

Strategic Planning and Its Contribution to Organizational Performance: A Case of Selected Public Sectors in Yirgalem Town, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The study sought to investigate the contributions of strategic planning to organizational performances in the selected sectors of yirgalem Town. The study has also sorted out the context of strategic planning prior to its design. In addition, the research investigated the practices and challenges in the course of designing, implementing and over sighting the plan in the ex-post implementation. In order to systematically approach the problem. This approach was selected on the ground that it helps the selection of Case Study approach. To this effect, a case study is chosen as an overall approach for its ability to incorporate to qualitative and quantitative methods in the collection and analysis of data that focuses on the various issues of the study. Besides, in order to meet the objectives of the research, both primary and secondary sources of data were accessed using questionnaire, interviews and observations. Moreover, from 22 public sector organizations that have implemented strategic planning, 5 sectors were randomly selected from where 37 respondents were selected using simple random sampling and 13 were selected as key informants who were purposely considered. The results show that though there has been a gap to improve, to a better degree there has been awareness creation prior to the design of Strategic Planning. However, results show that there was a gap in participating wider level of management and stakeholders in the course of designing the plan. This study also shows that the Strategic Planning has resulted in positive changes with regard to revenue collection, efficient service delivery and increased desire for qualified manpower. Finally, the researcher recommends that, in the planning processes to come in the future, the Town Administration should create adequate awareness for both employees and the stakeholders. It is also recommended that good performing units and employees should be rewarded so as to motivate the poorly performing ones. Moreover, further research is recommended as strategic planning multiple dimensions.

Keywords: Strategic planning, Organizational performance, Contributions

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the strategic plan has become a common management tool in both developed and developing countries. Much have been written and published in the field of strategy and consequently on strategic planning. At its peak in the 1970s and 80s, planning was the central activity of modern organizations, which they thought enabled them to achieve a competitive advantage. Much influential literature stems from this time, shaping the way managers thought about strategic plans. Over the past two decades research has increasingly identified the pitfalls of planning (Mintzberg, 1994a as cited by Marie Nauheimer, 2007).

Over time the concept and practice of strategic planning has been embraced wide-reaching and across sectors because of its perceived contribution to organizational performance. Now day's organizations from both the public and private sectors have taken the practice of strategic planning critically as a tool that can be employed to fast track their performances. Strategic planning is arguably important ingredient in the conduct of strategic management. In this regard, (Steiner 1979 as cited by Robert, 2012) noted that the framework for formulating and implementing strategies is the formal strategic planning system.

However, most theory and practices have been focused on the private sector, specifically in businesses and for the purpose of improving competitive position in the market. Strategic planning for public organizations is a more recent innovation first introduced in the 1980s. It has steadily grown as an academic endeavor and tool for public managers, but is not nearly as robust as its private sector predecessor.

Since the last five years, increased efforts are being made towards facilitating planned urban development in Ethiopia. Indeed, similar efforts were being made starting the establishment of the former National Urban Planning Institute (NUPI), now renamed as the Federal Urban Planning Institute (FUPI) (MoUCH, 2006). The Ethiopian government has formulated the five year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) (2010/11-2014/15) to carry forward the key strategic directions pursued in the PASDEP. The GTP envisages that, besides maintaining a fast growing economy, better results will be realized in all sectors. To this effect, yirgalem Town is not an exception in this regard (GTP, 2010).

1.2. Statement of the problem

The environments in which public and nonprofit organizations operate have become not only increasingly

uncertain in recent years but also more tightly interconnected; thus changes anywhere in the system reverberate unpredictably and often chaotically and dangerously throughout the society. This increased uncertainty and interconnectedness requires a fourfold response from public and nonprofit organizations (and from communities). Strategic planning can help leaders and managers of public and nonprofit organizations think, learn, and act strategically (John, 2004).

Many of the studies on the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance were done between 1970s and early 1990s. These studies focused on the direct relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance. Although the studies within the African context by Woodburn (1984), Adebite (1986) and Fubarua (1986) noted that organizations that practiced strategic planning recorded better performance compared to non-planners.

