An Integrated Strategic Quality Model (ISQM) for Non-Governmental University

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the world is exposed to challenging competition from countries with a highly reactive business culture, as well as very competitive costs. Every day, we are faced to some instances of the globalization of manufacturing and business sites as well as higher education sectors or universities. We cannot respond to this competition simply by reducing our expenditures or making efficient our costs. Instead we must take an active role in transforming our traditional sectors, into more knowledge based enterprise. This is especially important for developing countries like us, where over 99% of the industries, representing over 70% of employment opportunities, are SMEs and also higher education sector and universities are going out from government dominance. Such a transformation will also need to go hand-in-hand with the development of a culture that encourages the creation of the next generation of companies and organizations, building on today’s emerging technologies. It is clear that we must learn how to translate our academic excellence into added...
value and employment opportunities. This will necessitate bringing together the different actors on the innovation scene and taking a far more efficient and concerted approach to achieve and maintain competitiveness in an increasingly challenging global environment [1].

For this reason, most of organizations are designing and developing programs and projects for improving their quality level. Despite taking general advantages of each quality project for organizations, while decision making to choose and apply quality model, we should consider organizational context, level of people maturity, constrains and limitations as well as efficiency and effectiveness principles of quality journey [1-4, 8].

Strategic Planning has a tendency to encourage people to think about the future. This is extremely important since many organizations are inward thinking, focusing too much on the short-term. Strategic planning looks at the long-term vision and achievable mission as well as strategic issues and directions. It has been proven that organizations which focus on the long-term through strategic planning promit quality level rather than other organizations [5, 7, 8].

**Strategic Planning, Quality Improvement and Balanced Scorecard:** Over the past few decades, many firms experienced some kind of strategic thinking and planning approach. Some of them have tried to integrated strategic plan into some various quality improvement programs, such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Six Sigma, European Foundation Quality Management (EFQM) and The Baldrige National Quality Program. Such Quality Programs aim to assist organizations to make strategic approach about quality and improve the quality of the manufacturing and service providing.

Although Quality Programs focus on continuous improvement, they are not well suited to measuring relative performance among differing enterprises in different industries. A few reports noted the differences and synergies between the Quality Frameworks and the BSC (2-9, 11):

- The BSC emphasizes clear causal links through strategy maps and objectives.
- The BSC programs rely on benchmarking approaches.
- The BSC sets strategic priorities for process enhancements.
- The BSC integrates budgeting, resource allocation, target setting, reporting and feedback on performance into ongoing management processes.
- These elements enable the BSC to be a central management tool for an upgraded and more effective performance measurement system and strategy management process. [2-4].

The Balanced Scorecard approach begins with the premise that financial measures are not sufficient to manage an organization. Financial measures tell the story of past events. They are not helpful to guide the creation of future value through investments in customers, suppliers, employees, technology, or innovation. The Balanced Scorecard complements measures of past performance (lagging indicators) with measures of the drivers of future performance (leading indicators). The objectives and measures of the scorecard are derived from an organization’s vision and strategy. These objectives and measures provide a view of an organization’s performance from four perspectives [2-4].
Financial – the strategy for growth, profitability and risk viewed from the perspective of the shareholder.

Customer – the strategy for creating value and differentiation from the perspective of the customer.

Internal Business Processes – the strategic priorities for various business processes, which create customer and shareholder satisfaction.

Learning and Growth – the priorities to create a climate that supports organization change, innovation and growth.

Using the Balanced Scorecard, corporate executives can now measure how their business units create value for current and future customers. They can also learn what investments in people, systems and procedures are necessary to improve future performance. While retaining an interest in financial performance, the Balanced Scorecard clearly reveals the drivers of superior, long-term value and competitive performance. The Balanced Scorecard tells the story of the strategy [2, 3, 6].

On the other hand, as a result of continued research and innovations over the last 15 years, the BSC has gone through an evolutionary process of improvement, from performance measurement (1990–1996) to performance management (1996–2000), to becoming a globally recognized best practice for strategic Planning and management (2001–to present).

In fact, the benefits a firm can obtain from properly implementing the BSC include:

- Translating strategy into more easily understood operational metrics and goals;
- Aligning organizations around a single, coherent strategy;
- Making strategy everyone’s everyday job, from CEO to the entry-level employee;
- Making strategic improvement a continual process; and
- Mobilizing change through strong, effective leadership [2-7].

According to literature review, Islamic Azad University-Khorasgan Branch (IAUK) interested to taking advantages of strategic planning models, Quality improvement programs and also BSC to making a strategic vision and aim for improving quality of its services. An integrated strategic quality model which is modified and adopted from integrated strategic plan [16] the first version was experienced in IUMS and reported (2009) tried to revise, install and establish into IAUK. This Project approved by Presidency Board of IAUK and IAU –Zone 4 Council.

Scope of Project: The foundation of the Islamic Azad University Khorasgan Branch (IAUK) was approved by the Islamic Azad University Board of Trustees on 1987. This Branch commenced majoring 510 students in 4 disciplines in the same year and it is currently hosting 12000 students majoring in 81 different fields of study. So far 34792 students have graduated from this university.

