



A conceptual framework of impeders to strategy implementation from an exploratory case study in an Iranian university

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to develop a comprehensive framework for assessing impeders of strategy implementation in a higher education context through an in-depth analysis of a higher education institution in Iran.

Design/methodology/approach – A semi-structured interview is employed with senior academic staff and managers in a particular university.

Findings – The main impeders of strategy implementation within the university as the case organisation and are found to be grouped into five main areas: planning consequences, organisational, individual, managerial and environmental. The nature and reasons for the impeders are explained and finally an analytical framework is developed.

Research limitations/implications – The paper, through the use of how and why questions during interviews, highlighted a framework which provides an in-depth understanding of impeders. The paper's results have implications for other universities in Iran and indeed the Middle East. However, a limitation of this paper is that the results are exploratory only, given that the paper is carried out in only one Iranian university.

Practical implications – This paper provides a valuable basis for discussion on the impeders of strategy implementation. Moreover, the results of the research can be used as guidance for managers and academic staff at the strategy implementation stage in the higher education sector.

Originality/value – The findings of the paper highlight the relevant impeders of strategy implementation within a higher education environment that will be of interest to those in this field, particularly those working in Iranian universities.

Keywords Higher education, Management strategy, Academic staff, Public sector organizations, Iran

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

Today's environment has become increasingly uncertain and unpredictable for both profit and not-for-profit institutions. Hence, managers and leaders of organisations must think, learn and act strategically (Bryson, 2004). Furthermore, in order to control and adapt to environmental changes, a clear approach with long-range planning techniques, like the strategic management process, should be used (O'Regan and Ghobadian, 2002). Although strategy implementation is viewed as an integral part of the strategic

management process, less research has been conducted on it. In fact, the majority of strategic management literature merely focuses on the formulation of strategy rather than its implementation (Alexander, 1985; Al-Ghamdi, 1998; Noble, 1999a; Siciliano, 2002). As the outcome of strategic planning is only a set of plans and intentions, it cannot in itself produce actions and visible changes in organisations. This paper, therefore, endeavours to bridge this gap and looks closely at the impeters to strategy implementation in a public sector, using an institution of higher education, with a focus on developing and establishing a conceptual framework in this area.

Public sector organisations, including the Iranian higher education sector, have begun to recognise that strategic planning is necessary in order to maintain their own responsiveness to a rapidly changing environment (Streib and Poister, 1990; Smith *et al.*, 1987; Bryson, 2004). Ostar (1989) and Rowley and Sherman (2001) claim that colleges and universities have experienced rapid changes associated with ageing facilities, changing technology, changing demographics, increasing competition, rising costs and funding cuts. Educational administrators are challenged to anticipate changes in the environment. They also should formulate proactive responses that will enhance the educational processes within college and university campuses. There is an abundance of literature on different aspects of the higher education sector development. However, the higher education sector outside of east/west contexts, and in particular the impeters to strategy implementation are rarely mentioned in the relevant literature (Rahimnia Alashloo *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, this investigation looks closely at the issues of strategy implementation in the higher education context of Iran in order to identify and understand the relevant impeters in this area.

The challenges of strategy implementation

The strategic management process can be compared to a two-headed coin. On one side is strategy formulation, which defines what an organisation's game plan would be to compete successfully within a specific context. On the other side is strategy implementation (Alexander, 1991). However, the two are intertwined because a strategic management's plan does not end with its creation of a strategic plan. This is because having a strategy does not mean that action will follow (Jauch and Glueck, 1988). Implementing strategies successfully is very important and vital for any organisation, both in the public and private sectors (Noble, 1999b). The above discussion leads to the conclusion that without proper executive methods and mechanisms, organisations would not be able to achieve their objectives and mission of implementing their formulated strategies.

As explained previously, the strategy formulation is only one aspect of the strategic management process, and strategy implementation has been neglected in most of the literature, especially in the higher education context (Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002; Herbinak and Joyce, 2001). Alexander (1991) claims several reasons for this omission:

- Strategy implementation is less glamorous than strategy formulation.
- Many academics and practitioners tend to overlook it because of a belief that anyone can do it.
- People are not exactly sure what it includes and where it begins and ends.
- There are only a limited number of conceptual models of strategy implementation.

