

## **Participatory Strategic Planning in a Public University**

**Isabela Papalardo**

Universidade Federal de Goiás

[isabelapapalardo@ufg.br](mailto:isabelapapalardo@ufg.br)

**Maria Tereza Tomé de Godoy**

Universidade Federal de Goiás

[maite\\_godoy@ufg.br](mailto:maite_godoy@ufg.br)

**Vinícius Sobreira Braga**

Universidade Federal de Goiás

[viniciusbraga@ufg.br](mailto:viniciusbraga@ufg.br)

### **Abstract**

*The experiences of participatory strategic planning are still restricted in the public sector. There are few studies about it concerning public universities. Onward this belief, came the idea of creating a participatory strategic planning methodology appropriate for a Public University. The objective is to show how it was developed and implemented across the University. Initially was defined some concepts required to understand the methodology, and then presented how the method was developed and applied. Also shows the adjustments made in order to the make planning proper to a public university context*

### **1. Introduction**

This article aims to present the methodology adopted by Federal University of Goiás (UFG), a Brazilian university, to develop and implement the strategic planning in the departments of the institution. Faced with difficulties in conceptualizing and creating models of Public Administration, especially the need for an appropriate model to the peculiarities of a Public University, this work attempted to establish a methodology that respects diversity, democracy and autonomy of the University. In addition, the article pointed some recognized tools in strategic management.

The adoption of the methodology which will be presented in this article was the result of the experience gained over time. In 2006 is approved by the University Council (CONSUNI) an internal resolution which regulates the Strategic Management Program (SMP). In the same year the program has been enhanced with the creation of the System of Strategic Management Program (SPGE). In the year of 2011, the Dean of Human Resources and Institutional Development (DHRID) deploys a Strategic Planning Department and creates a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) with the purpose of supporting the practice of strategic management and advising all departments and levels in developing its strategic planning.

Given this, for better exposure of the methodology adopted by UFG, some concepts of Strategic Planning and how these concepts were implemented in some areas of the university will be presented.

### **2. Strategic planning**

Planning implies objectify, think, dream, wish, draw, etc. Strategic is an entrepreneurs and creative intention about organizations' future attitudes. Strategic thinking is strategy creation with effectiveness. "Think strategically and act operationally means mastering the present and conquering the future." (REZENDE, 2011, p. 2)

When we refer to strategic planning (SP) we usually are induced to understand it in a wrong way as a simple document. Actually, SP is a continuous process that involves a "complex set of decisions". The planning process itself must be planned whereas it is an interactive process (action performed mutually between two or more parts that repeats itself over time) (OLIVEIRA, 2010, p.14)

Another aspect that must be considered is the length and amplitude of this process. In SP the deadline is longer and amplitude is wider, besides that, should be correlated to the core competencies of the corporation. (OLIVEIRA, 2010)

Planning aims the development of processes, techniques and administrative attitudes, that provide a viable situation to evaluate future implications of present decisions, relating to institutional goals that will make decisions in the future faster, consistent, efficient and effective (OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 5).

However, the Planning should not be confused with prediction, projection, problem-solving or plan. While some authors support the strategy planning and result prediction approach, Mintzberg (1998) denies this approach and affirms that the possibility of prediction is a fallacy. According to the author's opinion, thinking and acting are intrinsically connected and must work together, that's why practice stands out as a strategic tool and gain the sense of *strategizing*.

According to Oliveira (2010, p. 38), the strategic plan has three operational dimensions, namely:

- I) Demarcation (includes the structuring of the strategic planning process, where should choose the methodological structure and professional to work at this part. Ideally a joint action should occur between the organization's executive and a consultant);
- II) Preparation (description of strengths and weaknesses of the organization; perceived opportunities in the environment and ability to face the real threats; establish objectives and goals to be achieved; description of strategies and actions to concretize the process and the determination of policies or guidelines of activity) and
- III) Implementation (involves organizational subject, information system, budgetary system, incentive systems, operational competence, training and leadership).

### **3. Balanced Scorecard**

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) provides managers with instrumentation they need to navigate to future competitive success. BSC translates organization's strategy and mission into a comprehensive set of performance measures that provides the framework for a strategic measurement and management system. (KAPLAN and NORTON, 1996)

According to Kaplan and Norton (1996) the Balanced Scorecard holds four different perspectives from which a company's activity can be evaluated:

Table 1: BSC Perspectives

<b>Perspectives</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
Financial	How do we look to shareholders?	The financial perspective answers the question of how shareholders view the firm and which are their desires from the shareholder's perspective. The specific goals depend on the company's stage in the business life cycle.
Customers	How do customers see us?	Customers should be analysed in terms of kinds of customers and the kinds of processes for which we are providing a product or service to those customer groups.
Internal Processes	What processes must we excel at?	This perspective shows which processes are most critical for satisfying customers and shareholders. These are the processes in which the organization must concentrate its efforts.
Learning and Growth	How we sustain our ability to change and improve?	Learning and growth perspective is focused on the question of how the firm must learn, improve, and innovate in order to meet its objectives. Much of this perspective is employee-centered.