The successful strategic planning in organizational performance is very important to support and strength on organizational performance. A good strategic plan perform reduce wastage of time, cost minimize and to use less human resource and the right person to the right position. Most of the time organization prepares strategic planning to improve the performance of their departments and sector but fail to implement according to the time set, the planned human resource and within the budget framework. Authors offer a number of general causes for Unsuccessful strategic planning management and organizational efficiency failures: Lack of capital, unplanned expansion and management incompetence, lack of human resource management, wastage of time during implementation the strategic planning, all are mentioned as typical reasons for inefficient organization. Nevertheless, each of these challenges may be effectively addressed by strategic planning.

According to the researcher, there is absence of study on the contribution of strategic planning in public organizations performance in yirgalem Town Administration, the researcher feels, it is worth doing the study in the area.

1.3. Objectives of the study

- To examine the contribution of strategic planning to organization effectiveness;
- To investigate the contribution of strategic planning to organization efficiency;
- To examine the challenges and achievements of strategic planning on organizational performance.

2. Research methodology

2.1 Research design

For undertaking this research, a case study was chosen as an overall approach for its ability to incorporate different methods and techniques in the collection and analysis of data that focuses on the various issues of the study. Moreover, because of the nature of the data collected being qualitative and quantitative, the researcher was convinced to employ mixed approach so as to gain the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches.

2.2 Sampling design and techniques

The study population is the twenty two (22) public offices that are engaged in implementing the strategic planning of yirgalem Town. From these sectors, by using simple random sampling, five (5) sectors (namely; yirgalem Water Resources, Revenue Authority of yirgalem Branch, Investment Sector, the Municipality and yirgalem Education Bureau) were selected for the study.

As the strategic plan has been implemented in all the 22 sectors, the random selection was found to be appropriate. The researcher has consulted the list of employees in these sectors and identified 160 employees, who are involved in the implementation process of strategic planning. From among the 160 employees, 50 were considered for the study using simple random sampling. Due to the fact that they are believed to have adequate knowledge about the strategic plan of the town and its implementation, all purposely considered with whom interview is to be conducted.

2.3 The study variables

The study variables were the strategic planning (independent variable) and organizational performance (dependent variable).

2.4 Data collection method

To collect the primary data from the higher officials in the town, the interview was used as they are believed to have adequate information about the strategic planning of the selected offices. Besides, semi structured questionnaire were designed and distributed to address the sample employees working in different sectors of the town.

2.5 Method of data analysis

The analysis based on four dimensions; i.e., theoretical prepositions, case description, complimentary of qualitative and quantitative data and examining explanations. Based on these dimensions, the collected data were categorized, presented, analyzed and interpreted using tools such as percentages, tables, graphs, charts. Moreover, descriptive statistics have also been employed in processing qualitative data.

4. Results and discussion

Table 4.1: The Contributions/Role of Strategic Planning for Organizational Performance

The contributions of strategic planning	Strongly agree in %	Agree in %	Neutral in %	Disagree in %	Strongly Disagree in %	Mean
Provides clearer focus for the organization	40.5	35.1	8.1	13.5	2.7	4
Improves the relationship between staff and Management	37.8	32.4	10.8	8.1	10.8	3.8
Helps in building strong teams	51.3	21.6	13.5	10.8	2.7	4
Provides a glue or bond among management Level	43.2	27	13.5	10.8	5.4	3.9
Produces great satisfaction among planners around a common vision	40.5	29.7	18.9	8.1	2.7	4
Enhances organizational efficiency	43.2	29.7	13.5	10.8	2.7	4
Solves major problems	35.1	35.1	16.2	10.8	2.7	3.9
Helps to communicate those goals and objectives to the organization's constituents	37.8	21.6	27	8.1	5.4	3.8
Develop a sense of ownership of the plan	35.1	21.6	27	13.5	2.7	3.7
Ensure wise use of resources as per priority	27	35.1	18.9	10.8	8.1	3.6
Provides a framework for informed change	18.9	37.8	24.3	10.8	8.1	3.5
It has important value in building a consensus about where an organization is going and how	21.6	40.5	29.7	5.4	2.7	3.7
Helps to set more realistic objectives	32.4	32.4	21.6	8.1	2.7	3.8
A need for better information for decisions making may be recognized	27	40.5	21.6	2.7	8.1	3.8
Growth can be accelerated and improved	27	35.1	16.2	16.2	5.4	3.6
Problem areas can be identified and eliminated	24.3	35.1	27	10.8	2.7	3.7
Helps to control operational problems	29.7	27	27	10.8	5.4	3.7
Develop better communications with those both inside and outside the organization	32.4	27	27	10.8	2.7	3.8
Develop better internal coordination of activities	24.3	32.4	32.4	8.1	2.7	3.7
Develop a frame of reference for budgets and short-range operating plans	16.2	40.5	32.4	8.1	2.7	3.6
Helps the employees feel secure as a result of better understanding change and the environment	24.3	40.5	24.3	5.4	5.4	3.7

