

Strategic analysis of a Mexican public university

Análisis estratégico de una universidad pública mexicana

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Abstract

Educational organizations constantly face changes that must be faced strategically to achieve their objectives and remain competitive, it is the great importance that strategic management represents in organizations, since it allows better decisions to be made. The present investigation is carried out in a public university in the State of Tabasco, Mexico with the objective of analyzing the procedures that contribute to strengthening the management in the direction of the educational institution from a strategic approach. In it, are integrated: analysis of the environment and internal of the University taking into account processes and quality standards in higher education themselves that have been determined in the university environment. The methodology used was descriptive of documentary type and the systematic analysis of information obtained by evaluation matrices in the corresponding areas. The results found highlight the technological and labor weaknesses of the educational institution, great opportunities are recognized for it, some strategies are determined that could be developed taking into account the capacity of the university, the demands of the environment and the educational competitiveness of the market.

Resumen

Las organizaciones educativas se enfrentan a cambios de manera constante que deben de afrontarse de forma estratégica para alcanzar sus objetivos y permanecer competitivos, es la gran importancia que representa la gestión estratégica en las organizaciones, puesto que permite tomar mejores decisiones. La presente investigación se desarrolla en una universidad pública del Estado de Tabasco, México con el objetivo de analizar los procedimientos que contribuyen a fortalecer la gestión en la dirección de la institución educativa desde un enfoque estratégico. En él, se integran: análisis del entorno e interno de la Universidad teniendo en cuenta procesos y estándares de calidad en educación superior mismos que se han determinado en el ambiente universitario. La metodología utilizada fue descriptiva de tipo documental y el análisis sistematico de información obtieno por matrices de evaluación en las áreas correspondientes. Los resultados encontrados resaltan las debilidades tecnológicas y laborales de la institución educativa, se reconocen grandes oportunidades para la misma, se determinan algunas estrategias que se podría desarrollar teniendo en cuenta la capacidad de la universidad, las exigencias del entorno y la competitividad educatica del mercado.

Internal analysis, Competitiveness, Strategic management, Competitive advantage

Análisis interno, Competitividad, Gestión estratégica, Ventaja competitiva

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Introduction

Higher education institutions know that they cannot be considered as isolated systems, as they not only depend on society in terms of the environment, but the same values that their members possess are subject to the set of expressions of the same culture to which they belong, i.e. the company-university alliance is becoming more and more relevant within the concept of corporate social responsibility. With this, business development becomes a reality that the productive and service sector cannot undervalue, because they would lose a great opportunity to discover and maintain their strategic positioning within the market. It is known that strategies do not arise by magic, they arise based on the needs, demands of the internal environment and the environment in which a myriad of factors of different nature that can affect or influence the results of the organization are identified, therein lies the importance of this research that was conducted in a public university in the state of Tabasco, It is considered that all institutions, regardless of their line of business, should periodically carry out a strategic analysis to determine the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities they face in education, always with the ideology of increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the organisation through the implementation of suitable strategies focused on the area of knowledge and the human factor that allow them to develop based on the mission, vision, policies and values of the university.

The objective of the study is focused on analysing the procedures that contribute to strengthen the management of the educational institution from a strategic approach. This will help the university to stay up to date with the latest developments in the sector, as well as to facilitate the measurement of results and to know the line of work to be followed. It should be remembered that an educational institution is a set of tangible and intangible resources and institutional capacities, and that an analysis of the university's internal environment identifies its resources and capacities, as well as its strengths and weaknesses, in order to establish objectives based on these resources and capacities that will allow it to formulate strategies to strengthen or take advantage of these strengths and reduce or overcome these weaknesses.

Material and method

The present is a descriptive non-experimental cross-sectional study.

Population and sample:

The population corresponded to the administrative staff of the university who worked in the year 2022 and the sample consisted of 85 people: heads of careers, heads of departments, managers and heads of areas. For the collection of the information, interviews were carried out in addition to a documentary review of statistics and monitoring of standards, processes and management planned and implemented in the period 2021 - 2022.

