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FULL LENGTH ARTICLE

An Examination of the Link between Organizational Culture and Strategy Formulation in a Selection of Iraqi Private Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the connection between organizational culture and strategy formulation in several private colleges in Iraq, as organizational culture is a major factor in the success or failure of organizations, and it is a crucial element in organizational transformation and growth, which is a characteristic of the modern age. This research seeks to explore the significance of organizational culture by looking at its resurgence, its cultural makeup, and the dimensions of strategy formulation in universities and private colleges. It then examines the connection between organizational culture and strategy formulation among the study sample. The hypothesis is that there is no meaningful relationship between organizational culture and strategy formulation. A sample of 100 lecturers from 10 private universities and colleges was surveyed using a questionnaire to assess interest in organizational culture in the educational community. The results revealed that there is a relative interest in culture, but it is not given an important role in formulating strategy. It was suggested that mental and intellectual abilities and experiences should be harnessed through dialogue and direct training to transform them into a powerful tool for formulating educational strategy.

Keywords: Culture ▪ Apparent Culture ▪ Core Culture ▪ Cultural Fabric ▪ Strategic Formulation ▪ Vision ▪ Mission ▪ Objectives ▪ Organizational Model

1. INTRODUCTION

The formulation of strategy is a highly debated topic in the field of management science, as well as in psychology and sociology. Despite its complexity, researchers are still drawn to this subject due to its variety of measurement methods and influencing factors. Cultural inputs have been found to be integral to strategic discourse, connecting it to the origins of culture in anthropology, human relations, and the development of society. Those interested in economic activities have considered cultural factors since the post-World War II period, when modern management approaches achieved success without any dispute; they applied rational scientific principles for management theory in a comprehensive way. The reason for the development of culture being a major factor in the struggles of multinational corporations to implement the policies of their parent company in foreign countries became clear. This interest was further strengthened by the emergence of the Japanese model in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This research aims to explore the connection between organizational culture in its three aspects (core culture, apparent culture, and cultural fabric) and the formulation of strategy in its four dimensions (vision, mission, goals, and organizational model). The research is divided into four main sections. The first part covers the research methodology used for the study. The second part looks at previous studies related to this field. The third section focuses on the theoretical aspects of organizational culture and strategy formulation. Finally, the

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fourth part discusses the results of this research. The fourth topic of the research was broken down into two parts: the conclusions and recommendations reached by the researcher. The third topic, titled "The Practical Side," discussed the characteristics of the research sample, as well as presenting the results of the questionnaire analysis and exploring any relationships between the variables studied.

This formulation was summarized from administrative literature and research. This research is directed to cover the extent to which organizational culture plays a role in private universities and colleges that are subject to the Law of Private Universities and Colleges No. 25 of 2016 in forming their strategies in light of the privatization of higher education. The preliminary survey (pilot study) conducted by the researcher, as well as unstructured interviews with a sample of leaders from the study community (including deans, their assistants, and heads of departments), led to the following questions:

- What are the intellectual principles that underpin the research topics and its variables?
- How aware are private universities and colleges of the significance of organizational culture dimensions?
- Do private universities and colleges use their organizational culture when creating their organizational strategy?
- What is the level of implementation of the studied private universities and colleges in terms of the dimensions used to form a strategy (vision, mission, goals, and organizational model)?
- What is the connection between organizational culture and the strategy adopted by private universities and colleges?

The goal of this research is to explore the significance of organizational culture in its apparent and tangible forms, the cultural fabric, and the aspects of strategy formulation in universities and private colleges. Additionally, it seeks to identify the dimensions of organizational culture from the perspective of employees and how these dimensions are used to ensure success for these organizations by formulating their strategies. Furthermore, this research aims to clarify the relationship between organizational culture and strategy formulation in universities and colleges. Ultimately, the goal is to develop a practical framework to correlate its primary and secondary variables with the actual research conditions.

This investigation is significant because it provides an intellectual framework for research topics and contributes significantly to nurturing an entrepreneurial ecosystem aligned with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research's scientific strategy. In an effort to enhance the educational quality of private universities, this study could be considered a valuable resource for fostering such an ecosystem. They are deemed to be successful if they are able to create strategies that are aligned with their organizational culture. As well as identifying their organizational culture and strategic-planning strengths and weaknesses, this study might provide solutions to the challenges faced by universities and colleges. Ultimately, this could lead to the development of strategies that will improve the overall reality of their organizational culture and strategy formulation.

The researcher began with the hypothesis that there is no significant correlation between organizational culture and strategy formulation, and derived the following sub-hypotheses: there is no significant relationship between the observable characteristics of organizational culture and strategy formulation; there is no significant relationship between the fundamental components of organizational culture and strategy formulation; and there is no significant relationship between the nature of the cultural environment and strategy formulation. The proposed structure of the study is shown in Figure 1.

The research sample consisted of 100 teaching staff members from 10 private universities and colleges, which accounted for 17.8% of the private university and college research community. A total of 105 questionnaires were distributed; however, five were not valid for statistical analysis.

In order to gather the necessary information that would assist in achieving the research objectives and obtaining the desired outcomes, the following processes were employed:

a. The study relied on Arab and international sources that addressed the topic of the research in terms of theoretical studies, books, letters, and university dissertations.
b. The main data-collection tool was a questionnaire designed to meet the research objectives and hypotheses, utilizing a five-point Likert scale for most questions.
c. The questionnaire had two sections. The first part contained questions 1–14 to measure organizational culture (based on Fakhar et al., 2012), and the second part focused on measuring strategy formulation (questions 15–28), based on the scale of Amy J. Hillman and Michael A. Hitt (2013). In addition, field visits to universities and colleges were conducted and personal interviews were held with deans, their assistants, and department heads.

The questionnaire was given to a group of arbitrators with varying levels of expertise and specialization to obtain their feedback on the clarity of the questionnaire paragraphs, their correlations, and the extent to which they were appropriate for measuring the necessary variables. Because each paragraph received an approval rating of 89%, some of the questionnaire's paragraphs were reevaluated in light of their recommendations. The scores for answering the scale phrases were arranged in ascending order and divided into two equal groups. A ratio was taken from the highest score and the same ratio from the lowest, in accordance with the benefit of developing it to ensure greater accuracy in the scale and greater validity of the questionnaire.