Strategic planning was developed initially in the private sector and later was extended to include public and not-for-profit organisations in order to help such institutions respond effectively to environmental changes (Duncan, 1990; Wilson, 1990). Similar types of strategies have been found across different types of organisations, in spite of their internal organisational differences (textbook publishing, automotive firms, hospital administration, electronics, air transportation, information-service companies and universities) as a result of each facing similar environmental conditions (Comeron, 1983). For instance, Streib and Poister (1990) stated that not only have strategic thoughts and actions grown rapidly in the private sector, but they have also become progressively significant in the public and not-for-profit sectors. Based on strategic management process literature, the existing gap of knowledge in the strategy implementation stage is shown in Figure 1.

This research specifically concentrates on the impeder for the implementation stage that is based on a framework to examine the relevant impeder and explore the new problems within the higher education context of Iran in the Middle East region. However, there is a limited number of impeder to strategy implementation identified in the strategic management literature, specifically in the public sector. If closely examined, these barriers could be linked to organisational structure, system, culture, power, conflict (Ellis and Dick, 2000). Figure 2 uses a systems approach, and in particular uses the definitions proposed by Johnson *et al.* (1973) of sub-systems to categorise impeder in order to simplify and present them visually.

The relevant impeder have been summarised in Table I. This is then employed as a vehicle to undertake the field work in order to understand the nature of, and reasons for problems, and is further explained in the methodology section. According to the above discussion, the entire impeder are clearly classified within five main groups to cover the literature reviewed in both private and public sectors by addressing the scholars' names.

Overview of the strategic plan for higher education in Iran

According to the Third Five-Year Development Plan 2000-2005 (TFYDP), which is a generic strategic plan for the whole of Iran, change and reformation in the structure,

