

Strategic thinking in high performance teams in public universities

Pensamiento estratégico en equipos de alto desempeño en universidades públicas

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ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this research was to analyze strategic thinking in high performance teams in public universities. The methodological framework was subscribed as a correlational descriptive investigation of non-experimental design. As a result, it is concluded that the organizations are subject of constant change, consequence of the vertiginous scientific-technological advance, of which the public university institutions do not escape, which, by their commitment with the academic formation of Professionals of the future require high performance teams oriented towards the exercise of strategic thinking.

Keywords: Strategic thinking, high-performance teams, public universities

RESUMEN:

La presente investigación tuvo como propósito analizar el pensamiento estratégico en equipos de alto desempeño en universidades públicas. El marco metodológico se suscribió como una investigación descriptiva correlacional, de diseño no experimental. Como resultado, se concluye que las organizaciones son sujeto de cambio constante, consecuencia del vertiginoso avance científico - tecnológico, del que no escapan las instituciones universitarias públicas, las cuales, por su compromiso con la formación académica de los profesionales del futuro, requieren de equipos de alto desempeño orientados hacia el ejercicio del pensamiento estratégico.

Palabras clave: Pensamiento estratégico, equipos de alto desempeño, universidades públicas.

1. Introduction

The thought is the internal mental state, consequence of the human perceptive process, as well as a way to be related to the objects and stages of the environment; this one assembles psychological functions like learning, feeling, remembering, between others; essential for the act of thinking. Also, it is defined by Ericsson and Hastied mentioned by Garbucio (2011) "like a sequence of symbolic and internal activities that lead to ideas or new and productive conclusions".

For the previous reason, the companies, independently of its nature, are born like ideas that impel a series of plans, which fulfillment they give place to an organized entity planned from its conception for the planning of activities destined for the development of the society. It is possible to affirm that the company flows from its beginnings of the strategic thought, but also of the work in team like foundation for its existence, and as method guides in the work of the human talent, from its individual efforts up to the work in team, resource valued for the interested organizations in tackling highly competitive global markets focused towards the innovation.

The present scientific article inclines for analyzing the strategic thought in teams of high performance in public universities, in the understood one that these academic institutions do part of the reality organizational previously raised. Therefore, the same one is organized in five segments: 1 introduction, 2 outlined analysis review of the scientific literature concerning the strategic thought and teams of high performance, 3 the methodology of the investigation; 4 analysis of results, and 5 Conclusions.

1.1. Strategic thinking

The action of formulating and planning strategies constitutes per se an intellectual process of creativity, as well as adaptation to changes; The awareness of this fact gave place in 1987 to the birth of "strategic thinking", which arises as a response to the obsolete planning based on formulas (Schnaars, 1994). This facilitated the processes in the organizations, becoming a competitive advantage to tackle the global markets, immersed them in constant changes product of the technological advances in information and communication.

It is necessary to stand out, that the concepts of strategic thought and strategic planning must not to be confused. An extensive scientific literature establishes clear differences between these. This way, it is found that "the strategic planning must be understood how a concept that is part of the managerial strategic thought and, therefore, is linked like directing, leading and managing a company or organization" (Sabaté and Solanas, 2011); therefore, it is seen like a "mental activity that provides a vision of the managerial future" (Farrier and Hernández, 2017). Therefore, the planning and the action to plan are inherent in the strategy.

In this order of ideas, Sainz (2015) defines planning as an activity of analysis and reflection in which factors of various kinds intervene, but whose exercise must be consistent with strategic thinking, as this is the "Foundation for making Strategic decisions "; The author emphasizes that the lack of this "foundation" will cause the actions to be dispersed and unconscious in the medium and long term, distorting the future vision of the Organization. Consequently, managers require strategic thinking to address planning, action and implementation of it effectively, as well as adjusted to organizational requirements and objectives, as In essence, the strategy, the generation of ideas, innovative solutions in response to complex and unpredictable circumstances.

For Alles (2011), the strategic thinking is a:

"Ability to understand changes in the environment and establish their impact on the short, medium and long term in the organization, optimize internal strengths, act on weaknesses and take advantage of context opportunities. It implies the ability to visualize and conduct the organization as an integral approach, to achieve challenging objectives and goals that are reflected".

Therefore, strategic thinking is a desirable competition in a university manager, in the understanding that private or public universities for their effective development in the market that is their responsibility, require a leader with the capacities Previously mentioned, that contributes with the achievement of the objectives envisaged in a methodical, reflective and intuitive way, understanding the internal and external factors that make up the reality in the university institutions.

