



DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN GREEK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

The New Public Management, as a philosophy, focuses on providing more quality service to the citizen by delivering it to "the customer", a concept derived from the theory of Total Quality Management. Besides, it contributes to optimizing the decision-making process by linking costs - benefits and taking into account emerging efficiencies, as well as achieving predetermined results - objectives set in specific time frames. Concepts such as indicators, performance, evaluation, due to misuse and mistakes made at the political level in previous years, cause reactions to the educational community, which is distrustful of political leadership and shows the majority is reluctant to participate in processes that their outcome could be interpreted as perceived by the superior authority. There is no doubt that education has the most important contribution to the improvement of human capital from birth to university studies. The Greek Ministry of Interior is responsible for the supervision over decentralized administrations and local authorities (municipalities and regions), coordination and organization of recourse to the popular verdict (elections, referendums), legislation on Greek citizenship and expatriates, and legislation on registers, registries and demographics. So, it can be considered as the main stakeholder for Public Management issues. With a series of Legislation, the roadmap seems to be set. Recently, by the Greek Law 4692/2020, some of the basic concepts of Management are institutionalized, such as the process of planning and evaluation (internal and external) the school unit and Teachers evaluation are being defined.

Keywords: new public management, goal management, total quality management, Greek public schools' evaluation

1. Introduction

The development of strategies and business plans has become a necessity for public organisations. To meet today's challenges, the public administration must learn

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(Michalopoulos, 2003) to operate in a modern way, and it is a requirement to change the culture and design of the administration so that citizens/customers of the services provided are at the center of the social interest.

To implement a Strategic Management System (Hunger, 2004; Hitt et al., 2007), Strategic Planning must be applied, this is a dynamic and complex process (Bourantas, 2002; Tsiotras, 2002) through which the long-term sustainable choices of an organisation are implemented and evaluated, taking into account the critical external and internal factors that affect the continuous competitiveness, efficiency, performance and ultimately the success of the organisation. In a public organisation the strategic planning system is defined by the policy set by the government and the ministry.

Greek Law 3230/2004 establishes the system "Administration through Objectives", which aims at the more efficient functioning of public services and the response of human resources to modern needs and new management standards.

For this law, Objective Management (Drucker, 1954; Odiorne, 1979) is defined as the process of identifying clear performance objectives at the highest hierarchical levels of each body and then disseminating these general objectives, in the form of specific actions at each lower hierarchical level. At each level, supervisors and subordinates shall be committed on an annual basis to the implementation of specific actions and to the achievement of specific quantitative and qualitative results, taking into account general or specific efficiency indicators (Drucker, 2007). By the Joint Ministerial Decision 153168/IK/5-12-2008, the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs defines the indicators used in the field of Education for each type of institution in detail. The general indicators are then defined by the Directorates of the Ministry of Education (Central Office) and are further specialized and supervised by lower-ranked bodies. Greek Law 4369/2016, and in particular Article 22, sets out in greater detail the procedures to be followed for the implementation of the Administration through objectives. At the top of the administrative pyramid, there are objectives defined by the mission of the Agency and determined by the strategy and vision of the leadership. While the positions at the base, corresponding to the objectives that are specific to the expected operational results of the administrative actions.

In November 2020 the Government published the result of a committee, known as the Pissarides Commission, titled "Development Plan for the Greek Economy". The proposed interventions are organised, in public sector actions, horizontal market-related actions, and vertical actions specifically in central sectors and sectors of the economy. The committee recognizes that in the last years, measures have been implemented to increase transparency, such as e-prescribing, the digital inventory of the number of civil servants, etc. but there remains in many respects a divergence from international best practices and the lag concerning other countries remains significant. It concludes that improving public administration should be an important priority for the country. An inefficient public administration has high budgetary costs and provides low-quality services. Nor can it support the implementation of reforms for the economy as a whole.

1.1 Strategic Management Implementation Stages

The strategic management process (R. Noe, J. Hollenbeck, B. Gerhart, P. Wright, 2010) has two distinct but also interdependent stages:

- The Design Phase where formulation of the strategy is being decided,
- The Implementation Phase where the implementation of the strategy takes place.

In the first stage, the strategic direction deciding the mission and objectives of the organisation, external opportunities - threats and internal strengths - weaknesses is being decided. Various strategic alternatives are then devised and their ability to achieve the mission and objectives are compared. At the implementation phase, the above direction is to be followed up to the end.

