

## CREATING A COMMON VISION IN THE PROCESS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN EDUCATION: THE EXAMPLE OF ANKARA PROVINCE

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The aim of the present study is to create a vision in the process of planning in education. The study group was composed of teachers (n=100) working in Ankara at different schools of Ministry of National Education in the spring semester of May 2013 academic year. In this study, the quantitative data were collected through 28-item questionnaire adapted from Okumuş (2007). For the analysis of the data t-test and one-way-ANOVA were conducted using SPSS 21. The findings of the study revealed that an independent t-test has been used to examine whether there is a significant difference between the ideas regarding to their perception of shared vision and the duty status of the teachers who work at different schools of the Ministry of National Education.*

**Keywords:** Education, Strategic Planning, Process of Strategic Planning, Strategic Vision.

### **Introduction**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the face of globalisation, new markets, human needs and expectations that result in constant change and fierce competition environment, institutions think more strategically and make more strategic plans and also have to attach more importance to making strategic decisions (Bayraktar and Yıldız, 2007: 280-296).

The rapid change in the field of technology and knowledge requires educating qualified people who can keep up with the changes. With the globalisation, knowledge has increased rapidly and it has driven all organizations along with educational ones to new quests (Ağaoğlu ve Şimşek, 2006:43).

Technological changes and the improvement in the field of communication and information network have turned the world into a *global village*. Before globalisation, educational organizations had to educate people who believe in national values. However, after globalisation, educational organizations have to educate people who can survive in global world and believe in global values also (Ağaoğlu ve Şimşek, 2006:43).

Schools, which are unchangeable factors of education, are the foremost institutions that keep cultural richness of societies alive and shape future (Çalık, 2003:251).

Whether schools function or not depends on a good planning and implementing that plan effectively. Phenomenon of change has caused traits like aim, structure, and behaviour in all organizations along with educational ones and to have difficulty in adapting to change. That is why educational organizations, especially schools, need to improve, adapt to circumstances, prepare the environment, make changes and develop clear and extroversive strategies (Çalık, 2003:251-252).

Vision is a very important phenomenon for increasing competition and a good management process. This study's aim is to present plan and planning, strategic planning, the importance of vision in the increasingly globalized world and social conditions. It also aims to explain the relationship between strategic planning in education and common vision and by doing this, the study tries to show the requirements of vision management.

### **Concept of Plan and Planning**

Broadly defined, a plan concerns the means and methods as regards what will be done and how it will be done to attain certain goals. A plan is a way of predicting the future in a calculated manner on the basis of the defined targets (Genç 2007: 17).

Planning is the definition of the vision and mission of the organization and the formulation of the strategies, functional aims and norms in harmony with such vision and mission. Planning also refers to the allocation of the required sources to realize the goals (Ataman 2009: 256).

Planning is the process by which it is determined in advance what will be done when, how, where, and by whom. In a broader sense, it is a conscious process or intended action of determining and developing the best method to be followed in order to realize a goal or an anticipation of the tasks to be accomplished in the future (Gönüllü 2008: 1).

The main objective of planning is to direct actions of the organizations according to predetermined goals and to reach the desired goal with as little source as possible, as early as possible and in the shortest way possible (Kiraz, 2006:39).

Planning can be qualified as society's using sources in a good way by the help of its shared wisdom. Planning is based on foundations of goal, time, methods, clarity, coherence, and flexibility. Planning is structured on principles of being prudential, being rational and having an aim (Okumuş, 2007:10).

Even though plans seem to be the duties of top executives, plans are needed in every unit of the organization. However, it is executives who can carry the authority of making decisions about planning (Hatiboğlu, 1999: 29).

A plan is a result, while planning is a process. It is a process in which the management gathers and processes information (Gönüllü 2008: 10).

### **Strategic Planning**

Strategy, which means a plan or method for achieving a specific goal, is derived from the words in Greek, stratus (military) and ago (command) ( Ağaoğlu ve Şimşek, 2006: 44).

Strategy's lexical meaning is "dispatching, directing, sending, taking, and commanding." The word is attributed to Greek General Strategos and it reflects the general's knowledge and methods of defence (Demir ve Yılmaz, 2010:70).