The results showed significant differences between the two groups at a significance level of 0.01, indicating the validity of the scale in all its paragraphs. The difference between the two groups was then measured using the Mann–Whitney test coefficient to calculate significant differences. The researcher used a variety of statistical techniques, such as the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient as a non-parametric measure, to evaluate the data

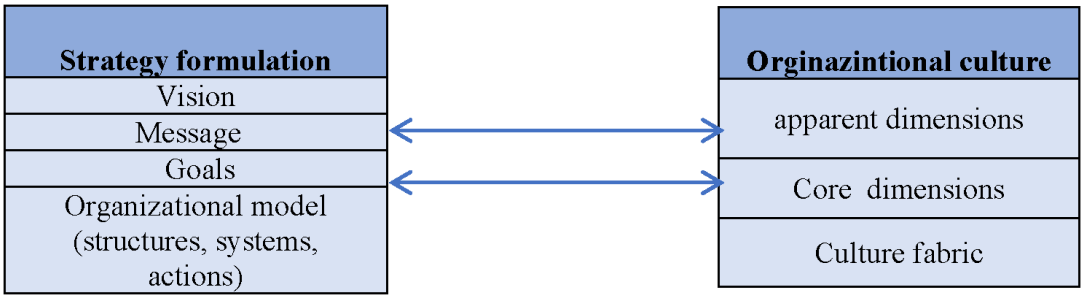


Figure 1. The proposed structure of the study.

of the research variables and test its hypotheses. These techniques were used to assess the strength of the relationship between organizational culture and strategy formulation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews relevant prior studies related to the topics and variables of the study and attempts to identify their most important findings. It also highlights the potential benefits that can be gained from this research, as researchers and scholars look back at previous studies to gain insight and build upon them. The research takes into account a variety of intellectual and applied studies that support its objectives, some of which were selected for review by the researcher.

Al-Azzawi's (1998) study, "Strategy between the Culture of the Organization and Its Organizational Composition and Problems from the Point of View of Senior Management," examined housing and construction companies as a public institution. The study reported a strong correlation between strategy and uncertainty and found that the automated structure was prevalent in the surveyed companies for the tested dimensions of organizational structure (centralization and related structural dimensions).

Al-Dulaimi's (1998) study, "Harmonization between the Dimensions of the Organizational Cultural Fabric and the Strategic Choice and Their Impact on Performance," was conducted on three industrial companies from Iraq's mixed industrial sector. This applied study sought to determine how the cultural fabric harmonizes with strategic choice and how organizations can achieve alignment with strategic options, thereby reducing the costs of wasting social energy because of ambiguity and uncertainty arising from a lack of knowledge about the organization's cultural-fabric pattern. One objective was to verify the extent to which the cultural approach can be used as a mechanism to achieve harmony with strategic choices and lead business organizations toward better performance. The most important results were:

- High shareholder satisfaction in the surveyed companies was achieved alongside senior management's success in profitability and market-share growth.
- Significant relationships existed between strategic choice and performance. The total strategic choice of the surveyed companies showed a significant, medium-strength correlation with total performance, supporting the interpretation that performance depends, to a limited extent, on the strategic choice adopted by the organization.

Khababa's (2016) study, "The Impact of the Organizational Dimension of Culture on the Implementation of Strategy in the Enterprise: A Case Study of Some Medium-Sized Algerian Industrial Enterprises," emphasized the influence of organizational culture on the implementation of strategy within an organization. Its secondary objectives were to define how organizational culture can contribute to company strategy, describe the significance of organizational structure, and determine the extent to which the institutions under study used the organizational dimension of culture to achieve their strategic goals. The study sample consisted of 65 workers from seven medium-sized businesses in Algeria.

The researcher proceeded from the hypothesis that there is a significant correlation between organizational culture and strategy implementation in the enterprise, from which a group of sub-hypotheses branched out. The study found that the organizational dimension of culture affects strategy execution, with organizational structure regarded as the most important element of that dimension, and that organizational structure and its components have a considerable impact on institutional effectiveness.

Miller's (1987) study, "Strategy Making and Structure: Analysis and Application for Performance," was conducted in the United States using a random sample of 97 companies selected from the list of a commercial organization. A questionnaire was the approved method for this applied study. It examined the relationship between organizational structure and strategy formulation, emphasizing interdependence and harmony between structure and strategy and the complementary role of each under different circumstances. Structure was addressed through four dimensions: integration, centrality, formality, and complexity. The study found many relationships between structure and strategy formulation, especially for the formal and central dimensions, whereas complexity often had no important relationship with strategy formulation.

Shera's (2008) study, "Changing Organizational Culture to Achieve Excellence in Research at the University of Toronto," described efforts over 12 years to change organizational culture at the University of Toronto, Canada. It described the role of strategic planning, the method of change, and key elements such as individuals, resources, research-and-development centers, and participating strategic associations employed to increase research outcomes. Lessons included the importance of stable leadership committed to change programs, the need to use strategic planning to reach achievable goals, the identification of problems hindering university development, and the need to organize and develop research societies. The rapid change at the university led to increased research and

the existence of a firm and clear vision for leadership at the internal and external levels.

3. CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

The emergence of organizational culture in management dates back to the late 1930s (Edgar, 2004: 3), and interest in it grew in the 1950s. Sami (2000) indicated that it occupied a prominent position in American society through what is known as symbolism. The researcher attributes this to the emergence of successful giant companies led by their founders—symbols who carried cultural values that were evident in their work or products (Abdul Latif, 2006: 4). Since the first University of Pittsburgh conference on organizational culture in 1984, regarded as the real birth of the concept, researchers in organization science have developed a theoretical framework for organizational culture (Al-Dulaimi, 1998: 2).

The concept of organizational culture emerged mainly from the literature of management and organizational behavior because of the emergence of modern organizations and the increase in their organizational problems (Al-Nuaimi, 1998: 20). The concept was influenced by different formulations and developments in the broader concept of culture. Organization scholars did not reach a single specific definition; rather, they developed many overlapping definitions, some of which complement one another. Organizational culture has been used as an umbrella that includes human concepts such as values, social models, ethical and technological values, and their effects (Hejan, 1992: 11).

Despite discrepancies in the definition of organizational culture, Al-Madhoun and Al-Jazrawi (1995: 397) noted a consensus that it is one component of an organization's internal environment and that it results from frequent interactions between employees. These interactions shape the behavioral patterns of the organizational social system and help the organization remain cohesive. Workers congregate around organizational components represented by values, beliefs, norms, standards, and expectations.

Al-Badayna and Al-Adayleh (1996: 4) confirmed that society's culture clearly affects behavior within organizations and that this influence extends beyond the outside culture to include the culture of the organization. Culture affects decision making, behavioral patterns, and attitudes toward the organization. Their account addresses culture from psychological and structural perspectives, emphasizes patterns of behavior, affirms the dynamism of culture, explains how it comes into being, and emphasizes the connection between culture and personality.

