



Öztürk, Z., Kızılkaya, S., & Çağatay, A. (2016). Students' opinions regarding strategic management course's instructed in the graduate programs level of gaining qualified employee to business: a study at Gazi University. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 3(3). 174-184.

<http://iojet.org/index.php/IOJET/article/view/128/134>

Received: 28.03.2016
Received in revised form: 30.04.2016
Accepted: 01.05.2016

STUDENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT COURSE INSTRUCTION IN THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS AND THEIR LEVEL OF BRINGING QUALIFIED EMPLOYEE IN BUSINESS: A STUDY AT GAZI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

At the point of monitoring developments taking place in the internal and external environmental conditions of the businesses, gaining the necessary skills is critical. To gain these skills, conscious and visionary individuals are trained in strategic management course in the universities at the associate degree, undergraduate, graduate and doctor's degree. In this study, students' opinions regarding the level of strategic management course's benefits on business with qualified employee were given. To serve this purpose, a research was conducted with students taking a strategic management course at master's and doctoral level in 2015-2016 fall term at the Institute of Social Sciences at Gazi University. With a parametric method analysis, an independent Sample T-Test for comparison was performed on the data obtained. As a result of the study, it was observed that students educated in master's and doctoral level expressed their opinions concerning the strategic management course as an important tool to function in providing qualified employee to business in the middle level. As a result of analysis, it was observed that gaining qualified employee to business in a strategic management course is the level of 3, 32 in graduate students and 2, 63 in doctoral students.

Keywords: Strategy, Strategic Management, Strategic Management Course, Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test.

1. Introduction

Businesses should comply with every aspect of the change (size and quality of the change, activity areas and Dynamics) to be able to protect their existence in the area they engage in (Akgecmi, 2008). At the point of fulfilling the obligation in question, businesses need individuals with particular qualifications. Strategic management education is one of the ways in which individuals are allowed to have skills including holding a vision, using resources efficiently and productively, considering opportunities and possibilities revealed by environmental changes, uncovering the possible threats and weaknesses. In this education, students are given information on subjects such as the basic concepts related to strategic management and revealing the strategies that will provide a competitive advantage.

This study will determine students' views related to the degree that strategic management course given brings qualified personnel in an attempt to determine the individuals with strategic consciousness needed by businesses.

Inability of organizations to produce a strategic management approach adequately has its sources in not continuously analyzing the internal and external environment the organization operates in (Ülgen and Mirze, 2004, ss.59). Businesses must analyze the general environment influenced by many factors in society and the industrial environment directly related to the operations particularly in external environment analysis (Longenecker et al., 2005, s.56). Strategies may not be implemented owing to the reasons such as predominance of a top to bottom management approach, uncertain strategies, top, mid and lower level managers' lack of an effective management approach, weak and unhealthy vertical communication, lack of coordination among the departments in business (Beer and Einsentat, 2000, ss.31).

In strategic control subdimension, performance levels of strategic criteria are measured. These measurements involves customer satisfaction criterion, realizing innovations and capability of obtaining them, and the success of reaching quality control standards (Barringer and Öladytı, 1999, s.426)

Another subdimension related to the strategic management course is strategic leadership subdimension. In this dimension, the role of leaders and managers in developing strategies basicly is focused on. Bennis characterizes these differences as the ones dominating the situation and the ones surrendering the situation (Bennis, 2003, ss.50).

A survey is carried out with 60 students among 173 students in total who are taking strategic management course in master's (130) and doctoral (43) degrees at the Institute of Social Sciences at Gazi University.

2. Strategy And Strategic Management

Strategy is one of the concepts we frequently encounter in the daily life. This concept appears to be defined in different ways in several areas including social, economical, managerial, military and educational areas. The term derives from Latin *stratum* which means way, line and bed (Eren, 2002, s.1). In a military sense, it is defined as an art of designing and managing an array of operations and activities (Ülgen, Mirze, 2010, s.35). Again from a business and management perspective, strategy is organizing the relationships of businesses with their environments and mobilizing resources on hand in an attempt to get the edge over the competitors (Dinçer, 2007, s.17).

In organizational and managerial sense, another concept confronted by us in the second half of the 20th century is strategic management. Strategic management, which was perceived initially as a composition of strategy and management concepts, can be defined today as efficient and productive use of production resources (natural resources, capital, human capital, raw material, machines, etc.) by businesses and organisations to achieve objectives. Strategic management is creating desired future by managing all functions and elements of the organisation from an integrative perspective (Ansoff, 1972). Strategic management is also an integrative perspective involving development of strategic plans, preparation of outcome-oriented budgets, measurement and evaluation of performance and performance management aiming at achieving missions and goals (Kooten, 1989, s.8). To define in another way, strategic management is predominantly interested not in daily and ordinary part of the business management, but in maintaining their lives in a long term and

activities that return competitive advantage and profit above average (Ülgen ve Mirze, 2010, ss.28). According to Dinçer and Fidan, strategic management involves determinations and solutions related to the external environment produced by businesses by asking questions concerning what is going to happen in the long run (1996: 2015). Strategic management is ensuring continuity of organizations and complying with changing environmental conditions so that strategic goals are achieved (Özer, 2008, s.487).