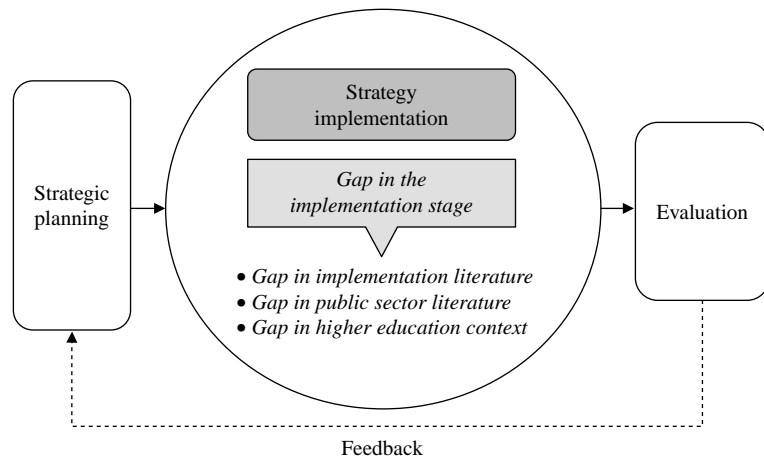


Figure 1.
The literature gap in the strategy implementation stage

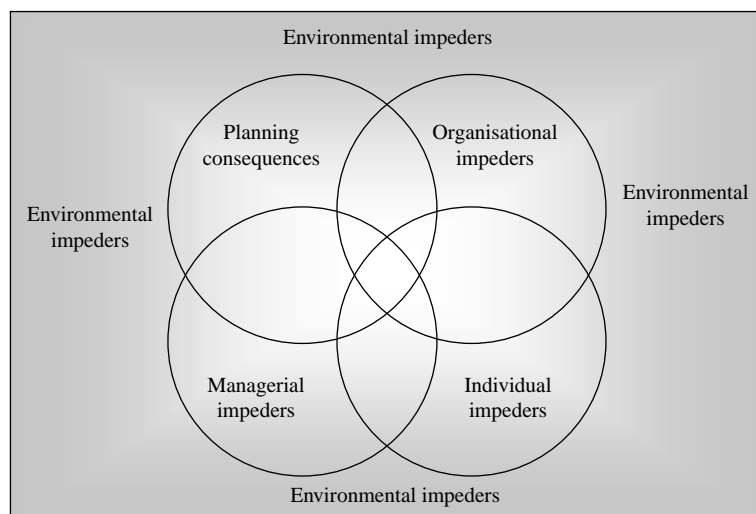


Figure 2.
A conceptual framework to impeders of strategy implementation

strategies and functions of higher education was considered necessary. First, in order to integrate and co-ordinate science and technology strategies, policies and functions, the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education was transformed into the Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology (MSRT) to best meet the requirements of the country in the third millennium. The MSRT is responsible for the non-medical sector higher education in Iran. Second, the ministry regulates research affairs and development of postgraduate degrees to improve research activities as a strategic direction in higher education institutions (MSRT, 2001). According to clauses number 100 and 101 of TFYDP, the government should undertake supportive enterprising actions in order to develop and improve research activities. Additionally, based on the 103rd clause, the government should provide all of the required facilities to access the necessary information for ensuring Iran, is included in the world network of information, and improving the relevant services to propagate the use of new information technology (Majlis Research Centre, 2003).

As a result, the growth of research activities has been considered as the main strategic direction in the higher education system by the MSRT in order to align with policies and directions of TFYDP for the country. This study is focused on the impeders and difficulties in implementation of the above research strategy within a higher education context in Iran which is rarely dealt with by the relevant literature. It is carried out by highlighting the main barriers and provides an in-depth understanding of the nature of and reasons for problems in this sector.

Research methodology

The phenomenological philosophy advocates an attempt to understand social reality that is grounded in people's experiences. Hence, the emphasis is on understanding the phenomena and arriving at new meanings of the studied concepts (Gray, 2004; Collis and Hussey, 2003). As this research was intended to investigate the impeders of strategy implementation within the context of public sector higher education, a phenomenological philosophy was adopted to understand the phenomena through

