



12th International Strategic Management Conference, ISMC 2016, 28-30 October 2016, Antalya, Turkey

## Strategy Development Process in Higher Education: The Case of Marmara University<sup>\*</sup>

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### Abstract

Strategic planning in higher education has become one of the most important factors of today's education system. State of the Republic of Turkey, which is aware of importance of this trend in the world, made the preparation and implementation of five-year strategic plans mandatory for higher education institutions. However, when examining the strategic plans made by universities in Turkey in general, it draws attention that strategy development techniques are not used in development processes. Strategies at different levels in universities are not taken in consideration, and strategies are not determined by high participation and not formed and implemented in a conscious way. Marmara University has developed a different and unique approach by considering these facts when doing researches to develop strategies to be effective in the next five-year period. In this notification, it is aimed to reveal strategic approach developed exclusive to universities in 2017-2021 strategic plan of Marmara University, and strategy development process model formed for the purpose of being internalized of strategy in institution. In this respect, in study; it is mentioned how participation of academic and administrative personnel is provided, in which way it is focused on creating value for all stakeholders, how internal and external environment analysis are made with which scientific research projects and how corporate learning is supported in every stage of the process. This paper tries to highlight a case from Marmara University's strategy development process indicating how strategic plan on "the paper" can be changed into internalized strategy creating change, momentum and dynamism through the both implementation of a new approach to strategy and strategy development process.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of ISMC 2016.

**Keywords:** Strategy, strategy development, university

<sup>\*</sup> This model has been implemented with the support of Prof. Dr. Arif Güllüoğlu and Prof. Dr. Mehmet Emin Arat who allowed the dissemination of strategy to large segments of university and offered their information support in shaping the strategy development process, and help of a team of 120 people and moderators of 10 people who gave active support in the whole process.

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## 1. Introduction

We are in a process that higher education institutions, universities are undergoing a transformation in all over the world. Globalization dynamics, needs of knowledge-based economy and new communication technologies are transforming all institutions deeply. This process loads new missions and roles to universities, while it increases the importance of universities. In today's world in which competition density among universities at national and international level; now transformation of universities became necessary according to needs and expectations of information society shaped by research-development (R&D), innovation and entrepreneurship. Meaning of this is that determination and management of strategy in universities have gained vital importance. In order to shape and/or adapt to these changes; determination of strategies, management of system and processes, in line with determined strategies and distribution of sources, became so vital for universities. Universities, as all of the other institutions, should seriously think about the factors, which will take part in their strategic plans and basic values to be expressed (Collins and Porras, 1996).

Literature regarding strategy development in higher education focuses on two fields as of education and management. This literature that does not depend on experimental research regarding corporate strategic planning and includes definitive case studies more, has appeared as of 1970s (Shapiro and Nuner, 2001; Dooris, Kelley and Trainer, 2002; Holdaway and Meekison, 1990). Some writers used various strategy development tools in their own institutions such as case assessment matrixes (Doyle and Lynch, 1979; Foster, 1983). Some of them defended that relevant strategic tools need to be adapted according to different cultures and academic values (Groves, Pendlebury and Stiles, 1997; Kotler and Murphy, 1981).

The other worth-stressing important point in strategy development processes of universities is to decide which approach is adapted, outside-in or inside-out. Outside-in approach expresses a widely known, classical strategic perspective (Porter, 1980; Bakoğlu, 2010). It defends the thought that institutions need to define opportunities of external environment and adapt their system in a way to make use of these opportunities. The perspective of inside-out strategy, which reveals the opposite, is as important as outside-in approach (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Miller, Eisenstat and Foote, 2002; Bakoğlu, 2003). According to inside-out approach, institutions need to define their strategic sources, which are a part of their business systems, and use these sources to reach the success, and rearrange if needed. Institutions need to create combinations in which outside-in and inside-out strategies are considered together in order to obtain their full of strategic potentials (Meyer, 2007; Bakoğlu, 2000, 2003, 2010).

With reference to all of these facts adopted by the world, Marmara University has adopted a strategy-oriented perception, and actualized the strategy development process stated below with a perception in which outside-in/inside-out strategy development approaches are considered together, through many of implementation ways seen in Turkey for the first time in order to determine the strategies to be effective within the next five-year in scientific ways and with high participation.

## 2. Strategy Development in Higher Education

Strategy development at higher education emerged especially since 2000s because of the difficulties that were faced in education and relevant areas. Problems such as increase at unemployed university graduates, change at student demographics, decrease of scores necessary for entering the departments and limitations of resources made necessary to move in accordance with strategy development and strategic plans for higher education institutes. By this means, adaptation to changing environmental conditions and providing changing needs and at the same time guiding education with a proactive approach would be possible (Hinton, 2012). At this point the important thing is, like Porter suggests (1996), applying a strategy which will create a differentiation, otherwise the strategy would stay as just a motto. Here one of the important questions is about how well the universities apply and audit the strategies (Neilson, Martin and Powers, 2008). Creating measurable performance indications and making regulations on financial resources are crucial for accurate application and auditing of strategic plans.

If the higher education institution doesn't improve its strategy with this understanding, since it won't include the necessary tools to implement a real strategic plan, they will remain as just beautiful ideas that will allow the development of the institution. In addition to all these, every university that would be successful in its own field should target a specific niche. It is extremely important to define a strategy where the niche is adapted with the strengths of the university (Hamel and Prahalad, 2005).

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