The State, in circular DIPA/F.4/5270/1-3-2007 of the Ministry on Interior, proposes:

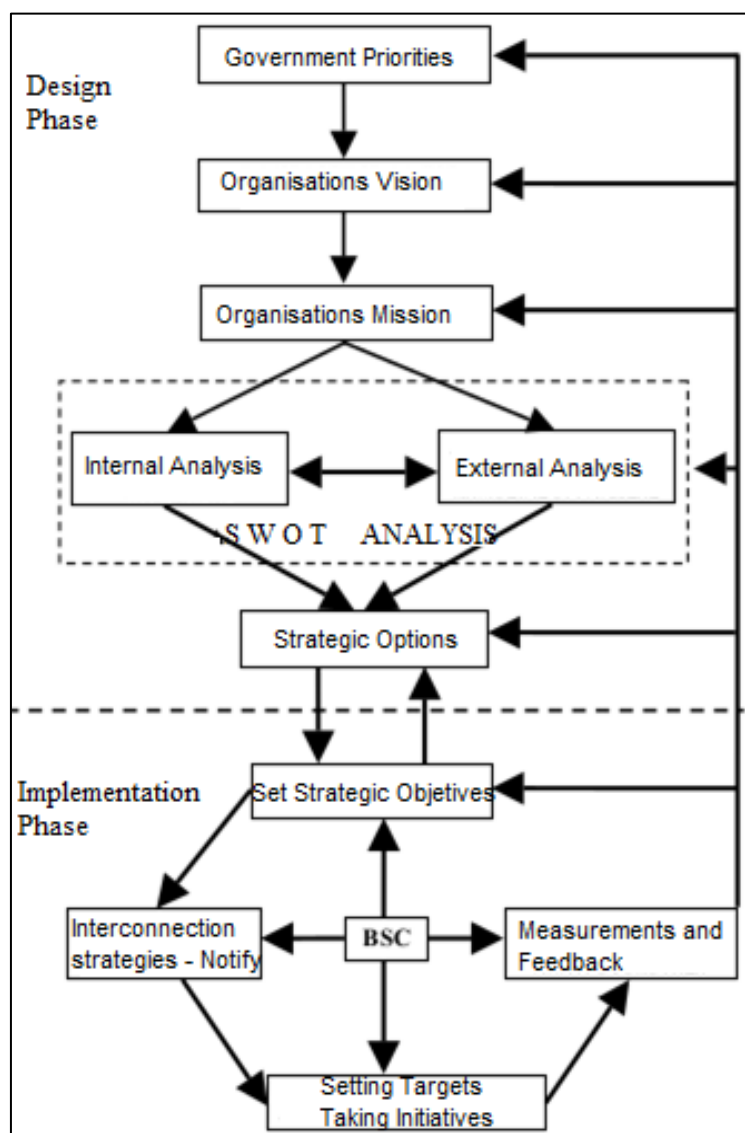


Figure 1

(Source: Circular DIPA/F.4/5270/1-3-2007)

2. The First Phase of Implementation

During the first phase, the strategy is configured this includes the following steps:

A. Vision configuration

The vision determines the direction in which the organisation wishes to move. It usually has a time horizon of 3 to 5 years, but often extends in time to even more years. It answers the question of: Where do we want the organisation/business to be in five years?

At this step, the shape of the organisation in the future is to be decided and therefore it sets general goals and ultimately drives the organisation's strategy and mission. At the same time,

- It shall ensure unanimity on the strategic objectives.
- It gives the general operational orientation
- It acts as the central point of reference, whereby which units are identified with the strategic objectives
- It facilitates the "translation" of strategic objectives into the day-to-day, functional distributed responsibilities.

B. Mission Configuration

It defines the main purpose of the organisation's operation, its ultimate reason for its existence (as it occurs from the current institutional framework, in the case of a Public Agency). It is usually a written picture of how the vision is implemented. It is a declaration of the philosophy and values of the organisation. It clarifies the main work of the Agency, what it does and transfers it to all its shareholders, and in particular to its employees, it determines the reason for the existence of the agency, as is apparent from the current institutional framework describing it.

