Strategic Leadership and Its Application in Egyptian Universities

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Abstract

Today's universities operate in a climate of great change, along with increased responsibilities and accountability from Internal and external customers. This has resulted in calls for a new kind of leadership working to help the university to improve educational services and face more challenges, called strategic leadership, at the university level. Aim of study defining of Egyptian leadership universities pattern of modern leadership styles, named as Strategic leadership (concept, objectives, roles, requirements, and application obstacles). Relate to the suffering of the Egyptian universities of many problems that limit their efficiency and effectiveness. This led to the need to search for new approaches as strategic leadership for eliminate of these problems. The study used a descriptive approach for its suitability for the nature of the study. The study found multiple reasons for the application of strategic leadership style in Egyptian universities as a result of the problems the leaderships of the Egyptian universities suffer from which limits its efficiency and effectiveness. Study recommended starting applying this pattern quickly after all the positive results it achieved in many universities.

Keywords: *leaders, strategic leadership, Egyptian universities*

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Introduction

In spite of the long history of research on leadership, social scientists, primarily organization behavior scholars, have only recently begun to single out strategic leadership as a focus of attention (Boal and Schultz, 2007). In the meanwhile, the practice of "strategic leadership" appears to be animated by persistent myths, sometimes created by the trade press, other times by the personal experience of leaders. These myths' as (Hambrick, 2005) reminds us poignantly, invite critical scholarly scrutiny.

The field of strategic leadership which focuses on the way top-level leaders (i.e., executives) have an impact on organizational performance through their leadership. One of the seminal works in strategic leadership illustrates the importance of strategic leadership by asserting that organizations are a reflection of their top leader (Kelly and mark, 2013).

Strategic leadership as one of kind of leadership is the process of developing visions, creating executable plans, making strategically consequential decisions, stimulating and motivating followers, and engaging in supportive exchanges with peers and subordinates given volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments of organizations (Zoogah, 2009)

Strategic leaders also contribute to organizational outcomes, according to Boal and Hooijberg (2001), by developing the capacity for change. Strategic leaders are catalysts for change who also prepare the organization for change (Hambrick, 2005) Because strategic leadership involves the universities as a whole and its relationship with its environment, it falls on top-level leaders to exercise it. Indeed, a leader's distance from operations "can generate and establish lofty principles, goals and visions" (Glenn Creating, 2001). So, strategic leadership as used here pertains to executive leadership, stressing the relationship between strategy and leadership.

Strategic leadership relates an organization's ideologies, identity, mission and view of the macro environment system to its differentiated core competencies. "Relates" implies that the leadership vision is not identical to the strategic elements (Worden, 2003). Indeed, these elements of strategic leadership are fundamentally at odds.

With regard to the vision component, leaders depict or construct not only a vision of the organization's mission, but of an encompassing social reality of the environment (i.e. society). Relating the organizational mission to the values in the encompassing environment pertains to the legitimacy and credibility of the vision and the organization. Whereas an organization's mission is broad or abstract enough to be consistent with values held by the wider society, strategic plans tend to be more tightly oriented to a university exclusive interests or competitive niche. Such plans may thus be at odds with societal interests and values even though they dovetail with the universities mission. The wider societal system is not centered on the interests of a leader's particular organization even though that university may have a mission congruent with both the plans and societal values. (Worden, Skip, 2003).

Strategic leadership creation in Egyptian universities is a difficult matter specially that these universities suffer from many problems, because of these problems most Egyptian universities not application strategic leadership approach, then these problems requires immediate solutions, for the success of this approach. (Jaber Mohammed Ramadan, 2013).

Nowadays Egyptian universities need to let a critical mass of managers develop the skills and abilities required to exercise strategic leadership, (Adel Rajab, Abdulhadi Mabrouk, 2007).

This means that Strategic leadership may be one of the most critical organizational issues due to its positive effect on organizational performance. Therefore, strategic leadership helps Egyptian universities express their vision to future.

Strategic Leadership Definition

While there are many different definitions of strategic leadership, we define it as the ability to influence others in universities to voluntarily make day-to-day decisions that lead to the universities long-term growth and survival.

Kotelnikov Defined as "the vision, direction, the purpose for growth, and context for the success of the higher education institutions, strategic leadership also initiates 'outside-the-box' thinking to generate future growth" (Kotelnikov, 2001).

