The Impact of Efficient Strategic Planning on Sound School Administration Among Public School Principals in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study came to complete the role that previous researchers began by focusing on strategic planning and linking it to an effective school administration in secondary public schools in Saudi Arabia to reach results and recommendations that may benefit principals, supervisors, and workers in the field of education. The study used the descriptive analytical approach and developed a questionnaire as an instrument, which was administered to 122 school principals from public schools in Saudi Arabia. The results concluded that the five areas each received a very high relative weight, and this reinforces the importance of school principals using strategic planning in their schools because of its great benefit in increasing the effectiveness of school administration. The findings showed no statistically significant differences between the averages of the study sample's estimates on the role of strategic planning in increasing the effectiveness of school administration due to years of experience, as all school principals need strategic planning because of its importance and because of its novelty, which limits the number of years of service.

Keywords: school administration, strategic planning, management, principals.

1. Introduction

In its ancient sense, planning was practiced by peoples and human societies of various types and forms and in many ways, according to their circumstances. Its primitive forms were practiced spontaneously and appeared with alternative meanings, such as expectation, management, and precaution (Wang et al., 2018). These practices will be carried out in the future to avoid problems and risks that threaten the safety and security of these societies and people. They practiced planning thinking despite the simplicity of its methods, processes, tools, and goals. It is noted that the true beginning of educational planning in its modern sense is due to the close experience in general planning (Epstein, 2018). From general planning, educational planning arose as sectoral planning emanating from and linked to it. Since education is part of the national plan, its share was educational planning, but simply and inaccurately.

In general, educational planning includes a group of related activities that determine specific goals for educational development for a specific, limited time (Bush, 2020). These activities take place during a comprehensive development planning process within a framework of specific capabilities, through financial, economic, and human resources, and a set of obstacles. Educational planning also includes the study of internal efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the productivity of the educational system, along with some guidelines for the required changes (Lumban Gaol, 2023). From educational planning emerges educational planning, which is concerned with everything that takes place within the educational system and affects it and is also concerned with educational objectives, whether qualitative or quantitative.

Among the types of educational planning are traditional planning, long-term planning, and strategic planning. Strategic planning emerged in the nineties of the last century and begins by examining the external environment of the educational institution and using that information that is useful in examining the basic role of organization within what is going on in society on a broader scale to adopt strategies (Kalkan et al., 2020). For planning, strategic planning emerged as a careful analysis of the current situation and the external and internal factors affecting the organization, which requires the adoption of a set of main goals and priorities that should be worked on to achieve the organization's (school) vision and mission (Ferlie & Ongaro, 2022).

Educational administration is in dire need of strategic planning more than other areas of life. The school administration is more in need of strategic planning than any other to invest all the material and human potential of teachers, workers, and students, as well as to benefit from the external environment, whether in terms of available opportunities or confronting existing challenges, risks, and threats (Day et al., 2021). Also, strategic planning is concerned with the vision, mission, and goals and is concerned with predicting future problems and developing solutions for them. Several studies that attempted to test the relationship between the performance of institutions and their adoption of strategic planning demonstrated the presence of strong relationship between them (Ansoff et al., 2018; Podolsky et al., 2019). These studies demonstrated institutions that are managed strategically enjoyed performance superior to the performance of institutions that are not managed strategically. These studies also indicated that strategic planning is a scientific method for managing organizations and is considered responsible for improving performance and ensuring effective dealing with the basic components of the work environment in our current era.

1.1. Problem statement

For years, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia has been interested in adopting planning and strategic plans through short- and long-term plans in the education system, as well as addressing the shortcomings in school administration and keeping pace with rapid progress in the field of technology and various sciences. The Ministry sought to reach an acceptable degree in the field of quality education. This study came to complete the role that previous researchers began by focusing on strategic planning and linking it to the effectiveness of school administration in secondary public schools in Saudi Arabia to reach results and recommendations that may benefit principals, supervisors, and workers in the field of education.

1.2.   Questions of the study

1-   What role does strategic planning have in developing the effectiveness of school administration from the point of view of the principals of secondary schools in Saudi Arabia?

2-   Are there statistically significant differences between the average estimates of principals of secondary public schools for the role of strategic planning in increasing the effectiveness of school administration attributable to gender and years of experience?