From the same approach of ideas explains Senge (2006), that the first step of strategic thinking is the reflection on the project; Developing in the strategist, what the author calls "Focus and synchronization", the first describes the importance of knowing to which aspects to direct attention; The second refers to the coherence between efforts and goals to achieve. In this context, for Medina and Ortegón (2006), the full knowledge is of supreme importance on the functioning of the strategic thought, since across this one it is determined and faces the strategic planning, which needs of the "creative intuition, the intellectual autonomy, the analytical aptitude, the divergent thought, and the flexibility". The authors synthesize in three types of thought: the logician, the critic, the creative one, which justify the mentioned qualities:

Logical thinking: according to Wright & Tohinaka mentioned by Medina and Ortegón (2006), is based on the comprehension, formulation, analysis, as well as the evaluation of arguments. Therefore, it guarantees human interaction, contributes to clarity of thought, effective communication, the development of judgments based on argumented reasoning, because through language determines the relationship between premises and conclusions, depending on rationality, as well as truth as guiding principles.

According to the authors, this kind of thinking revolves around topics such as: formal and informal logic, deduction and induction, the use of argument techniques, as well as propositions in accordance with language, the context of use, the key assumptions, as well as the intentions of the speaker. Likewise, Castañeda *et al.* (2012), describes logical thinking also called lineal, as natural, spontaneous, mathematical, based on experiences; It is sequential, therefore each phase requires justification and evidence based on "pre-established logic principles".

Consequently, the management leaders of organizations require the implementation of logical thinking to define and accurately identify the inconvenience to be attended to. This will allow them to provide correct, effective solutions and of quality to the present problems in the routine character of the work in team, especially in the acquaintances as of high performance, because this one type of thought is directed, reflectively, conclusively, analytical, faced it was making to synthesize, compare and leave aside, being constituted in a competition of the first order for the decision making.

Critical thinking is to "identify and solve the real problems well, instead of solving with precision false problems", favors in the approach of complex situations, for which, Wright & Tohinaka mentioned by Medina and Ortegón (2006) It states that "it systematically uses different perspectives of analysis, coming from different types of knowledge."

Around this idea, Campos (2007), refers that it allows "people to make reliable judgments on the credibility of a claim or the desirability of a certain action", for this is aided by intellectual skills such as analysis, Reflection to determine the validity of the information received and to be able to discern before theoretical or practical alternatives. Therefore, the critical thinking includes competitions translated in attitudes and carefully reasoned aptitudes: for the appropriate evaluation of the information, the evaluation of the proper or foreign beliefs and the actions product of these, as well as the disposal at the change in constant learning of new skills.

The creative thinking as Michalko mentioned by Medina and Ortegón (2006): it is generative and innovative; therefore, he re-interprets the complex situations to conceptualize them on the base of multiple alternatives "it moves away from the known for the use and the curiosity of the experimentation. It dares to re-represent the existing thing and to look for new ways". For Castañeda *et al.* (2012):

"Creative or lateral thinking is the source of new mental representations. It is a competition that allows us to invent or discover new aspects. It is the ingenuity or talent that each person possesses. Is to fly the imagination to conceive new perceptions. The development of creative thinking is very important because it allows us to improve, modify, perfect, innovate invent or discover new aspects that until then had not been imagined". (p. 73)

For Menchén (2010), the creativity inside the organizations depends on the persons, who are characterized for possessing "common qualities like the independence, the autonomy the intuition and the spontaneity; they are curious and sure of optimistic, themselves, himself and with big sense of humor. The subjects must be the creative savant of the organization".

In this ideas order, the present article fixes position with the argumentation that on strategic thought Medina and Ortegón (2006) express, given that it reflects like the components of this one, that is to say, logical, critical and creative thought, there are essential elements for the effectiveness in teams of high performance. It is clear that the conjugation of the mentioned elements provides to the human talent the necessary competencies to achieve the planned organizational objectives.

Likewise, the exposed premises become vitally important in the university organizations, whose academic character, as well as their importance for the development of the Colombian society imposes challenges to be surpassed in the light of the development in their human talent of The competencies of strategic thinking and effective teamwork as organizational principles aimed at achieving success in one of the most important institutions of the country.

1.2 High Performance Teams:

Teamwork has constituted a *sine qua non* requirement in the dynamics of contemporary organizations, it is also the most expeditious way to add value to them.

Therefore, that people learn to work side to side, according to reaching the due targets, taking as a premise the effective productivity of the organization in which it works, it is a guarantee to develop a creative, generating energy of successful actions from strategic agreements, in which every individual involves a responsible commitment with its partners, to what they establish Duran, Crissien, Virviescas and Garcia (2017) "The formation of teams allows a company to be proactive instead of reactive in the formulation of its future".