Impeders	Sources
<i>The impeders of planning consequences</i>	
Lack of exact strategic planning	Pechlaner and Sauerwein (2002), Noble (1999a, b), Sambasiva and Deshmukh (1994), Rowley and Sherman (2001b), Aaltonen and Ikavaiko (2002), Reed and Buckley (1988), Freedman (2003), Al-Ghamdi (1998), Alexander (1985, 1991), Hrebiniak and Joyce (2001), Okumus and Hemmington (1998), Dooley <i>et al.</i> (2000), Rapert <i>et al.</i> (2002), Dess and Priem (1995), Wooldridge and Floyd (1990), David (2003), Aladwani (2001), Schmelzer and Olsen (1994), Hussey (1985), Heide <i>et al.</i> (2002), Jauch and Glueck (1988), Thompson (2002), Hambrick and Cannella (1989), Thompson and Strickland (1999), Pearce and Robinson (2003)
Insufficient linking of strategy to goals	
Time limitation	
Lack of identification of major problems	
Lack of effective role for formulators	
Unsuitable training system	
Unsuitable regulations and executive policies	
Lack of consensus among decision-makers	
<i>The organisational impeders</i>	
Incompatible structure with the strategy	Pechlaner and Sauerwein (2002), Al-Ghamdi (1998), Heide <i>et al.</i> (2002), Olsen <i>et al.</i> (1992), Hoag <i>et al.</i> (2002), Okumus (2001), Alexander (1985), David (2003), Macmillan and Tampoe (2000), Schmelzer and Olsen (1994), Thompson (2002), Reed and Buckley (1988), Noble (1999a, b), Chandler (1962), Leavitt (1965), Drazin and Howard (1984), Hambrick and Cannella (1989), Thompson and Strickland (1999), Pearce and Robinson (2003), Certo and Peter (1988), Johnson and Scholes (2002), Wheelen and Hunger (1995), Hill and Jones (1998), Jauch and Glueck (1988), Owen (1982), Okumus (2003), Rowley and Sherman (2001b), O'Brien (2002), Okumus and Hemmington (1998), Aaltonen and Ikavaiko (2002), Goldhaber and Barnett (1988), Conrad (1998), Peng and Litteljohn (2001), Aladwani (2001), Dobni (2003), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Freedman (2003), Hutt <i>et al.</i> (1995) and O'Regan Ghobadian (2002)
Unsuitable resources allocation	
Lack of suitable communication	
Lack of effective co-ordination	
Lack of adequate information system	
Incompatible organisational culture	
Competing activities	
Unsuitable compensation system	
Unsuitable evaluation and control systems	
<i>The managerial impeders</i>	
Unsuitable leadership	Hoag <i>et al.</i> (2002), Al-Ghamdi (1998), Alexander (1985), Jauch and Glueck (1988), Noble (1999a, b), Reed and Buckley (1988), Beer and Eisenstat (2000), Khandwalla (1976), Maddock (2002), Thompson and Strickland (1999), Pearce and Robinson (2003), Okumus (2001, 2003), Freedman (2003), Aladwani (2001), Okumus and Hemmington (1998), Heide <i>et al.</i> (2002), Mintzberg and Quinn (1991), Wheelen and Hunger (2000), Cockerill (1994), Wolverson and Holt (2005)
Inadequate organisational support	
Inadequate management commitment	
Fear of insecurity among managers	
Political factors in regards to power	
Unsuitable personnel management	
<i>The individual impeders</i>	
Insufficient capabilities of employees	Alexander (1985), Al-Ghamdi (1998), Okumus and Hemmington (1998), Noble (1999a), Dobni (2003) Hambrick and Cannella (1989), O'Regan and Ghobadian (2002), David (1999), Freedman (2003), Clarke (1994), Johnson and Scholes (2002), Klein and Sorra (1996), Aaltonen and Ikavalko, 2002, Pechlaner and Sauerwein (2002), Beer and Eisenstat (2000) and Hutt <i>et al.</i> (1995)
Resistance to change	
Fear of insecurity among people	
Lack of understanding strategy	
<i>The environmental impeders</i>	
Political-economic impeders	Hambrick and Cannella (1989), Schmelzer and Olsen (1994), Al-Ghamdi (1998), Ogden (1995), Wilms and Zell (2003) and Coy and Pratt (1998)
Impact of competitive environment	

Table I.
The impeders of strategy implementation in organisations

the experiences of individuals within a university. A case study strategy was chosen in order to obtain rich, in-depth information about the issues being studied in order to highlight the nature of, and reason for, the impiders in the implementation stage. A university was chosen as the sample for this case study. The university selected is one of the oldest and largest universities in Iran. It has a large number of research activities, academic staff in a variety of academic fields providing a variety of postgraduate degrees. It therefore has huge potential for research development. In addition, the university is well-known for its research activities with 16 high quality research centres and institutes. Moreover, this academic institution has been involved in all three research development plans over the last 15 years.

A semi-structured interview was employed to investigate the problems of strategy implementation within the academic units in the university. The structure of the interview was matched with the framework in five main categories. The data were gathered from 30 interviewees including deans of faculties, research deputies (as managers) and senior academic staff. Yin (2003) claims that there is preference for devising theoretical propositions prior to data collection as a tool to analyse data by analytical approach and procedures. The theoretical propositions are established in the form of the framework in Figure 2 and further developed in Table I. The data collected from the case study have been analysed by analytical procedures including categorisation, recognition and interpretation.

