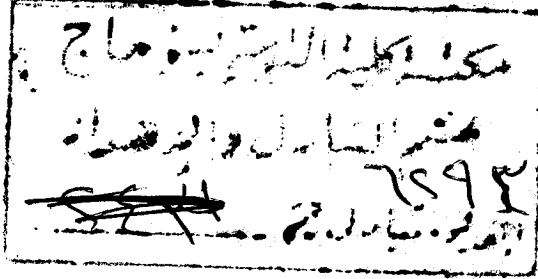


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**Culture As A Factor In
Planning Effectiveness : case
Study on kuwait Community
Service**

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**Culture as a Factor in Planning
Effectiveness: Case Study on Kuwait
Community Service**

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Culture as a Factor in Planning Effectiveness: Case Study on Kuwait Community Service

Key Words:

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Summary

Based upon the analysis of records of the Community Service and Continuing Education from the date of liberation from the Iraqi occupation in 1991 till 1999, and results obtained from 914 questionnaires; the effects of age, sex, as well as level of education and nationality on the selection of programs offered by the Community Service Directorate were investigated.

The role played by the cultural factors was further elaborated, and examples were discussed systematically. Results showed clearly that culture not only plays a role in the outputs of the programs, but also is a detrimental factor in the understanding of the concept and philosophy of planning.

Culture as a Factor in Planning Effectiveness: Case Study on Kuwait Community Service.

Introduction:

Culture is usually considered the scapegoat of all mis-achievements and malpractices both in developed and developing worlds. Cultural influences are more than often blamed when application of a successful tool (*TQM, ISO9000, Strategic Planning*) faces obstacles or fails when applied in developing countries. The increasing gap between the developed and developing world in the North and the other world in the South is always attributed to *Cultural* differences.

This initiated a wave of studies that concentrated on culture; it became a component in at least four mandatory curricula at the college of basic education¹ (for teacher's preparation: *viz.*: Science Culture, Islamic culture, Education Administration, Management, Development of Educational Concepts) and the overwhelming literature caused confusion more than clarifying this issue. One of the best examples of this is the book published by the National Council of Culture, Art and Literature, State of Kuwait on July 1997². Actually this book is a translation of Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky work published in 1990 under the title "Cultural Theory"³. It confers more on segmentation than on culture and it's concepts.

As part of the team responsible for a self-study project in a joint venture between the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training and Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools CHE/MSA, it was necessary to collect, study and analyze all the available data and information pertaining to community service.

Our analysis proves that whatever management strategy or planning policy adopted, the results of its application in developing countries are far more different from those results achieved from its implementation in the developed world.

It may be the success of technology transfer that promotes policy makers to adopt exogenous management and planning techniques. *ISO9000* for example was dealt with as if dealing with "Cellular Phones" (Team Engineering and Management Consultants, 1996)⁴; that means it could be imported *per se*. DECUM is another example of how these tools are thought to be applied as easily as "IBM or Macintosh computers" (Bozobar, 1997)⁵.

Dealing with machines is not the same as dealing with humans who are motivated by cultures which are different and when the substrate is different, the result of the reaction or the outcome is surely different.

The problem is complicated further, as post-graduate studies are not available in most developing countries, and even if it is carried *in situ*, literature sources are usually exogenous, from other developed countries. The result is that *Ph.D.* holders – who ultimately occupy high rank positions (another implication of cultural problems as jobs are related to academic

qualifications more than work efficiency or performance appraisal). Those specialists in turn as they occupy leading positions and as they are convinced that the systems they have seen in countries of their study were successful as tools for development, they believe that they must have the same effect in their countries. Ultimately they support application of foreign management strategies and planning policies giving no attention to the role culture plays in their effectiveness.

Failures and ineffectiveness of these techniques open the door for conservationists to call for going back to traditional methods, developing and widening the gap between North and South.

Based upon all that, we thought it feasible to study the impact of culture on the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training planning policies for community service in Kuwait, or more specifically, for Kuwait community servicing.

Aim of Study:

The aim of the presented study is:

1. To elucidate the effect of culture on the effectiveness and efficiency of training planning policies for community service in Kuwait.
2. To analyze various concepts of planning (forecasting, efficiency, *etc*)
3. Using the results and examples to prove the impact of culture on the efficacy and efficiency of planning policies adopted.

