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# Dilemmas Of Strategic Planning in Contemporary Universities Environments

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Planning has gained importance among practitioners and academics. In light of the current requirement for creative activities, this study examines the difficulties facing planning agencies, particularly at universities, with regard to environmental planning. The article comprehensive overview of three particular problems of the current requirement for creative activities, this study the difficulties facing examines planning particularly at universities, with regard to environmental planning. The article provides a comprehensive overview of three particular problems. The conflicts between intervention, regulation, and investment are distinguished and theoretically explored. This paper offers knowledge of the planning dilemmas that exist today at academic institutions by examining the crucial concepts of time and space in the intervention dilemma, material and procedural standards in the regulation dilemma, and risk and income in the investment dilemma.

This study suggests that in order to develop new contextualized forms of synthesis, planning practice at academic institutions today has to make sense of these dilemmas. Because of the intense competition among higher education institutions, strategic planning is crucial to their survival and success.



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# 1. Introduction

It is a fact that in today's complex world, strategic planning is crucial for any organization to succeed in the business sphere. Many studies reveal that the issue is more complex than generally believed. This is because the rapid changes in the environment, workplace, technology, and social perspectives make it difficult to find new solutions and adapt strategic planning to this new innovation in the real world. Similarly, research from a strategic planning perspective in developing countries is very limited. Thus, the literature of strategic planning at present demands more empirical studies be conducted.

Strategic planning plays an important and key role in the success and survival of all kinds of businesses, among them educational organizations. Higher education institutions, in particular, are regarded as the foundation of modern economic and social growth. Even in today's highly dynamic environment, strategic planning remains crucial for any organization to succeed in the business sector, and for those who are interested in organizational and managerial development, strategic planning remains an important research topic. (French, Kelly, & Harrison, 2004).

The ability of a business to change with the times in today's world will determine its success, sustainability, and even existence. As the world has changed considerably in recent years, businesses face numerous new obstacles every day. Businesses face numerous risks and pressures from the competition that prohibit them from achieving their objectives (Akdogan & Cingoz, 2012). In order to investigate new opportunities and recognize dangers so that key strategic decisions can be made, environmental scanning has been recognized as one of the crucial steps in the strategic planning process. Many authors have acknowledged the necessity of ongoing, deliberate environmental study and integration of the environmental information into their strategic planning (Balasundaram, 2008).

The rationale that underpins how an organization adapts to its external environment is dealt with in strategic planning (Ansoff, 1987). To match their firm's strategies with the demands of the external environment, business executives (owners) must be aware of and comprehend the external operating environment of their organizations (Bettis & Hitt, 1995; Wholey & Brittain, 1989). The competitive

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intensity of a company is defined as its tendency to directly and strongly fight its competitors in order to gain entry and sustain itself in the market. Only through a careful analysis of the business's external environment is it achievable (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

#### 2. Problem statement

This paper contributes to the theoretical debate at the university level about some aspects of contemporary strategic planning. Through some aspects, it tries to explain that educational planners are facing three major dilemmas at the university level: educational regulation, educational investment, and political intervention (Albrechts, 2003; Gordon, 1997; Campbell, 2001; Phelps et al., 2010). The study intends to shed light on the impact of a discrepancy between higher education institutions' internal environment, which leans heavily toward stability, and their external environment, which is marked by fast change. This contradiction reveals the strategic plans adopted by higher education institutions to be ineffective, and in the majority of cases, it renders them unrealistic. This results in a waste of resources used by higher education institutions and the labor market (money, capabilities, and ability). Due to the passing of time, students' knowledge and skills in higher education are no longer in line with the requirements of the workplace. This results in a double waste of resources: first, at the university level due to inadequate student preparation; and second, in the labor market due to inadequate use of graduates' qualifications and the need to set up training programs, which forces the workplace to incur additional costs and waste.

# 3. Significance of the study

This paper contributes to the theoretical debate about some aspects of contemporary strategic planning at the university level. The paper tries to explain how educational planners at the university level are dealing with three main problems: political intervention, investment in education, and internal regulation.