Glenn and Mehdi (2009) refers to The most important aspects of strategic leadership as shared values and a clear vision, both of which will enable and allow employees to make decisions with minimal formal monitoring or control mechanisms. With this accomplished, a leader will have more time and a greater capacity to focus on other, ad hoc issues, such as adapting the vision to a changing business environment. In addition, strategic leadership will incorporate visionary and managerial leadership by simultaneously allowing for risk-taking and rationality (Glenn and Mehdi, 2009).

(House and Aditya, 1997) offered a definition of strategic leaders: "as managers who have overall responsibility for university," locating strategic leadership at the nexus of managers and universities.

Ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the university" (Glenn Creating, 2001).

Strategic leadership of a visionary leaders are primarily future-oriented, proactive and risk-taking. These leaders base their decisions and actions on their beliefs and values, and try to share their understanding of a desired vision with others in the university (Glenn and Mehdi, 2009).

The definitions of strategic leadership presented above presume an ability to influence subordinates, peers, and superiors. It also presumes that the strategic leader understands the emergent strategy process that some authors consider more important than the intended strategic planning process for organizational performance. Strategic leaders understand and use this process to ensure the future viability of their organizations. Strategic leadership presumes a shared vision of what university is to be, so that the day-today decision-making, or emergent strategy process, is consistent with this vision (Glenn Creating, 2001).

Strategic Leadership and Nature of its Work

Success of strategic leadership in the work requires a new thinking about how to Optimal use the resources of the universities ؟

This kind of thinking is called strategic thinking which involves having a vision of what the university can and should become, and in offering new ways of understanding the challenges and opportunities before it. It involves scanning the internal and external environments for trends, patterns and factors that may influence the work both now and in the future. A particularly critical competency for strategic leaders is systems thinking, which allows them to discern the complex interrelationships among the variables that contribute to organizational success (Beatty, and Hughes, 2005).

It is important to appreciate the dynamic way that strategic thinking, acting and influencing interact with each other. For example, strategic leaders often need to draw upon a group of diverse stakeholders to address a complex organizational challenge. That involves making sense together, not just within one leader's own head; it involves thinking and influencing simultaneously. It involves creating in a collaborative way a common and shared understanding among different individuals having different perspectives (Beatty and Hughes, 2005)

Suzanne (2013) refers to multiple Responsibilities for university strategic leaders:

Vision: Setting the vision may be the single most important responsibility of leaders. It enables strategic leaders to set the principals that provide the direction and broad boundaries for the enterprise. It provides the foundation that makes it possible to empower individuals to act with independence, judgment and initiative (Suzanne, 2013).

Alignment: The alignment process builds commitment to the vision and the strategic plan. The leadership team aligns the entire organization so that all the organization's energy and action are focused on achieving several core goals (Suzanne, 2013).

Deployment: leaders deploy the appropriate resources at the time and place where they can have the most impact (Suzanne, 2013).

The Importance of Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is a form of leadership that uses the attributes of influence, motivation and communication but has the ability to establish the long-term direction of the organization while effectively establishing the day-to-day operational aspects (Davies and Ellison, 2006)

Strategic leadership of the universities helps to bridge the gap between strategy formulation and strategy implementation by putting an equal emphasis on path finding and culture-building and delivery of value to the customer. This requires radical paradigm shifts towards both people and customers that will virtually turn the universities upside-down and inside-out (Nicholls, 1994).

Beatty and Hughes suggest that. In order to appreciate the nature and importance of strategic leadership, it is helpful to distinguish it from operational leadership. Strong operational leaders are known for their specific focus and marshalling of resources to 'get the job done'. Most senior executives have progressed in their organizations because they have strong operational skills, but effective strategic leadership requires a skills that are (Beatty and Hughes, 2005):

* Systemic - universities are interdependent and interconnected systems, so leaders who take actions and decisions taken in one part of the organization are mindful of their impact on other parts of the universities.

* Future focused - a strategic leader operates with a far-reaching timetable, integrating short-term results and a long-term focus.
* Change oriented - a strategic leader is often a driver of organizational change (Beatty and Hughes, 2005) confirm strategic leadership. They enhance the long-term viability of their universities through the articulation of a clear vision and, at the same time, maintain a satisfactory level of short-term financial stability. And they accomplished this while maintaining relatively smooth day-to-day operations.