1.3.   Significance of the study

This study comes as a continuation of what researchers began in the field of strategic planning in Saudi Arabia, which are a few studies that did not include all fields. Therefore, this study is considered a new addition to the stock of strategic planning in Saudi Arabian education. This study may highlight the extent to which school principals benefit from employing strategic planning in school administration. This study may be useful in developing the performance of teachers, supervisors, and school principals. This study may benefit graduate students by delving into the topic of strategic planning and its relationship to school administration from other angles.

1.4.   Study limitations

Objective limitation: This study was limited to identifying the role of strategic planning in developing effective school administration in public schools in Saudi Arabia.

Spatial boundaries: the study was applied in Saudi Arabia, Abha.

Human Limit: This study was limited to male and female principals of secondary public schools in Saudi Arabia.

Time limit: This study was applied during the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023.

2.   Literature review

2.1.   Strategic planning

Educational planning emerged with the emergence of economic planning, especially when the strong relationship between education and the economy became clear, which indicates that education is one of the important requirements for achieving a strong, sound economy (Kerzner, 2019). This reinforces the statement about the importance of education in the development of society. The recommendation of the Ministers of Education emphasized the necessity of adopting educational planning as an approach and method to solve educational problems quantitatively and qualitatively. Then UNESCO led to the spread of educational planning curricula and methods and the emergence of many educational plans in India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Syria, and other developing countries (Hayter & Cahoy, 2018; Khasawneh, 2023). In general, planning has appeared in the Arab countries since 1960 in the form of five-year and ten-year plans. After that, planning moved to the school and became the most important process among the processes and functions of school administration, for the school administration to achieve its

effectiveness to a large degree in all administrative, technical, and social fields (McCaffery, 2018).

Planning is the formal process of choosing the organization's mission and basic goals for the short and long term. It helps in deriving secondary and subsidiary goals and enables the selection of the appropriate strategy and tactics to achieve those goals. Finally, planning is the basic function of distributing basic organizational resources (human, financial, and material) (Killen & O'Toole, 2023). On the other hand, educational planning is a continuous process that includes several activities that occur in a specific order and organization over a specific time. The nature of those activities and the relationships between them depend on the structure of planning, the choices of planners who carry out the planning process, the degree of priorities, and the obstacles that affect the educational planning process (Zalat et al., 2021).

The subject of educational planning is the activity of education, with its purposeful and planned nature, which aims to provide members of society with a general amount of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to prepare them to become good citizens, which are sufficient for them to face the requirements of life, such as work, production, positive participation, and maintaining the cultural identity of society (Barney & Hesterly, 2019). This could happen through regular structures, programs, and gradual and diverse educational formulas, which is thus part of comprehensive educational planning. School planning is a necessary need for the school principal to achieve the desired school goals with great success (Wang et al., 2018). An important part of the success of the school year plan is the study of the educational goals to be achieved, and these must be given the attention of those in charge of managing the school's affairs so that they become familiar with all the interventions that affect and are affected by them (Epstein, 2018). It is also based on foundations that are established in a specific manner that enables it to be implemented and measured scientifically.

2.2. School strategic planning

Planning is considered the first and basic function in the duties of the school principal, and the effectiveness of planning is achieved only through the school principal developing a strategic plan with clear goals, procedures, programs, and activities (Bush, 2020). Accepting the idea of the strategic dimension of school planning was difficult at the beginning due to the characteristics of the school context, which were characterized by conservatism and scepticism about change, and due to what was entrenched in the mentality of those in charge of managing and planning schools due to long decades of dependency on the policies adopted by the central educational authorities and the reluctance to carry out independent initiatives that enjoy the support and encouragement of these authorities (Lumban Gaol, 2023).

The goal of strategic planning is to develop a high quality of teaching and learning in the school and to bring about educational change and reform through successful school management, activities, and operations carried out by the school principal in cooperation with the school development team, based on a clear vision, a well-defined mission, and an ambitious plan that achieves the strategic goals and attempts to take advantage of strengths (Kalkan et al., 2020). It also aims at overcoming the failures of the past so that the plan is consistent with the new directions of educational requirements. Strategic planning also aims to activate the cooperative

work of each individual in the school to bring about the required change, which leads to developing the performance of the school principal, encouraging teachers to be creative and communicative, and strengthening the sense of belonging to school work (Ferlie & Ongaro, 2022; Khasawneh, 2022). Indeed, the goal of strategic planning is not merely to manage things, but rather to change, develop, and reform to achieve a better situation.