IAUK with more than 20 years of experiences in education, research and development has got its appropriate position in the area. Presently, with the purpose of achieving its future prospect, which is to attain the highest national position, to achieve appropriate indices of higher education in international levels, to reach the highest leading status among the universities of Isfahan province and to increase the scientific products indexed in international levels, the university has developed its short and long term programmes. Below are some outstanding achievements during last two decades [15]:

- The 1st Comprehensive University in zone 4 and the 9th Comprehensive Islamic Azad University in Iran.
- Obtaining the first rank among the Islamic Azad Universities based on OIC ranking.
- Publishing over 100 ISI articles, about 330 scientific research papers, more than 30 knowledge extending articles and more than hundreds of scientific general articles applied for end users.
- Publishing 90 volumes of scientific books through the University Press.
- 3150 defended thesis at M.A, M Sc and Professional Doctorate levels and 11 defended thesis at Specialized Doctorate level (PhD).
- Registering tens of invention patents by the faculty members and students.
- Obtaining top ranks in Robotics Competitions, Invention Competitions, Kharazmi Festival, Innovation and Flourish Festivals, Student Business Competitions, National Festival of Hazrate Ali Akbar (AS), Hedayat Festival and ….
Contracting more than 160 cases of Research Projects with outside and inside organizations.

Establishing the first Technology Development Center Unit (Technology Incubator) and Entrepreneurship and Academic Cooperation Development Center among the Islamic Azad Universities.

Establishing the first Education and Research Development Center (ERDC)

Obtaining the top ranks of featured researcher in province and regional level over the past years.

Holding more than 100 regional, national and international conferences.

Publishing 3 research quarterly journals with the titles of (Science and Research in Humanities), (Science and Research in Psychology) and (Agriculture Magazine).

Sending 7 Theories to the Theorization Chairs Center as innovative theories and being awarded the first chair theory in the area of linguistics in Iran.

Being selected the National Master Sample in 1381 and 1382 from this university.

**Methodology of Project:** The applied model for the IAUK Branch to promote its level of quality is an integrated model that combined quality process and strategic planning as well as Balanced Score Cards technique. The university through this quality journey with participation of managers, staff and also graduate student's representatives formed some Focus Discussion groups to develop strategic problems and issues as well as strategies to tackle these problems. The concept of quality infused in all FDGs sessions in 4BSC perspectives (emphasizing on growth and learning, as well as student satisfaction as a key costumer) relevant to higher education system. We designed and applied this integrated quality model both for planning for quality improvement during 5 year period in Phase One. We are also designing a quality indicator system with BSC technique to monitor continues and evaluate annually and summative.

**Procurement Executives’ Association Initiatives:** Over the last few years, several programs experienced by Islamic Azad Universities as well as state universities in Iran for improving quality and promoting their situation in higher education business market in regional and national level as well as international level. They have been involved in addressing the challenge of both measuring the performance of their acquisition systems and using performance results to improve their processes and practices to better meet the expectations of their customers for higher quality, lower cost and improved service.

In 2009, the IAUK created the IAUK Strategic Task Force (IAUK-STF) to analyze the situation of Islamic Azad universities in Iran higher education system, to identify innovative approaches for measuring performance and to develop strategies and recommendations for promoting situation and in search of excellence.

In 2009, IAUK chartered IAUK-STF to create, document and maintain a strategic quality framework for acquisition that builds upon the Model. The framework was designed with sufficient flexibility to address IAUK special needs and have sufficient cohesion and commonality to identify key quality measures and appropriate benchmarks. The IAUK Team researched, designed, produced and will facilitate implementation of the system, processes and procedures necessary to meet the IAUK objectives of an effective management system in an ever-changing and turbulent environment. Various Focus Discussion groups (FDGs) including Research, Education, Resources, Cultural and Student affairs groups established. Groups started their tasks with Strategic planning Workshops and then during a period of 6-9 months they had regular meetings and produced SWOT analysis, identify stakeholders, make strategies, set strategic goals and design objectives and action plans for the universities. BSC workshops in interval time helped the groups to infused a systematic an logic approach and helpful techniques to develop the quality strategic program categorized according to 4 perspective of BSC model for better understanding and sharing the approach. In that process some requirement have adopted by members of groups, including:

A conceptual framework on combination of BSC in Strategic Plan, an Effective internal and external situational analysis with participation of categorized stakeholders, understanding Accountability for results, involving all levels of managers and key process owners.
Implementing the Balanced Scorecard: To realize the full benefits of the BSC, the IAUK encourages the adoption of the BSC for all key agency functions.

- Implementing the BSC agency-wide will provide a common methodology and coordinated framework for all organizational efforts.
- While implementing the BSC is an important first step, helping groups to develop balanced scorecards for additional functions (e.g., extracurricular programs, human resources, finance, IT) will strengthen the link among organization, those additional functions and agency missions and goals, will promote cross-functional coordination of improvement efforts and break down “stovepipes” in the organization.
- Internal stakeholders may serve as advocates to promote the benefits of the BSC methodology university wide.
- The BSC will provide sound data on which to base organization decisions, from allocation of available resources to future direction.