Source: Fieldwork, April 2018

As it is presented in the Table 4.1 above, majority of the respondents (75.6%) agreed that strategic planning provides a clear focus for the organization so as to become efficient and effective. Respondents also agreed that strategic planning helps to bridge between employees and management. In this regard, 70.2 % of the respondents agreed that strategic planning can serve as a linkage between operational level workers and the management. However, 18.9 % disagreed with the idea that strategic planning will serve as a bridge between the lower level employees and the management.

On the other hand, most of the respondents (72.9%) agreed that implementing strategic planning will help to build a team-spirit. In addition, nearly similar number of respondents stated that strategic planning creates a glue or bond among management, produces greater satisfaction among planners around a common vision and helps to solve the major organizational problems.

However, respondents did not have as such strong position with concerning the contributions of strategic planning pertaining to; its benefits in communicating organizational goals and objectives the immediate constituencies, developing a sense of ownership for the plan itself, and helping in the wise utilization of resources. Besides, respondents have shown similar concern whether strategic planning provides a framework for informed change, its aid in building consensus orientation among planners, implementers and other stakeholders, and its benefits in making SWOT analysis. Moreover, 62.1% of the respondents agreed that

implementing strategic planning will help to accelerate and improve growth.

Finally, Table 4.1 above shows that respondents held nearly similar degree of agreement concerning the benefits of planning in identifying the major problem areas and solving them, controlling operational problems, developing better communications with those both inside and outside the organization, to develop better internal coordination of activities and in developing a frame of reference for budgets and short-range operating plans.

4.2. Organizational, mission, vision objectives, Goals and Values

The following section presents the processes, practices and stakeholders in the course of determining organizational values in the selected sectors. See Table 4.5 below:

Table 4.2: Organizational, mission, vision objectives, Goals and Values

Items	Response category	Strongly agree in%	Agree in %	Neutral in %	Disagree in %	Strongly Disagree in %	Mean
Organizational Mission	mission statements were stated	73	16.2	2.7	2.7	5.4	4.5
	The mission is long-term in Nature	51.4	32.4	2.7	2.7	10	4.1
	Awareness has been created	29.7	27	24.3	5.4	13	3.5
	The mission statements are Formalized	37.8	29.7	10.8	13.5	8.1	3.8
Organizational Goals and Objectives	Goals and objectives were Designed	59.5	27	5.4	5.4	2.7	4.4
	Both short-term and long-term were spelt out	46	27	8	10.8	8	3.9
	Goals and objectives continuously developed	40.5	18.9	24.3	8	8	3.8
	SMART Objectives were Designed	35.1	24.3	21.6	8	10.8	3.6
	Different management levels have participated	46	18.9	18.9	8.1	8.1	3.9
Vision	Statement of vision were Designed	67.6	10.8	8	5.4	8	4.2
	The Vision was time bound	37.8	18.9	16.2	13.5	13.5	3.5
	Different management levels have participated	29.7	29.7	18.9	13.5	8	3.6
Values	Statement of values were Designed	56.8	18.9	8	10.8	5.4	4.1
	Values are developed Continuously	32.4	27	29.7	8	2.7	3.8
	Different management levels have participated	24.3	35.1	24.3	13.5	2.7	3.6

Source: Fieldwork, April 2018

Table 4.2 above presents that the overwhelming number of respondents agreed that the organizations have stated the mission statements. In this regard, the mean value of 4.5 shows that respondents position towards

this particular item is positive. In addition, 51.31% of the respondents strongly agreed and 32% of the respondents agreed that the sectors have stated long- term mission statements whose mean value is 4.1.