The success of an organization's strategy is thought to depend on how its members view its culture, which is a key pillar of organizational life. Culture is the essence of the ideology of any organization seeking to accomplish its goals efficiently and effectively. It represents employees' feelings and attitudes toward the company and defines the general outline of their regular tasks (Al-Nuaimi, 1998: 24).

Controversy has persisted over framing the concept of organizational culture because of its multidimensionality, the ramifications of concepts related to each dimension, and the merger of some dimensions with independent organizational concepts such as organizational climate. Schein generally presented organizational culture as the basic assumptions that a group discovers and develops during the learning process to overcome problems related to external adaptation and internal integration. Those assumptions gain legitimacy through application, and new members learn them as the correct way to perceive, think about, and feel those problems (Lunenburg, 2011: 123).

Expansion in the formulation of organizational culture came to include the values, beliefs, and propositions that people learn from early childhood and that distinguish one group from another (Newman, 1996: 963). Some literature describes culture within a broader framework of intellectual dimensions: philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, common attitudes, and criteria that bind group members together (Saxton & Kilman, 1986: 87). In the 1990s, the concept took a broader path through researchers' focus on the cultural fabric, which combines intangible thought and symbolic modes of expression so that thought and behavior are embodied in a specific mechanism harmonious with the organization's work and policies.

Rashid and Jallab (2007: 358) indicated that organizational culture represents solutions to problems of external adaptation on the one hand and internal integration on the other. Adaptation and integration decisions create different models and assumptions for sensing the organization's environment and responding to it. These models and assumptions affect how the organization collects information, interprets it, and acts upon strategic issues. Organizational culture therefore has a prominent role in building a framework of common meanings to which members adhere and which distinguishes the organization from others.

The researcher defines organizational culture as a set of behavioral manifestations practiced by individuals or groups in the organization that contains knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, traditions, ideas, philosophies, and ideologies invented and adopted by a group of individuals. The organization adds to this the cultural fabric of its employees; its characteristics, interests, policies, goals, and values define the personality of the organization and distinguish it from other organizations.

3.1 Dimensions of Organizational Culture

Researchers have differed in defining the dimensions that give culture its broadest meaning, and this disagreement lies at the heart of attempts to develop a specific definition. Table 1 summarizes important dimensions identified by a group of researchers and administrative thinkers. In general, the dimensions adopted in this study follow McDermott and O'Dell (2001: 76–85).

3.1.1 Apparent Dimensions of Culture

The literature of the 1980s focused on understanding the dimensions of culture through explicit and visible manifestations such as buildings, styles of clothing, and patterns of behavior. Culture was also represented by expressive behavioral symbols, such as structures and systems, or verbal forms, such as language and stories narrated through rituals and celebrations. These manifestations form a group of expressive behavioral practices, symbols, rituals, stories, language, slogans, organizational structures, and power structures.

Table 1. Dimensions of organizational culture: apparent, essential, and cultural fabric

Researcher	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5	Dimension 6	Dimension 7	Dimension 8
Pettigrew, 1979	Beliefs	Symbols	Rituals	Legends	Language	Philosophy	–	–
Ouchi, 1981	Commitment	Correction	Well-being	Decision making	Validity	Caring for people	Interest in work	–
Kilmann et al., 1983	Beliefs	Values	Ideology	Philosophy	Opinions	Assumptions	–	–
Harris, 1989	Purpose	Communication	Language	Dress and appearance	Food and eating habits	Time and awareness	Relationships, roles, and values	–
Robbins, 1990	Initiative	Risk	Guidance	Integration	Administrative support	Conflict and its patterns	Organizational culture	–
Goetsch & Davis, 1999	Work environment	Organizational values	Cultural role model	Rituals of the organization	Cultural fabric	–	–	–
McDermott & O'Dell, 2001	Apparent culture	Intrinsic culture	Cultural fabric	–	–	–	–	–
Grayson, 2002	Leadership	Organizational model	Creativity	Functionality	Planning and communication	Environment	Staff development	–
Smith, 2004	Power of authority	Masculinity	Individuality	Uncertainty avoidance	Long-term guidance	Short-term guidance	–	–
Schreiner, 2005	Use of power	Trust	Equivalence	Uncertainty avoidance	–	–	–	–

Lorsch (1986: 95) described apparent organizational culture as the common beliefs among senior-management members concerning the organization's relationship with its environment, consumers, and workers, which determine methods of action and behavior. Hofstede (1990: 389) described it as a set of central values that define the rules of human thinking and are interpreted through daily methods of action. Members share responsibility for defending the visible culture of their organization before the community and rejecting things alien to it.

3.1.2 Essential Dimensions of Culture

Researchers who use fundamental dimensions to interpret organizational culture confirm that it constitutes an intellectual system concerned with cognitive aspects: philosophical assumptions, beliefs, trends, logic, and knowledge. Daft (2001: 588) referred to an immersed part of organizational culture, like an iceberg, representing the non-material and invisible side and including the basic assumptions and beliefs rooted in people. McDermott and O'Dell (2001: 76–85) described this as core culture: invisible, non-apparent values that include workers' loyalty and assumptions in business organizations.

3.1.3 Integrated Dimensions: The Cultural Fabric

The pioneers of this description maintain that culture cannot be fully described through a single dimension; rather, it is a network of overlapping dimensions in continuous amoebic motion (Heracleous & Langham, 1996: 486). Research in the 1990s presented new attempts to study the organizational model and its implications together—cultural manifestations and essential aspects—constituting the concept of cultural fabric.

The researcher considers cultural fabric a structure with two levels of noticeable and unnoticeable characteristics. Noticeable characteristics are represented by models of behavior, symbols, stories, language, and myths. Unnoticeable characteristics are represented by common values, customs, beliefs, and assumptions. The cultural fabric models these two levels and directs members of the organization in addressing problems related to external adaptation and internal balance. Figure 2 illustrates its components.

The concept of cultural fabric is used to diagnose the prevailing organizational culture by identifying components of the organizational model, such as prevailing values and beliefs, including common beliefs among members about the organization. Experts and specialists preserve its data and summaries in charts that describe the organizational model and its symbolic reflections. The priorities of the organization's values and beliefs may change. It is therefore important for an organization to understand its organizational model and for symbols to express it by providing new types of services. Control systems support quality, while incentive systems and workers' motives move toward achieving it.