It sets specific objectives and defines the organisation's relationship with other enterprises/organisations.

In the process of determining the Mission, answers should be given to specific questions such as:

- What is the general reason for the existence of the organisation?
- What are the basic needs/problems of citizens, the treatment of which justifies its operation?
- In what ways should the organisation meet citizens' expectations to achieve long-term results translated into a successful functioning of the organisation?

C. S.W.O.T. Analysis (Intra-Administrative Analysis - External Environment Analysis)

The conversion of the vision into a complete set of objectives is implemented using the S.W.O.T. analysis (from the initials of the words Strengths-Weaknesses- Opportunities-Threats). SWOT analysis, also known as the SWOT table, is a technique that lists and correlates the intra-administrative strengths and weaknesses of a company/organisation in relation with the opportunities and threats that are taking place within its external environment, to identify the main Strategic Concerns that the company/organisation is

called upon to address and, on the other hand, at formulating the appropriate Strategic Options, which will ensure a successful approach to these Strategic Concerns.

SWOT is an acronym for:

Strengths = internal characteristics, which may be decisive in the effort to improve the company/organisation to fulfill its mission.

Weaknesses = internal characteristics, which make the company/organisation problematic and not sufficient to pursue policies in its area of competence.

Opportunities = external environmental conditions, offering significant improvement prospects, in terms of how the company/organisation provides services.

Threats = external circumstances, which create a serious possibility of undermining the effective functioning of the company/organisation.

	Positive influence on the achievement of	Negative influence on the achievement of objectives
Interior Environment	Strengths	Weaknesses
External Environment	Opportunities	Threats

Figure 2: SWOT Table

In the first phase of applying the S.W.O.T. analysis, the strengths and weaknesses as they arise from the analysis of its internal environment are determined and defined.

D. Definition of Strategic Options

After identifying the main Strategic Concerns for the company/organisation, the main axes-categories of Strategic Options are identified as a combination of the data obtained from the S.W.O.T. analysis.

3. The Second Phase of Implementation

In the second phase, the strategy is implemented. The company/organisation should implement the strategic plan with programs based on annual operational plans, which are designed at the level of Directorates. Operational plans should be specified to action programs, which are initiatives or projects to be undertaken, to achieve strategic choices and are designed in directorates or departments. Here we will need a technique to thoroughly monitor its implementation. This technique will, at the same time, form the basis of a Strategic Management System to transform the Strategy into action plans at all individual levels of the company/organisation.

The method chosen is based on the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) technique, a Results-oriented Performance Management System, with the main objective of linking the short and long-term activities of a Public Organisation with its Vision, Mission and Strategy through the definition of measurable and consensual objectives.

Looking at the components of the term, it clarifies its strategic and holistic perspective, balancing, leveling, multidimensional perspective and integration.

- Balanced: balancing, leveling, multidimensional perspective,
- Score: measurability, target orientation, long-term pursuit, strategic character,
- Card: systematization, simplification of complexity, written registration, representation, transparency, binding nature.

BSC is an efficient recording system consisting of four different aspects (examined from four angles), which are:

a. Customers / Citizens

Every organisation serves a specific need in the market. This is done with a targeted group, i.e. its customers. Customers determine for example the quality, price, service and acceptable margins in these products and/or services. Organisations always strive to meet customer expectations that may change at any time. The existence of alternatives (those of the competitor) has a great impact on customer expectations. The main question that this perspective answer is 'what should the organisation do to meet the needs of the citizens to whom it provides services?'

b. Financial

The financial perspective is important for all shareholders and other economic operators in the Organisation. This is mainly a quantitative criterion based on numbers from the past.

Besides, it provides a reliable picture of the operational management and sustainability of the selected strategy. The added value delivered from the other three perspectives will be translated into economic success. This is therefore quantification of the added value provided to the Agency. After all, on the balanced scorecard, when there is higher added value, the profits will also be higher.

c. Internal Processes

From the point of view of internal procedures, the question should be asked which internal procedures to have added value to the agencies and what activities should be carried out in the context of these procedures. Value added is mainly expressed as customer-oriented performance resulting from the optimal alignment between processes, activities, and decisions.

d. Learning and Development

An organisation's learning ability and innovation indicate whether an organisation can improve and/or grow continuously in a dynamic environment. This dynamic

environment is subject to change daily due to new laws and regulations, economic changes, or even increased competition.