Results and discussion

Saunders *et al.* (2003) point out that there are some general sets of processes for qualitative analysis including categorising, unitising data, recognising and developing categories. The data gathered from interviews have been placed in five categories based on the main types of impiders to strategy implementation in the conceptual framework. In this section, the results of the research are discussed with reference to the literature reviewed. As presented in Table II, the five main categories are used for the structural purpose in the discussion that follows:

The impiders of planning consequences

The research results highlighted that the strategic plans are ambiguous and the objectives of plans are not clearly and explicitly established because of a centralised form used for decision making at the ministry level. The vast majority of research deputies stated that there is an absence of clear regulations and executive policies in two respects:

- (1) a lack of clear research policies based on the requirements of the TFYDP to give a clear picture of the new changes; and
- (2) a lack of the required regulations and executive policies in the form of subsequent guidelines.

This is supported by other studies such as Al-Ghamdi (1998) and Pearce and Robinson (2003). The research revealed that the centralised planning and a decision making system in the governmental sector result in formulators playing the role of decision-makers at the top level, without taking any active role and responsibility for the implementation process.

Literature review findings	The research findings	The new findings
<i>The impeters of planning consequences</i>		
1. Lack of exact strategic planning	1. Lack of an exact strategic planning	1. <i>Changing plans in the implementation</i>
2. Insufficient linking of the strategy to goals	2. Unsuitable training system	2. <i>Unrealistic and idealistic plans</i>
3. Time limitation	3. Unsuitable regulation and executive policies	
4. Lack of consensus among decision makers	4. Lack of effective role for formulators	
5. Lack of identification of major problems	5. <i>Changing plans in the implementation</i>	
6. Lack of effective role for formulators	6. <i>Unrealistic and idealistic plans</i>	
7. Unsuitable training system		
8. Unsuitable regulations and executive policies		
<i>The organisational impeters</i>		
1. Incompatible structure with the strategy	1. Unsuitable resources allocation	1. <i>Lack of adequate postgraduate degrees</i>
2. Unsuitable resources allocation	2. Incompatible structure with the strategy	2. <i>Unsuitable executive approach</i>
3. Lack of adequate communication	3. Unsuitable evaluation and control systems	3. <i>Lack of suitable incentive system</i>
4. Lack of effective co-ordination	4. Lack of adequate communication	
5. Lack of adequate information system	5. Incompatible organisational culture	
6. Incompatible organisational culture	6. Unsuitable compensation system	
7. Competing activities among people	7. Lack of effective co-ordination	
8. Unsuitable evaluation and control systems	8. <i>Lack of adequate postgraduate degrees</i>	
9. Unsuitable compensation system	9. <i>Unsuitable executive approach</i>	
	10. <i>Lack of suitable incentive system</i>	
<i>The managerial impeters</i>		
1. Unsuitable leadership	1. Unsuitable leadership	1. <i>Lack of enough managers with positive attitude</i>
2. Inadequate organisational support	2. Lack of adequate manager commitment	2. <i>Lack of adequate motivation</i>
3. Lack of adequate manager commitment	3. Lack of adequate organisational support	
4. Fear of insecurity among managers	4. Unsuitable personnel management	
5. Political factors with regards to power	5. <i>Lack of enough managers with positive attitude</i>	
6. Unsuitable personnel management	6. <i>Lack of adequate motivation</i>	

Table II.
The overview of the research results

(continued)

Literature review findings	The research findings	The new findings
<i>The individual impeters</i>		
1. Insufficient capabilities of employees	1. Lack of sufficient capabilities of employees	1. <i>Lack of adequate morale of team work</i>
2. Resistance to change among people	2. Resistance to change among people	2. <i>Lack of enough motivation</i>
3. Fear of insecurity in the new territory	3. Fear of insecurity in the new territory	
4. Lack of understanding the strategy	4. <i>Lack of adequate morale of team work</i>	
	5. <i>Lack of enough motivation</i>	
<i>The environmental impeters</i>		
1. Political-economic impeters	1. Political-economic impeters	1. <i>Social-cultural impeters</i>
2. Impact of competitive environment	2. <i>Social-cultural impeters</i>	2. <i>Governmental impeters</i>
	3. <i>Governmental impeters</i>	

Note: The impeters in italics are new issues based on the research results

Table II.