Data processing and analysis:

SWOT & EFI matrix was used for data processing.

The following matrices were developed for the strategic analysis:

SWOT is a matrix that allows an analysis of the current and real state of the internal and external situation in which a company, person or organisation finds itself in order to have a vision that allows us to plan future strategies. It is a tool that allows us to know the factors that influence the environment of the university and that in turn could be used to design strategies for decision-making and the execution of actions or tactics implemented in the future in the educational institution.

With the SWOT matrix, an internal analysis was carried out (on the strengths and weaknesses; to find out which characteristics and qualities the university should improve and what it excels in) and an external analysis of the university (what was analysed here are external variables that the institution cannot control directly but can work to take advantage of or counteract them).

The EFI matrix is the tool that allowed the internal analysis of the university's administration to be carried out, allowing the effectiveness of the strategies applied to be analysed and their impact to be known in detail; this instrument allowed the most relevant strengths and weaknesses in each area to be evaluated, with the results obtained it will be possible to formulate strategies that are capable of resolving, optimising and reinforcing the institution's internal processes. When using the MEFI, it was necessary to apply some intuitive judgements with respect to experience and expertise, as it has several subjective components, so when carrying out the analysis it was necessary to use the results of the SWOT Matrix..

Steps in the development of the EFI matrix:

Step 1: A list of strengths and weaknesses was made.

Step 2: Values (relative weights) were assigned to each factor.

The weights assigned to each factor ranged from 0.0 (least relevant) to 1.0 (most relevant), regardless of whether the factor represented a strength or an area for improvement (weakness), the factors that would have the greatest impact on the performance, productivity and efficiency of the services were given the highest values. The total of all weights had to add up to 1.0.

Step 3: Ratings were assigned to each factor, which were divided into four values between 1 and 4 for each factor to indicate whether the factor represented a major weakness (rating = 1), a minor weakness (rating = 2), a minor strength (rating = 3) or a major strength (rating = 4).

Step 4: The weighted rating was defined. The assigned value of each factor was multiplied by its corresponding rating, this was done for each factor, in order to determine a weighted rating for each variable.

Step 5: The weighted value is determined. Once step 4 was completed, the final value of each factor was added together to determine or obtain the total weighted value. The total of that value is between 1.0 (as the lowest value) and 4.0 (the highest value), the average value of the weighted value is 2.5.

Literature review

Nowadays it is not enough for a company to produce what the market demands or what its customers want, Gimber, X. (2001) states, it must do it "better", which means, better, faster than the competition, with more quality than the competition, more timely than the competition, etc., i.e. "better than the competition", this is nothing else than competitiveness. Today, in order for companies to stay in the market, survive, grow, and prosper, they must be competitive in all areas. The future is uncertain, the past is behind us, we are facing a technological revolution, which implies a profound change in the way we behave, the solution is to be competitive.

The internal diagnosis of an organisation at a global level is an essential part for companies, as it allows them to know the functioning of the operations carried out in the entity, taking into account the key elements to prevent, detect, and correct errors and irregularities within the company. (Campos, Navarro, & Sanchis, 2014).

The internal factors that the entity can control and perform are strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are positive aspects that the entity generates to be able to stay in the market, while weaknesses are situations that the entity could do in a better way (Villagomez, Mora, Banadas, & Vasquez, 2014).

Nowadays competitiveness as a strategy that companies must develop to survive, grow, maintain and prosper in today's markets, is the result of the strategic planning process.

Porter (1985) points out that competitiveness is the ability of a company to produce and market products in better conditions of price, quality and opportunity than its rivals.

Competitiveness is a multidimensional term that does not have a specific definition, due to the different levels and qualitative and quantitative factors involved in its determination; it also includes the existence of different analysis approaches and indicators for its measurement. Moreover, it is a universal concept used as a formula for the economic growth of countries and as a necessary condition when it comes to gaining participation in international markets (Flores, 2008).