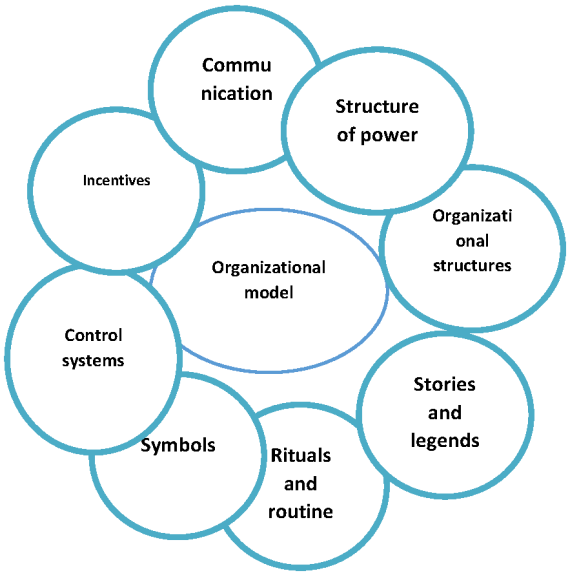


Figure 2. Cultural fabric.

The specific cultural-fabric dimensions can be summarized as follows:

First—Situation analysis. The cultural fabric supports situation analysis and answers the question "Where are we now?" in relation to the organization's cultural reality. It clarifies internal characteristics revealed by diagnosing culture through the cultural fabric. The reality of culture can support situational analysis through its strengths and weaknesses: does current culture constitute a strength that enables the organization to seize opportunities, or does it constitute a weakness that threatens it? The fabric thus directs points of strength into their correct paths (Heracleous & Langham, 1996: 486).

Second—Strategy making. The cultural fabric highlights

beliefs, guiding assumptions, actions, symbols, and rituals and presents them to those responsible for strategy making. For the purpose of determining the organization's strategic path, it supports the intuitive thinking of decision makers, which is reflected in operational areas.

Third—Organizational contents. The cultural fabric clarifies organizational contents represented by symbols, structures, systems, and actions. These help identify which beliefs, assumptions, and manifestations of culture should be interpreted according to a new strategic direction and which should be preserved and strengthened.

Fourth—Change management. The cultural fabric helps estimate potential resistance to change by assessing the nature and importance of current beliefs and assumptions and the extent of communication and mutual representation between elements of the organizational model and aspects of the prevailing culture.

Fifth—Monitoring and evaluation. Periodically rebuilding the cultural fabric through diagnosis and examination of required modifications to the strength of its elements can help the organization make internal progress toward change and achieve its strategic goals (Heracleous & Langham, 1996: 487).

3.2 Strategy Formulation

Strategies represent how management seeks to achieve goals and pursue the targeted message of the organization's work and its strategic vision in the required manner or quality (Thompson & Strickland, 2006: 52). Strategy formulation includes many administrative choices and represents the ways and means through which the organization commits to specific competitive approaches and directions, as well as specific methods of work. It is the first step in moving from the general framework of strategic direction and environmental analysis to meaningful evidence that can guide decision makers.

Formulation means developing the organization's master plan and requires analytical, intellectual, and synthetic skills (Al-Ghalbi & Idris, 2007: 344). Because strategy is a conceptual center expressing the purpose of the organization and the aspects on which it focuses, it is linked to core values shared by employees through their intentions and actions (Rashid & Jallab, 2008: 23). Strategy formulation is the most important aspect of the intellectual model of strategic management (Jawad, 2010: 195), and its importance appears in the following matters (Al-Ghalbi & Idris, 2007: 344):

- It is the stage that correctly, accurately, and appropriately links the general orientation affected by theoretical considerations with implementation processes affected by practical detail.
- It helps the business organization define the roles of different levels, identify the necessary contributions of each, and provide the necessary links between their work.
- It contributes to diagnosing and mobilizing resources within a well-defined strategic plan.
- It represents the basic rule and starting point for implementing the strategic option. An option cannot be transferred to practice without a specific and clear formulation.

Accordingly, strategy formulation consists of a group of operations.

3.2.1 Developing a Vision

The strategic manager's first step usually begins with formulating a comprehensive vision for the organization as an image of the desired future. Definitions of vision focus on a mental image of the desired and preferred future. Pitts and Lei (1996: 8) confirm that vision is related to the organization's broad and desirable goals; its aspirations express what the organization really wants to become. Miller and Dess (1996: 6) describe vision in strategic management as a broad and comprehensive set of purposes and as forward-looking thinking that discovers the future while specifying the means used to achieve desired goals.

Awad (2000) described vision as the organization's aspirations and future hopes that cannot be achieved in light of current resources (Rashid & Jallab, 2008: 167). Al-Issawi et al. (2012: 225–231) defined it as an ideal and attractive future that has not yet been achieved and as a guiding star for every individual in the organization. The elements of a strategic vision are:

- defining the future situation the organization wants to reach;
- determining the goals the vision seeks to achieve;
- considering organizational culture;
- choosing the appropriate strategy;
- determining the resources necessary to implement the vision; and
- determining the areas of activity necessary to achieve it.

3.2.2 Mission Statement

Organizations seek to translate their vision into a document or statement representing their philosophy and directions for investing material and human resources in a way that increases their value in the eyes of stakeholders and distinguishes them from other organizations. This document is the organizational mission (Caillier, 2016: 230). The mission defines the purpose of the organization or the reason for its existence (Dora & Jaradat, 2014: 103). It comprises the individual characteristics that distinguish the organization from similar organizations. Smith (2016: 630) defined it as the essential characteristics that reflect the organization's main orientations and reason for existence.

Al-Sakarna (2010: 176) viewed the mission as accurate and clearly summarized words and terms that develop incentives for workers to deal with the organization and that have a general, distinctive character and guiding philosophy. The researcher views the mission as the distinctive framework that defines the organization's field of activity, goal, fundamental reason for existence, identity, and operations. Campbell and

Yeung (1991) identified four elements of an organizational mission: purpose, strategy, values, and standards of behavior (Rashid & Jallab, 2008: 177).

3.2.3 Setting Strategic Goals

Goals are results that must be reached through organizational outputs (Barrick et al., 2015: 121), and therefore refer to the final results of activities (Dora & Jaradat, 2014: 106). Al-Ghalbi and Idris (2007: 221–223) defined them as goals derived at the general-planning and operational levels and as an intermediate state required to translate mission and vision into specific measurements in a logical sequence. Al-Mursi et al. (2002: 122) viewed a goal as a desired state or situation to be achieved and as a means of measuring progress toward an objective, measurable, and verifiable result within a time frame.

Dora and Jaradat (2014: 106) stated that strategic objectives should meet the SMART conditions: goals should be specific and clear, measurable, agreed upon by organizational members, realistic and achievable, and time-bound.