Consequence of the dynamics organizational, as well as the rapid evolution of the information technologies and communication, the organizations need of teams capable of tackling really the challenges that there imposes the vertiginous change of the global markets. This mature version of the joint work is called: High performance or performance teams, self-directed, effective or dynamic. It should be noted that this inescapable reality reaches universities, which as an academic entity are committed to research, scientific production and training of their human talent, for which they require such strategies.

Within this perspective Rodríguez (2008), conceives this type of equipment "as a structured and flexible social process" in order to originate the active participation of each member in the achievement of common objectives, achieved through "clear indicators of Productivity, quality and satisfaction with working life". Meanwhile, Malpica, Rossell and Hoffmann (2014) define them as "a small number of people", whose knowledge, skills, complementary experiences, as well as their commitment to the organization, establishing realistic but challenging goals, Identify. Similarly, Guizar (2013), in contrast to the previous authors extends the number to fifteen persons authorized to analyze, also to propose solutions to unforeseen difficulties, car to be administered, to establish assertive communication, compromised with the high direction to achieve products or quality services.

For Rodríguez (2008), the high Performance teams are defined by the nature of the interactions that dynamize the relations between their members, of these three dimensions are detached, the task, the procedure and the socio-affective process:

Well-defined tasks: According to Rodríguez (2008), it is conceived as a task, in addition to the objectives or goals, all those complex circumstances to be resolved. Within the conception of the aforementioned author, this is the most relevant element, therefore the most important. For "High Performance teams, the tasks must be very well defined, so that the different components of the team, according to their roles, can deal with them naturally and assertively. This facilitates the implementation of the task, its monitoring and evaluation".

As for the objectives, these are defined by Chiavenato (2010), as a "goal to achieve, a desire or an expectation that is intended to be realized in a given period"; He affirms that the strategic process, which is part of the strategic thinking, corresponds to an integrated set of decisions oriented towards the definition of objectives, the elaboration of strategies to achieve them and the choice of actions for their concretion. The author explains "a crucial aspect of this process is its preparation, which must be borne by people who interact and argue with each other, in addition to exchanging ideas and negotiating with one another."

Simple working procedures: With regard to the procedures, Rodríguez (2008), concatenates this dimension with the previous one, because "identified the task, the groups look for the way to carry it out, establishing a system of work that allows them to increase their efficiency, by giving better use to the Resources available to achieve their goals". It conceives the procedures, also called work processes, as "sets of operations, organized in chronological sequence that requires the systematic way of doing a task". Meanwhile, Münch and García (2008), conceptualize the procedure as a succession of specific routine activities, according to the situation and organizational structure, type of product, availability of human resources and material, among other factors.

Therefore, for the strategic thinking, according to the complements that make it up, it requires a team oriented towards the systematic, chronological organized work, as well as sequenced for the achievement of the organizational goals, it is then dimension primary condition, defining work in high performance teams.

Satisfactory socio-affective process: Defined the task, determined the procedure, are generated according to Rodríguez (2008), interpersonal relations expressed as actions and affective or emotional reactions, to which they do not pay due attention. The aforementioned author defines two levels in this dimension: the individual, reflected in attitudes and behaviors that can facilitate or hinder the execution of the task; And the group level, reflected in the socio-affective process that manifests itself in the relations between the members of the team.

Therefore, in high-performance teams communication skills, active listening, observation and management of emotions are key elements for the effective execution of tasks and implementation of procedures. In this regard, Madrigal explains (2009), that "the game of emotions, individual and

collective passions has always existed", but, for the management of these factors is intelligence, which according to Goleman (2011), is the ability to recognize our own Feelings, feelings of others, motivate and properly manage the relationships we hold with others and with ourselves"

The indicators, tasks, procedures and socio-affective processes are not only vital for the development of teamwork, but also for the exercise of strategic thinking. Understand and describe the importance of these for high performance teams, as well as the positive impact of the components of strategic thinking for the effective achievement of the objectives in the university organizations is the subject of study of this research.

2. Methodology

As for the methodology, the research is descriptive, because it describes the behavior of strategic thinking in high performance teams in private universities, in this context, explains Hernández, Fernandez and Baptista (2010) "The Descriptive research seeks to specify properties, characteristics and important traits of any phenomena being analyzed. Describes trends in a group or population".

Also, this research is framed in a non-experimental design, because the variable is studied as it is presented without being modified, and it is considered transversal by collecting the data in a single moment. Coupled with being established as correlational, because it measures the incidence of strategic thinking in high performance teams, as well as their degree of relationship.