School administration consists of several elements, each of which affects the other and interacts between them to achieve the desired goals of the school (Podolsky et al., 2019). For this to happen, the school administration must be characterized by a clear degree of effectiveness. The administration of the high basic school is responsible for implementing activities and programs and achieving the strategic objectives of the school. Hence, the school administration, especially its director, must have the ability to effectively implement the plans drawn up, as well as address all administrative, technical, and social problems and obstacles in a scientific manner based on thinking, innovation, development, and creativity. The school administration must also consolidate human relations between teachers and workers (Ansoff et al., 2018). The effectiveness of school administration is considered a goal and a means, and it is a healthy phenomenon necessary to ensure continuity and long-term survival. It is a means because it is the tool achieved to achieve goals and results.

2.3. Previous studies

Nthinya (2021) explored the uneven and improper use of the process of strategic management applied by the school teams in the underprivileged public secondary schools in the Motheo District. The study used an explanatory sequential design in conjunction with a mixed methods research strategy to tackle the aforementioned issue. Both a quantitative and a qualitative phase make up this design. I used systematic sampling in the quantitative phase to choose 130 SMT members to be the participants. The results showed that while a minority of sampled SMT members either adopted SMP inconsistently and badly or did not use it at all, the majority of sampled SMT members implemented the SMP consistently and appropriately.

Arif et al. (2019) investigated how secondary school principals in Medan are performing concerning leadership, organizational culture, work motivation, and job satisfaction. In all, 135 participants made up the sample for this study, which was carried out in 2017 at Medan City High School. A valid and reliable questionnaire is used for the research variable data selection. It is founded on the results of instrument testing with thirty-two research participants and rational analysis (Expert Judgment). The results of the research indicated that whereas Ha was approved, Ho was not. Therefore, leadership, organizational culture, job happiness, and work motivation all positively and significantly affect high school heads' performance.

Apriana et al. (2019) examined the State Vocational School 6 Palembang headmaster's competency in training vocational students for entrepreneurship. A qualitative research approach is employed in this study. The leaders of Palembang's State Vocational School No. 6 served as the study's subjects. The results of the study showed that the entrepreneurial skills of the headmaster of State Vocational School 6 Palembang were essential to the development of the institution. The Palembang 6th State Vocational School's principal collaborates with several companies. The headmaster of State Vocational School 6 Palembang demonstrates

entrepreneurial competency by being consistently on time, leaving the school later than the faculty and staff, never being content with the level of achievement, and working and being accountable.

Yaakob et al. (2019) investigated how strategic management and planning are implemented in educational settings. Educators and leaders in the field of education are subsequently introduced to a variety of strategic management and strategy plans. Nevertheless, there are still issues with strategic planning and management in schools. Is it worthwhile for learning and teaching? The findings showed that teachers' comprehension of the value of strategic planning and management in the classroom is seriously lacking. The authorities may operate more effectively and efficiently in Malaysia's education planning and policy with the help of this micro research.

Hu et al. (2018) comprehended Chinese schools' knowledge of strategic planning, the different kinds of strategic plans, the content covered by the plan text, the key influential groups in planning, and the methodology used to evaluate such planning. A comparison study was conducted using the two aspects of school differentiation. First, a five-year plan is highly valued by the institutions polled. Second, the missions of the higher education institutions are more ambitious. Third, the main decision-makers in any HEI are the administrators, esteemed instructors, heads of departments, and directors of university offices. Private schools and vocational colleges place greater emphasis on the roles played by students, alumni, and outside experts.

3.   Methodology

3.1.   Research design

The researcher used the descriptive analytical method, in which the researcher describes the phenomenon he wants to study and collects accurate descriptions and data about it. The method relies on the study of reality and is interested in giving it an accurate description and expressing it quantitatively and qualitatively without bias on the part of the researcher.

3.2.   Sampling

The participants of the study included 122 school principals from public schools in Saudi Arabia, who were selected randomly after sending an online form as an invitation to participate in the study. The form included a consent letter to obtain the ethical approval of the participants to be part of the study. The sample was from Saudi Arabia, Abha City. The following table presents the demographic data of the sample.

Table 1. Information of the sample of the study

Variable	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	61	50
Female	61	50
Years of experience		
Less than 5 years	46	73.7
From 5 to 10 years	59	48.4

More than 10 years	17	13.9
Total	122	100%

3.3. Instrument of the study

The study developed a questionnaire, which is a tool for collecting data related to a specific research topic through a form that is filled out by the respondent, to measure the role of strategic planning in increasing the effectiveness of school administration in Saudi Arabian public schools. The questionnaire is considered the main tool appropriate for the field study to obtain information and data that is being filled out by the respondents.