This paper is important from a theoretical and practical standpoint. The strategic planning quandary stems from the fact that planning is a critical issue for any



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management in any modern organization, but due to rapid growth, techniques for estimating for long periods of time have become significantly less effective. Strategic planning, as is widely known, focuses on creating plans for relatively long periods of time, but at the same time, these plans are constantly changed, modified, and replaced with reasonable alternatives, making it harder to make planning decisions that are relatively trustworthy. This fact has caused the period of strategic planning to be reduced, and decisions based on speculative processes have been temporarily replaced. This phenomenon needs further research by those with an interest in planning studies, highlighting its effects on the nature of strategic planning and its tasks and looking for speculative solutions to guarantee the acceptable construction of images for organizations' visions and missions that could ensure reasonably accurate estimates in the distant future.

Due to the long study period that may last two to five years or more, studies on strategic planning issues are particularly crucial at higher education institutions in comparison to other organizations. The passage of time and changes in the graduate's employment tasks as a result render the student's planned knowledge and abilities ineffective.

According to the information above, research on the strategic planning dilemma is extremely important since it helps researchers come up with solutions for the various problems it causes. One of the objectives of this research is to clarify this situation and identify potential contributing variables to solve some of its problems. From a practical standpoint, the significance of the study lies in recognizing the trends in applied research and pointing out potential research areas through the suggestions and proposals it generates.

# 4. Scope of the study:

The study will deal with four dimensions related to strategic dilemmas in higher education, in particular at the university level. The dimensions are:

The nature of planning, methodological obstacles, political intervention, and investment.



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#### 5. Terms Definition

- **5.1 Planning,** is the process of applying knowledge to a set of future actions. It is problematic in nature because the future is wrought with both quantitative and qualitative uncertainties, as well as unexpected occurrences. (Abdul Khakee, 2020)
- **5.2 Planning dilemmas**, Planning is a dilemmatic and paradoxical process, due to the complexity of the issues it addresses as well as the obstacles and contradictions that planners must overcome. (Savini, F., Majoor, S., & Salet, W. 2015).
- **5.3 Methodological obstacles**: Methodological obstacles are multiple barriers that prevent strategic planning from effectively achieving its goals.
- **5.4 Political intervention**; political issues that have an impact on planning. **Investment dilemma**; The investment dilemma in planning stems from the need to cope with the problems of a pure supply-led approach by achieving more demandresponsive plans, but without sacrificing the capacity of developers and investors to generate revenue streams that could sustain other projects.

# 6. Research Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of some strategic aspects on strategic planning dilemmas in contemporary university environments from the perspective of the theories and research articles that have been published. In light of the available literature, strategic planning dilemmas are investigated in this paper using the descriptive method.

# 7. Dilemmas of Strategic Planning

# 7.1 The Nature of Planning

Planning, which is the process of applying knowledge to a set of future actions, is complicated because the future is filled with unpredictable events, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Taking decisions while planning frequently entails



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selecting from alternatives that are, or occasionally seem to be, unsatisfactory. It is not always possible to anticipate both the immediate and long-term effects of planned actions, no matter whether they are taken by smaller teams of planners or by larger groups of stakeholders.

Planning also involves making rational judgments; planners have always had to make the best decisions possible while taking into account the spatial, intertemporal, and social conditions that were in place at the time.

All of our options have their limitations, so it is almost as if our judgments accordingly are not only limited but also difficult to make. As earlier studies that focused on the dilemmatic aspects of planning have shown, planning is a paradoxical process because the problems it addresses are complex and because planners have to overcome challenges and contradictions.

(Rittel & Webber, 1973; Savini, Majoor, & Salet, 2015; Thomas & Healey, 1991).

The nature of planning activity and the guiding principles upon which it should be founded have been hotly debated topics throughout the long history of planning practices. In-depth conversations centered on selecting the best course of action to address the planners' challenges while taking into account the competing interests of the many parties impacted by those decisions. Administrators and planners are aware that this factor has a significant impact, especially when daily planning activities are linked to moral dilemmas, such as the degree to which a practice is morally right or wrong, how closely it relates to social justice ideals, or the exclusivity of the entitlement of the beneficiary groups (Reade, 1987; Low, 1991).