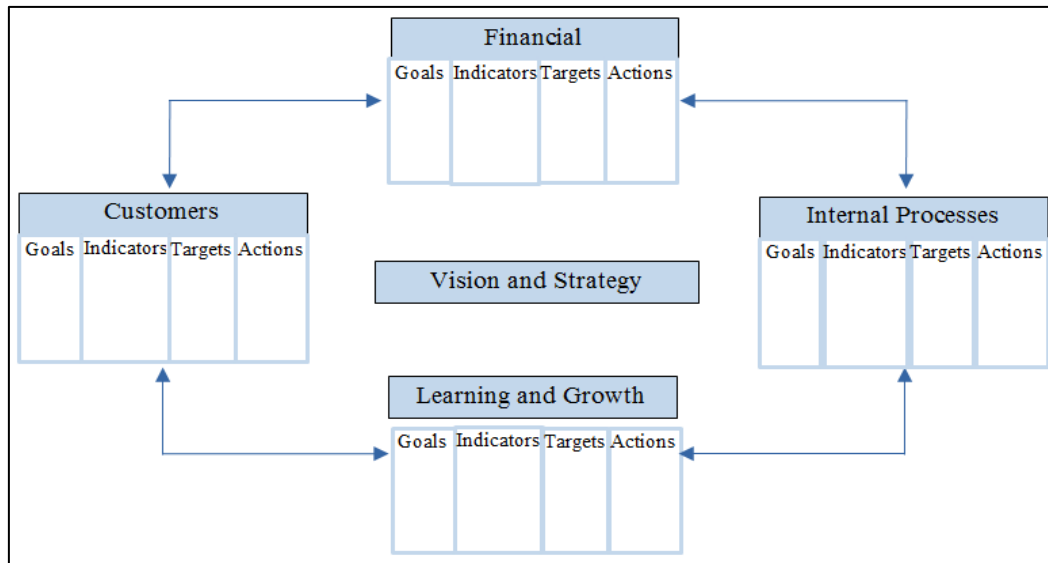


Figure 3
(Source: Circular DIPA/F.4/5270/1-3-2007)

As the name suggests, balance is an important principle in the Balanced Scorecard model. There must be a balance between short and long-term objectives, economic and non-financial criteria, indicators leading to delays, and external - internal perspectives. This is a coherence reflected in the model, through the mutually linked between the four perspectives.

Finally, the implementation stages of the Strategy (using Balanced Scorecard) are now fully completed:

- I. Setting Strategic Objectives,
- II. Interconnection of Strategies - Notifications,
- III. Setting Targets and taking Initiatives,
- IV. Efficiency Measurements & Feedback.

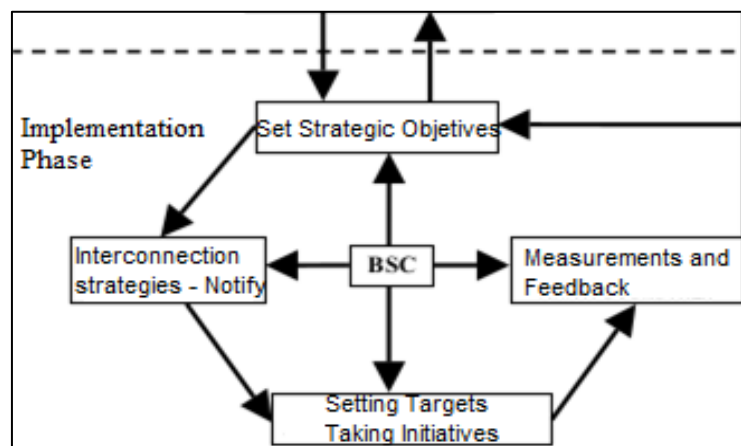


Figure 4
(Source: Circular DIPA/F.4/5270/1-3-2007)