Turkish Language Society states that the word is borrowed from French (stratégie) and defines it as "a society's or a nation's support to policies by using its military, financial, and psychological power in times of war and peace".

There have been different definitions for the word strategy. Many foremost management scientists like Steiner, Miner, Mintzberg, Ansoff, Cannon, Brandt and Digman have defined the term. According to Drucker, strategy is the analysis of the current situation and the change thereof, if required. Cannon defines 'strategy' as "administrative decisions to reach the companies' competitive goals". Thomson refers to strategy as "an ever-developing administrative game plan or a map to be followed to attain goals as well as an activity to take the organization where it hopes to reach". For Tichy, 'strategy' is an approach to fulfill a mission" (Yüzbaşıoğlu 2004: 137-142).

While Micheal Porter defines strategy as "making difference", Gary Hamel defines it as "planning the future" (Kırım, 1998: 84). According to Quinn, strategy is the plan that determines main objectives and policies of the organization" (Ensari, 2005: 13). However, according to Argyris strategy covers strategic formulation and application, swot analysis, scaffolding, defining roles and using organizational sources in accordance with these principles (Becerikli, 2000: 97-99).

Private sector's strong interest in strategy has resulted in curiosity for this management tool both in service industry and public sector. Insight that will boost operational activities; perspective that guides the whole organization, pressure for change, will for taking opportunities and solving problems are all indicators of great need for strategies that organizations require in today's world. (Kırım, 1998: 60).

In private sector, strategic planning that is emerged from the need of planning future and adapting to rapidly changing environment dates back to 1950's. In 1970s, the public administrators in the USA started to employ strategic planning to deal with the crises arising in the sector (Genç 2009: 203). As of 1980s, strategic planning started to be employed by non-profit organizations, as well (Demir and Yılmaz 2010: 72).

The strategies which gain a definite structure in written form are referred to as 'strategic planning' (Genç 2007: 17).

Strategic planning is a tool that boosts operational activities of the organization by making plans while taking threats and opportunities into consideration. Strategic planning also helps organization act according to those plans (Yüksel, 2002: 31).

Strategic planning is the main element of strategic method. Strategic management is a technique that enables all organizations that are active in private sector and service industry to set goals for future and determine what is to be done to achieve them (Uluğ, 2007:2).

Strategic planning ,which is accepted as an effective method in the process of change, is a prudential method that aims to solve the problems easily and foresee the future correctly by accepting environmental factors as key elements (Çalık, 2003:252).

Strategic planning was first used in military field and then it was used in industrial organizations. It was widely used in higher education institutions in 1970s. It was used at other levels of education in 1980s (Ağaoğlu ve Şimşek, 2006: 44). Strategic planning and total quality management studies at primary and secondary schools are carried out by Ministry of National Education in accordance with the total quality management and application instructions that were published in the bulletin of communiqué in 1999 (MEB, 1999).

In order to answer the question "Where we want to be", the mission that explains organization's existence clearly, the vision that shows future plans realistically and principles, strategic goals and assessable purposes that shape organization's actions are all introduced explicitly ( Uluğ, 2007:5-6).

The answer to the question "How do we reach where we want to reach?" is provided by setting the means, methods and strategies to be employed in order to reach the objectives and goals (Bakar 2008: 12).

The process of strategic planning starts with an analysis of internal and external conditions and continues with the determination of the vision, mission, objectives, goals and strategies of the organization.

The strategies formed by means of harmonizing the threats and opportunities as well as the weaknesses and strengths following the analysis of internal and external conditions are implemented. The process ends with an assessment and check of the extent to which the implemented strategies have been successful (Özyurt and Çetin 2000: 64).

Without strategic planning, strategic management is not possible because strategic actions are performed according to strategic planning (Uluğ, 2007:3).