Heather C. and Robert M. (1998) state that the planners are not the only ones who are becoming more interested in the ethical implications; the debates can be seen within law and medicine. However, identifying acceptable methods becomes more difficult when planning applications within public-sector organizations. Such dilemmas make the demands placed on planners more challenging. For instance, are planners obliged to serve the interests of politicians, the company, the managers, the clients, the larger community, future generations, and the labor market? Furthermore, there is a high possibility that evolving circumstances will have an impact on commitment and actions, altering planned outcomes or, at the very least,



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bringing into question broadly accepted norms and values. It's almost never easy to plan. Planning, which is the application of knowledge to a set of future activities, is problematic since the future is rife with both quantitative and qualitative uncertainty as well as unexpected occurrences. Making decisions during planning often requires selecting from among possibilities that are, or occasionally appear to be, undesirable. Understanding the immediate and long-term effects of planned activities is not always achievable. In addition, whether planning is done by a small group of public planners or a larger group of stakeholders, it always entails making practical decisions. Planners' best judgment, while taking into account the geographical, intertemporal, and social variables available at the moment, has always been the deciding factor. I It is probable—almost certain—that judgments are not just confined but also that decisions are challenging since all of our possibilities have limitations. Planning is a paradoxical activity, as evidenced by past research that specifically addressed the dilemmatic aspects of planning. This is owing to the difficulties and paradoxes that planners encounter, as well as the complexity of the topics it addresses. (Abdul Khakee, 2020, pp. 175–181).

# 7.2 Methodological Dilemmas

Group cooperation in planning in developed countries began in the 1990s of the previous centuries, and very advanced methods have been developed in all aspects of the planning process. Nevertheless, there were multiple barriers that prevented strategic planning from effectively achieving its goals, particularly in the fields of higher education, where the expected results were frequently subject to change in comparatively short periods of time. As a result, strategic plans lost one of their most important qualities—the flexibility and capacity to accept changes without risking long-term goals or significant objectives—and became disconnected from reality.

Strategic planning in practice shows that there are various fundamental and secondary reasons for the current crisis, particularly in the field of education. Technology and communication advancements had a significant impact on the basis for prediction because they required more complex planning models.



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In the last two decades, restricting techniques were used in strategic planning due to factors relating to the internal and external environments of educational institutions, which caused the plans' slowness in responding to the demands of rapid change.

For example, while changes in the labor market occur quickly, the preparation process lags behind market demands due to students' lengthy preparation.

#### 7.3 Political Intervention Dilemmas

This paper aims to contribute conceptually by highlighting the current political issues that have an impact on planning. The process of planning is frequently seen as a political one that involves dividing power and establishing agreements between diverse interests. Planners are frequently presented as mediators in a larger political process (Albrechts, 2003) or as managers of political dynamics in project management, and there is historical acknowledgement that there are clear interconnections between planning practice and strategies for enhancing the authority of politicians (Gordon, 1997). Despite the significance of the relationship between politics and planning, there hasn't been enough debate about it among academics and researchers, and the subject is generally quite unclear (Campbell, 2001, p. 83).

According to several studies regarding the relationship between politics and education generally, there is little political analysis of educational planning in general (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011; Gift and Wibbels 2014; Nicolai et al. 2014; Wales, Magee, and Nicolai 2016; Bruns and Schneider 2016).

Education systems are composed of a set of technical and political components, and in order for these components to be effective, systematic changes are required to ensure their alignment with each other for achieving education plan objectives. Because of wide political and non-academic involvement, educational institutions frequently confront significant political challenges in executing or completing their aims. There are several ways that politics can affect educational goals or how they are implemented, some of which include the following:



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- Political restrictions frequently limit the efficacy of educational systems. For instance, policies could be well-designed but lack sufficient funding (UNESCO, 2014).
- 2. Plans for the growth of the educational system frequently fail to make effective use of their resources. For example, faculty members may lack adequate training and pedagogical skills to accomplish educational tasks as planned, but there is less money allocated for training staff (Bray and Lykins, 2012; Campe, 2015).
- 3. Indirect connections between learning outcomes and inputs: several countries have proven themselves to be ingenious in building classrooms, updating educational technologies, providing training, or introducing new programs. However, the mechanism linking these important investments with student learning outcomes may be ineffective. (Pritchett, 2013; Ulrich, Kremer, and Moulin, 2009).
- 4. Planners and administrators in educational institutions are confronted with obstacles of a political nature. The obstacles are related to the challenges of improving the quality of education and its outputs, the quality of communication with the labor market, and keeping pace with the needs of the various stockholders who benefit from educational outputs. However, political restrictions and non-academic interventions may have a greater impact in countries that adopt central policies. Additionally, quality is frequently less clear and more complex, particularly in environments where resources are limited to improve educational outcomes, and even when there are interventions of a positive nature, their results do not appear quickly enough. This limits the flow of investments necessary to improve the operations of educational institutions in light of the accreditation and quality requirements imposed by developed universities worldwide (Hossain and Moore, 2002; Mani and Mukand, 2007; Grindle, 2004; Kosack, 2012).