2.2 Recent Legislation in Greek Public Schools

Following Greek Law 4692/2020 and in particular Article 33 it states that "*At the beginning of the school year and no later than 10 October of each year, the Principal of each school unit shall convene at a special meeting the teachers' association to carry out the planning of the educational work and the design of collective actions and research procedures, as well as to determine how they are to be implemented for the current school year*". An account shall be taken by the teachers' association, in particular of the internal evaluation report of the school unit concerning its educational work of the previous school year and the observations, proposals, and external evaluation reports, as well as of the views of the School Board on matters falling within its competences. At the end of the school year, the Principal of each school unit shall convene a special meeting of the teachers' association to evaluate the school unit, as an administrative and educational structure and of its educational work. "*This report shall indicate in particular the areas targeted, the objectives set, as well as the corresponding qualitative criteria for their monitoring and evaluation, describing in detail the actions to improve the functioning of the school unit planned, the difficulties encountered in implementation, and how they were addressed*". The same report shall present, including and quote relevant material, the extent to which all the individual objectives set out in the programming has been achieved and proposals for further improvement or new proposals for initiatives for the following school year.

In Article 10 the State defines the Pilot Schools (P.S.) and the Experimental Schools (E.S.) who operate intending to improvise the best educational planning and pilot implementation of the education policy, to cultivate and spread the best education methods, practices, and tools throughout the education system. Article 20 is titled *Teacher evaluation*: the Teaching staff is evaluated for his educational and teaching work, as well as the general presence and offer of the in the P.S. and the E.S. The criteria are the pedagogical, teaching, as well as their service Adequacy. A positive assessment of the teacher is to complete a total number of units at least equal to half of the maximum number of units that can be cumulatively in the individual criteria. After the completion of the evaluation, the Teachers who have been positively assessed can apply for renewal of their term. Teachers, who are assessed negatively, do not have the right to apply for the filling of the teacher vacancies in P.S. and E.S. In article 21 which is titled *Evaluation of the educational work*, periodically internally and external evaluation is carried out, to ensure and continuous improvement of the quality of the educational work and educational results. The programming plan action is being checked of this implementation of research programs and educational objectives for the school year, which includes all the programmed activities of the P.S. or the E.S., the objectives of the results, planes how to organise and operate the school, as well as how to implement the written educational actions. At the end of the school year the teachers assess the achievement of the educational objectives set out in the action plan, the successes are recorded as well as the weaknesses and problems that were addressed during the school year and the performance of the school as a whole is then published. The external evaluation which is carried out by a higher Board is based on this internal evaluation and is being used to suggest ways to improve the procedures for planning actions and

evaluation of the P.S. and E.S. and draw up reports with general comments in particular concerning needs, difficulties, trends and achievements on the external evaluation reports.

3. Conclusion and Recommendations

Efforts to implement strategic planning in the public sector began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s, partly in response to criticism of an "inefficient" public sector (Bryson, 2011; Papadimitriou, 2008). Strategic planning was presented as a challenge for the new generation of designers to avoid technocratic determinism while achieving a more systematic approach to public decision-making.

In this context, an effort was made, using a set of new tools, techniques and perspectives, to address the weaknesses and problems of traditional systems and was generally called the New Public Management (NPM). In essence, the new public administration, as an approach, is not a model based on a theoretical basis, such as the traditional approach to the bureaucracy system, but a new perspective on how to administrate public organisations, composed of three major categories of characteristics: administrative reforms, administrative philosophy and techniques and control mechanisms. A key feature of these changes and reform interventions is their orientation and inclusion in the theoretical framework of the New Public Management and Public Governance approach.

The Greek government published a road map for the development of the Greek economy prepared by the "Pissarides Commission" (Pissarides et al., 2020). As mentioned earlier improving public administration should be an important priority for the country. An inefficient public administration has high budgetary costs and provides low-quality services. Nor can it support the implementation of reforms for the economy as a whole. State supervision of management should address both questions of legality and effectiveness. The use of terms known by Total Quality Management Systems (Tsiotras, 2016; Logothetis, 2005) is pointed out almost on every page of the Report pointing out the need to have medium-term policy planning that supports the change in the development model and has intermediate quantitative objectives in the central features of the economy.

The State provides the legal framework for the application of techniques and practices that, until a few years ago, were considered private-sector prerogatives. It remains to be seen whether they will eventually find a response to implementation in public institutions and more specifically in secondary schools.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare. I have seen and agree with the contents of the manuscript and there is no financial interest to report. I certify that the submission is my original work and is not under review at any other publication and I have no commercial associations (eg, consultancies, stock ownership, equity interest,

patent/licensing arrangements, etc.) that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with the submitted article.

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