(Glenn and Mehdi, 2009) stated that the presence of a strategic leader leads to a number of outcomes for universities for example:

1. These leaders tend to pay particular attention to building their university resources, capabilities and competencies in order to gain appropriate, sustained competitive advantages. Strategic leaders know that focusing on the short term and forgetting about core competencies in the face of changing circumstances and a turbulent environment are likely to lead to organizational failure.
2. Strategic leaders view human capital as an important factor in innovation and the creation of core competencies, and they expend considerable effort sustaining the health of this resource (human capital).
3. Universities led by strategic leaders are more successful in learning, both at the individual and group levels. Studies have shown that both the managerial and visionary aspects of leadership are essential for university -wide learning initiatives to succeed.

Skills of Strategic Leadership

The current universities' need to develop the skills and abilities of members required the exercise of strategic leadership. These skills are very important to university leaders to face more danger and unexpected events in addition to orientation of long -term vision, enhance long-term university viability and short-term financial stability (Rowe, 2001).

Strategic leadership skills are indeed necessary and sufficient for university restructuring where the aim is greater efficiency and flexibility in face to conditions. Dealing with these conditions requires skills of put a new vision to the university, an ability to invent the future, the setting of new directions (Wilson, 1996).

Paul et al. focus on six skills of strategic leadership which is improving the skill of Anticipate sudden events, improving the ability to face Challenges, Interpreting various important matters , taking decisive decision, to improve ability to align among conflicting views and learn new ideas to serve the university (Paul et al., 2013).

Kotelnikov refers to strategic Leaders as those leaders who are always looking ahead and analyzing the present in terms of preparation for what may come for the university. Strategic leaders are adaptable and growth-oriented. They take responsibility for getting things done by training employees to think and act more effectively to achieve the best result possible for the university (Kotelnikov, 2001). Neumann and Neumann, emphasized three strategic leadership skills:

• The first skill is visioning, which is the leader's ability to see the organization's future clearly and completely. Visioning involves the desire to change the status quo, the tendency to adopt goals quite different from the status quo, the ability to identify opportunities in the environment, and the formation of a long term growth path for their colleges (Neumann and Neumann, 1999).
• The second skill is focusing, which is the leader's ability to move the college from concentrating on the status quo to adopt the new vision. Focusing involves the communication of the vision to others, the formation of a powerful guiding coalition, the concentration on new priority areas and niches, and the creation of the teams necessary for implementation (Neumann and Neumann, 1999).
• The third skill is implementing, which is the leader's ability to carry out the various goals and plans of the new vision (Neumann and Neumann, 1999).

Strategic Leadership Planning

Strategic leadership planning is a dynamic and continuous process: it expresses how universities leaders sees, thinks about, face a changes and challenges and creates their commitments for the future it desires.

Bryson refers to strategic leadership planning as a process that brings university leaders together to think about the future and face its challenges, create a vision, and invent ways to make this future happen through determination, community teamwork, and disciplined actions. It is the primary function of university leadership to make things happen that would not happen otherwise and prevent things from happening that might occur ordinarily (Bryson, 2011).

In fact universities all over the world are Exposed to many of the social, economic, political and educational changes and must find ways to manage these large changes for long- term to university future.

One of the key tasks for strategic leaders is how to manage these changes through understanding the nature of these changes and put means to face it (Shattock, 2010b).

For Shattock, the messiness of the current situation in universities can be addressed only by strategic leadership through better strategic planning, and by more reform aimed at teasing apart the different parts of the university 'value chain' and opening up the university black box to external scrutiny (Shattock, 2010b).

Universities must be able to decide what it want the future to be and, it must also decide how this desired future would become a reality (Bryson, 2011).

Practices of Effective strategic Leadership

To practice strategic leadership, you apply the principles of strategic leadership that make universities a success. For example:

1. Get Clarity. Getting clarity means being able to connect clearly and instantly to your long-term and short-term ideas about success. In educational work, this practice often equates to setting a universities vision. While a vision is a powerful thing, it is not quite everything you need as a leader. You may have a personal vision for yourself, but in addition, you need the skill of getting clarity on that vision again and again over time. Your vision will change as you change. Getting clarity ensures you don't make changes in a direction you don't want to go (Hamm, 2006).

2. Find Focus. When you find focus, you fix your attention on top priorities even when the world around you is pulling you away. In educational work, focus shows up in the form of a strategic plan. The strategic plan makes it possible for everyone in university to see the most important aspects of the direction of the institution in a single document. These elements include the vision, mission, goals, strategies and other important aspects that allow everyone to move forward in a unified way. As a leader, you also need a one-page personalized document to remind you of your priorities. This does not have to be an exhaustive list of tactics, but must include a short list of areas that matter most to you (Byrne, 2009).