According to the IESA (quoted by Ferrer, 2001) the concept of competitiveness is related to the ability of companies to face their competitors in the markets. It serves to reveal relevant aspects of management, strengths and weaknesses, which the economic, financial and social sectors are not able to identify or facilitate in their analyses.

Porter (1985) points out that a company's competitiveness depends on identifying and evaluating the 5 competitive forces in order to formulate a strategy that is superior to those of other competing companies: rivalry between companies, companies introducing substitute products to the market, new competitors entering the market, the power of suppliers of the required materials, the bargaining power of buyers of the product or service. The power of these forces varies from industry to industry and changes with the evolution of the sector. Depending on the industry, their forces will have a different importance, because each industry is unique and has its own structure.

Thus, the concept has been evolving over time and it is considered as the ability of the company to maintain an advantageous position in the domestic market and to have the capacity to provide quality, productivity and to face global markets (Ferrer et al., 1999).

Etkin (1996) refers to competitiveness as the capacity, particular attitude or attribute of the company to face threats and daily challenges inherent to the reality of open markets.

A firm's competitiveness is its ability to deliver goods and services equally or more effectively and efficiently than its competitors (Enright, 1994).

Competitiveness, therefore, does not emerge spontaneously as the macro context changes, nor is it created by relying solely on micro-level entrepreneurship. Rather, competitiveness is the product of a complex and dynamic pattern of interaction between the state, firms, intermediary institutions and the organisational capacity of a society.

When referring to competitiveness we cannot leave aside the work of Porter (1990), who refers to competitive advantage as the key to competitiveness.

The meaning of an organisation's competitiveness derives from its competitive advantage in production and organisational methods (price and quality of the final product) against its specific competitors. The study of competitiveness must take into account the theory put forward by Romo David and Abdel Guillermo (2005), according to which for some firms the ability to compete is based on a combination of price and quality of the good or service provided, so that when quality is the same in competitive markets, firms will remain competitive if their prices are as low, or lower, than the prices of their competitors.

The constant changes in technology and in the production process have had a great impact on companies, so much so that they have come to determine a competitive advantage that allows them to reduce operational costs and increase productivity and thus gain market share and position themselves in the market (Alarcon & Torres, 2017).

It must be considered that companies are embedded in specific economic contexts (general and sectoral environment), dynamic, which enhance or limit their competitiveness. The ability to adapt to continuous changes in the environment is one of the main features of modern companies.

Sallenave, J (1994) states that every company has three objectives independent of the will of its managers: survival, profitability and growth, where profitability is the key to this sequence, he speaks of the triangle of profitability, expressed in three keys that make it possible to achieve it through a competitive advantage.

Tompson and Strickland (1998) argue that competitive advantage is what a company does much better than rival companies, and thus represents a competitive strength and specialised expertise that competitors cannot match. From this arises a fundamental principle for strategic management: a strategy is powerful if it produces a competitive advantage, the exploitation of which is the underlying product of any strategy.

According to George de Sainte-Marie (1995), competitive advantages arise from "know-how", which is the essential factor for the organisation's development and sometimes its survival. The author explains that it is necessary to prepare the "knowledge portfolio" (i.e. the organisation's knowledge base) in order to deduce a "knowledge chain" (how and in what order it is interwoven).

Sainte-Marie distinguishes four forms of knowledge: conventional, specialised service, technological and proprietary knowledge.

Conventional knowledge is based on "working hours". It is the simplest as it does not require imagination and innovation. It operates mainly at the level of labour management.

Specialised service knowledge concerns the marketing of a specific skill in a particular field. It involves being up to date in technology, maintaining an adequate level of efficiency and mastering the process, organisation and logistics of the business, remaining competitive in price and offering high quality.

Technological know-how requires mastery of advanced technologies in an evolved and innovative organisation that is constantly being updated scientifically and technologically. The knowledge associated with the sale of its own products requires total mastery of a market sector, monitoring the behaviour of its variables, as well as being an expert in marketing and advertising, which is its strong point. This activity provides the company with considerable independence, if it is well managed.