3.2.4 Building the Organizational Model

In today's rapidly changing world, rigid organizational arrangements are fragile. Organizations seeking distinction must be flat, fast-moving, responsive, and innovative (Thompson & Strickland, 2006: 400). A flexible organizational model is a basic force that enables an organization to respond to private and public external influences, draw up policy, and engage in development projects with high risk and high return. Brown (1973) called this permeability (Jawad, 2010: 165–168).

Changes in the organizational model can affect the extent to which the organization adopts strategic change. They also affect the strength and spread of beliefs and culture, and hence the organization's ability and success in formulating strategy (Hamdan & Idris, 2009: 302–306). Strong culture may become an obstacle that resists change. It is therefore important that organizational departments evaluate and review their strategies annually in partnership with employees (Thompson & Strickland, 2006: 400).

3.3 Relationship of Culture to Strategy and Its Formulation

The goal supports the idea of culture with a specific name for the strategy, as was evident in Lorsch's writings (1986: 81). The strategic vision is framed in light of the beliefs and values of senior management (Lorsch, 1986: 82). Those beliefs represent the heart of culture, and the vision is formed within a broad framework of senior management's values and beliefs on issues such as the organization's relationship with its environment and competitors.

Strategic formulation may be narrowed by the influence of management values, beliefs, and perceptions that transfer rational strategic logic to cultural or subjective logic according to senior management's vision. Strategies, systems, and means are shaped by the values, beliefs, and philosophy of senior management and form procedures and strategic implementation that are covered by organizational learning in the cultural area (Hodge et al., 2002: 207–287). In support of these views, the organizational model is the essence of culture and frames the thinking process that guides, directs, and leads strategic formulation, as illustrated in Figure 3.

Beliefs supported by assumptions may include the philosophy that the organization is a leader in innovation. In light of this belief, strategy is formulated and implemented within a framework of rules, structures, and systems. Culture and strategy interact with other aspects of the organization to lead performance. Culture is therefore a determinant that leads the process of formulating strategy. Hodge et al. (2002: 279) indicated that culture is important and influential in the formulation and implementation of strategy. When values and beliefs among members run counter to those required by the strategy and its implementation, they can contribute to strategy failure. Figure 4 illustrates possible influence relationships.

Kono (1994: 35) proposed harmony between strategy and culture in a reciprocal relationship. A vital cultural fabric can contribute to the formulation of a distinctive diversification strategy, and a successful, distinguished strategy can lead to a creative culture, with both cases reflected in high financial performance. The research did not provide automatic applied mechanisms for harmony and remained at the level of using the fabric as a control tool for tracking variables while an organization adopts radical or incremental strategic changes.

Bowman (1990: 77) attempted to describe the relationship of harmony between culture and strategy by presenting cultural characteristics compatible with particular strategies. From the signals identified by Bowman and Asch (1996: 283), the cultural fabric of an expansion option is characterized by values supporting diversification and expansion and an organizational model promoting distinction, creativity, risk taking, rapid seizure of opportunities, flexible thinking, and openness to the environment. Behavior expresses these values when it moves toward flexibility (Kono, 1994: 85). Leadership takes a transformational pattern that creates intellectual stimulation and enhances work motivation above the required level (Bass, 1985: 41).

In conclusion, the relationship between organizational culture and strategy formulation has taken three main directions:

1. **Sequential direction:** culture is viewed as either a determinant of or subordinate to strategy.
2. **Influential direction:** the relationship is described according to culture's influence on strategy in terms of flexibility, direction, and strength.
3. **Harmonious direction:** organizational culture is treated as a determinant and a follower at the same time through the concept of cultural fabric and a group of cultural characteristics consistent with one strategy rather than another. Although study of the cultural and strategic phenomena is important, it has remained distant from experimental research. The current research therefore relies on exploratory attempts and studies that cover these variables and their analyses.

4. THE RESULT

4.1 Characteristics of the Research Sample

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the research sample. The most important indicators are summarized as

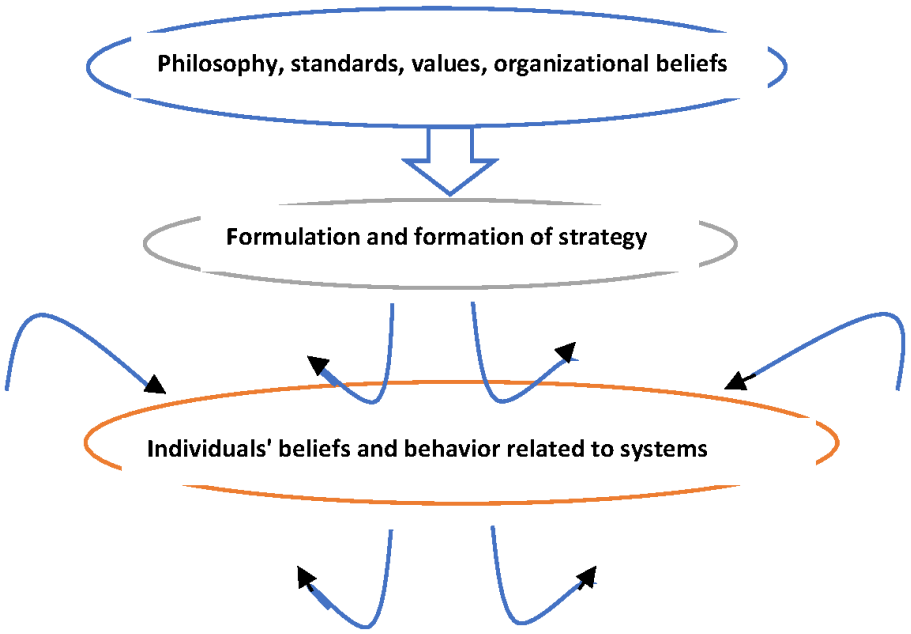


Figure 3. The relationship between culture and strategy.