3. Investing Time. Leaders must learn how they can invest your time. This means universities leaders must learn to think differently about time and learn to do more with less. Universities have tried to promote this concept by encouraging time management (Schorr, 1992) investment of time requires self-discipline, order of priorities, don't try to do it all at once. Sensible time planning and pinpointing the tasks (Therese, 1994).

4. Build the Team. Strategic Leaders in universities cannot succeed on their own; even the Leaders need support and advice. Without strong relationships to provide perspective, it is very easy to lose your way. Authentic leaders build extraordinary support teams to help them stay on course. Those teams counsel them in times of uncertainty, help them in times of difficulty, and celebrate with them in times of success. After their hardest days, leaders find comfort in being with people on whom they can rely (George, 2003).

Pina and Joe indicated that Successful teamwork relies upon synergism existing between all team members creating an environment where they are all willing to contribute and participate in order to promote and nurture a positive, effective team environment. Team members must be flexible enough to adapt to cooperative working environments where goals are achieved through collaboration and social interdependence (Pina and Joe, 2002).

Roles of Strategic Leaders in University

Strategic leaders need to have cognitive skills, appropriate knowledge, skills, and leadership experience of large organizations to manage complexity, strategic leaders use online resources to increase their ability to handle complex and uncertain environments. Effective organizations are a result of the ability of leaders, theorists and practitioners to coordinate, formulate, implement, and evaluate new strategies to adapt to complex and rapidly changing environments (Jacobs, 2002).

As indicated by Haggai (2001), the active role strategic leadership played in the Egyptian educational institutions which are summarizes as follows: interest in collective action, formulate a vision and message of the educational institution, put its strategic objectives and activating the participation of Foreign Affairs (parents, the community, in support of the work of educational institutions) Have been identified by Almaghraby (1999), ten roles of Egyptian university leadership strategy, namely: where one leads the strategic commander legal role, and social obligations. Direct, motivate and develop subordinates, and supervision. Has a network of information, relationships and

contacts at internal and external level of the educational institution. Review the performance of the educational institution using a number of indicators. The transfer of information to senior management, and subordinates. Speaks formally and transmits the information to the authorities and the people concerned. Always interested in developing the performance of employees, processes, procedures and organizational structures. The role of a reformer to take corrective action when the educational institution is exposed to conditions of emergency and sudden crises. Acts as a distributor for enterprise resources through informed study of discretionary budgets. The task of negotiating with internal and external actors and solve problems that may arise between individuals (Almaghraby, 1999).

The vital roles to strategic leadership help alter perceptions about strategic planning, and the organization itself, helping to overcome inertia (Terry et al., 2004).

Providing strategic leadership is an important role for the university for example (Bass, 2007: Adel and Abdulhadi, 2007).

- Understand the nature of their available university environment, the services that present it to community.
- How to manage change in good times and bad times.
- How to use authority and accountability.
- How to shape an effective management team of diverse competencies and interests.
- Ability of the university goals and strategies.
- Develop structures, processes, controls and core competencies for the university, choose leaders.
- Provide direction with respect to university strategies.
- Maintain an effective organizational culture.
- Deal with ambiguity, complexity, and information overload requiring adaptability and a sense of timing.

Obstacles of Strategic Leadership at Universities

Universities that have not adequately developed strategic leadership skills in their leaders may run into four kinds of problems :

1. Lack of strategic clarity and focus is one common problem that occurs when organizational leaders fail to make tough decisions that clarify both what will be done as well as what will not be done. The lack of strategic clarity and focus prevents people from seeing their part in achieving goals (Adel and Abdulhadi, 2007).
2. Limited perspective sometimes universities leaders focus on short-term success at the expense of long-term viability (Adel and Abdulhadi, 2007).
3. It can be very difficult for them to shift focus and do something different. Short-term success is important, but if the organization consistently disregards the long term, it will suffer. There's palpable frustration among universities leaders such as director, vice reactor, deans, department chairs etc (Molly, 2013).
4. Some strategic leaders need order, stability, control the details of the work being performed, setting and using goals as motivational tools, and they may have difficulty showing empathy when dealing with employees (Glenn and Mehdi, 2009).

These were some problems that may eliminate the effectiveness of the strategic leadership style in universities, which must be taken into account when starting the application.