Importance of Study:

The importance of the presented work to policy makers and administrative leaders in developing countries is clear in that it will increase their awareness about the factors that interfere with their planning activities, and have a tremendous effect on its outcome.

For researchers from the developed North, the presented work will add to their knowledge about cultural discrepancies and cultural conflicts and may be of help to those engaged in multicultural or intercultural activities.

scope of Work:

Various definitions of planning will be analyzed to their components and the effects of culture on planning policies will be discussed.

The attitude of different segments of the society towards the multiplicity of various programs offered by the Community Service and Continuing Education Directorate of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training will be treated by statistical methods to express the results quantitatively – wherever possible.

Research Hypothesis:

Culture plays a major role in the success or failure of any planning policy or management strategy particularly in community-related works such as the community service programs of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training. Motives could be considered a more precise, stable and valid indicator to assess the needs of the society for planning community service programs.

Materials and Methods:

The study adopted the content analyses method which is one of the styles used in the Descriptive Method Approaches, by following the undergoing steps:-

First: Research of primary sources is derived from three categories:

1. Laws, decrees and by-laws related to the scope of work.
2. Statistical analysis using SPSS X (computer program) is applied to the records of the Community Service and Continuing Education Directorate at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training from the date of liberation from the Iraqi occupation in 1991 till 1999. Sex, age, level of education and nationality are considered as the fixed variables in the statistical program. The area of study of the selected program is correlated to the above variables. A total of 162 courses and programs were offered by the named directorate during the period covered by the presented study.

Second: According to the nature of the course or program they are classified – for the purpose of this study – into six categories, *viz.:*

1. Technological Sciences,
2. Commercial Sciences,
3. Health Sciences,
4. Computer Sciences,
5. Arts and Linguistics,
6. Other Programs (programs that could not be included in the above mentioned categories such as librarianship, environmental pollution and control, marine sciences, *etc.*).

Third: The data derived from these source showed in an analytical profile the Progress in the numbers of participants in the PAAET Community Service Programs for the Kuwaitis/non-Kuwaitis duration of study. Comparison of program selections made by Kuwaitis/non-Kuwaitis, males/females, and different age groups were carried out in a trial to draw the general picture of the attitudes towards various programs and deduce the motivations behind these attitudes.

Fourth: The fourth part of the study is based upon the data retrieved from a questionnaire designed to reveal program preferences of the Kuwaiti society.

After a pilot study for a selected sample of 25 members, questionnaire validity, reliability and truthfulness were confirmed. Ambiguous, vague and obscure questions were modified and the final forms of the questionnaires were distributed to a randomly selected sample of 1250 members of the society. 914 questionnaires were retrieved, yielding a retrieval ratio of 73.12% Results were analyzed statistically using SPSS.

Questionnaire responses were matched with what really occurred upon execution, in-order to explore the validity of these responses as indicators of the actual needs of the respondents.

Results and Discussions:

1. The PAAET Community Service and Continuing Education Directorate:

The Directorate of Community Service and Continuing Education of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training was established in 1984/85 as an implementation of the recommendation stated in SACS self-evaluation report⁶. The mission stated to the directorate was to respond to the needs of individuals in the community for further training and education. Through increasing their skills, knowledge and experience, they would be able to achieve better opportunities for life.

Therefore, the goals of the directorate are⁷:

Expand the awareness of member of the community and enlighten them about recent advances in science and technology.

Assist members of the society in their comprehensive self-development through offering the necessary programs in scientific and applied fields.

Offering better opportunities for professionals to be acquainted with modern changes in their professions, both academically and practically.

Holding seminars, conferences and publicizing applied programs, promoting Continuing Education and preparing of instructional text books in various fields of applied training and making them accessible for the general reader.

Through the years 1984/88, the directorate planned its programs according to the results of a comprehensive survey that was designed to detect the needs of the individuals and their attitudes⁸. The sample of that study included 4787 members, and the selected programs were prioritized according to the needs and requirements of the community members and the public interest as well.

The practical reasons that explained the needs for programs did not express the real motives behind those selections. Again cultural factors played a very prominent role in this respect.