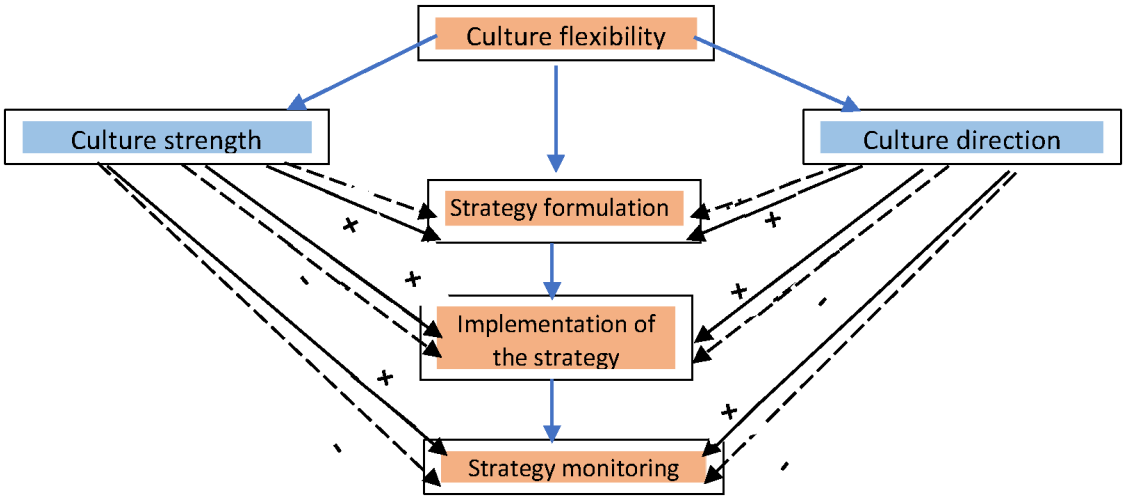


Figure 4. The influencing relationships between culture and strategy.

follows:

1. **Gender:** There is a weakness in the trend toward appointing women within the private universities and colleges under study.
2. **Age:** The average age indicates the high experience of the research sample.
3. **Educational attainment:** The figures indicate that the surveyed organizations tended weakly to appoint master's-degree holders and focused on appointing holders of postgraduate degrees (PhDs), including retirees from public universities.
4. **Duration of work in the current university or college:** The vast majority of teaching staff were appointed recently, a natural result of the recent establishment of most of the universities and colleges under study in Iraq after 2003.
5. **Number of universities or colleges in which the lecturer previously worked:** Diversity of experience is a clear feature of the study sample, in addition to its tendency toward job stability.
6. **Duration of experience in universities or colleges:** The figures indicate the growing role and accumulated experience of retirees from Iraqi public universities. They form the backbone of the structures of the private universities and colleges under study and therefore have an important role in implementing the strategy of Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

4.2 Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations

Table 3 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations of the dimensions of organizational culture.

Table 3 shows that paragraph 6, concerning the role of the prevailing organizational culture in empowering employees and involving them in service work toward achieving the college's mission and educational and societal goals, obtained a

Table 2. Characteristics of the research sample

Variable	Categories and titles	Number	Percentage
1. Sex	Male	76	76%
	Female	24	24%
	Total	100	100%
2. Age	29 years and less	–	–
	30–39	10	10%
	40–49	12	12%
	50–59	26	26%
	60 years and more	52	52%
	Total	100	100%
3. Education	Doctorate	52	52%
	Master's	45	45%
	Higher diploma	3	3%
	Total	100	100%
4. Duration of work at the current university/college	5 years and less	12	12%
	6–10 years	67	67%
	11–15 years	18	18%
	16–20 years	3	3%
	21 years and more	–	–
	Total	100	100%
5. Number of universities/colleges where the lecturer previously worked	One	13	13%
	Two	56	56%
	Three	31	31%
	Four and more	–	–
	Total	100	100%
6. Duration of experience in the universities/colleges in which the lecturer worked	5 years and less	18	18%
	6–10 years	14	14%
	11–15 years	4	10%
	16–20 years	6	50%
	21 years and more	58	75%
	Total	100	100%

high arithmetic mean of 4.412 on the five-point Likert scale and the lowest dispersion, 0.669. This indicates harmony between the lecturer and the culture of the organization and its reflection in interaction with coworkers to promote research and development in appropriate ways and formulate an entrepreneurial strategy.

Paragraph 5, concerning the selection of college leaders from among heads of departments and scientific committees, obtained a low response mean of 2.862 and above-average dispersion of 0.880. This reflects that, although the organizations in question have an appropriate organizational culture, it is not employed to select college leaders from among heads of departments and scientific committees according to a sound scientific vision.

Table 4 presents the arithmetic means and standard deviations of strategy-formulation dimensions.

Table 4 shows that paragraph 6—the College Deanship's effort to develop and generate strategic alternatives commensurate with the competitive decision in determining strategic directions, such as expansion and growth or a focus on specific areas—obtained a high response mean of 4.675 and low dispersion of 0.632. This indicates that the departments of the universities and colleges work according to a sound vision when formulating their strategies.

Paragraph 14, concerning the extent of the college dean's interest in evaluating and reviewing strategy annually in partnership with faculty, obtained a low response mean of 3.187 and above-average dispersion of 0.856. This indicates that the administrations of those universities and colleges distance themselves from attracting the opinions of teaching staff and that their boards of directors or founding bodies formulate strategy individually.

4.3 Relative Importance of Organizational Culture and Strategy Formulation

The responses of the research sample concerning organizational-culture dimensions and strategy-formulation dimensions are summarized in Table 5 through arithmetic means and standard deviations.

The arithmetic mean of the core-culture dimension was 3.798, with a dispersion of 0.921, showing a moderate level of the culture index among sample members. Apparent culture obtained an arithmetic mean of 3.947 and a standard deviation of 0.867, a level above average. This indicates that sample members dealt with an appropriate degree of objectivity with the dimensions of organizational culture. The cultural-fabric dimension reached an arithmetic mean of 4.780 and a standard deviation of 0.811, which is also a moderate level of dispersion. The general mean of the organizational-culture variable among sample members was 3.835, with a dispersion of 0.953. This indicates an average use of organizational culture in formulating strategies and a neglect of the essential role of culture in the formulation process.

For the response variable, strategy formulation, the vision dimension obtained an arithmetic mean of 4.055, slightly higher than the hypothetical mean, indicating a weak tendency to build a mature vision for most surveyed universities and colleges; its dispersion was 0.780. The mission dimension obtained an arithmetic mean of 4.515 and a dispersion of 0.855, a good level. This confirms that management in

Table 3. Arithmetic means and standard deviations of organizational-culture dimensions