3. Strategic Management Course

One of the important approaches that sustain businesses in the business life is strategic management. Businesses with a managerial consciousness are influenced from severe economical conditions, fierce competition and crisis environment relatively lesser than other businesses in the industry. Strategic management course holds an important place in keeping the degree of this influence at a desired level.

Businesses operating in international area need to consider different cultural, economical, social and legal areas. The importance of a consistent strategic management policy in following the developments in these areas is undeniable. One of the tools which are drawn on in monitoring this consistency and solving the problems is strategic management course (Yelkikalan ve Pazarçık, 2005, s.5). Strategic management course allows different ways of thinking, analysis tools and case study materials to be used in developing general management skills (Barca ve Hızıroğlu, 2009, s.121). Strategic management course also has a role in enhancing qualifications of individuals needed by businesses in areas (<http://www.cag.edu.tr/>) such as monitoring and analyzing business environment and making strategic decisions (Civan ve Cenger, s.88). From another perspective, strategic management course provides students with a general frame with respect to the ways of developing strategies and the use of these strategies at a corporate and business level (http://www.iky.sakarya.edu.tr/tr/ders_plan_ayrinti/t/6/f/13/b/14/InKod/9980)

4. Purpose, Significance and Limitations of the Study

The goal of this study is to reveal the views of 30 master's degree and 30 phd students registered in Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall term and taking the strategic management course with respect to the role of strategic management course in bringing qualified personnel to the businesses. In addition, views with respect to strategic consciousness, strategic analysis, strategic direction, development, implementation, control and leadership as subcomponents of strategic management will be revealed.

In this direction, following hypotheses are developed considering the extent that strategic management course brings students in requested qualifications:

H0: The level at which strategic management course brings needed qualifications in terms of educational level does not constitute a significant difference.

H1: The level at which strategic management course brings needed qualifications in terms of educational level constitutes a significant difference.

This study is very important in terms of determining students' views on the effective level of strategic management course which has an important place in training individuals with basic qualifications (such as holding a particular vision, revealing possible threats and weaknesses) requested by businesses.

Conducting this study in just one university, with just master's and Phd students, not including distance education students, not having all students in the class while distributing the survey constitutes the limitations of this study.

5. Method and Population of Study

Survey method is adopted in obtaining data. "Survey for levels of gaining relevant qualifications through strategic management course" developed by Gönen (2013, s.116) was used. This questionnaire has 33 items and comprises of two parts: the first one is related to the gender, age, undergraduate program from which participant graduated, working status and second one is related to the values with respect to the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses through strategic management lesson.

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 23 software is benefited from in analyzing the data.

Dependent variable of this study was determined as the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses. Strategic management course which has an effect on this variable is determined as the independent variable. Descriptive analysis was used in analyzing the effect level of the dependent variable.

Population of the study is 173 students in total who are registered in Ankara City Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall semester and take strategic management course. 60 questionnaires in total were implemented to achieve the significancy level of the population. Simple random sampling method was applied to ensure that each individual in population falls into the population equally and independently.

The reason of selecting this population was that it was fast and easy to Access the data and that master's and Phd students were taking strategic management course subject to the study.

An Independent Sample T-Test was used to analyze the views of students registered in Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall semester with respect to the effect of strategic management course on bringing relevant qualifications in businesses.

6. Data Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient related to the reliability and whether data are normally distributed were determined in this part of the study.

In the analysis of the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.725. According to Kalaycı (2005, s.405) this indicates that the questions in this questionnaire are quite reliable. Variables related to the Cronbach's Alpha analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Findings of Cronbach's Alpha Technique

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
,725	,705	29

Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test were used to determine whether findings obtained from Independent Sample T-Test are distributed normally. When p value in Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test is above 0.05, sample can be accepted to be normally distributed. Following hypotheses related to the Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are offered, because the data obtained are normally distributed.

H_0 : Data on the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses through strategic management course are not normally distributed.

H_1 : Data on the level of gaining relevant qualifications in businesses through strategic management course are normally distributed.

Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test analysis in the context of the hypotheses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Findings of Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Test Statistics^a

		WORKING STATUS
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,033
	Positive	,000
	Negative	-,033
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		,129
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		1,000

a. Grouping Variable: LEVEL OF EDUCATION

Two-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test is generally comprises of two parts as Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z and Asymp. Sig (2-tailed). Second part, Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed), is the part which shows whether data are normally distributed. This value is 1.000 and indicates a normal distribution (Table 2).