The first version of the questionnaire was given by the researcher to a panel of judges made up of ten arbitrators with backgrounds in educational administration. In light of the suggestions offered, the researcher addressed the arbitrators' viewpoints and made the required additions, changes, and deletions. One indicator of an instrument's validity is its construct validity, which quantifies the degree to which the tool's objectives are met and illustrates the degree to which each field of study is connected to the questionnaire's total score. The researcher determined the correlation coefficients between each questionnaire field's score and the questionnaire's overall score to confirm constructive validity, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The correlation coefficient of the questionnaire

No.	Dimension	Pearson correlation coefficient	Sig.
1	Formulating the school's mission.	0.773	0.000*
2	Formulating the future vision of the school.	0.873	0.000*
3	Formulating the school's strategic goals.	0.858	0.000*
4	Analysis of the school's internal environment	0.853	0.000*
5	Analysis of the school's external environment	0.844	0.000*

*Statistically significant at α=0.05

Table 2 demonstrates that all correlation coefficients in all areas of the questionnaire are statistically significant α =0.05, and thus all areas of the questionnaire are considered true to what they were set to measure.

The reliability of the questionnaire means the extent of consistency between the data collected by re-applying the same measures (the questionnaire) to the same individuals or phenomena and under the same or similar circumstances to the greatest extent possible. Stated differently, the stability of the questionnaire implies that, even if it were repeatedly given to sample members over a certain length of time, the findings would remain mostly unchanged. The Cronbach alpha coefficient technique was used by the researcher to confirm the study questionnaire's stability, and the results are presented in the following table.

Table 3. The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient to measure the reliability of the instrument

No.	Dimension	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
1	Formulating the school's mission.	0.898
2	Formulating the future vision of the school.	0.887
3	Formulating the school's strategic goals.	0.869
4	Analysis of the school's internal environment	0.902
5	Analysis of the school's external environment	0.934

Total	0.971	

The results displayed in Table 3 make it evident that each questionnaire item has a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient value. Additionally, the reliability coefficient is strong because the alpha coefficient for every section of the questionnaire was 0.971.

3.4. Data analysis

The study used the Pearson correlation coefficient, Pearson correlation coefficient, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, mean scores, and percentages to measure differences in the responses of sample members according to the gender variable. To measure differences in the responses of sample members, one-way-ANOVA analysis was used to find the differences according to the years of experience variable.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. The first question

To answer the first question, frequencies and percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation were used for each item of the questionnaire individually, as well as for all items of the questionnaire combined. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4. The mean scores, standard deviation, percentage, and rank for each area of the questionnaire

NO.	Dimension	Mean score	Percentage %	Standard deviation	T value	Sig.	rank
1	Formulating the school's mission.	55.29	85.06%	5.31	33.902	*0.000	3
2	Formulating the future vision of the school.	55.09	84.75%	5.06	35.240	*0.000	4
3	Formulating the school's strategic goals.	38.86	86.36%	4.06	32.421	*0.000	1
4	Analysis of the school's internal environment	51.15	85.26%	5.50	30.552	*0.000	2
5	Analysis of the school's external environment	53.46	82.25%	6.76	23.743	*0.000	5

It is clear from Table 4 that in the ranking of the questionnaire's fields, the third field, which is related to "formulating the school's strategic objectives," ranked first, with a relative weight of 86.36%. The fourth area, related to "analyzing the school's internal environment," came second, with a relative weight of 85.26%. The first field, which is related to "formulating the school's mission," came third with a relative weight of 85.06%. The second area, related to "formulating the school's future vision," ranked fourth, with a relative weight of 84.75%. The fifth area, which is related to "analyzing the school's external environment," ranked fifth. The latter is relatively high compared to other fields, with a relative weight of 82.25%.

The researcher explains this result by considering the many political changes and external circumstances, as well as the instability of the economic situation. All of this makes it difficult for the school principal to analyze the external environment of the school. After analyzing these

results, the researcher can conclude that the five areas each received a very high relative weight, and this reinforces the importance of school principals using strategic planning in their schools because of its great benefit in increasing the effectiveness of school administration. The focus must be placed on analyzing the school's external environment, as this field ranked last, relatively speaking, compared to the previous fields.