No.	Phrases	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
First: Core culture			
1	The college leadership constantly evaluates its existing organizational culture and seeks to make it results-oriented by formulating its strategy.	3.850	1.103
2	The college leadership plans to let the college's human resources know what they want from their presence in the educational community and why they serve it.	4.212	0.950
3	The prevailing organizational culture in the organization is not a golden factor for the talents and skills that the college needs to achieve its mission and goals.	3.925	0.990
4	The prevailing organizational climate in the college contributes to the appropriate delegation of powers to all heads of departments to make decisions.	3.525	1.221
5	The college leaders are chosen from the heads of departments and heads of scientific committees according to a correct scientific vision.	2.862	0.880
6	The prevailing organizational culture in the college helps to empower its employees and include them in service work for its benefit toward achieving its mission and educational and societal goals.	4.412	0.669
Second: Apparent culture			
7	The college encourages creativity and creative workers who excel in solving difficult problems.	4.275	0.841
8	All the staff of this college bear the common responsibility to defend its culture and reject foreign things that are intrusive.	4.162	0.976
9	The common beliefs among the members of the College Board of Directors concerning the college's relationship with its environment and employees determine the way of action and behavior.	3.875	0.771
10	The deanship does not deal with the abilities and capabilities of employees in a fair manner.	3.475	1.136
Third: Cultural fabric			
11	The college administration adopts special systems to motivate employees who contribute to strengthening the cultural fabric within the college.	3.862	0.910
12	The cultural fabric (control systems, communication, and flexibility of organizational structures) supports situation analysis and answers the question "Where are we now, relative to the other colleges?" in relation to the cultural and scientific reality of the college.	3.675	1.003
13	The college deals efficiently with personal and group conflicts and disputes.	3.625	1.184
14	Employ expertise in the field of preserving the culture of the college.	3.959	0.764
	Aggregate index	**3.835**	**0.953**

Table 4. Arithmetic means and standard deviations of strategy-formulation dimensions

No.	Phrases	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
First: Vision			
1	The college has systems to manage it according to a correct vision on which it works.	3.952	0.953
2	Everyone in this college, especially those responsible for it, has an idea of its shared values, beliefs, and assumptions about its mission and goals.	3.963	1.042
3	The deanship, department administrations, and teaching staff work in a team spirit when formulating the strategy.	4.250	0.864
Second: Mission			
4	The College Deanship prefers to adopt research-and-development methods in formulating the strategy.	4.462	0.988
5	The college deanship administration perceives the possibility of formulating a strategy in light of the material, financial, and human resources that the college possesses and expects to obtain in the future.	4.387	0.819
6	The Deanship seeks to develop and generate strategic alternatives commensurate with the competitive decision in defining strategic directions, such as expansion and growth or focus in specific areas to achieve its goals.	4.675	0.632
7	The college deanship has the ability to know the future strategies and policies of competitors.	4.536	0.788
Third: Goals			
8	There is an understanding and realization of strategic goals by the individuals responsible for implementing them. A goal that is understood, compatible with organizational culture, and enhances the organization's strategic position is acceptable.	4.312	0.835
9	The success of formulating a strategy for the college is reflected in its ability to create a kind of competitive advantage, as this criterion is derived from the size of the competitive differences between the college and its competitors.	3.912	0.859
10	The College Deanship sets strategic goals and a timetable for achieving them. The process of evaluating results is based on a set of criteria.	4.287	0.798
Fourth: Organizational model			
11	The College Deanship avoids engaging in development and expansion projects that have high risks and high returns.	4.425	0.896
12	Environmental information plays an important role in formulating the college's strategy.	3.800	1.028
13	The college responds to external influences, both public and private, in drawing up its strategy.	255.4	0.989
14	The College Deanship is interested in evaluating and reviewing its strategy annually in partnership with the college faculty.	3.187	0.856
	Aggregate index	**4.172**	**0.855**

Table 5. Arithmetic mean and standard deviation of organizational culture and strategy formulation

Variables	Organizational culture				Strategy formulation				
	Core	Apparent	Cultural fabric	Aggregate index	Vision	Mission	Goals	Organizational model	Aggregate index
Arithmetic mean	3.798	3.947	4.780	3.835	4.055	4.515	4.170	3.917	4.172
Standard deviation	0.921	0.867	0.811	0.953	0.780	0.855	0.918	0.991	0.855

the surveyed organizations perceived the possibility of formulating strategy in light of the material, financial, and human resources available or expected in the future. The researcher also observed this during field visits and personal interviews with teaching staff.

4.4 Relationship between Organizational Culture and Strategy Formulation

To test the research hypotheses and verify the nature of the relationship between the variables, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was used as a non-parametric measure at significance levels of 0.05 and 0.01. Analysis was conducted at the sub-variable and aggregate levels, as shown in Table 6.

4.4.1 Core Culture and Strategy Formulation

The correlation coefficients between core culture and the strategy-formulation dimensions of vision, mission, goals, and organizational model were 0.268, 0.599*, 0.613**, and 0.221, respectively. Significant relationships appeared at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. The relationship between core culture and the organizational model was the weakest, indicating that the administrations of the colleges under study did not focus on attracting core culture for the purpose of evaluating and annually reviewing organizational strategy in partnership with college teachers.

The strongest relationship was between core culture and strategic goals, with a correlation of 0.613**, which is a good indicator. The correlation between core culture and the aggregate strategy-formulation variable was 0.377*, a positive relationship significant at the 0.05 level. These results indicate that core culture helps the colleges enhance strategy formulation through the employment of creative human resources capable of understanding, analyzing, interpreting, and choosing goals, technology, structure, and organizational relationships that contribute to university or college leadership. The results therefore provide sufficient support for the invalidity of the first sub-hypothesis to some extent.

4.4.2 Apparent Culture and Strategy Formulation

The correlation coefficients between apparent culture and the dimensions of vision, mission, goals, and organizational model were 0.422*, 0.676**, 0.712**, and 0.688**, respectively. These relationships were significant at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. The relationship between apparent culture and vision was the weakest. This indicates that the administrations of the colleges under study focused less on employing apparent culture to build the college's vision and formulate its future scientific perceptions, partly because some lacked systems and work rules for college administration.

The strongest relationship was between apparent culture and strategic goals, at 0.712**. This reflects the attraction of college administrations to lecturers with strong apparent-cultural capabilities for the purpose of drawing up strategic goals and indicates a desire to excel in developing and achieving future strategic goals. The correlation between apparent culture and the aggregate strategy-formulation variable was 0.628**, a positive relationship significant at the 0.01 level. Apparent culture helps colleges develop strategic alternatives commensurate with competitive decisions, including expansion, growth, or focus in specific areas. This provides sufficient support for the invalidity of the second sub-hypothesis.

4.4.3 Cultural Fabric and Strategy Formulation

The cultural-fabric dimension was significantly related to vision, mission, goals, and organizational model, with coefficients of 0.301*, 0.689**, 0.707**, and 0.571**, respectively. The relationship between cultural fabric and vision was the weakest, although significant at 0.301*. This indicates that the administrations of the colleges under study focused less on employing cultural fabric to build the college's vision and formulate future scientific perceptions. Some colleges did not strengthen the supervisory role of cultural fabric in tracking academic practice to support strategy formulation and match the organizational model with the strategic vision.