Porter, M. (1982) defines the value chain as a way of acquiring competitive advantage (pp.223- 224).

In order for the university to achieve a competitive advantage, it is necessary that external and internal factors are substantiated, analysed and evaluated. Therefore, in this context, the traditional perception that competitiveness is determined only by the abundance or scarcity of the resources available to the company is not sufficient, but requires a comprehensive analysis of factors for proper operation, such as the level and technological innovation, organisation, environmental protection and economic policy (Vera and Ganga, 2007; Romo and Abdel, 2005; Villafán, Guitrón, Pedraza and Bonales, 2007).

On the other hand, when analysing different methodological approaches, the following are considered internal factors that impact on business competitiveness: strategic planning, production and operations, marketing and sales management capabilities, quality assurance, human resources management and leadership, organisational culture, as well as information systems, among others (Jiménez, 2006; Rubio and Aragón, 2008; Rodríguez, Bañuelos, Rubio and Chávez, 2010; Saavedra, 2010).

Internal analysis, besides being an important entity for organisations, serves as a basis for meeting the scope of the objectives, so it is everyone's responsibility to know the conceptual framework, its components and the importance of its implementation and operability of internal analysis within the organisation. (Gamboa, Puente, & Ysidora, 2016).

For (Obispo & Gonzalez , 2015) internal control serves as a support tool for decision making by senior management, with the purpose that the objectives set are fulfilled in their normality under the established regulations.

From the point of view of internal organisation, the resources and capabilities approach stresses that the competitiveness of the company depends on it being able to configure a set of resources that are difficult for competitors to copy, and which give it a series of distinctive capabilities or competencies (Fernández, 1993). The company must identify which resources are capable of providing a sustainable competitive advantage and a stream of income maintained over the long term, hence, when characterising and defining the concept of organisational culture, the importance of this as a differentiating element is often emphasised (Leal, 1991).

From the external point of view, organisations are open systems that cannot escape the turbulence and trends of the environment, and must respond appropriately to its pressures since most of the forces generating change originate externally (Daft and Steers, 1992). In this sense, we agree with Mayoral (1994) that organisational change tends to be generated increasingly through turbulence and changes in the organisational environment.

It is necessary to highlight that many institutions do not have tools to assess the degree of compliance with the strategy and competitive standards, partly because they do not carry out the exercise of quantifying from the formulation of goals and objectives. In other words, some organisations do not follow the process of identifying, defining, measuring, improving and evaluating an action plan that facilitates the continuous monitoring of strategic management.

Prieto (2011) defines organisational strategic management as the essential tool for the analysis and assessment of the current situation of the company, because it allows top management to develop the activities of characterisation, formulation and evaluation of satisfactory strategic alternatives, in the complex context of the company, generating as a result the optimisation of the resources available in its productive unit. On the other hand, organisational strategic management aims to lead the firm on the road to success, always seeking to benefit stakeholders, especially its customers, partners and employees.

Niven (2002) considers that the success of strategic management is defined by the unrestricted commitment of the board of directors to top management. Systematic support starts with the approval of strategic planning and the resources required to develop and implement management systems.

Lana (2008) asserts that, for the strategic management process to be successful, five stages must be developed. The first stage consists of the internal analysis of the company and its environment; the second stage consists of defining the courses of action determined by the short, medium and long term purposes; the third stage consists of formulating corporate, business and functional strategies, using the different strategic management tools available to the company; the fourth stage examines the way in which the strategic actions generated by the previous stages will be implemented; and in the fifth stage, the control and monitoring mechanisms are determined.

Results

The University under study is an institution dedicated to the continuous improvement of its services, it offers various careers with a unique educational model in the area with the aim of training professionals who respond in a timely manner to the needs of the productive and social sector, through the different educational programmes taught by teachers with a desirable profile, in addition to providing quality services it has an adequate infrastructure to perform as an institution, it has laboratories, materials and equipment necessary for students to perform practices and promote the academic development of the same.