In relation to the study population, this research analyses the strategic thinking in high performance teams at the University of the Atlantic, in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia. In this order, explains Arias (2012), in more precise terms target population, is a finite set of elements with common characteristics for which the conclusions of the investigation will be extended. Being the population the Faculty of Economic Sciences, constituting specifically, 1 Dean, 4 program coordinators, 4 missionary coordinators of faculty (research, self-evaluation, extension and well-being), 3 University professionals (assistance functions), 2 Administrative assistants, 23 plant teachers, 8 full time teachers, and 70 professors, constituting 115 informants units.

As instrument of compilation of information, there used two surveys type questionnaire, with nine (9) items each one, which allowed to measure the behavior of the variables: strategic thought and teams of high performance, which was validated across an interrelation coefficient Alpha of Crombach, with 0,92, being highly reliable.

For the analysis of the data, the descriptive statistic was carried out in order to measure the behavior of the strategic thinking in teams of high performance in private universities, and then to establish the correlation between the two variables, through the coefficient of Spearman's Rho correlation. Subsequently, these results are analyzed and interpreted, in addition explain Finol and Camacho (2008), the interpretation is made as a process of critical and argumentative reflection, is inseparable from the analysis.

3. Results

Applied the instruments for the collection of the information, the corresponding treatment was carried out for the analysis of the same ones, since the information thrown will be the one that indicates the conclusions to which the investigation arrives, which It will show the analysis of strategic thinking in high performance teams in private universities. For the comprehension, these results are presented in tables which indicate the total of the studied dimensions, which have been designed based on the descriptive statistic.

Table 1
Strategic thinking.

Indicators	ÍTEMS	Alternatives of Answer									
		Always		Almost always		Sometimes		Hardly Ever		Never	
		Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr
Logical thinking	1	45	39,13	23	20,00	18	15,65	17	14,78	12	10,43
	2	51	44,35	19	16,52	14	12,17	16	13,91	15	13,04
	3	47	40,87	21	18,26	18	15,65	13	11,30	16	13,91
Σ		143	41,45	63	18,26	50	14,49	46	13,33	43	12,46
Critical thinking	4	49	42,61	35	30,43	18	15,65	9	7,83	4	3,48
	5	47	40,87	29	25,22	17	14,78	10	8,70	12	10,43
	6	52	45,22	31	26,96	14	12,17	11	9,57	7	6,09
Σ		148	42,90	95	27,54	49	14,20	30	8,70	23	6,67
Creative thinking	7	43	37,39	29	25,22	15	13,04	13	11,30	15	13,04
	8	51	44,35	27	23,48	16	13,91	18	15,65	3	2,61
	9	49	42,61	30	26,09	12	10,43	10	8,70	14	12,17
Σ		143	41,45	86	24,93	43	12,46	41	11,88	32	9,28
Σ TOTAL		434	41,93	244	23,57	142	13,72	117	11,30	98	9,47
AVERAGE		41,93		23,57		13,72		11,30		9,47	
COMBINED AVERAGE		32,75				10,39					

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the results of the project survey

Table 1 shows the results of the strategic thinking dimension, where it can be observed that as far as the logical thought indicator is, a tendency towards the alternative of response "always", with a 41.45%, followed "almost always" with a percentage of 18.26%, which reveals a high compliance with the indicator, as well as a positive tendency to logical thinking. On the other hand, regarding the critical thinking indicator, there is evidence of a trend towards "always" response alternatives with 42.90%, followed by 27.54% in the alternative "almost always". Later, in the creative thinking indicator, 41.45% of the "always" response is shown, followed by 24.93% towards the alternative "almost always". That indicator got a positive presence.

Consequently, the results obtained approximate the theory posed by Medina and Ortegon (2006), who considers that the strategic thought is the result of the conjugation of the reasoning represented by the logical thoughts plus the critic and the Intuition based on creative thinking, however, it should be noted that the aforementioned complements of strategic thinking, in the intellectual decision-making process, act in an associated way.

Table 2
High Performance Teams.