While in Western democratic countries, it is possible to rely on questionnaire results, the situation is different in developing countries. Questionnaires are not the right tool for getting the valuable, reliable or valid information. Many explanations could be given in this respect:

1. Even if the respondent is aware of the importance of the study, he does not believe that any change will happen from his comments or views. Most of the respondents consider questionnairing a waste of time, effort and paper.

2. Political/social oppression in some developing countries (such as Kuwait) leads to fear of telling the truth. This belief is deeply rooted in the culture and expresses itself in:

- a) Alienation between the citizen and the government
- b) Treating the public sector and behaving in the public sector differently from the private sector
- c) Lack of enthusiasm to voluntary work.

3. The *value* of scientific research in developing countries is different from the *value* given to science in developed countries. This devaluation may be explained by the fact that societies in developing countries do not feel the gain from endogenous scientific activities.

Furthermore, statistical correlation between the variables in the above mentioned study proved invalid on application. Correlation and statistical significance did not express a *cause result* phenomenon. Such correlations whether positive, or negative were not fit to deduce new assumption or explain the *status quo*, or help in prediction.

Hence the presented study aimed at analyzing the effect of demographic factors on the community service programs in Kuwait. Motives for these selections were the focus of attention in the study and analysis surpassed the mere selection. Although the presented research aims at the same aim of the previous studies, yet it goes deeper in analyses and search for the motives and not the attitudes of the society-community-members. Motives are considered more stable than the rapidly changing attitudes – especially in oriental cultures. Motives are more deeper in effect and stays longer in duration of action.

Attitudes, on the other hand, would change during the time elapsing between planning and implementation. This is particularly true when the preparation and execution of plans take a very long time due to prevalent bureaucracy and deficient resource.

2. Record Analysis:

Results of analysis of the records of the Community Service and Continuing Education Directorate at the PAAET are shown in tables 1 to 9. Table 1 shows the progress of total numbers of participants in the PAAET community service programs classified according to area of training. Analysis showed that a nearly steady trend appears in the progress of the total numbers of participants. This steadiness is attributed mainly to the increase in the admission capacity of the directorate, more than an indication of the community trends.

The current policy of the directorate not to initiate the program except when enough participants are enrolled makes any trial to combine these numbers with community needs untrue.

Nevertheless, the dramatic increase in the numbers of participants in what is grouped as "*other programs*", i.e. programs not included in the following categories: technological sciences, commercial sciences, health sciences, arts and linguistics; was noticeable.

The number of participants in programs grouped as "*other programs*" increased from 46 in 1991/1992, and slightly dropped in 1993/1994 to 124, whereas it showed a double fold increase from that period onward, and reached 605 on 1996/1997, and dropped dramatically on 1998/1999 to 75 only.

As the population of participants in the PAAET included Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis, analysis of the progress of their total numbers were carried out separately. We thought this is a feasible way to deduce by comparison an indication of the relative importance of the same category of the program to each group.

Comparing the results obtained from analysis of the progress of total numbers of Kuwaiti participants in the PAAET's community service programs classified according to area of training (Table 2 and 3) with those of the non-Kuwaitis; showed different patterns of change in these two groups. While the numbers of community members who joined computer and technological science programs decreased steadily in the Kuwaiti group (from 922 in 1991/1992 until they reached 739 in 1995/1996 and 422 in 1998/1999), there was an increase in numbers of Non-Kuwaitis (from 175 in 1991/1992 to 350 in 1995/1996 and 316 in 1998/1999).

Commercial science programs, on the other hand, attracted more Kuwaitis than non-Kuwaitis; yielding figures of 34 against 291 and 166

against 346 and 141 against 207 for non-Kuwaitis against Kuwaitis in 1991/1992, 1995/1996 and 1998/1999 in respective order.

It is noteworthy to state that the presented results prove beyond doubt that the increase in numbers of participants in programs other than those categorized in the five categories are due mainly to Kuwaitis only.

Financial and economic motivations could explain the differences in responses of Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis to the variety of programs offered by the PAAET Community Service Directorate. While Kuwaitis were more inclined to *non-value-added* programs; non-Kuwaitis were more attracted to the programs that open for more opportunities for work and increase their job-fitness.

In order to explore the effect of gender on the demand for community service programs offered by the PAAET, separate analysis of the numbers of males and females who joined these programs were carried out. Results shown in tables 4 and 5 indicated that sex is a very important determining factor that influence the selection of programs.