RESULTS

Following table explains strategic goals of IAUK that is categorized in 4 perspectives of BSC and according to each perspective we pointed out some related strategic measures.
<table>
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<th>Strategic Goals</th>
<th>BSC Strategic Measures</th>
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| **Financial**   | • Developed Graduate Programs / Previous year %  
| F1. Developing Graduate studies programs (G1) | • NO of MOU and Research or Educational Contracts / PY %  
| F2. Promoting relation between IAUK and Industry and other resources (G5) | • Current Costs / PY %  
| F3. Establishing Performance Management and Productivity Model in IAUK (Effective Consumption, Lowest Cost) (G12) | □ Financial Suggestions Accepted by Council  
| **Customer**    | • Graduate Students / GS previous Year  
| C1. Developing Graduate studies programs (G1) | • Consumer, Student feedback about Electronic Services  
| C2. Developing Electronic Instructional and Administrative Services (G2) | • Graduate Students / GS previous Year  
| C3. Adjustment between Organizational transaction and culture, and Core Iranian-Islamic Value (G3) | • Student Satisfaction about Spiritual and Psychological aspects of Services  
| C4. Promoting IAUK Services for Students, Educational Informational & Recreational (G4) | • Student Inventory on IAUK services  
| C5. Promoting relation between IAUK and Industry and other resources (G5) | □ Partner Survey  
| **Internal Processes** | • NO of Electronic Processes or services / PY %  
| I1. Developing Electronic Instructional and Administrative Services (G2) | • NO of Processes Modified and Revised Based on Values  
| I2. Adjustment between Organizational transaction and culture, and Core Iranian-Islamic Value (G3) | • NO of Suggested Theory Chairs / PY %  
| I3. Increasing Theorizing Chair In IAUK (G7) | • NO of Accepted Theory Chairs /PY %  
| I4. Designing An Evaluation System for Evaluating Science Production of Research Centers (G6) | • Verifying and approving Evaluation System by IAUK Council and Research Heads  
| I5. Promoting Capability and Competencies of Academic Staff (Qualitative as well as Quantitative) (G9) | • Implemented Program for Staff Development  
| I6. Decentralization and Delegation of Authority to Faculties (G10) | • NO of Delegated Decisions  
| I7. Standardization of Business Processes of IAUK (G11) | • Establishment and Acquisition of ISO 9000-2008  
| **Learning & Growth** | • ICDL / Staff survey  
| L1. Developing Electronic Instructional and Administrative Services (G2) | • NO of Specific Value Based Staff Development Courses and Meetings  
| L2. Adjustment between Organizational transaction and culture, and Core Iranian-Islamic Value (G3) | • Developed Staff for KTE and Contracts Skills  
| L3. Promoting relation between IAUK and Industry and other resources (G5) | • Job Motivation Inventory  
| L4. Promoting Job Motivation and Organizational Belonging in Staff, Academic & Non-academic (G6) | • Motivational Programs for Staff  
| L5. Promoting Capability and Competencies of Academic Staff (Qualitative as well as Quantitative) (G9) | • Family Based Programs IAUK Family Day / Night for Staff  
| | • Meeting on Strategic Planning and BSC  

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As the table showed some of strategic goals categorized in more than one perspective but there are different strategic measures in each perspective, so each perspective emphasizes on different approach but we should have a holistic approach to apply strategic direction in our organization.

CONCLUSION

The following are some benifits of application of An Integrated Strategic Quality Model taking advantages of BSC in IAUK that we attained during the process of implementation of this model:

- As a systematic approach to unify all planning effort through organization.
- As a quality improvement tool for assuring quality actions and programs.
- As an instrument for reengineering business processes.
- As a training tool to educate all staff (academic as well as nonacademic) emphasizing on learning and growth, internal business processes as well as customer and financial measures.
- As a communications tool to translate strategy of top managers to lower levels of management and participatory management.
- As a tool to monitor, evaluate key control indicators formative or summative.
- As a tool to manage unwanted tradeoffs and correct unimportant action plans.
- As a goals deployment approach for driving strategic goals down through the organization.
- As a management system for focusing scarce resources on the most strategically leveraged improvements needed for successful strategy implementation.

The BSC has been a main theme of quality strategic plan for IAUK and applied and examined as a system for linking strategy to action. It took much mind and labour work during the process of designing and implementing in this university but it is strongly worth of work and helpful for higher education sector system in general as well as universities specifically Non governmental and private universities. We think that a strategic quality planning that is combined and integrated with BSC can help organizations such as universities on their journey of quality, to greatness and to excellence. But beforehand you should make sure that you understand exactly how it can help and use a process to create and maintain a required conditions and environment that is suitable for achieving the desired outcomes.

REFERENCES

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