The research results also highlighted two new impeters in this context. The first one was “changing plans during the implementation process”. This is due to changes in socio-economic transitions and lack of agreement with, or belief in, some elements of plans by executive managers. The second new impeder was “idealistic and unrealistic plans”. The reason is that objectives and indexes of research plans are considered according to international levels or other unachievable indexes. For instance, the share of gross national product was determined to be about 1 per cent (at least 0.75 per cent) for research activities, but it was actually less than half a per cent in 2003.

The organisational impeters

The research results revealed there to be no suitable resource allocation both in the university where the study was carried out and in higher education as a whole. This is due to the high bureaucracy surrounding the approval process as well as it being a protracted process. These factors have decreased the motivation of people to carry out research activities. The analysis of the data also indicated that the budget is not distributed equitably among academic units, due to some departments having more influence in the approval and decision making process.

The results also highlighted that an extensive administrative bureaucracy and teaching-oriented structure have been established among the academic units in the university. This result is supported by many researchers and scholars who claim that proper strategy-structure alignment is a necessary ingredient for successful implementation (Schmelzer and Olsen, 1994; Noble, 1999b; Owen, 1982; Johnson and Scholes, 2002). In terms of evaluation and control systems, the majority of academic staff claimed that even though there is a difficult administrative process for approval of projects and resource allocation, exact evaluation systems and performance indices are not established with any regard to the quality of research outcomes.

At the university level, the internal communication system is not sufficient to give full and timely information to the entire academic units and staff about new changes, responsibilities and directions. Furthermore, at local, national and international

levels, the communications were not established to develop external co-operation and co-ordination with other organisations and academic bodies regarding research activities at different levels. With regard to organisational culture, the findings indicated that there was no compatibility between organisational culture and the new strategy, due to a teaching-oriented culture being long established in the university. This impedes is consistent with Dobni (2003) and Okumus (2003) who highlighted that strategy-culture fit, and match, is a powerful lever for successful implementation.

The results of the primary data indicated that there is lack of linkage between strategy and the compensation system as an important problem in the implementation stage. In terms of effective co-ordination, the research findings revealed that the tall hierarchy, bureaucratic system and inadequate managerial abilities regarding research activities, are all recognised as reasons for ineffective co-ordination at the university level. Moreover, the lack of effective co-ordination has created improper results during decision-making at the national level, due to governmental organisations carrying out their research programmes without considering the macro objectives, the need for co-ordination with each other, and other national plans.

The research also highlighted a few new impeders. The first one being an inadequate number of postgraduate degrees, considered a major problem for the development of the research activities, and due to lack of sufficient budget, facilities and academic staff to develop them. The second is a lack of a suitable incentive system to facilitate the strategy implementation. This is considered to be due to the existing approach which is based on researchers' achievements rather than on a forward-looking approach to increase the motivation of faculty to do further research. The third one is the compulsory approach towards research activities among the faculties and departments with regard to research areas for academic staff and doctoral students.

The managerial impeders

The research results from the academic staff's viewpoints which indicated that some managers do not have adequate experience, skills and abilities to persuade staff to successfully implement the strategy. Furthermore, the common expression was "ineffective managers in managerial positions". Therefore, selecting qualified leaders is viewed as a vital aspect of effective leadership necessary to inspire others in the implementation process. Moreover, some deans of faculties pointed out that the existing leadership style is not matched with the new changes to develop research activities because of it being teaching-oriented and there being a lack of sufficient skills and abilities in existing managers. The analysis of the primary data highlighted that a number of managers do not have high commitment in terms of research plans and objectives. This is due to the lack of effective participation of the managers in the decision-making process and an unsuitable appointment system which is based on informal relationships, rather than professional competence. Additionally, it was also noted that a suitable personnel management system has not been established in the university in question, due to a lack of sufficient financial resources, welfare facilities and attention to the personal needs and wishes of academic staff.

The research results also highlighted two original issues:

- (1) There was lack of motivation among managers to accept a managerial position and carry out its responsibilities. This was seen to be because of insufficient

autonomy and authority to conduct their roles in the supervision area and unstable management positions.