Organizations whose values and beliefs concentrate on distinction and renewal after adopting an expansion strategy must provide implementation mechanisms through a flexible structure and cultural fabric that enhance competitive advantage. Rational environmental strategic logic thus shifts toward organizational cultural-strategic logic to ensure positive action toward an entrepreneurial strategy.

The strongest relationship was between cultural fabric and strategic goals, with a coefficient of 0.707**. This result reflects that many surveyed organizations determine the type of cultural fabric that can be strengthened when evaluating strategic alternatives, using internal compatibility as a criterion for comparing alternatives and choosing the optimal strategic option. The correlation between cultural fabric and the aggregate strategy-formulation variable was 0.539**, a positive relationship significant at the 0.01 level.

These results indicate that cultural fabric helps the faculties enhance strategy formulation. Universities and colleges adopting expansion and diversification strategies seek a cultural fabric different from that of an organization adopting a stability strategy. Different cultures thus help organizations follow different strategies. Surveyed organizations that expanded by adding new departments relied on values supporting diversification and expansion. Their organizational model promoted excellence, risk taking, rapid seizure of opportunities, flexible thinking, openness to the environment, and flexible strategy formulation. This provides sufficient support for the invalidity of the third sub-hypothesis.

The relationship between total organizational culture and total strategy formulation was significant at the 0.01 level, with a coefficient of 0.726**. The relationship has been described from several points of view: as a sequential effect in which culture is once a determinant and once a follower; as an influential direction in which culture affects strategy through its flexibility, direction, and strength; and as a harmonious direction. The main hypothesis is therefore rejected, because the findings indicate a significant relationship between organizational culture and strategy formulation.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The researcher reached the following conclusions:

1. The private universities and colleges under study possess a good level of core culture and apparent culture, and most have their own cultural fabric. However, interest in core culture was lower than interest in apparent culture. This indicates that the universities and colleges benefited

Table 6. Relationship of organizational culture and strategy formulation

Organizational culture	Vision	Mission	Goals	Organizational model	Strategy-formulation index
Core culture	0.268	0.599*	0.613**	0.221	0.377*
Apparent culture	0.422*	0.676**	0.712**	0.688**	0.628**
Cultural fabric	0.301*	0.689**	0.707**	0.571**	0.539**
Organizational-culture aggregate index	0.417*	0.639**	0.701**	0.611**	0.726**

more from apparent culture and did not give sufficient importance to attracting the core culture inherent in their teaching elites for the purpose of raising the scientific status of these organizations.

2. The dimensions of strategy formulation—vision, mission, goals, and organizational model—were generally at a good level, especially strategic goals. The organizations benefited from cultural, academic, scientific, and administrative innovations, including those of teaching staff. They sought to develop and generate strategic alternatives commensurate with competitive decisions defining strategic directions, such as expansion and growth or focus in specific areas.

3. Significant relationships existed between core culture and strategy formulation and its dimensions. The researched organizations benefited, to some extent, from the new ideas of lecturers when formulating their strategies.

4. The relationship between apparent culture and strategy formulation was also at a good significant level. This dimension helped the surveyed colleges enhance strategy formulation by developing and generating strategic alternatives commensurate with competitive decisions and strategic directions.

5. The surveyed organizations benefited from the form of their cultural fabric in developing competitive strategies in their work environment. A significant relationship existed between the adopted cultural fabric and strategy formulation.

6. The availability of organizational culture in its core, apparent, and cultural-fabric dimensions, and its homogeneity among the researched organizations, contributes to conditions conducive to formulating organizational strategy and enhancing leadership.

7. The research sample indicated that organizational culture is one of the most important factors directly affecting performance, organizational loyalty, and commitment to organizational philosophy, systems, rules, and procedures.

8. Modern administrative thought seeks to maximize the role of organizational culture in formulating strategy. Nevertheless, the researcher generally found that the departments of the surveyed organizations do not seek to develop their organizational culture and employ it effectively in strategy formulation to achieve competitive advantage.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends the following:

1. Private universities and colleges should respond to the requirements of rapid strategic action by providing an organizational culture that supports their efforts to respond and adapt to accelerating environmental changes. These changes require universities and colleges to possess a competitive advantage that guarantees their survival and development.

2. Private universities and colleges should change their organizational culture—which may require a unified and coordinated administrative procedure over a period of time to replace an unhealthy culture with a sound one—whenever the prevailing culture impedes the formulation and implementation of strategy.

3. The core culture of lecturers should be transformed into an apparent culture by attracting their energies and motivating them to demonstrate their scientific, mental, and intellectual capabilities and experience through direct dialogue. This can be transformed into a documented culture expressing a distinct vision for universities and colleges, enabling them to keep pace with scientific developments and raise the level of private university education.

4. Fear among lecturers about their future should be reduced through governing laws and instructions, especially after the issuance of Private University Education Law No. 25 of 2017. Morale among lecturers in private universities and colleges should be raised by activating their contribution and considering their opinions on future strategies and policies and on decisions affecting college workers. Financial regulations should motivate them to contribute and excel.

5. Private universities and colleges should enhance their culture through symbolic measures such as annual rewards for distinguished professors, demonstrating commitment and appreciation for exceptional classroom skills.

6. The scientific capabilities of teaching staff should be optimally invested and formulated as new methods and ideas that contribute to the development of private universities, colleges, and private university education, helping these organizations continue in the external environment and maintain competitive advantage.

7. The role of organizational culture in building organizational models for private universities and colleges should be activated. Those models should be flexible, participation should be encouraged, goals should be redefined, and incentive and reward systems for teaching staff should be reconsidered. Scientific stimulation and results-based motivation should receive greater attention than material returns and personal benefits for boards of directors or founding bodies.

8. The researched organizations should allocate resources to send a message to their scientific and administrative human resources about the most important competitive advantages they seek and to demonstrate the effects of cultural enrichment on the university or college, its employees, and society.

9. Methods for evaluating lecturer performance and the systems used to measure organizational-culture dimensions should be reconsidered. Evaluation should be stripped of personal considerations and framed objectively in line with global academic developments that focus on intangible intellectual assets, such as mental capabilities, more than on physical assets and capabilities.

10. Contacts should be established with international academic institutions, Arab or foreign, to identify new developments in the formulation of competitive strategies.

11. The Department of Private University Education in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research should emphasize that private universities and colleges need to change prevailing cultures maintained by leaders and department heads who follow an old traditional culture. Such a culture can cause dysfunction or impede new initiatives. These organizations should take measures to achieve compatibility between organizational structure and desired strategy and reallocate basic resources. The Ministry should also support private universities and colleges with qualified scientific staff from government universities and colleges to enhance and develop organizational culture.

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