Among the strengths detected: trained teachers were identified who provide a high level of education in the different areas of the productive and social sector, competitive and trained administrative staff, in general the staff is oriented to decision making, this allows them to respond accurately to solutions to various situations that arise in the environment. In addition, there is a business development and incubation centre, which contributes to the generation of the university's own income, thereby contributing to the academic strengthening of students, graduates and society in general, with the aim of increasing their level of skills in the labour field.

The weaknesses identified include a technological backwardness, a certain obsolescence in equipment and failures in internet connection, which delays the various processes for both the academic and administrative areas; the constant rotation of staff without prior notice was observed, causing delays; planned activities are not completed successfully in time and form, which causes inconvenience to students, parents, related areas and other departments. There is a lack of assertive communication between departments and an excess of misinformation in the processes that students have to carry out, which in the end causes inconvenience and other problems. It is considered that the institution has great strengths that allow it to remain in force and help it to remain in the competitive market, but like other institutions it has weaknesses that if not addressed in time could affect it greatly, so it is recommended that these weaknesses become areas of opportunity and that it should also continue to improve and innovate in order to remain positioned in the market.

The SWOT analysis is considered as the basic instrument or starting point to know and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the company in order to formulate or develop strategies for improvement (Labra, Rivera, & Reyes, 2017).

According to the data obtained, the internal factors (Strengths and weaknesses) were identified, in which reference has been made to:

Fortalezas	Debilidades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Oferta educativa -Modelo educativo -Programas educativos acreditados -Personal capacitado -Centro de incubación y desarrollo empresarial -Infraestructura -Laboratorios de prácticas con material y equipo adecuado -Terreno propio -Vinculación con el sector productivo -Ubicación geográfica -Certificación del sistema de gestión de calidad ISO 9001-2015 - 2 Extensiones universitarias -Becas institucionales y educación a distancia - Implementando servicios a distancia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rezagos tecnológicos -Comunicación no asertiva -No cuenta con una cobertura adecuada de internet -Presupuesto insuficiente -Demandas laborales -Rotación de personal sin previo aviso
Oportunidades	Amenazas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Zona industrial y social -Movilidad educativa nacional Internacional -Percepción social -Incremento de acciones para el mejoramiento del medio ambiente -Generaciones con pensamiento emprendedor e innovador 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Percepción de la seguridad -Situación económica estatal y nacional -Competencia -Factores de Mercado -Cambios en la política económica -Tasa de desempleo -Zona industrial de alto riesgo -Cambios de gobierno

Table 1 SWOT analysis matrix for the Tabasco University

According to matrix 1, it is determined that the institution has strengths that allow it to be in constant growth and improvement, at the same time providing educational services to meet the needs and expectations of customers, by having a unique educational model in the area in which they obtain two professional degrees, one at TSU level (university technician and LIC / IN (graduate and engineer) allows them to be the first choice for generations, On the other hand, having extensions in various municipalities allows them to cover and attract more enrolment, on the other hand, it has opportunities for improvement in the industrial area in which it is located and the possibility of educational mobility for students to strengthen their academic knowledge, as there are new generations with thoughts of innovation and entrepreneurship, this allows the institution to be an option for them, since it has various careers and educational programmes that respond to demand. A clear example of this was when the covid-19 pandemic started, immediate strategic actions were taken to implement distance services and use was made of the various technological tools to carry out procedures and advertising remotely. On the other hand, as they have their own land, they have the great opportunity and strength to grow their infrastructure.

Like any external institution, there are threats, which should be analysed in detail in order to reduce their impact and ensure that they do not affect the institution's functioning, as well as weaknesses that can be converted into opportunities for improvement, One of them is non-assertive communication, which represents a major problem, since if it is not dealt with, it leads to deficiencies in services and dissatisfaction on the part of clients and parents, as well as changes and continuous rotation of personnel, which brings with it a slight problem in the different processes that are carried out.

Undoubtedly the institution has great strengths and opportunities for improvement that will allow it to remain competitive in the market and also to be in constant development and growth, however, for its proper functioning it will be necessary to address the various weaknesses and make strategic decisions that allow it to be prepared for any situation that arises as a threat and to face the environment in a competitive way.