### **Vision**

Vision's lexical meaning is sight, foresight, intuition, imagination. (Redhouse, 1998: 531-532) In linguistic perspective the word's origin is quite old. "Visio", which is derived from the latin word "videre", means to understand, to grasp, to be on alert. In middle ages, the german word *wissen* that means "to know" and the word "wiese" that means "sage" are derived from the same origin. In those ages the word "visio" were derived in order to describe the action of seeing future and soon after it was used for concepts like "hallucinating" and "optical hallucination" (Sollmann ve Heinze, 1995: 13).

Vision is no more than untested opinions and immature dreams without strategy. Vision consists of the ideas which concern the achievements not thought-of before or at the present but aimed to be gained in the future and which are clearly expressed by the individual who develops such ideas (Genç 2007: 11).

Vision is a real image of the future. It is quite close to come real, however, it is too far away to make us interest in a new structuring. Vision is creating a situation in minds that is likely to happen or likely to be created (Özden, 2008: 33). Vision is a sense of future. It forms a basis through which we look into the future. It is an intellectual bridge that exceeds today's potentials, is a foreseen possibility and does not justify past (Okumuş, 2007:32 ).

Vision is a qualified target definition which describes where we want to reach as we have already reached that target. Underlying vision are the concepts of strategies, objectives, processes and ventures (Duman 2007: 7).

Vision is the highest quality argued to be possessed by the individuals who claim to be superior to others in daily life, politics, arts, economics, management etc. Those who appreciate, follow and respect them also think that this significant quality exists in such individuals (Erçetin 2000: 87).

In its simplest terms, the vision of an organization is an image of the future of the organization as shared by all its employees. In that sense, a vision is not a personal fantasy but a mental design as to how the future will be and according to which the ideas and beliefs regarding the ideal realization of the set goals are formulated (Can 2007: 36).

A vision provides a set of fundamental laws shedding light on the organization's future. These laws function as a guide for the future leading all the administrative activities and many regulations are made in line with them. The principles regarding the attainment of goals are clarified thanks to the vision (Duman 2007: 9).

The formation of a vision sometimes functions as a tool causing managers and leaders to announce their goals rather than attaining them. Thus, employee participation is inevitable for the formation of a successful vision. The higher the participation in the process of vision formation is, the more the loyalty to the vision develops (Erdem 2006: 21).

In order for the vision to be adopted and to cover the whole organization, it should cover the mission of the organization. It should also become integrated with the organization's principles. All the members of the organization should take credit for their positions and duties (Okumuş, 2007: 50).

### **The Connection between Strategic Planning and Common Vision**

Organizations start planning session by determining their own visions. They do analysis in order to specify their organizational condition. They develop strategies for having organizational vision. (Ensari, 2005: 25).

Central to corporate strategic planning is the knowledge that the mental activity of vision focused on the future defines where the company aims to be in the future and enables the conscious efforts to attain the future goals. In addition to such knowledge, the sharing of the vision by all the employees is a *sine qua non* in terms of the survival of the public companies in the face of both internal and external strategic competition (Okumuş 2007: 2).

There is always a close connection between strategic planning and vision. Strategic planning starts with the determining vision of the organization. In order for the strategic planning to reach its goal, it is a must to come up with one that is shared by the whole organization. There is no point in starting a strategic management and planning for an organization that does not have a vision (Okumuş 2007: 41).

At the meeting point of reality and imagination, vision expresses the goals that the organization wants to achieve. The vision that shapes the actions of the organizations is an issue to which the organizations attach great importance. By developing a vision of education, the school can maintain the balance between where it wants to be and its current position and also shapes expectations. Because of this reason, the schools that want to prepare themselves best should share a vision ( Can, 2007: VIII).

A vision is a standard of comparison which measures the progress towards a desired future. Visions determine the activities of parents, school staff and students; namely the whole school community (Aytaç 2000: 7).

That schools have a vision for the future adopted by the school community is essential to the achievement of the practices towards reaching the future goals. It is clear that a school without a vision would be in no need to make efforts for attaining the goals it has set for itself (Aytaç 2000: 11).

A common vision is an answer to “What we want to create.” Just like individual visions are images and pictures that are in peoples’ mind, a common vision is an image in the minds of the members of the organization. These images create a sense of solidarity internalized by the organization and providing consistency to different activities.