Political groups have a variety of political motivations for interfering in educational matters. Whether these motivations are good or bad, their involvement is still effective, and these motivations define the type and extent of their influence.

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Groups with a professional background, including those that interfere for ideological, humanitarian, national, or geopolitical reasons. The educational policies and programs that educational institutions establish are influenced by all interventions. The desire of a political group to keep power may not align with the objectives and strategies chosen by educational institutions, rendering the stability of educational policies susceptible (Bruns, Macdonald, and Schneider, 2019).

The administrative system chosen by the state, either centralization or decentralization, may be the source of its political influence. Accordingly, the permitted educational policies vary, as is the case in the United States of America, where each state's education policies are different from those of other states. There are numerous examples of this all over the world (Kosack, 2012).

Influential political groups also do not have a consistent perspective on educational policies, educational standards, or educational outcomes. The continuing plans are directly impacted by the regular modifications to political solutions that various political factions embrace.

Depending on the administrative style utilized, the management style employed at various levels of the educational administration, and the administrative style of funding education, political interventions may have varying effects (Kingdon et al. 2014; Kosack 2012; Grindle, 2004).

The political climate and the social, economic, and cultural developments are just a few of the factors that determine how much the state can influence education quality improvement. For instance, the lack of pressure placed on governments to improve the level of quality and efficacy of school institutions weakens the impact of the state in many developing countries (Harding, Robin, and David Stasavage, 2013). In many less developed countries, the labor market does not require formal education as a prerequisite for employment. It may not be expected that stockholders will put pressure on schools to improve the quality of their outcomes in such political and cultural contexts (Kosack 2012). In the aforementioned scenario, governments and educational institutions' ability to plan for increasing schools' effectiveness in accordance with the quality standards will be constrained



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by the lack of pressure from the labor market and other beneficiaries to improve quality in line with global demand (Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer 1985).

At all levels of authority, the effects of political interventions are clear, and they require serious research to address them. Better communication and coordination between educational institutions and the labor market about the standard of their outcomes in terms of skills and knowledge are required on a national level (Di John and Putzel 2009, p. 4). The educational system should make sure that the stockholders' requirements are met (Khan 2010; Kingdon et al. 2014; Williams 2017). The development of policies that will ensure and strengthen incentives for local and educational administrators to practice accountability and responsibilities for enhancing the quality of education and qualifying school outcomes in order to be more advantageous in the labor market is absolutely essential at the local and school level (McLoughlin 2011; Williams 2019). Government intervention is only one aspect of political influence on education; other actors, such as different trade unions, professional associations, interest groups, and other informal sector institutions, also play a significant role in determining reform strategies and improving the quality of educational institution activities (Grindle, 2004; Kosack, 2012).

All of the aforementioned political initiatives place restrictions on educational plans and subject them to significant changes in their structures and objectives.

#### 7.4 Investment Dilemmas

The investment dilemma in planning arises from the need to address issues of a purely supply-led approach while preserving the ability of developers and investors to secure revenue streams that can support other projects. While demand-led development seems risky and uncertain and may have little effect on the main objectives of targeted change, supply-led development accordingly provides some level of control over business production programming. However, the frequent global economic crises have shown how it can be sidetracked by unrealistic expectations that may not be fulfilled. Thus, risk tolerance determines the ability to



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allow self-administered business interventions (Sagalyn, 1997). The paradoxical reality of economic resources in planning is an element of the investment dilemma.

Economic studies of higher education frequently use the human capital theory (Becker, 1962, 1964) as their theoretical foundation. The ability to produce goods and services (such as talent, abilities, and health) is referred to as "human capital," and it affects how much someone is paid in the labor market.

