the actions are carried out in accordance with the plan.*

Keywords: *strategic planning; market orientation; control;*

1. Introduction

Modern trends in education. The educational system and the objectives of learning and teaching have always been subjected to significant changes in order to improve the organization and the quality of the educational process and make them continuously beneficial to the social development and compatible with the level of scientific and technical-technological achievements. The creation of the educational policy of today aims both at amplifying the lifelong learning approach and the promotion of

the possibilities for individuals to find approval for their personal values in all spheres of social life; the acquisition of competences will, thus, enable them to freely and actively participate in the overall social life and work, to be initiators of productive changes, and to live with the cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences in their environment. In line with the above said, the new trends in the education process at a global level are primarily directed to the establishment of a springboard equally applicable for the entire school population in the world; the creation of conditions for the optimal development of the individual's personality is to be gained via universal, quality and continuous access to learning. Therefore, the contemporary goals of education and upbringing actually correspond to the objectives of the integration processes of globalization: the EFA and the Millennium Development Goals¹⁵, which promote equal access to education and an emphasized commitment to providing more equal positions for the vulnerable and marginalized groups and individuals, and to creation of conditions for strengthening the competences of youth and adults for their social, cultural, psychophysical, and intellectual wellbeing.

European standards and requirements, however, are generally grounded on four important moments: Learning to acquire knowledge, Learning to work, Learning about coexistence, and Learning about survival (Kamchevska, 2006: 31). More precisely, Learning to acquire knowledge implies the development of students' cognitive abilities, with particular emphasis on the development of critical and creative thinking; Learning to work mainly involves training students for the practical application of the acquired knowledge and implying a more precise prediction of the social and technical-technological development in order to timely planning and directing those professions and occupations that will, after finishing education, enable them find socially useful employment; with Learning about coexistence the educational work focuses on fostering and developing multicultural awareness for mutual respect for each other's needs, values, and interests arising from different national, religious, cultural, class and other entities' background in society; Learning about survival refers to the individual's activity for personal self-realization and and gaining approval for his/her values, here the school must enable the activation of the individual's potentials and expansion of each student's personal capacities in all domains of the person's development. The educational work in today's schools implies learning and teaching which should enable students' full expression of their creative and productive abilities as well as achievement of maximum

¹⁵ *Education for All, Goals*, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/efa-goals/>.

developmental results in accordance with the personal potentials of each individual.

Bearing these guidelines in mind as a starting point, over the last two decades, the impetus has been to effectuate the educational process in order to provide optimal educational services for all users and to meet international standards so that the process of upbringing and education can be brought closer to the contemporary educational tendencies in the developed world. In this regard, when establishing the standards regarding the strategic objectives, the departing point were both our countries' domestic experiences and the international ones; they had served as the basis for the decisions made by the relevant competent institutions at the national level accompanied by experts' arguments on the interventions that have been undertaken in the following strategic areas: education and educational equity for all; promotion of intellectual growth and development; increase of the possibility for participation in education (social inclusion, participation, and cohesion); elevation of the educational, cultural, and economic competence of the state; strengthening and enhancing international cooperation; strengthening the capacities of the Ministry of Education and Science, etc.

From the above said, we can summarize that the processes of economic, political and educational globalization, and our determination to be integrated in the world trends as well as in the European ones, means to accept those standards, to change the legislation, to restructure the educational system and the organizational setup of its segments, to innovate the realization and the evaluation of the educational process.

2. Categorization of our education structure

A learning process can be concisely described as the process of the confrontation of a motivated or unmotivated individual with certain obstacles which represent a difficulty for achieving his objectives (or educational objectives) and fulfilling his motives. In order to overcome those obstacles and eliminate the difficulties, the individual takes investigative steps (or they are often being recommended) until he overcomes the obstacle with those steps, that is, until he eliminates the difficulty towards the objective. The pressures aimed at modifications that would get the educational process in the position in which it would suit better the new needs are increasing with time. Pedagogical practice confirmed many times that some modifications not only don't lead towards the improvement of success within the education, but also become the source of regression in this area (advocating the so-called general socio-trend directions with the tendency of incorporating them into the educational process as well).

Our project with its conceptual approach, the reform within the structure of the education system, implies the strategy of modifications “from the bottom up”, that is, the strategy in which the local initiatives of higher education institutions (faculties, institutes, vocational schools...) come to expression. This approach would suit the thesis which believes that less successful strategies of improving the educational process are the ones that operate from higher levels, where the politics is being created, and which are characteristic to rely on consultants that influence externally and have no connection with educational practice except intuitive assumptions. In which category would our redefinition of the education system structure be classified?

Depending on the principle of modifications (reforms), we can speak of four types of possible changes in the existing pedagogical practice: adaptive, external, regulatory and structural. Our reform in this general setting refers to the structural type of modification, which is aimed towards changes in the organizational structure of the education system, but it doesn't affect the realization of the educational process. Primarily, the structural systemic modifications are directed to economy, rationality, educational liberalization and acquisition of specific knowledge. Essentially, education is, with our structure, directed to results, that is, to defined knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that students should have after finishing a certain education cycle. Our modifications within the already existing structure can be categorized under the model of the so-called controlled expansion. This approach to reforms is the most appropriate for education systems which don't need radical changes, but the interventions of limited proportions – alterations, repairs, modifications, that is, the implementation of new details into the existing system, i.e. structure. Modifications of this kind have a character of conceptual modernization aimed towards better achievements of students in school. In the educational process, the main attention should be paid to knowledge structure, to the development of one idea from another, and to what age level can given algorithm (with its structural concretization) be applied. The structure is what enables to sort out and classify unfamiliar impressions and in that way what is learnt gets meaning and through meaning it initiates other motivators in the educational process. What should be emphasized in our approach is the idea that every content of teaching can be taught effectively at any level of student's development, provided that the given ideas and principles are adapted didactically in order for the student to use them. Our starting point in these evaluations, which differ from structural conceptions from 30 – 40 years ago, starts from the point that the development of a child is mostly conditioned by social factors. How far will a child get in the intellectual development and when we ourselves can influence the same, primarily depends on the cultural surrounding, that is, on

the impact of the environment.