7. Findings And Discussion

Data related to demographics (gender, age), the undergraduate program from which student was graduated and working status and interpretations of these were given place to in this part of the study. These data were analyzed with Frequencies analysis as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Participants According to Demographics

Gender		
	Number	Percent
Women	19	31,7
Men	41	68,3
Total	60	100,0
Age		
	Number	Percent
22-27	18	30,0
28-33	12	20,0
34-39	9	15,0
40-45	14	23,3

46 and above	7	11,7
Total	60	100,0
Graduated Undergraduate Program		
	Sayı	Yüzde
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	33	55,0
Faculty of Engineering and Architecture	7	11,7
Health Sciences	13	21,7
Other (Please indicate)	7	11,7
Total	60	100,0
Working Status		
	Sayı	Yüzde
I am working.	47	78,3
I am not working.	13	21,7
Total	60	100,0

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that 31.7% of participants are women, 68.3% are men. 30% of the participants are between 22-27 ages, 20% are between 28-33, 15% are between 34-39, 23.3% were between 40-45 and 11.7% are above 46.

When we look at the data regarding the undergraduate programs from which the participant graduated, 55% graduated from faculty of economics and administrative sciences, 11.7% from faculty of engineering and architecture, 21.7% from health sciences and 11.7% from other faculties. Other group seem to include participants graduated from Faculty of Trade and Tourism Education (Office administration education and business education) and communication faculty (public relations and publicity) (Table 3).

According to the data regarding the working status of the students, 78.3 of the participants was working and 21.7% was not working in a job (Table 3).

Analysis with respect to the degree of gaining relevant skills in businesses for participants were conducted through Descriptive analysis. Ranges of scores were very low for 1,00-1,80, low for 1,81-2,60, middle for 2,61-3,40, high for 3,41-4,20 and very high for 4,21-5,00 (Gönen, 2013: 97). Findings of these are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. *The degree that Strategic Management Course Brings Qualified Personnel in Businesses.*

	Number of people	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard Deviation
Strategic Consciousness Dimension	60	1	5	2.97	1,325
Strategic Analysis Dimension	60	1	5	2.87	1.361
Strategic Direction Dimension	60	1	5	2.90	1.225
Strategy Development Dimension	60	1	5	2.71	1.294
Strategy Implementation Dimension	60	1	5	3.08	1.192

Strategic Control Dimension	60	1	5	2.90	1.246
Strategic Leadership Dimension	60	1	5	3.45	1.338
Total	60	1	5	2.98	1.283

As seen in Table 3, students' views with respect to the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in businesses were in the middle level (2.98). When we look at the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in businesses in terms of its subdimensions, we see that students scored high in "strategic leadership" subdimension (3.45); middle in strategy implementation (3.08), middle for strategic consciousness (2.97); middle for strategic direction and strategic control (2,90); middle for strategic analysis dimension (2.87) and middle for strategy development dimension (2.71) (Table 4).

It is seen that only strategic leadership dimension were high with respect to the students views of the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in businesses. This situation indicates that the participants think that strategic management is a management approach which concerns strategic leader, strategic management will be successful only if they are supported by top management, and characteristics of the strategic leader is not different from the leader.

In strategy implementation subdimension, participants can be considered as not being sufficiently informed and skilled about some areas such as whether there is a difference between strategic planning and strategic management, the relationship of strategic plan development with strategic management course, the importance of employees in strategic management process, in ensuring the consistency of organizational culture and the effect of organizational structure on implementation of plans.

Other subdimension that the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in businesses were at middle level is strategic consciousness subdimension. According to Betz, this dimension involves the process in which long-term and rational actions (previously planned and entirely future-oriented actions) are developed (2010, 244). In addition, subjects such as the basic difference between strategic management and general management approaches, continuity of strategic management process, and the point that strategic management is not merely about organization's goal and management philosophy fall into this dimension.