There are many ways people can decide to invest in their productivity, including by devoting time to formal education. According to the theory, people should invest in their human capital until the marginal benefits and costs (such as tuition and fees and lost wages) are equal.

Academic risks and labor market risks are the two categories into which the most relevant risks can be divided based on human capital theory and the literature on the subject of higher education choices. The human capital theory contends that these factors are crucial when deciding whether to invest in higher education, so this focus will be particularly on risks that have an impact on either the costs or benefits of higher education. (Stuart J. Heckmana and Jodi C. Letkiewicz, 2021)

Students do not know with certainty how long it will take to complete their degree when they decide to invest in higher education. This is referred to as "time-to-degree risk" and could cost a lot of money. Longer college stays increase the opportunity costs of attending college as well as the direct costs of education (e.g., lost labor market wages).

The macroeconomic environment at graduation affects the financial return on investment in higher education. Post-graduate earnings can be significantly influenced by labor market supply and demand. Although the timing of graduation can be somewhat influenced, macroeconomic conditions are entirely out of the control of the individual decision-maker. People cannot predict their future earnings with absolute certainty, even though entry-level wages can be estimated by field and experience using average wages. There is also the risk of not finding employment after graduation, and this risk varies depending on the major field of study and the macroeconomic environment (Hartog & Diaz-Serrano, 2007; Fossen & Glocker, 2011).



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To be paid more in the labor market is the main incentive for people to invest in higher education. In a typical model, people invest in human capital until marginal benefits and marginal costs are equal in order to maximize utility. As a result, the costs and benefits of higher education are crucial factors in determining which higher education program to pursue. Numerous studies, however, show that there is systematic overestimation and underestimation of costs and future earnings, as well as significant uncertainty surrounding student loan repayment. Inaccurate cost or benefit estimates would result in systematic under- or overinvestment in the population.(Hira et al., 2000; Avery & Kane, 2004; Grodsky & Jones, 2007). (Johnson et al., 2016).

Given the variety of risks associated with higher education decisions and the extensive research literature demonstrating that decision makers struggle with risk, it is likely that people are selecting their higher education in a less than ideal way.

# 8. Conclusion

The fact that planning practices are paradoxical in nature is one of the major causes of the current planning crisis in higher education, and selecting appropriate strategies to deal with this paradox is crucial for minimizing its unfavorable effects. Understanding the requirements for planning practices is important for the process of making decisions related to creating higher education policies; it gives the opportunity to identify the key components of the approved policy and demonstrates how to prioritize particular options over others. The choices for planning practices are always considered in the context of political dimensions, and policymakers deal with them in order to address any interventions that have the potential to influence the direction of planning practices. Among them, the first is the capacity to set boundaries for planning policy in terms of the objectives and the time and space boundaries; the second is the capacity to manage the methods for carrying out the planning policy apart from interventions; and the third is the capacity to mobilize financial resources to achieve specific outputs and improve the drawn trends (Fainstein, 1994; Harding, 1997).



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In all three of the aforementioned dimensions, decision-making processes should be selective in the areas of organization and resource mobilization. Organizational and control challenges are a constant for planning authorities, especially in the higher education sector. Therefore, planning policies should be defined by these three components, with enough flexibility to ensure that appropriate changes are made to meet the interventions that have an impact on how decisions are implemented, such as by making minor changes to the objectives and the boundaries of space and time, as well as by adjusting how public and private resources are combined in the implementation of policies.

Due to the limited resources in higher education, each of the aforementioned dimensions poses crucial planning dilemmas. As a result, planning should be selective in terms of its objectives, spatial and temporal borders, and by adopting future desirable scenarios that provide the ability to pinpoint administrative policies that have been adopted that are appropriate for the requirements of the present and future work environments. As practical tools through which visions and ideas are designed to develop planning scenarios far from conventional time and spatial considerations are essential elements of intervening in the field of developing planning practices.