However, as it is presented in the Table 4.2 above, the level of awareness creation is inclined towards moderate position whose mean value is 3.5. Whereas, the table also shows that the majority of the respondents (67.5 %) hold that the sectors have formalized the mission statements.

From Table 4.2 above, it is possible to infer that sectors which have undergone the design and implementation of the strategic planning had their respective organizational mission statements with long-term perspective. However, the organizations had limitation on creating awareness on the mission statements designed. Moreover, it is also possible to infer that as the organizations have formalized their mission statements, this might have helped them to monitor their progress.

The second item in the Table 4.2 above is about organizational goals and objectives. In line with this, most of the respondents (86.4 %) agreed that the selected sectors have established their respective goals and objectives whose mean value is 4.4. However, the Table 4.8 illustrates that respondents had moderate position whether the designed goals and objectives were clearly stated as short-term and long-term in terms of their scope whose mean value is 3.9. Similarly, respondents had moderate degree of agreement concerning whether the organizations continuously design goals and objectives. In this regard, researcher's personal observation indicates that the local governments cannot design their own goals and objectives and there has been low level of participation by wider levels of management under their jurisdiction. Rather, they are instructed to contextualize the generic goals and objectives developed at regional level. The data also shows that the designed goals and objectives were not satisfactorily SMART which is indicated by the mean value of 3.6.

Generally, the facts presented in the Table 4.2 above imply that the organizational values at local level are the reflections of the value statement of the region. Hence, there is little room to design organizational values that are initiated by the local government. This may affect the capacity of the municipality to accommodate peculiar issues that may require different perspective. However, it is also possible to say that cascading similar values to local level may help to achieve uniformity and parallel development.

4.3. Challenges Encountered During Strategic Planning Design, Implementation & Evaluation

Table 4.3: Challenges Encountered During Strategic Planning Design, Implementation & Evaluation

Items	Strongy agree in%	Agree in %	Neutal in %	Disagree in %	Strongly Disagree in %	Mean
Complex, rapidly-changing environments can make plans obsolete before they are completed	8.1	32.4	18.9	27	13.5	2.9
Managers were reluctant to establish goals for themselves and their units	5.4	21.6	16.2	37.8	18.9	2.6
Initial problems in planning often result in a negative image of planning	10.8	27	21.6	24.3	16.2	2.9
Organizational resources may also be an obstacle to effective planning	21.6	13.5	29.7	21.6	13.5	3
Effective planning can be time consuming and Expensive	16.2	27	21.6	24.3	10.8	3.1
Over-estimation of resources and abilities	16.2	24.3	32.4	16.2	10.8	3
Ineffective attempts to gain the support of others	2.7	32.4	27	27	10.8	2.9
Under-estimation of time, personnel, or financial requirements and failure to follow the plan	5.4	27	21.6	24.3	21.6	2.7

Source: Fieldwork April 2018

Table4.3. above presents major challenges observed in the course of designing, implementing and monitoring and evaluation of strategic planning in the study area. In this regard, only 40.2 % of the respondents support the idea that environmental dynamism makes the existing plan obsolete and requires for new one. Responses also indicate that reluctance by the management was not the major challenges, which is confirmed by the mean value of 2.6.

Besides, the facts presented in Table 4.3 above show that the initial problems in planning does have moderate impact in terms of affecting the value or image of the plan. Similarly, respondents had moderate position whether organizational resources can be an obstacle to the effective implementation of the plan. Moreover, respondents held the same position whether effective planning requires more time and costs. In this regard, only 43.2 5% of the respondents agree that quality planning consumes more time and is expensive.