The most efficient way to develop a common vision is “to involve people in an excellent, extraordinary and metaphysical process of creativity”. Thus, they will be able to discover the vision inside themselves. Only when teachers participate in the process of vision development, will the notion of vision become meaningful for them (Özden 2008: 45).

### **The Purpose of the Study**

With reference to the statement “A strategic vision is created that is shared with the teachers in schools”, it is aimed to carry out the research whether a strategic vision is created that is shared with the teachers at schools of the Ministry of National Education.

### **The Research Questions**

The research questions concerning the purpose of the study are as follow:

- 1.Does the perception of vision differentiate in terms of duty status of the school staff?
- 2.Does the perception of vision differentiate in terms of period of service of the school staff?
- 3.Does the perception of vision differentiate in terms of educational status of the school staff?
- 4.Does the perception of vision differentiate in terms of age status of the school staff?
- 5.Does the perception of vision differentiate in terms of gender of the school staff?

## Research Design

In this section, the information about the participants of the research, data collection instrument and data analysis are presented.

## Participants

The population of research covers teachers who work at different schools of the ministry of National Education. The questionnaire forms have handed to 120 teachers out of 197, however, 100 teachers have given feedbacks.

## Data Collection Instrument

“Level of Sharing a Vision Survey”, which is based on literature, is composed of 28 questions 5 of which are demographic. By applying five point Likert scale, the data, which are obtained from 100 subjects, are used in analyses. “Level of Sharing a Vision Survey” is given as attachment.

Views of those who have participated in the survey have been evaluated by using five point Likert scale. In the scale, there are “Strongly Agree” “Agree” “Not Really Sure” “Disagree” “Strongly Disagree” options.

After an analysis is performed on the results, it is seen that degree of reliability of the survey is  $p(\text{sgn})=0,93$ , and degree of significance of the survey is  $\alpha=0,941$ . This shows us that reliability degree of the survey is quite high.

## Data Analysis

The data that are obtained from the research have been evaluated with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program.

In the study, “t test” and “one-way analysis of variance test (ANOVA)” have been utilised.

## Findings and Discussion

### The findings regarding demographical aspects of the sample group

In this section, the findings regarding to duty status, period of service, educational status, age status and gender of the sample group have been summarized.

**Table 1. Range of the sample group regarding duties**

		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Duty	School Head	10	10,0
	Teacher	90	90,0
	Total	100	100,0

%90 per cent of those who have participated in the survey are teachers, while %10 percent of them are school heads.

**Table 2. Distribution of the Sample group in terms of period of service**

		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Period Of Service	Less than 5 years	5	5,0
	5-10	10	10,0
	11-15	30	30,0
	16-20	19	19,0
	21-25	21	21,0
	26-30	7	7,0
	More than 30 years	8	8,0
	Total	100	100,0

When the sample group is examined by looking at their period of service, %5 have less than 5 years, % 10 have 5-10 years, %30 have 11-15 years, %19 have 16-20 years, %21 have 21-25 years, %7 have 26-30 years, %8 have more than 30 years of service.

**Table 3. Findings regarding educational status of the sample group**

		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Educational Status	two-year degree / bachelor degree	63	63,0
	Master's degree	37	37,0
	Total	100	100,0

The findings show that %63 of the subjects have a two-year degree or a bachelor degree, %37 have a master's degree and none has a postgraduate degree.

**Table 4. Age status of the sample group**

		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	younger than 30	5	5,0
	31-40	40	40,0
	41-50	40	40,0
	51-60	14	14,0
	Older than 60	1	1,0
	Total	100	100,0

The findings show that when the age variable is taken into consideration, %5 are younger than 30, %40 are between 31-40, %40 are between 41-50, %14 are between 51-60 and %1 are older than 60 years old.

**Table 5. Gender variance of the sample group**

		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	51	51,0
	Female	49	49,0
	Total	100	100,0

The findings show that %51 of those who have participated in the survey are male and %49 are female.