Souza (2008) warns that these perspectives are not rules that must be followed, since they can be changed to suit the organization profile and the its activity sector. The organization can find a set of indicators that will be most appropriate. Each firm should put the effort to identify the measures that are appropriate for its own strategy and competitive position.

Currently the BSC was innovated by its creators, Kaplan and Norton, cited by Souza (2008), adopting five managerial principles: Mobilize change through leadership; Translate the strategy into operational terms; Align the organization with the strategy; Motivate people to inset the strategy in all tasks; Manage to convert the strategy in a continuous process.

The successful application of BSC in private institutions generated the tendency to deploy it also in public companies. These organizations seek to apply the techniques and concepts focusing on greater strategic direction. According to Souza (2008), few studies concerns the BSC implementation in public sector.

#### **4. Strategic Planning Committee (SPC)**

The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) chaired by the Strategic Planning Department of DRHID was established by Ordinance No. 3240 on October 3, 2011. With the purpose of supporting the practice of strategic management and advising all levels and departments of UFG in developing its strategic planning, SPC was also born in order to keep under constant review the implementation of planning and conducting continuous studies about the topic.

SPC was established, initially, by 11 (eleven) administrative assistants and (one) professor and 11 (eleven) administrative assistants. Most of the members of the Committee work in departments with

administrative tasks, that's why the Ordinance has determined a workload 16 hours weekly to destine to the tasks of the committee. The meetings took place once a month, even though the Committee's activities occur continuously.

The Strategic Planning Department continued on the implementation of the strategic planning assistance on UFG. In 2013, due to the shutdown of most servers from the committee and weakening of the Committee, the role of advising the strategic planning became the exclusive for Strategic Planning Department. In 2014 the SPC was definitely extinct.

## **5. Organizational Scenario-case presentation**

The starting point of SPC was to identify the scenario and then define the best actions, considering the experience in strategic planning inside the UFG. At this time, was necessary to analyze peculiarities presented in the organizational environment of a Federal University.

The Federal University of Goiás was established in December 14, 1960 by the law No 3,834-C and restructured by Decree No. 63,817, of December 16, 1968. Nowadays, UFG's mission is to generate, systematize and socialize the knowledge and know-how, creating professionals and individuals able to promote the transformation and the development of society (UFG, 2012).

With a diverse organizational environment and peculiarities that are found only across a University, it was necessary to put extra effort in keeping the creative spirit at the same time manage with an organizational tool pragmatism.

The search for dialogue and democratization promotes a participatory environment in universities and integrated decisions with the organizational reality. In UFG it is not different, considering that management promotes the insertion of all administrative decisions and give autonomy of decisions on important points for departments. Besides, Consuni (University Council) and the Cepec (Council of teaching, research, extension and culture), which are councils that are part of the Central Administration of UFG, necessarily has representatives from many sectors of the university.

In title II of UFG's Statute is defined the academic and administrative structure. From reading the scenario and organizational analysis, it is possible to identify an administrative structure, in part, decentralized.. The autonomy policy of education, administration and financial and patrimonial management migrates, in part, to the departments.

This model adopted in universities promotes at the same time the democratization of Central Government decisions and the decentralization of some decisions within their departments.

Considering the already consolidated experience in strategic planning in public administration, the tools available and the organizational environment analysis carried out it was decided to develop a Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) at UFG.

The practice of participatory strategic planning meets the administrative policy adopted by UFG and bring a strategic planning closer to the administrative reality, as well as promotes interaction of servers form all levels. Besides that, PSP promotes systemic knowledge of strategic planning and therefore accountability of all in attendance of the goals defined. The PSP will be described furthermore during the methodology section.

To execute the strategic planning assistance in UFG's departments, there was a need to synchronize the knowledge and systematize the process of strategic planning. At this time, it is important to define what would be the best tool and create processes to assist in the strategic planning construction.

Initially, the discussion is composed around this didactic and the way would be the implementation in the various UFG's sectors. Through the Training and Development Coordination of the Department of Human Resources, courses about participatory strategic planning and system of strategic management program were

offered. The training was provided by SPC members. The courses had substantial demands and trained several servers.

The course of strategic planning, in particular, enabled the SPC's team and other servers as well. The goal of the course was to create a system by standardizing the development of strategic planning in the various sectors of UFG.