Furthermore, the facts presented in the above table show that over-estimation of resources and abilities, ineffective attempts to gain the consent and support of others and under-estimation of time, manpower or

financial requirements and failure to make plan oversight will have a moderate level of challenge confirmed by the mean values of $\underline{3}$, $\underline{2.9}$ and $\underline{2.7}$ respectively.

From the facts presented above, it is possible to draw a conclusion that there have been some challenges in the organizations that have designed and implemented strategic planning. However, as the challenges were not severe, it is possible to infer that the identified challenges can be easily tackled.

4.4. Summary of Findings

The study shows that prior to the design of strategic planning in the selected sectors of yirgalem Town, majority of employees were given awareness about the context and importance of strategic planning in their respective organizations. However, the results indicate that some employees did not get the awareness in advance. With regard to the momentums that have led to designing strategic planning, majority of the respondents (59.5 %) of the respondents stated that it has been required by the government policy from the top. Similarly, the result indicates that there has been Central Planning Committee which was mandated to design and adopt the strategic Planning of the Town. In addition, the results indicate that there has been clear understanding about the time coverage of the plan.

The facts discussed in the preceding chapter indicate that the sectors that have undergone the design and implementation of strategic planning have had some other organizations to learn from. Hence, the organizations had internal formal mechanisms to leverage good experiences from other relevant organizations. Besides, the discussion part shows that the organizations have analyzed their internal organization to identify their weaknesses and strength prior to the design of strategic planning which is supported by 89.1% of the respondents. However, the result shows that gap in terms of participating different levels of management and stakeholders in the course of designing the plan.

On the other hand, majority of the respondents (81%) agreed that the respective organizations have analyzed threats and opportunities in the external environment prior to designing the plan. However, respondents did not have strong agreement whether the organizations had formal mechanisms to analyze the external environment and stakeholder's participation. Therefore, it is possible to say that the planning process has been top-down approach.

However, it has been evidenced that majority of the respondents agreed that the organizations have designed clear organizational values including; vision, mission, goals and objectives and values. Despite this, the respondents had reservation with regard to the level of awareness creation and participation of stakeholders and wider management in the course of designing the plan. Moreover, the data collected from the key informants indicated that there has been little room for the lower level organizations to design organizational values that are contextual. Rather, the sectors in the Town are expected to cascade the values of the region (southern nation, nationality and peoples) in to their organizations.

The results indicated that there has been a gap in terms of participating stakeholders and other concerned bodies in the course of designing the plan. Besides, the results show that the budget allocated for the purpose of designing the plan was not adequate. However, 83.7% of the respondents held strong position in favor of the fact that the results of strategic planning were clearly spelt out. Moreover, the results indicate that there has been a gap in scanning the long- term implications of the plan and devolving multiple alternatives during planning.

With regard to the implementation of Strategic Planning, majority of the respondents (72.9%) agreed that division of labor was made by creating different units for different activities. However, results show that there is gap in putting the right persons at the right place. Similarly, results indicate gap in terms of breaking the plan into short-term and medium-term of time scope.

According to the survey data discussed in the previous chapter, there was no adequate participation in the course of over sighting the progress while the plan was being implemented. However, majority of the survey respondents (64%) agreed that there has been a continuous review process while the plan was being implemented in the selected sectors. On the other hand, there has been a good practice in terms of identifying clear and valid criteria for performance for which there has been mechanisms to hold the implementing experts accountable. In spite of this, the results show that the organizations do not have a culture of rewarding a good performing individuals and units.

The study revealed that the three reform instrument (BPR, BSC and Change Army) were found to be in alignment with strategic planning. It has been stated that the BPR deals with the job or work to be done, the BSC deals with how to do the work, whereas, the Change Army is about who is to do the job or the work.

Moreover, the study at hand revealed that there have been changes achieved over the last three years during the implementation of strategic planning. For instance, over the last three years the need for qualified manpower is increased. In addition, the time required to provide services is reduced. Moreover, as a result of strategic planning, yirgalem Town Administration is able to collect more revenue from both business activities over which it has exclusive power and from sources of concurrent power with the region. However, in some regards, the results show that there are gaps to be filled, particularly in terms of participating a wider level of

management and stakeholders in the course of designing, implementing and monitoring and evaluating the plan.