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# دووفاقپهکانی پلاندانانی ستراتیژی له ژینگه زانکوٚکانی هاوچهرخدا

# پوخته:

پلاندانانی ستراتیژی و دوورپانهکانی له نیّو زوّریّک له پزیشکان و نهکادیمییهکان له بواری پلانداناندا گرنگییان بهدهستهیّناوه. هاوتهریب لهگهلّ نُهم ریّبازه، نُهم تویّژینهوهیه نامانجی دهرخستنی نُهو ناستهنگانهیه که بهردهم دهزگاکانی پلاندانانی ستراتیژی بهتایبهت له بواری خویّندنی بالادا ههیه، بهم پیّیه نُهم تویّژینهوهیه نُهو ناستهنگیانهی بهردهم دهزگاکانی پلاندانان له بواری پهروهردهدا به تایبهت له بواری زانکوّدا دهستنیشان کرد پهروهرده، و نُهم تویّژینهوهیه زانیاری سهبارهت به دوورپانهکانی پلاندانان دهدات بوونی نُهمرِوّ له دامهزراوه نُهکادیمییهکان له ریّگهی سهرهتا چهمکهکانی پهیوهست به کات و شویّن له پیّوهندی لهگهلّ دووفاقی دهستیّوهردانی لایهنه نائهکادیمییهکان، به تایبهت دهستیّوهردانهکانی سیاسی، و دووهم، پیّوهره ماددی و ریّکارهکانی پهیوهست به دوورپانهکانی ریّکخستن، و مهترسییهکانی پهیوهست بهوهوه بوّ دووفاقی وهبهرهیّنان. به مهبهستی تیّپهراندنی نُهو سهختییانهی که رووبهرووی پلاندانانی ستراتیژی دهبیّتهوه، نُهم به مهبهستی تیّپهراندنی نُهو سهختییانهی که رووبهرووی پلانداناندا پیّشنیار دهکات، بهتایبهتی نُهو تویّژینهوهیه زهمینهی نویّی کوّکردنهوه له پراکتیکهکانی پلانداناندا پیّشنیار دهکات، بهتایبهتی نُهو



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یراکتیکانهی پلاندانان له دامهزراوه ئهکادیمییهکان که پیّویسته له سروشتی ئهو دووریانانه تیّبگهن که ئەمرۆ فەرمانگە ستراتیژییهکان رووبەروویان دەبێتەوە، بەتایبەتی لە بواری دارایی و... وەبەرھێنان لە بارودۆخى كێبركێى توند لە نێوان دامەزراوە پەروەردەييەكان.دەستێوەردانى باڵاتر و سیاسی و ههڵاوسانی خیرا.

# معضلات التخطيط الاستراتيجي في بيئات الجامعات المعاصرة

# الملخص:

اكتسب التخطيط اللاسترتيجي ومعضلاته أهمية بين العديد من الممارسين والأكاديميين في ميدان التخطيط. وانسجاما مع هذا التوجه تهدف هذه الدراسة كشف الصعوبات التي تواجه اجهزة التخطيط الإستراتيجي، خاصة في مجال التعليم العالى ، ولذلك يقدم البحث لمحة شاملة عن ثلاث مشكلات محددة تتعلق التخطيط الاستراتيجي وهي مشكلات التدخل من جهات عديدة غير اكاديمية، ومشكلات ذات علاقة بالتنظيم ومشكلات الااستثمار في التعليم العالى، وبناء غلى ذلك حددت هذه الدراسة الصعوبات التي تواجه أجهزة التخطيط في ميدان التربية والتعليم، وخاصة في مجال التعليم الجامعي ، وتوفر هذه الدراسة معرفة عن معضلات التخطيط الموجودة اليوم في المؤسسات الأكاديمية من خلال أولا المفاهيم ذات العلاقة بالزمان والمكان ارتباطا بمعضلة التدخل من جهات غير اكاديمية وخاصة التدخلات السياسية، وثانيا المعابير المادية والإجرائية ذات العلاقة بمعضلة التنظيم، والمخاطر ذات العلاقة بمعضلة الاستثمار.

تقترح هذه الدراسة في سبيل تجاوز الصعوبات التي يواجهها التخطيط الاستراتيجي سياقيات جديدة من التوليف في الممارسات التخطيطية ، وخاصة تلك الممارسة التخطيطية في المؤسسات الأكاديمية التي ينبغي ان تتفهم طبيعة المعضلات التي تواجهها المخطات الإستراتيجية اليوم، وخاصة في مجال التمويل واللإستثمار في ظروف المنافسة الشديدة بين المؤسسات التعليم العالى، والتدخلات السياسية وتقلباتها السريعة.