8. Analysis of the Degree That Strategic Management Brings Qualified Personnel in Businesses in Terms of Educational Levels of Participants

In this part of study, the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in businesses were analyzed in terms of educational levels of participants

Table 5. *Distribution of the Degree That Strategic Management Course Brings Qualified Personnel in Businesses According to the Educational Levels of Participants*

	Educational Level	Number of People	Average	Std. Dev.	T Value	P Value
Strategic Consciousness Dimension	Master	30	3,57	1,285	4,177	0,077
	Phd	30	2,38	0,942		

Strategic Analysis Dimension	Master	30	3,28	1,379	2,469	0,096
	Phd	30	2,46	1,087		
Strategic Direction Dimension	Master	30	3,08	1,285	1,332	0,440
	Phd	30	2,72	1,100		
Strategy Development Dimension	Master	30	3,32	1,246	4,678	0,089
	Phd	30	2,11	0,873		
Strategy Implementation Dimension	Master	30	3,27	1,306	1,317	0,253
	Phd	30	2,90	0,898		
Strategic Control Dimension	Master	30	3,34	1,272	2,971	0,237
	Phd	30	2,45	0,952		
Strategic Leadership Dimension	Master	30	3,44	1,303	-0,263	0,273
	Phd	30	3,45	1,270		
Total	Master	30	3,32	1,296	2,383	0,209
	Phd	30	2,63	1,017		

When Table 5 is examined, students' views with respect to the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in businesses were scored 3.32 in Phd students and 2.63 in master's students. Rate of gaining necessary qualifications of participants according to the educational levels were higher in master's degree students than Phd level students and there were no statistically significant difference between these two groups in terms of gaining qualified personnel. As can be seen in the Table, t value as 2.383 and p value as 0.209 is influential in this difference.

When looked at the effect levels regarding the subdimensions of strategic management lesson, it is seen that effect levels with respect to strategic consciousness are scored in 3.57 for master students and 2.38 for Phd students. As can be understood from independent sample t-test regarding this strategic management subdimension, strategic consciousness subdimension does not create a significant difference in terms of master's and Phd students (t value 4.177; p value 0.077).

One of the subdimensions of strategic management course which have a higher score Master's students, when compared to Phd students, is strategic analysis. This dimension were scored 3.28 in master's degree students and 2.46 in Phd students and did not generate a significant difference. This difference is understood when we look at t value as 2.469 and p value as 0.096.

Phd students' score in terms of strategic leadership subdimension were 3.45 and this score is 3.44 in master students. However, t and p values can be accepted as not generating a significant difference between two groups (t value -0.263; p value 0.273).

As a consequence, when examined the subdimensions of needed qualifications brought by strategic management course and educational levels of participants did not establish a significant difference.

9. Conclusions And Suggestions

Strategic management course is one of the important tools ensuring that businesses have the individuals with needed qualifications. In this study, master's and Phd students' views regarding the degree that strategic management brings qualified personnel in

businesses were revealed. To present the level of effect, a questionnaire study was performed with the students registered in Gazi University Social Sciences Institute 2015-2016 fall semester. According to the findings obtained:

- Participants were found to express medium level views of strategic management course in terms of bringing qualified personnel.
- When looked at strategic consciousness dimension according to participants' educational levels, effect rate of the strategic consciousness dimension was higher in master's degree students and lower in Phd students. Thus, phd students can be considered as gaining strategic consciousness dimension as a necessary qualification in business life at a lower level. Students' lack of knowledge regarding the main difference between strategic management and general management approaches and regarding the continuity of strategic management process results in this situation. In addition, participants have different views on the strategic management's connection with organizational goals and management philosophy.
- In analysis of strategic analysis dimension of strategic management course, effect rate of this dimension was higher in master's degree students and lower in phd students. In other words, phd students gain strategic analysis dimension as a necessary qualification in business life at a lower level.
- Phd students gain the qualifications needed in business life at a low level in strategic direction dimension. Organization must ring the changes in mission to maintain its existence or competitive advantage.
- Effect level of strategy development dimension was higher in master's degree students and lower in phd students. Thus, Phd students gain the qualifications needed in business life at a low level in strategy development dimension. Its reason is students' lack of knowledge regarding that main strategies and sub-strategies developed and implemented at lower levels in organization. Resources and competency of organization in different areas must be considered in development of strategies, and responsibility for developing strategies must be held by only top manager.
- Other subdimension in questionnaire regarding strategic management course is strategy implementation dimension. After the analysis in strategy implementation dimension, it was seen that master's degree and phd students expressed middle level views.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of strategic management process is possible only when proper data and statistics are compiled. Simultaneous control applications may not be necessary every time in strategic management process. Efficiency of strategic control is located on the last stage of strategic management process and comprises of the actions to be taken in the last stage of the process. After the analysis conducted in the context of these issues, this dimension was seen to be higher in master's degree students, and lower in phd students. This rate indicates that master's degree students have higher levels than phd students.
- In strategic leadership dimension of strategic management process, effect level according to the participants' educational levels was found to be lower in master's degree students and higher in phd students. Thus, phd students can be considered as gaining strategic consciousness dimension as a qualification needed in business life at higher levels. Its reason is students' lack of knowledge regarding that strategic

management is a management approach related to only strategic leader, strategic management is successful only when it is supported by top manager, characteristics of strategic leader is not different from a leader.

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