- (2) There was a lack of managers with positive attitudes towards research activities because of the practice of paying more attention to teaching activities and having high expectations of research results in short-time scales at a low cost.

The individual impiders

The results from the deans of faculties and research deputies indicated that the capability of the academic staff is not adequate for research. They considered this to be because there are insufficient capable and skilful researchers within the academic units. Furthermore, there are no suitable training programmes to allow academic staff to develop their research capabilities, skill and knowledge. Again, the research results from the deans of faculties and research deputies' whose viewpoints highlighted that there is a resistance to change among the academic staff to be involved in research in the university. In addition, insecurity and a fear of failure is perceived to exist among academic staff and this results in a failure to implement further research because most academic staff do not have adequate experience and knowledge with regard to research.

The study also presented two new points:

- (1) The research findings revealed there to be a lack of motivation among academics to become involved in research activities due to low income, high responsibility and the extensive bureaucracy and administrative procedures surrounding the approval process for research activities. Furthermore, respondents indicated some other reasons for this impeder such as the lack of a suitable incentive system to encourage the individuals, inadequate prestige and the lack of sufficient research facilities.
- (2) It was felt that there is insufficient desire to work in teams, among academic staff and researchers within the academic units. The reasons for this are considered the poor culture of team work and the spirit of individualism among departments and academic staff.

The environmental impiders

The interviewees stated that there is an unstable economy in the country, and this creates unpredictable situations for economic forecasts. Political factors and relationships influence economic indexes at the national and international levels. As relationships and communications in the last two decades have been unstable with some countries, especially in respect of Western countries, decision makers have had to deal with uncertainty when making decisions in both the national and international levels.

The study revealed that social and cultural factors play a key role in the external environment for higher education institutions, because they assume that the researchers might transfer their information to other people or organisations, like competitors or governmental organisations. Although privatisation was introduced from the first development plan, private organisations do not generally like to communicate with higher education institutions regarding research activities. The reason for this poor

culture is the lack of appreciation given to researchers and research among organisations in society. Moreover, some environmental impacts arise from the government during the implementation process. The critical point concerned the concentrated structure of the decision-making system as discussed in previous sections. Another problem was the evidence of parallel decisions regarding research by different governmental units. The next important problem with regard to government intervention was the lack of suitable rules and regulations to support the research strategy and accelerate the administrative procedures among governmental organisations.

It can be concluded that the interaction between industry and university on the one hand, and their relationships with government on the other, are crucial in the implementation stage for Iranian higher education institutions. Indeed, they face the tension between national educational policy and the power of various stakeholders; the critical stakeholders; often being described as the triple helix: “university-government-industry” (Etzkowitz *et al.*, 2000; Castro *et al.*, 2000; Hagen, 2002). However, based on the governmental rules and social attitudes in Iran, this approach has not been established in the country. As some limitations originate from governmental rules, in some cases, researchers and academic staff cannot directly communicate and make contact with industry. In addition, there is a negative social attitude among industrial managers regarding communication and co-operation within the triple helix of “university-government-industry” in the country.

Conclusions

The results confirmed most impellers identified in the literature review and also specified a number of new issues that were found to exist in the academic units of the university where the research was conducted. Thus, all relevant impellers were identified and in-depth understandings of their operation within the specific context of a public sector higher education institute in Iran, was achieved. However, some issues raised in existing literature did not appear to affect the implementation process within the case study as presented in Table II. This might have occurred due to the dissimilarity of the higher education context from others such as manufacturing companies, hospitality organisations and business firms.

In conclusion, the outcomes of the research have provided an original contribution to the body of knowledge in two main aspects.

- (1) The main contribution is a developed framework (Figure 2) with a comprehensive categorisation as guidance regarding the impellers of strategy implementation (Table I).
- (2) The results provided an original contribution by presenting the new impellers in the implementation process within the higher education context.