4.2. The second question

To answer the second research question, the t-test was used to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the averages of the study sample's estimates on the role of strategic planning in increasing the effectiveness of school administration due to gender. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5. The t-test for the gender variable

Dimension	Difference between the Mean score	T value	Probability value	Sig.
Formulating the school's mission.	0.590	0.607	0.545	Not significant
Formulating the future vision of the school.	1.107	1.211	0.228	Not significant
Formulating the school's strategic goals.	1.336	1.838	0.069	Not significant
Analysis of the school's internal environment	1.144	1.143	0.255	Not significant
Analysis of the school's external environment	1.032	0.841	0.402	Not significant
Total	4.285	1.023	0.309	Not significant

The table above presents whether there are statistically significant differences between the average estimates of the study sample regarding the role of strategic planning in increasing the effectiveness of school administration attributable to gender for each field of the study. It turned out that the probability value was 0.309. Therefore, there are no statistically significant differences between the averages of the study sample's estimates on the role of strategic planning in increasing the effectiveness of school administration due to gender.

The courses on strategic planning that were given to male and female managers were participatory and included mixed groups, and there was no discrimination based on gender. All principals of senior basic government schools in Saudi Arabia underwent the same courses. The material distributed to male principals is the same material distributed to female principals regarding strategic school planning.

To find the differences in participants' responses according to their years of experience in school administration, the one-way ANOVA analysis was used for independent samples, as shown in the following table.

Table 6. The One-Way ANOVA analysis for the differences according to the variable number of years of experience

Dimension	Source of variance	Sum of squares	Freedom Value	Mean square	F value	Sig.
Formulating the school's mission.	Between groups	37.31	2	18.66	0.66	*0.518
	Within groups	3,324.21	118	28.17		
	Total	3,361.52	120			
Formulating the future vision of the school.	Between groups	6.79	2	3.40	0.13	*0.878
	Within groups	3,105.80	119	26.10		
	Total	3,112.60	121			
Formulating the school's strategic goals.	Between groups	2.19	2	1.10	0.07	*0.937
	Within groups	1,991.42	119	16.73		
	Total	1,993.61	121			
Analysis of the school's internal environment	Between groups	19.75	2	9.88	0.32	*0.724
	Within groups	3,634.13	119	30.54		
	Total	3,653.88	121			
Analysis of the school's external environment	Between groups	84.12	2	42.06	0.92	*0.402
	Within groups	5,454.37	119	45.84		
	Total	5,538.49	121			
Total	Between groups	664.06	2	332.03	0.62	*0.540
	Within groups	63,700.03	119	535.29		
	Total	64,364.10	121			

statistically significant at 0.05

It was found that the f value in all fields of study was 0.62. Therefore, it can be said that due to years of experience, there are statistically significant discrepancies between the averages of the research sample's estimates on the contribution of strategic planning to raising the efficacy of school administration. All school principals need strategic planning because of its importance and because of its novelty, which limits the number of years of service. All courses given to school principals were for everyone in a participatory manner, through holding mixed groups, and without discrimination based on the number of years of service. All reference materials are the same for all managers. Public schools in Saudi Arabia are subject to the same objective and environmental working conditions, and there is no discrimination based on the number of years of service. There may be some new principals who have been careful not to show the importance of years of service in school administration.

5.   Conclusion

This study came to complete the role that previous researchers began by focusing on strategic planning and linking it to the effectiveness of school administration in secondary public schools in Saudi Arabia to reach results and recommendations that may benefit principals, supervisors, and workers in the field of education. After analyzing these results, the researcher can conclude

that the five areas each received a very high relative weight, and this reinforces the importance of school principals using strategic planning in their schools because of its great benefit in increasing the effectiveness of school administration. The findings showed no statistically significant differences between the averages of the study sample's estimates on the role of strategic planning in increasing the effectiveness of school administration due to years of experience, as all school principals need strategic planning because of its importance and because of its novelty, which limits the number of years of service.

6.   Recommendations

The study recommends providing focused and effective training for school principals by the Ministry of Education, especially new principals, regarding school strategic planning and how to develop a school strategic plan. Principals should respect the prevailing organizational culture in the school and work to strengthen it, by reducing unjustified local community interference in school affairs and promoting teamwork within the school. It is advised that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, as well as the directorates that branch out from it, provide initiatives and contests that foster a competitive culture among schools across a range of subjects and at all levels (parent councils, teachers, students, staff, and principals).

Acknowledgments

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