Justifications for Applying Strategic Leadership at Egyptian Universities

The reality of the performance of the Egyptian university leaders indicates a number of problems that eliminate the efficiency and effectiveness of those leaders and describe their performance as weak and routine (Adel and Abdulhadi, 2007), these problems have led some researchers (Mohammad, 2000, Adel and Abdulhadi, 2007) to confirming the need to apply a style of leadership strategy to avoid these problems, such as:

1. Weakness of interest involving faculty members, administrators and students in the strategic planning process (planning, implementation and evaluation) and limiting it to academic leaders which only believes in its own skills exclusively in the management of strategic planning processes (Mohammed Awad, 2013).
2. Absence of scientific planning for the work of the university leaders, which is wasted effort, wasted money and disrupts the development process of administrative university (Abdul Razak, 2006).
3. Lack of understanding of the university leaders to manage crises, disasters and sudden and serious events that may occur in their universities as a result of their lack of awareness of the dimensions of the university crisis and its causes and ways to deal with it (Mohammed, 1999: Yusuf, 2008).

4. Lack of ability to Reengineering of administrative Process in universities that process that depends on the fundamental change is not a formal administrative processes, and the rejection of the old ways with the redesign of these processes to meet the administrative problems of acute are experiencing (Mohammed Awad, 2011) and then the Egyptian universities to conduct a process of comprehensive and radical change excceed form to content so as to achieve the strategic vision for the future (Yousef, 2002).
5. Weakness of ability to deal with the external environment, and adapt to the variables and this is clear through the weakness of interest in university leaders linking universities to surrounding community and its institutions and individuals (Ahmed, 2007).
6. Intensification of conflicts and disputes between university leaders and other individuals (faculty staff, students and administrators) as a result of a misunderstanding, personal clashes, varying levels of performance, and a lack of cooperation, (Mohammed Awad, 2013) which reflects a negative impact on performance and hinder the ability to achieve the objectives of those universities and pay those leaders to search for the appropriate strategy for the management of conflict in Egyptian universities (Susan and Hossam, 2000).

These were some problems that leaders in the Egyptian universities suffer from, which causes us to emphasize the need to apply the pattern of strategic leadership and identify its requirements in order to avoid such problems in the time when they were in Abad need to leaders who have skill and ability, making it possible for leaders to face various challenges surrounding Egyptian universities.

Requirements of Strategic Leadership at Egyptian Universities

There are several requirements for the application of strategic leadership at Egyptian universities, including: anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change as necessary, understanding and cope with change that seems to be increasing exponentially in today's globalized world and the ability to accommodate and integrate both external and internal conditions, and to manage and engage in complex information processing (Abdul, 1999: Hagen et al, 1998: Ahmed Haji, 2001) power to influence people's thoughts and actions (Rowe, 2001), understanding changes and how such changes can be manage, (Adel and Abdulhadi 2007: Taylor-Bianco and Schermerhorn, 2006), face and manage of pressures within the   university system quickly prompt a return to the status quo (Adel and Abdulhadi, 2007: Daniel and Iris, 2005). For Sarah the most important requirements for strategic leadership at the university is the ability to select talent and encourage university employees in their teams to learn and grow each year through developing strategic skills(such as implement of challenging tasks) in line with the university strategy (Sarah, 2014).

It is clear, Multiplicity and diversity of requirements in applying strategic leadership in the Egyptian universities. Which refers to the need for understanding and awareness of the Egyptian university leaders to those requirements, and remove any obstacles reduce the effectiveness of the application.

Findings

The study found:
1. The importance of applying strategic leadership in universities generally.
2. Roles' multiplicity of strategic leadership in universities and not being limited to the traditional roles of educational leadership.
3. Multiple reasons for the application of strategic leadership style in Egyptian universities as a result of the problems the leaderships of the Egyptian universities suffer from which limits its efficiency and effectiveness.
4. Study recommended to start applying this pattern quickly after all the positive results it achieved in many universities.

Conclusions

Strategic leadership is a recent trend in the field of leadership, we think it will enhance the strategic processes in Egyptian universities. It is necessary in all Egyptian universities. The effect of the application of strategic leadership in Egyptian universities will appear in their academic and managerial practices. The increasing rate of Egyptian universities changes have caused a need to fundamentally alter the process used by Egyptian universities to remain viable in the future. Perhaps, strategic leadership will improve the abilities of Egyptian universities leaders to deal with more issues that face Egyptian universities. We need more studies to be applied in the different stages in Egyptian education and clarifying positive effects.

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