It is understandable that the outcomes of this study cannot necessarily be generalised to all higher education academic institutions. However, the research utilised the cases study methodological approach to provide an in-depth understanding of the problems to strategy implementation in a novel context. Consequently, the developed framework can be used as guidance by top management of higher education institutions in order to reconsider and reassess the impellers in the suggested categories within their organisations (Figure 3). This will enhance awareness and understanding of top

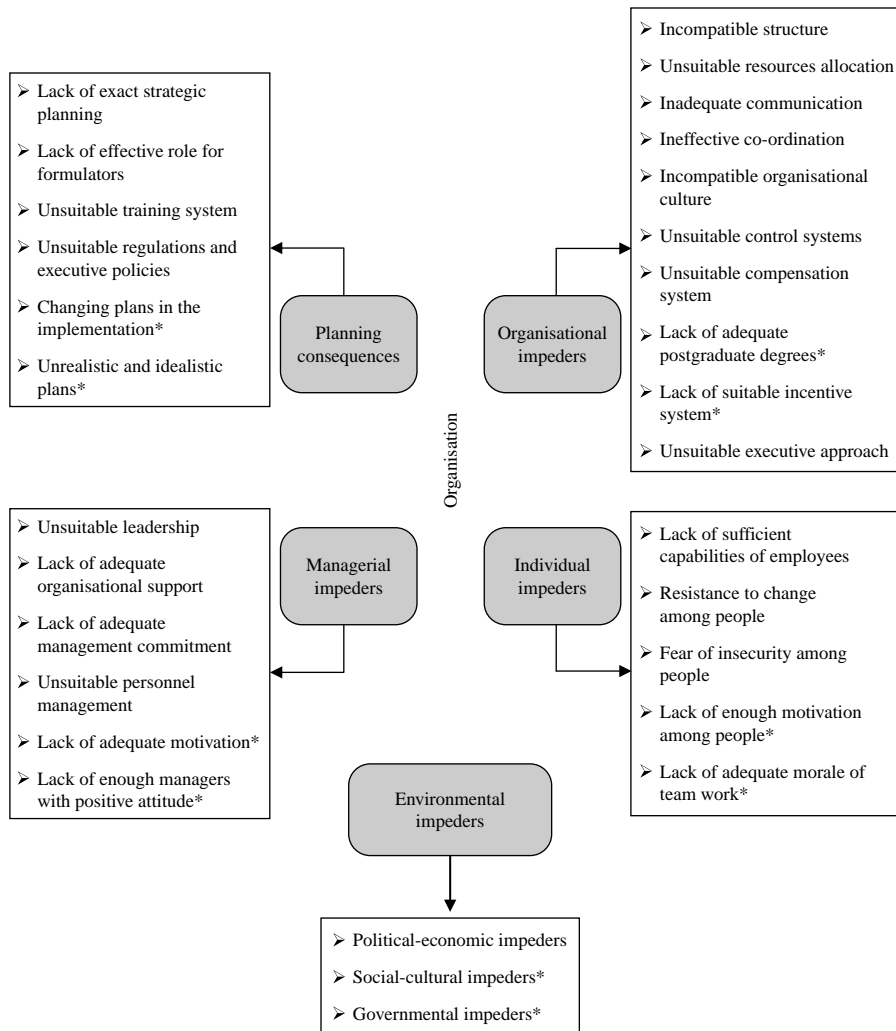


Figure 3.
The conceptual framework of the impeders to strategy implementation in a higher education context

Note: *The impeders in bold are new issues based on the research outcomes within every category

management regarding problems before the implementation process, and enable them to control and overcome the impeders by making the appropriate decisions.

Although the purpose of this research was not to study relationships between the impeders, a suitable groundwork has been established for further research in this direction. The comprehensive classification of the impeders to strategy implementation can be used for a number of different organisational contexts. Organisations can employ the conceptual framework to evaluate and identify implementation problems in the light of internal and external issues. Furthermore, future research will be able to study, improve, and develop this framework in diverse contexts, i.e. quantitative research

could potentially identify how strong the relationships between different impeters within the conceptual framework are in diverse organisational contexts.

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