Although some programs are restricted to females only (cooking, sewing, home economics...*etc.*), yet the number of males far exceeded those of females in all program categories.

The still prevailing social outlook to the work of women, combined with the preservative understanding of religious jurisdictions are among the factors that attributed to this phenomenon.

Further analysis of the total numbers of non-Kuwaiti male participants in the PAAET Community Service Programs (as classified according to the area of training) showed that financial motivation is more profounded in the expatriate female group (Tables 6 and 7). This was more clear when comparing the pattern of change in this group with the Kuwaiti male group.

Progressive, nearly steady decline in the numbers of male Kuwaitis who joined technological-sciences programs from 451 in 1991/1992 to 292 in 1995/1996 to 230 in 1997/1998 was very evident (The slight increase in their numbers in 1998/1999 is non significant statistically) (Table 7), this was associated with a corresponding increase in the numbers of participants in commercial-sciences programs (from 111 to 132 and 261 for the corresponding years).

Viability of marketing technological-science programs was nearly constant for non-Kuwaiti male, which started with 130 participants in 1991/1992 and proceeded as 138, 139, and 149 for the following years. A drop to a figure around 70 is noted during the period from 1996 to 1999.

Commercial-sciences programs were not attractive to females of both groups (Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis) (Tables 8 and 9).

Commercial science programs were the most demanded category for the non-Kuwaiti females, while health sciences programs were the most requested by Kuwaiti females.

This could be explained by the fact that the population of females in the Kuwaiti society is of normal demographic structure, while that of the expatriate females does not represent a normal population structure. Most of the expatriate females belong to the middle class or the working labor-force. They have no time or money to look for fitness or physical education or swimming programs. Salary limitations on the expatriate male group, not to bring their families except when they can sustain a substantially large salary makes accompanying wives for the expatriate group a real problem.

Despite the fact that the health sciences programs always exceeded in numbers of participants any other program offered for Kuwaiti females category offered by the PAAET Community Service Directorate, yet they showed a steady decline from 615 in 1992/1993 to 336 in 1998/1999. This decrease was compensated by a corresponding increase in the numbers of female participants in other programs (from 24 in 1991/1992 to 323 in 1996/1997).

This latter phenomenon is associated with noticeable change in the community view to women's work.

Expansion of the fields where female can work, loosening of traditional restrictions and family impacts, accessibility of these areas to females all contributed to such a change.

3. *The Questionnaires:*

The results of the questionnaires constitute the third part of the presented study. Results are tabulated in table 10.

It is clear from these results that the general trends and prominent phenomena deduced from the obtained data are:

1. Most of the respondents in the population of the sample from all ages and various cultural, educational or social backgrounds shared interest in continuing their education. More than 80% of the respondents are willing to join the PAAET Community Service Programs. A very small percent (10%) stated that they are not willing to join the PAAET Community Service Programs. The individuals in

this group explained that the reasons for their unwillingness to join the PAAET Community Service Programs is not an indication that they do not want to continue their education, but their needs in the programs are not found in the PAAET Community Service Programs. Causes of these inconveniences could be overcome easily and varied from: inconvenience of training site, unsuitable timing or duration of the programs.

2. A great proportion of the individuals that expressed their ambitions towards continuing their education were from age-groups 20 and 55 years. Career mobility and technological needs of modern life are the main reasons the respondents selected as their motives from the questionnaires.

3. The educational level of the respondents played a very influential role on the drive to continue education. Those who are on the intermediate school level were more willing to join the PAAET Community Service Programs, as compared to those who finished only the primary school level and even more than GCE holders. The only possible explanation of this phenomenon is that the chance offered by the PAAET Community Service Programs respond to the needs of those who have the will and are ambitious to get further education. It may be that those who have only passed primary education or part of it do not dream of continuing education or have lost hopes.

Unfortunately, illiterates are not included in the study because the questionnaires were distributed in written form. GCE holders on the other hand did not show such willingness for further education as it is according to the Kuwaiti Civil Laws every one of them have a job – *by law*, and so the motive for career mobility is less prominent with the easy access to employment opportunities.