The institution has a great competitive advantage due to the fact that it has its own land of great expansion that allows it to increase its infrastructure and build more buildings or to carry out projects to further improve its services by offering recreational rest areas, courts for other types of sports etc., on the other hand it is an institution committed to the services it provides, since it is currently certified in the iso 9001:2015 standard, reaffirming its commitment to quality education.

After determining and classifying the internal factors through the SWOT matrix, the internal factors evaluation matrix (MEFI) was implemented in order to estimate, classify and weigh the strengths and weaknesses of the institution (Morán & Luna, 2012).

MATRIZ MEFI			
FACTOR CRITICO DE EXITO	PONDERACION	CLASIFICACION	RESULTADO PONDERADO
FORTALEZAS			
Oferta educativa que ofrece	0.08	4	0.32
Personal capacitado	0.08	4	0.32
Cuenta con un centro de incubación y desarrollo empresarial	0.05	3	0.15
Infraestructura adecuada	0.05	3	0.15
Laboratorios de prácticas adecuadas	0.07	4	0.28
Terreno propio	0.05	3	0.15
Modelo educativo	0.08	4	0.32
Programas educativos acreditados	0.08	4	0.32
Vinculación con el sector Productivo	0.04	4	0.16
Ubicación geográfica	0.05	3	0.15
Sistema de gestión de calidad ISO 9001-2015 Certificado	0.07	3	0.21
SUBTOTAL DE FORTALEZAS			2.53
DEBILIDADES			
Comunicación no asertiva	0.05	1	0.05
Falta de cobertura adecuada de internet	0.05	2	0.1
Rezagos tecnológicos	0.05	1	0.05
Presupuesto insuficiente	0.05	1	0.05
Demandas laborales	0.05	2	0.1
Rotación de personal sin previo aviso	0.05	1	0.05
SUBTOTAL DE DEBILIDADES			0.4

Table 2 Tabasco University's MEFI matrix

When analysing the internal factors evaluation matrix, it is obtained that the strengths had a weighted score of 2.53 while the weaknesses score was 0.4, therefore the university should take advantage of this advantage over the other universities in the region.

Among the strengths observed in matrix 2, the institution has trained teachers who provide a high level of education in the different areas of the productive and social sector, as well as an administrative staff in constant training that allows them to respond correctly in their administrative procedures and in the various services provided. However, as there is a technological backwardness and there are failures in the internet connection, they have a weakness as an institution, as this causes delays or failures in the services provided, as well as staff turnover without prior notice, which causes some procedures to be delayed and not completed successfully, and this causes inconvenience to students, parents, areas and departments.

On the other hand, by having a business incubation and development centre, which helps the university to have its own income and at the same time contributes to the academic strengthening of students, graduates and society in general, this represents a competitive advantage since at least 70% of the universities in the region do not have a business incubation centre, which provides opportunities for new entrepreneurs in the area.

Also as part of this advantage the institution has a large area of land which allows it to expand its infrastructure and carry out new projects to increase the supply of services and in turn offer recreational areas of rest, courts for other types of sports etc., on the other hand is an institution is currently certified in ISO 9001:2015, reaffirming its commitment to quality education.

Among the weaknesses observed in the matrix, the highest weights are the lack of internet coverage, which is vital for educational institutions nowadays, and the various labour demands that the university is going through. This has a significant impact on the subtotal of the weaknesses with 0.4, which represents the sum of the weaknesses of the educational institution.

Conclusions

One of the most important conclusions that can be drawn from this external/internal analysis study is that it is possible to formulate strategies. A number of strategies can be provided, but only a few can be implemented, because we know that organisations, as well as educational institutions, however large and competitive they are, have limited resources. Therefore, no company can respond to all the challenges it faces. The university must prioritise in proportion to its size, objectives and market demands, it is necessary to manage its limited resources: human, financial and technological to maximise the final results.

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