### Research Questions

#### 1. “The perception of vision differentiates in terms of duty status of the school staff.”

For this one, an independent t-test has been used to examine whether there is a significant difference between the ideas regarding to their perception of shared vision and the duty status of the teachers who work at different schools of the Ministry of National Education.

The t-test between 2 groups

Sharing Vision		N	X	t	df	p(sgn)
	School Management	10	2,56	0,301	98	0,764
	Teacher	90	2,49			

According to the chart, there isn't a statistically significant difference between teachers' and school managers' perception of vision and their status of duty. Consequently, hypothesis 1 has been refuted.

#### 2. “The perception of vision differentiates in terms of period of service of the school staff”

For this one, an Anova test has been used to examine whether there is a significant difference between the ideas regarding to their perception of shared vision and the period of service of the teachers who work at different schools of the Ministry of National Education.

One way Anova

		N	X	F	P(sgn)
Vision Sharing	Less than 5 years	5	2,87	0,630	0,706
	5-10	10	2,70		
	11-15	30	2,35		
	16-20	19	2,44		
	21-25	21	2,54		
	26-30	7	2,48		
	More than 30 years	8	2,58		



According to the chart, there isn't a statistically significant difference between teachers' and school managers' perception of vision and their period of service. Consequently, hypothesis 2 has been refuted.

### 3. "The perception of vision differentiates in terms of educational status of the school staff."

For this one, since there is no PhD degree teacher, a t-test test has been used to examine whether there is a significant difference between the ideas regarding to their perception of shared vision and the educational status of the teachers who work at different schools of the Ministry of National Education.

The independent t-test between the two groups

Vision Sharing		N	X	t	df	p(sgn)
	two-year degree/ bachelor degree	63	2,49	0,136	98	0,892
	Master's degree	37	2,51			

According to the chart, there isn't a statistically significant difference between teachers' perception of vision and their educational status. Consequently, hypothesis 3 has been refuted.

### 4. "The perception of vision differentiates in terms of age status of the school staff."

For this one, an Anova test has been used to examine whether there is a significant difference between the ideas regarding to their perception of shared vision and ages of the teachers who work at different schools of the Ministry of National Education.

One way Anova

Vision Sharing		N	X	F	P(sgn)
	Younger than 30	5	2,87	0,617	0,651
	31-40	40	2,40		
	41-50	40	2,55		
	51-60	14	2,48		
	Older than 60	1	2,21		

According to the chart, there isn't a statistically significant difference between teachers' perception of vision and their ages. Consequently, hypothesis 4 has been refuted.

### 5. The perception of vision differentiates in terms of gender of the school staff.

For this one, a t-test has been used to examine whether there is a significant difference between the ideas regarding to their perception of shared vision and genders of the teachers who work at different schools of the Ministry of National Education.

The independent t-test between the two groups.

Vision Sharing		N	X	t	df	p(sgn)
	Female	51	2,46	-,544	98	0,588
	Male	49	2,54			

According to the chart, there isn't a statistically significant difference between teachers' perception of vision and their genders. Consequently, hypothesis 5 has been refuted.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It is assessed that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the perception of vision and the status of duty of the teachers and the school managers who have participated in the study.

It is assessed that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the perception of vision and the period of service of the teachers who have participated in the study.

It is assessed that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the perception of vision and the educational status of the teachers who have participated in the study.

It is assessed that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the perception of vision and the ages of the teachers who have participated in the study.

It is assessed that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the perception of vision and the genders of the teachers who have participated in the study.

In this article, through a sample survey the subject of creating a vision has been analysed in different schools of the Ministry of National Education.

From these findings forth, it is assessed that visions of schools are on a large scale created by school managements and strategic planning teams just because of obligation. When this conclusion is evaluated in the theoretic frame of the study, it is clear that schools' level of shared vision level will go up if the vision is created by the strategic planning team with the participation of the whole staff.

Since creating a vision is the most important step of strategic planning, all school staff should participate in seminars and in-service trainings regardless of their age, period of service, duty, status of education and gender.

In conclusion, in the process of strategic planning, creating a strategic vision practices are quite hard but not impossible. The important thing is to know how to take the steps of strategic planning process.

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