4. The time-lapse between leaving formal schooling and expressing the will to continue education showed a very high correlation. More than half of the respondents had stopped their formal education since 5 years. Although the highest percentage of positive attitudes were apparent in the group of individuals who stopped their formal schooling and or education for less than two years.

5. More than two thirds of those who expressed their willingness to continue education were married. This indicated that social and marital engagement does not stand as an obstacle for continuing education.

6. A great majority of those who stated that they are willing to join the PAAET Community Service Programs are already occupying jobs.

Raising the income was the expressed motive, they selected, for explaining their responses.

7. Most of those responded positively to the PA-AET programs are working in the government-sector. This is reasonable as most of the sample is from this group. Private sector respondents only constituted 3% of the whole sample.

8. Technological programs generally attracts males, while domestic programs are more appealing to females. Two remarks have to be mentioned here; *first*, domestic programs are only restricted to females, *second*, language and computer programs now occupy the priority for both sexes. Limitations are enforced by the capability of establishing new programs or initiating new courses by the Community Service Directorate in response to the needs and the available resources. Financial restriction, budgetary rules and bureaucratic procedures impede the mobility of speedy responses.

9. The expressed incentives of the respondents was different. Increasing experience and gaining new skills and job promotion were given higher weight in the analysis of this variant.

10. Analyses of the recommendation cited in the questionnaires revealed some attracting factors; from these changing the time and site of the course and programs were the most dominant. Respondents requested postponing the starting time in the summer than winter in-order to get good rest before start and to accommodate the harsh weather in summer in Kuwait. Some indicated that the sites have to cover all the Kuwaiti Six Governorates.

11. Repelling factors were equally emphasized between social conditions, difficulties in learning, financial and health conditions.

12. Concluding the most effective motives and incentives that supported continuing education for community members showed that the area of study and job factor are highly correlated on a statistically significant level. The impact of this factor differs significantly between males and females. While males attributed their willingness to reasons related to their jobs or extraneous expectations, females showed personal reasons for continuing their education.

13. Most of those who occupy jobs expressed that their incentives to continue their education is their ambition to improve their performance. Unemployed, on the other hand, said they continue their education to find a job and raise their income.

14. Statistically positive relations were also revealed proving that changing the career improving social status, facing work challenges and meeting job requirements are among the most influential motives for continuing education.

15. Feeling of security, possession, or belonging to groups were not influential and could not be considered as motives for the members of the Kuwaiti community to continue their education. This applies also in the drive for selection of specific programs from the list offered by the community service directorate of the PAAET. Most of the motives were from the fourth level *viz.*: financial, economic, theoretical, artistic, social, political and religious.

Conclusions:

Planners for the community service programs face the problem of needs-assessment before starting the needs-analysis to develop programs that respond to these needs.

If planners derive their indicators from attitudes of the society members, they will face problems in implementing successful programs. Attitudes in developing countries are vulnerable to change at a speed that community service institutes cannot cope with.

Technological advancement, scientific progress and explosion of knowledge dictate on developing societies rapid, sudden, and drastic changes in attitudes.

So we thought it feasible to study the effects of demographic and cultural factors on motivation of the society members towards community service programs. Motivation to active participation in selected programs and passive or negative attitudes to other programs are analyzed within the cultural context of Kuwait.

Before going into details of study it is preferable to explore on some definitions:-

Corderio (1993) addressing cultural diversity in schools expressed that the term *culture*, as it is generally used by anthropologists, educators and others, refers to the complex changing nexus of values,

attitudes, beliefs, practices, traditions, social institutions, and so on, of a community. Included, as elements of *culture* are religion, language, foods, history, dress and so on.¹⁰

Yongng Pai (1990) explained that *culture*, in general terms, is most commonly viewed as the pattern of knowledge, skills, behavior, attitudes and beliefs, as well as artifacts, produced by a human society and transmitted from one generation to another.¹¹

Culture, as Maehr (1974) points out, represents a group's preferred way of perceiving, judging, and organizing the ideas, situations, and events they encounter in their daily lives.¹² It represents the rules or guidelines a set of individuals who share a common history or geographical setting use to mediate their interaction with their environment (Shade, 1998).¹³ As such, culture might involve adherence to a specific religious orientation, use of a certain language or style of communication, as well as preferences for various expressive methods to represent their perception of the world, *i.e.*, in art, music or dance. *Culture* also determines the guidelines individuals within the group use to select the specific information to which they attend as well as the interpretation given to that information (Shade, 1998). Such a definition explains why cultural factors play a great role in the selection or preference of community service programs and consequently affect planning policies.