The development of consciousness of every individual, including children aged 7–18 years (our sample within the redefined structure of the education system), has had such a cognitive leap in the last 30 years (perception, reasoning, anticipation, the critical thinking process, the time consistency of attitudes, interests...), that everything that was true in perceptive age gradations of the children at the given age once, has now moved for at least one generation up. Many social psychologists that analyse the mental and manual skills of the children of different age and compare them with earlier similar studies share this view. Hence, in our system of education structure we start with perceptively cognitive and psycho-motor, manual skills of the children at the given age, with aims and tasks that have been placed upon them as well as with the relevance of the process of rationalization and economy of the educational process. Specifically our education structure, the model of controlled liberal education – is oriented towards a child, supports active teaching concretized on the example of the differentiated cycles at given educational levels, as well as the redefined curriculum according to it.

3. Model of strategic planning and analysis of the environment

Developed societies are societies that learn. We are talking about social organizations which are based on knowledge and in which education and learning have the status of basic instruments in the overall development of a society. Heinz concluded at the end of the twentieth century (Heinz, 1995): “What we think or believe in, after all, has little importance. The only valid thing is...what we do”. The notion of strategic management is based on the definition of “strategic planning”, where although “planning” is a prelude for strategic management, it is not itself enough unless it is followed by the preparation and implementation of the plan, as well as the evaluation of the plan in action. In our example, we are going to hypothetically present the model of the educational institution X, where the implementation of the strategic plan is developed as part of the project financed by UNESCO CEPES. This model established a level of quality in education which all the members that have joined or are planning to join the Bologna Process should reach.

The model describes five processes of strategic management: pre-planning, strategic planning, finalization, implementation, measurement and evaluation. This model can also be used for strategic planning within the model of the educational institution X. Namely, strategic management overcomes the development of a strategic plan that included processes of pre-planning and strategic planning. Strategic management is the finalization

and implementation of the strategic plan, as well as the measurement and evaluation of the results. The finalization of the plan includes the completion of the plan and its disclosure to all employees. Implementation includes the identification of resources for the plan, putting it into practice and managing its realization. Measurement and evaluation consist not only of monitoring the measures of implementation, but also, more importantly, of the assessment of how the organization changes as a result of those measures, as well as the use of that information to update the plan - “communication is the transfer of experiential activities through signs, whether they are symbols, signals or their combination” (Kuka & Jovanović, 2011: 9). An important feature of planning in this case also should be its market orientation. This practically means that High school for brokers should have the right kind of service, in the right place at the right time and enable the customer to be aware of the existence of such a service.

In strategic planning especially important is consistent interaction of socio-social environment as an open system. In order to effectively perform the analysis, managers should know well the organizational structure of the environment. The three levels of environment are observed: 1. general environment; 2. operational environment; and 3. internal environment. Managers need to understand how each of these three levels influences the results, in this case the model of the educational institution X, and in accordance with that formulate strategies for the educational organization.

4. Vision, customers, mission and strategic priorities

The internal planning structure of the educational institution X should function on different levels within the institution X. It will permeate everything, acting on every area of activity and influencing every student and every employee. Just as in business, the planning structure in education can also be divided into three levels: 1. Strategic plan referring to the period from 5 – 20 years; 2. Business or commercial plan referring to the period from 3 – 5 years; and 3. Hoshin or operational plan referring to the period of one year. Planning involves the preparation of decisions about what to do in the future, in fact, this means “making tomorrow’s decisions today” (Kuka & Jovanović, 2011: 31).

Vision defines where the organization wants to be in ten or twenty years. It gives the answers to the following questions: What does the organization want to be? What are the future products? What are the future markets? How to satisfy the demands of interest groups? What is the role of top managers in defining the organization’s vision? Vision is actually the idealized view of where the organization wants to be and how it wishes to look in the future. Frequently asked question is: Who is our customer? It

seems that the answer is simple. Unfortunately, that is not the case. This is easy to prove with the question: “Who is the customer of education in the fourth grade of elementary school?” – Pupils in that grade, the fifth grade, secondary school, faculty, parents, future employers, etc. That also applies to the question: “Who is the customer of services of the educational institution X?” – “The customer” is not the manufacturer of the product or service. The closest view is that the end user is the employer (customer) for which the immediate customer, namely the student, will work. An increasing number of educational profiles in the market supply and demand causes necessary sociological (in this case educational) decadence that is “the expression of needs for forms not established in the content” (Kuka & Jovanović, 2011: 23).

The mission needs to answer the question: “What should the organization do to justify the reason of its existence?” Three elements are mainly included, which are usually marked as a “thought triad”: what we do (products, services, functions), for who we do it (customers, end users) and how we do it (processes). There are several sources that can help us determine our mission, starting from the particular missions of organizational parts, current demands, to our strategy or long-term plan. Effective strategic planning is a continuous process that requires constant re-evaluation of needs, resources and operational environment. If there is no strategic plan, the educational institution X should make an assessment through self-assessment. A detailed self-assessment can identify strategic priorities.

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