The training of servers as well as workshops developed in UFG's sectors, have created a methodology that is better explained in the next chapter.

## **6. Participatory Strategic Planning Methodology**

### **6.1. Assistance Request**

The construction of a participative strategic planning process is started with the request of UFG's departments. Although the Strategic Planning Committee disseminates and promotes seminars for the presentation of Strategic Planning, the decision to apply the advice is always expressed by the Director of each departments.

The request can be carried out by a written requisition, phone call or e-mail. Therefore, there is no need to formalize this request. All request communications are directed to the President of the SPC, making proper referrals to the Committee.

### **6.2. The Initial Meeting**

At this stage a first meeting is held, when the importance of strategic planning is described and exposed the methodology that will be adopted.

The orientation of strategic planning department is that at this moment directors and coordinators must invite as many servers as possible (teachers and administrative assistants). Due to the participatory methodology, the first meeting is the moment that all servers have the opportunity to expose their position and make questions about the process.

This is a crucial stage for strategic planning efficiency. It is at this moment that should be discussed and defined how strategic planning will be accomplished. It is found in Rezende (2011) the importance of the initial meeting for the organization, dissemination and training of those involved in the strategic planning development.

SPC brought the proposal of a methodology that has been confirmed in public administration, and during this stage occurs the presentation of this methodology. However, this approach is not static. Confirming the position adopted as ideal, Rezende (2011) emphasizes that the methodology adopted should not limit the creativity of those involved. Planning must be methodical, dynamic and harmonized, and the methodology must never be confused with a strategic planning limitation.

Therefore, in the initial meeting there is no curtailment of ideas exposure, but the leader must pay attention to define information, such as "... the human resources, financial, and technological materials that are required for strategic planning" (REZENDE, 2011, p. 25)

The moment before strategic planning development, according to Rezende (2011), is the time when organization, dissemination and training must occur.

### **6.3. Workshops**

The methodology used in the workshops is *focus group*. According to Mattar (1996) the moderator has to act by stimulating and coordinating the participants' discussion. In the case of UFG the moderator role is exercised by a member of the strategic planning department which will assist in all steps of strategic planning.

Moderator's behavior should be of non-interference in planning content, but in the appropriateness of the systematic which makes the SP viable. Therefore, the methodology chosen is an instrument that assists the participatory strategic planning construction and do not limit ideas.

Is expected during the development process, the participation of most of all people from local team responsible for the strategic planning. The construction of SP is fully held by the members of the department. The reason of strategic planning being participative is the consciousness of members to develop goals and achieve them.

In this sense, Cavalcanti (2008) affirms that the prerequisite for the success of this strategic planning is the authenticity, and this is guaranteed only with the participation. Participation should ensure the maximum information possible for the process conduction, involving all of the organization. According to the author it is important that the components represent all functions present in the organization.

Reaffirming the democratic process within the University environment the proposal of participatory strategic planning construction consolidates also the information dissemination, the mission and objectives of the institution. A feature observed in the development of PSP in the various UFG's environments was the interaction created in this process.

### **6.4. (Re) Defining the Strategic Guidelines**

At this moment are defined or redefined the strategic guidelines. The strategic planning of departments is structured in strategic guidelines that are composed by the definition of mission, vision and values.

Mission is a written declaration of the department's reason for being. When declaring the mission the institution is communicating, for the external and internal environment, what is the purpose of the company's business.

Vision refers to a desired situation by all levels at UFG.

Values refer to moral and ethical principles which are shared through department's servers from UFG.

### **6.5. Environmental Analysis**

During this step the organizational environment is defined by collecting the environmental variables, considering the internal environment (strengths and weaknesses) and external environment (threats and opportunities). Meanwhile, it is recommended to prioritize the five main aspects for each one of the four variables. Finally the SWOT analysis is done and the strategic environment is defined.

Internal environment is composed of the strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are internal factors that contribute to achieve the mission and strategic goals. The weaknesses are internal factors that can impede the achievement of the mission and the achievement of strategic goals.

External environment is composed of opportunities and threats. The opportunities are external factors, in the present or in the future, that impact positively the achievement of the mission and the achievement of strategic goals. The threats are external factors, which can negatively impact the achievement of the mission and the achievement of strategic goals.

## **6.6. Strategic Objectives**

During this step, the strategic objectives are determined based on previous phases of planning, mainly in strategic environment determination by environmental analysis. The strategic objectives are purposes to be achieved and they are defined from the priorities set out in the environmental analysis. Then they are classified according to BSC perspectives.

The objectives are defined during the workshop with the requesting team and the coordination from strategic planning department who elaborates a strategic map.