The first step in planning community service programs is the needs-assessment. Assessing the needs by direct questionnaires does not always work successfully. Defining the motivation for joining a specific program necessitates the study of prevalent culture and psychological conditions in the society. Each individual is unique not only in his abilities, skills and capabilities, but also in the motives that induce him to behave in a particular manner.

The major problem facing planners in developing countries is predicting the requirements or analyzing the needs of their societies.

Bureaucracy, budgetary restriction and lack of speedy ways to acquaint technology are among the reasons that long time lapses between planning and implementations. During that time, needs would change and when it is time to implement the plan it would be unrealistic.

Trials to speed the implantation of plans usually leads to drastic negative results. Lack of communication and need for prioritization are

also playing a major role in unsuccessful planning and produce plans that do not respond to needs in time.

Some examples could be forwarded from our work experience with the PAAET. In May 1983 a joint venture self-study project was carried by the PAAET with SACS. Recommendations of the special activities committee (standard 9) included establishment of a special directorate with the following objectives:

To help the community members for fulfilling comprehensive self development and continuous education and to support their attitude towards education and progress.

To provide training on work for professional advancement in the fields of science and technology and to raise the productive efficiency of the workers in community establishments and organizations.

To support the interrelationship between study in the institutes and work needs and community demands from one hand and actual problems of the local environment on the other hand.

Coordination between the institutes in supplying the community needs from special activities, guided use of the facilities in the institutions and defining and developing the methods of performance.

Upon implementing the recommendation in 1983 the Directorate of Community Service was established. As this recommendation came from exogenous sources, while the named directorate is held responsible for training there are two other units that carry on training functions namely: Center for Evaluation and Measurement (offering on-job training and in-service programs) and Planning and Coordinating Training Directorate (offering in-service training and special courses).

It may be emphasized that the target audience in the first directorate are teachers and members of the academic staff, while that of the latter directorate are civil servants from different units of the government-sectors and administrative body. At the same time, the community service directorate addresses the community at large.

Although this is clear and distinct in planning, yet upon implementation the conditions are different.

One prominent example is the course offered to introduce the Internet. Everyone working at the PAAET has a chance to join either the Internet course of the Evaluation Center or that of the Community Service or the Directorate of Planning and Coordinating Training or even the course offered by the Computer Service Directorate (a service unit not supposed to offer training). Conditions, tuitions, durations and sites were different, even the consultants, instructors' and trainers' fees were completely different (25 KD – equivalent to approximately \$75- 10 KD, 15 KD and 30 KD per hour respectively). This confusion and intermingling of responsibilities is undoubtedly due to implementing a plan with resisting any change. Changes would have included amalgamation of the Special Courses Directorate in the Community Service Directorate. But as the former directorate was inherited as a unit with separate identity from the Ministry of Social Affairs, to which it belonged prior to establishing the Technical and Vocational Directorate affiliated to the Ministry of Education.

Here is an example where history and tribal relation affect the consistency of the organization and the loyalty of the employees.

Another example is the new strategy for developing the PAAET imposed by Dr. Jasem Al-Khalaf the General Director in 1985/86.

This was a strategy built up from the higher level of administration. As director general who was freshly graduated from the USA he tried to inject the most advanced administrative techniques into the PAAET's body.

His strategy evoked great resistance and forced him to resign and start a private consultancy office.

The third example is from the directorate itself. In October 1989, the PAAET directorate organized a conference on Continuing Education and Lifelong Education. As a recommendation the conferees stressed upon the importance and value of that type of education.

The result was a direct response from the PAAET authority by changing the title of the Directorate from: Department of Community Service to Directorate of Community Service and Continuing Education. This happened in 1989 and now in 2000 nothing changed except the title and another Conference on Continuing Education in the Gulf Countries (October, 1999). No continuing education programs or courses are offered by the Directorate because there is no need from the community

from one side, and there is a tough resistance from the academic institutions (faculties and colleges) from the other side.