Indicators	ÍTEMS	Alternatives of Answer										Total	
		Always		Almost always		Always		Almost always		Always		Almost always	
		Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr	Fa	Fr
Logical thinking	1	45	39,13	25	21,74	21	18,26	11	9,57	13	11,30	115	100
	2	41	35,65	23	20,00	25	21,74	12	10,43	14	12,17	115	100
	3	35	30,43	40	34,78	12	10,43	9	7,83	19	16,52	115	100
Σ		121	35,07	88	25,51	58	16,81	32	9,28	46	13,33	345	100
Critical thinking	4	43	37,39	29	25,22	30	26,09	9	7,83	4	3,48	115	100
	5	51	44,35	29	25,22	17	14,78	10	8,70	8	6,96	115	100
	6	50	43,48	31	26,96	14	12,17	12	10,43	8	6,96	115	100
Σ		144	41,74	89	25,80	61	17,68	31	8,99	20	5,80	345	100
Creative thinking	7	12	10,43	14	12,17	18	15,65	37	32,17	34	29,57	115	100
	8	11	9,57	10	8,70	8	6,96	65	56,52	21	18,26	115	100
	9	17	14,78	11	9,57	13	11,30	40	34,78	34	29,57	115	100
Σ		40	11,59	35	10,14	39	11,30	142	41,16	89	25,80	345	100
Σ TOTAL		305	29,47	212	20,48	158	15,27	205	19,81	155	14,98	1035	100
AVERAGE		29,47		20,48		15,27		19,81		14,98			
COMBINED AVERAGE		24,98						17,39					

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the results of the project survey

Table 2 shows the results of the high performance equipment dimension, where the "tasks" indicator can be observed as a trend towards the "always" response alternative, with a 35.07%, followed by "almost always" with a percentage of 25.51%. With regard to the "procedures" indicator, a trend towards the "always" response alternative is reflected with a 41.74%, but in the "almost always" alternative, it shows a 25.80%. The exposed evidence positive presence of both indicators.

Finally, in the indicator "Socio-affective Processes", is shown a 11.59% in the alternative response "always", followed by a 10.14% to the alternative "almost always." Therefore, this indicator, unlike the previous ones, shows a negative presence. In this sense, the results obtained, need to be taken care of and therefore take into consideration the expressed by Rodríguez (2008), who considers that the optimization of the communication skills, the active listening, the feedback or aptitudes like Solidarity, among others, contributes to the implementation of indicators such as the task or the procedures through the efficient conduction of socio-affective processes.

Table 3
Correlation between strategic thinking and high performance teams in private universities.

		Strategic thinking	High performance teams
Strategic thinking	Pearson correlation	1	,894**
	Sig. (bilateral)		,01
	N	115	115
High performance teams	Pearson correlation	,894**	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	,01	
	N	115	115

** The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the results of the project survey

In order to determine the relationship between strategic thinking and high performance teams in private universities, a correlation test of Spearman was performed, whose value highlighted a correlation of 0.894 between the variables studied, which is see in Table 3. The procedure used for the test was through the following statistical formula (1), and corroborated by the results obtained from the application of the statistical program SPSS V. 19.0

$$\rho = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n(n+1)(n-1)} \quad (1)$$

Applied the formula is obtained a Spearman coefficient of correlation of 0,894, which indicates the existence of a statistically significant relation between the variables which are the object of this research, i.e. as increase the values of the variable strategic thinking, increase the values of the variable high performance teams object of study, or vice versa.

4. Conclusions

The organizations are subject of constant change, consequence of the vertiginous scientific-technological advance, which generates new challenges for their development, this reality does not escape the public university institutions, which are committed to the academic training of the professionals of the future. Therefore, they require the conformation of high performance teams oriented towards the exercise of strategic thinking, as a determining factor for the effectiveness in the fulfillment of the organizational objectives.

In this order of ideas, strategic thinking was conceptualized, expressed in its three components, logical, critical and creative thinking, as an intellectual action that combines reasoning, as well as intuition, providing the leader – Manager Competences to understand the changes (within and outside the organization), to determine the impact of these in the short, medium and long term, in order to optimize the strengths, to take actions in terms of the weaknesses and to take advantage of the opportunities. It is summed up in the ability to conduct organizations from a global and comprehensive perspective, with clearly defined objectives, ensuring their fulfillment effectively.

Also, it was determined that the dimension strategic thinking, is part of the work of the population selected for the present study with a trend of 66.5%, of the total of the professionals consulted. Therefore, strategic thinking is a desirable competition, but also present in an interesting percentage in the university management object of study.

Similarly, was defined when high-performing team as a set of people whose activities are defined by knowledge, skills, experience, flexibility, loyalty, confidence, productivity, effectiveness, as well as its commitment to the organizational goals. The indicators of this dimension showed a positive trend for the indicators "task" and "procedures" of 49.95%, but negative in relation to the indicator "socio-affective processes", understood these as the skills Communication, active listening, feedback, among others; Situation that must be attended, because its deficiency affects the efficient development of the team and be able to be considered as high performance.

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