## **6.7. Target and Indicators**

During this activity we define targets and indicators to the strategic objectives defined by the terms of GEPLANES.

Geplanes is a software used to monitor strategic planning across the University. More explanation about it will be given further.

Indicators are formed by units of measure group to evaluate strategic objectives performance.

Goals represent performance level or improvement rate required to achieve the strategic objective.

## **6.8. Action Plan**

A dashboard is adopted containing objective, targets, indicators, actions, executors and deadlines based on 5W2H technique (What, When, Where, Who, Why, How, How much) to determine the action plan according to GEPLANES methodology.

Action plan is an instrument which defines the tasks, method of execution, executors, deadlines and resources to be applied for the achievement of the strategic objectives.

## **6.9. Strategic Plan Construction**

Finally, after completed all these steps, the strategic plan must be prepared as a result of a logical sequence these steps.

The set of items described before will result in the strategic plan to be implemented in departments.

## **6.10. Plan Approval**

To implement the strategic plan it must be approved in each administrative levels.

## **6.11. Strategic Plan Implementation**

The plan must be implemented by the requester with support of Strategic Planning Department as a consultant in the process.

## **6.12. Monitoring Plan**

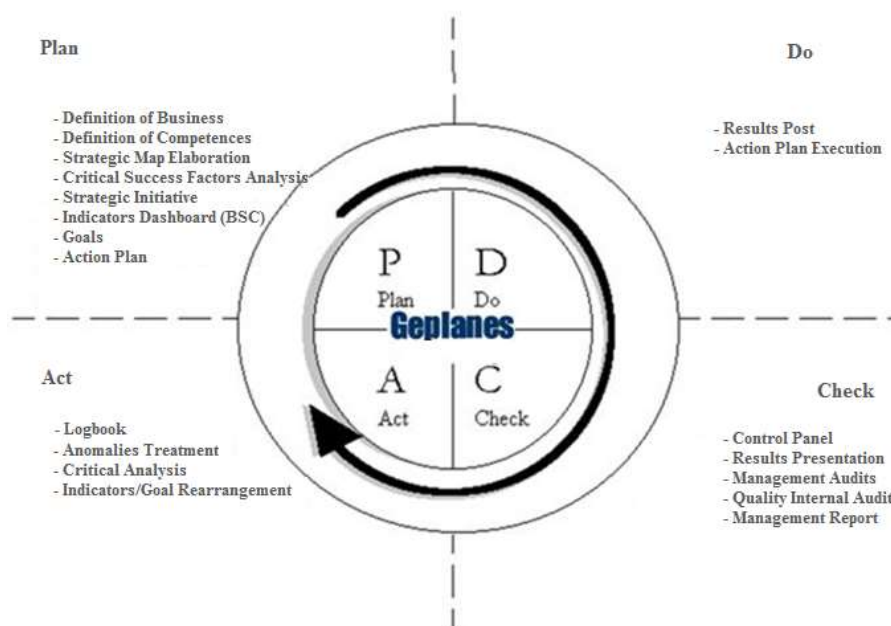
The coordinator of Strategic Planning Department monitors the plan Geplanes.

## 7. Geplanes

Geplanes is a public software, designed to be used as a tool for strategic management in public and private organizations. Its functions includes from initial planning to strategic execution, enabling the monitoring of organizational performance. When using it properly, the manager is able to: monitor strategic objectives performance, analyze the critical success factors, monitor action plans, evaluate results periodically established by performance indicators, issue management reports and graphics. In addition, quality tools are provided allowing the registration and treatment of anomaly or non-conformities.

Geplanes, which is available for servers and other UFG's employees, have adapted institution particularities and parameterized so that it is possible to receive the assistance from Strategic Planning Department in any department and institution level.

The software has the methodology based on BSC and its available functions integrate management practices according to PDCA cycle:



In order to instruct Geplanes users and facilitate strategic planning process from the resources offered by the software, was created by UFG a manual. The manual, created in 2014, is available on the institution website.

## 8. Conclusion

This article aimed to introduce the methodology used to implement the Strategic Planning in a Federal Institute of Higher Education. As presented, the University concerned has used a participatory strategic planning method focused on a growth of servers participation, approaching the planning to administrative reality.

It was noted that strategic planning assistance is requested for each level and is therefore optional for the departments.

Looking ahead, it is expected to align the strategic planning implementation with the Institutional Development Plan (IDP) , which represents the most important plan for the university. It is planned to draw up manuals containing the strategic planning methodology in order to assist in the development at the University



and spread of work methodology as well. Finally, it is expected to strengthen the strategic planning process within the University mainly in the monitoring phase and in use of GEPLANES software.

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