In order to fully understand what is going on and why such events happen, we have to go deep in analyzing what is meant by planning. Planning as a concept is not fully apprehended in the *Arab and Islamic Cultures*. Although Muslims believe in the Quranic citation which states that Joseph (the prophet) made a long forecasting planning on a seven year basis and on a very wide scale.

In The Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

47. (Joseph) said: for seven years
shall ye diligently sow
As in your wont:
And the harvests that ye reap,
Ye shall leave them in the ear,
Except a little, of which
Ye shall eat.

48. Then will come
After that (period)
Seven dreadful (years),
Which will devour
What ye shall have laid by

In advance for them, -
(All) except a little
which ye shall have
(Specially) guarded

49. Then will come
After that (period) a year
In which the people will have
Abundant water, and in which
They will press (juices and oil).

Syrat Yusuf or Joseph
(S. 12 – Ayats 47 – 49)

On the other hand the prevalent cultural concept is that tomorrow is something we cannot predict, forecast and must say after any future plans "If God Wishes." (*Insha-Allah*).

Controversy does not only exist concerning the term planning, but also with the more recent terms derived from it, namely strategic planning.

Literature on planning dates back from early history. There is a reference to a "Director of Strategic Planning" in Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" (1971), originally written about 2,400 years ago.¹⁴ Great attention was given to planning in both Corporate America and Communist Europe until it became firmly installed in most large corporations by the mid-1960s (Gilmore, 1970;¹⁵ and Chamberlain, 1999).¹⁶ Despite all this attention, the fact remains that the question "what is planning anyway?", has never been properly answered – indeed – seldom seriously addressed – in planning's own literature.

Literature on strategic planning dates the concept further back. Georfe Steiner (1969) noted that the word planning comes from the Latin *planum*, meaning "flat surface", correspondingly in Arabic it means "drawing lines" (*takhteet*).¹⁷ Leaving aside the prophetic powers of the Romans with regards to a literature that was to follow in two millennia, Steiner went on to note that the word entered the English language in the seventeenth century, referring principally to forms, such as maps or blueprints, that were drawn on flat surfaces.

The same author wrote that in 1967, in what remains to be one of the few carefully reasoned articles on the subject, Loasby (1967) wrote that "the word 'planning' is currently used in so many and various senses that it is in some ways degenerated into an emotive noise".¹⁸ At about the same time, one of the more impressive assemblages of planning people took at Bellagio, Italy (Jantsh, 1969) under the auspices of the OECD.¹⁹ Jay Forrester's "reflection" on the conference included the comment that "efforts to define the terms [*planning and long-range forecasting*] failed" (1969).²⁰ Mintzberg (1994) commented that they have failed ever since.²¹

Aaron Wildavsky (1973), a political scientist well known for his criticisms of planning, concluded that in trying to be everything, planning became nothing, Aaron blamed the elusiveness of the term and remarked that

anyone of various specialties will find it everywhere in general and nowhere in particular.²²

Emphasis that "*planning*" may be so elusive because its components have been more concerned with promoting vague ideas than achieving viable positions, more concerned with what planning might be than what it actually became. As a result, *planning* has lacked a clear definition of its own place in organizations and in the state. We join the author in the belief that *planning* has, nevertheless, carved out a viable *niche* for itself, through its own success and failures. The need, therefore, is not to create a place for planning so much as to reorganize the place it already occupies.

There is nonconformity in the literature sources concerning the definition of strategic *planning*. A comprehensive survey is included in the book of Henry Mintzberg entitled "*The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*" (1994).

Planning may be considered as:

1. Future thinking,
2. Controlling the future,
3. Decision making,
4. Integrated decision making, or
5. A formalized procedure to produce an articulated result, in the form of an integrated system of decisions.

1. Planning as Future Thinking

Bolan (1974) wrote that "Planning denoted thinking about the future" or simply taking the future into account.²³ The problem with this definition is that it cannot be bounded. What organizational activity, no matter how short-term or reactive does not take the future into account?

Newman acknowledged the problem back in 1951 when he quoted Dennison (1951) that "Almost all work, in order to be done at all, must be planned, at least a few minutes ahead".²⁴ But *if* this is true- if as Dror (1971) put it more boldly, "*planning*, in a word is *management*" - why bother to use the word "*planning*" when "*management*" works just fine?²⁵

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