4.5. Conclusion

Strategic planning should be preceded by awareness creation communication to those who will be affected by its implementation. This implies that strategic planning is not merely technical, but also encompasses socio-political aspects as well. Hence, its design requires the will and consent of the society in general and the primary stakeholders in particular. In this regard the study showed that there is gap in terms of getting support from the stakeholders prior to the formulation of the plan.

In addition, as changes may bring both positive and negative impacts, organizations intending to formulate strategic planning need to have open system so as to learn from other organizations operating under similar conditions. This would help the organizations optimize the benefits and minimize the costs to be incurred as a result of implementing the changes. To this effect, the study revealed that Sectors of yirgalem Town Administration have had internal mechanisms that helped them to benchmark good experience from other organizations based on which the sectors under consideration were able to identify weaknesses and strengths from the internal environment and threats and opportunities in the external environment.

Despite the fact that the sectors under consideration have clearly spent out their respective organizational values including vision, mission, goals, values and objectives, all stakeholders were not communicated while initiating the formulation of strategic planning. This might have affected the plan not to have participatory attributes which is a key development value in the contemporary world.

Moreover, as a matter of fact, division of labor is crucial when designing and implementing the plan which may help the organizations to be efficient and effective. However, dividing tasks will have no significance if the right persons are not placed at the right place in terms of their qualification. Hence, employees in charge at different positions may lack the required expertise which may in turn let the organizations compromise their initial intention. Furthermore, proper implementation of strategic planning will help the organizations to be coherent and organized in their operation. This may require more number of qualified manpower which has been noted by this study. The plan also helped the sectors under question to align other reform tools such as BPR, BSC and Change Army.

4.6. Recommendation

- ✚ Any change shall be preceded by understanding and building consensus. This is due to fact that changes bring both positive and negative impacts. Strategic Planning being one of the tools to bring about changes should begin with creating awareness to the employees and the target stakeholders. Hence, the purposes, processes and perceived success of the plan should be clear for both internal and external environments that may affect the plan or be affected by it in turn. Therefore, in the next GTP, yirgalem Town Administration should create awareness by short term training when cascading the general plan to the local level.
- ✚ In the process of designing Strategic Planning, participation of the concerned bodies enhances the pace of improving organizational performance. However, it has been found out that there was lack of participation in the course of designing the plan. Therefore, a researcher recommends that the top-level management at different sectors in the Town should involve stakeholders and staffs to understand and share the organizational values. This is helpful to create a team-spirit and shared accountability.
- ✚ Budget is the key aspect in the course of designing, implementing and evaluating Strategic Planning. However, the finding shows that the allocated budget was not adequate to this end. Therefore, it is recommended that the Office of Finance and Economic Development (OoFED) of the Town should ensure that the allocated budget is adequate in implementing the earmarked activities of the plan.
 - ✚ In addition, throughout the process of Strategic Planning, the vital resource required is educated manpower along with merit principles which entails putting the right person at the right place. Therefore, the Office of Civil Service and Good Governance of the Town should have mechanisms to ensure that sectors have employed persons with the required qualifications and experiences.
 - ✚ The success of Strategic Planning is dependent on continued monitoring evaluation of organizational performance. Then, the Office of the Mayor facilitate the continuity of monitoring and evaluation in sectors of the town.
 - ✚ Designing clear and valid parameters will help to measure the performance progress of the organizations. Hence, Strategic Planning should involve clear and valid performance indicating criterion that would help to simplify performance evaluation.
 - ✚ Moreover, the purpose of reforms such as BPR, BSC and Change Army are to improve service delivery. It is argued that these reforms tools must be integrated so as to ultimately enhance customers 'satisfaction. Therefore, short-term trainings must be provided so as to widen employees

‘understanding about the principles and practices of these reform tools.

Recommendations for Further Research

Finally as a matter of fact, every research is the beginning moving from the known to the unknown. Hence, future researchers are recommended to investigate other aspects of strategic planning and organizational performance in general and the impacts of strategic planning on customers’ satisfaction in particular in the other regions and cities.

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