



## Article

# The Role of Strategic Awareness in Raising The Level of Strategic Mindset: An Analytical Study of The Opinions of A Sample of Leaders At The University of Maysan

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the impact of strategic awareness on the development of the strategic mindset. A combined methodology was used with two dimensions of strategic awareness (internal, external) and three dimensions of strategic mindset (entrenchment, return, deprivation). 135 questionnaires were distributed among the University of Maysan community, 5 of which were not returned, and a total of 130 accurate responses. It was found there was significant relationship and impact between strategic awareness and strategic mindset. Furthermore, the results highlighted how strategic awareness development was a key mechanism to develop a strong strategic mindset. Data was gathered by means of questionnaires, which were analysed using the statistics program Smart PLS. The researchers' hypothesis that there is an interrelationship between strategic awareness and strategic mindset was confirmed. The findings, a number of recommendations were made calling for department and divisional managers to practice certain behaviours that may contribute towards reinforcing strategic awareness and subsequently the overall strategic mind-set within their business units.

**Keywords:** Strategic awareness , Strategic mindset, University of Maysan.

## 1. Introduction

In the modern and complex business world organizations are faced with challenges, drastic changes, and fierce competition which demands to maintain strategic mindset capabilities [1]. It is all about having a proactive mindset, and learning from mistakes or setbacks, taking them as opportunities for growth and moving forward. On the other hand attention perception refers to the ability to comprehend external environment and organizational demands, identifying opportunities and threats that may affect future consequences. This study explores the interaction of strategic awareness and elevating strategic mindset. It attempts to explain how strategic awareness allows organizations to derive benefit from their failures and obstacles, making these experiences drivers of their development [2], [3]. It will also examine how strategic awareness helps to recognise external opportunities and threats that may influence the organisation's path. Theoretically, strategic consciousness and strategic cognition are important in the theory of strategy. Strategic sensitivity is the understanding of external forces that influence organizational purposes and competitive advantages, while strategic orientation attributes focus on turning obstacles into opportunities (Huff et al. 2000). In practice, developing strategic awareness is the foundation for the development of strategic mindset skills. In turn, when implications for the future are detected (chances and risks to the organization),

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strategic planning is best used by organizations that allow them to establish strong strategies in accordance with their goals (and thus be able to succeed over time) [4].

## 2. Materials and Methods

Strategic awareness first appeared in the 1980s, and since then it has transformed into a broader form beyond only senior management knowledge. It highlights not just the need to mind both internal and external matters in strategizing. First, at the individual level strategic awareness was conceived of as the extent to which senior executives were aware of key objectives. In recent years it has caught on at the organizational level, where it reflects strategy that's actually executed effectively. This interpretation presumes that managers have a common, shared vision of the current strategy in force at their organization. Strategic literacy is ephemeral and unstable; it is a living domain that needs constant growth and updating. To be competitive, companies have to reflect on the data and information surrounding them (both internal and external) in order to create the strategic goals and aspirations. Different interpretations have also been proposed by scholars and writers in order to further elucidate this concept. Thompson described this as a manager's understanding of the firm's situation, recognizing opportunities for change and consideration of influencing environmental factors. Others have classified strategic awareness as a competency. It is a cognitive empowerment that allows an organization to develop clear vision through inquiry, research, value transformation and the ability to think critically.

Contemporary literature suggests that strategic orientation can be described by a triplet of main dimensions, as Al-Badayneh et al.

### Strategic Awareness of the External Environment

Orgs are heavily shaped by their environment because no one is an island. Strategic factors within or near the organization (deep pockets towards future stake/leaders, company employees striking rich) as well as on external factors (competitive pressures, societal trends, political influences and economic environment - consumerism). These external determinants are variously called the broader environment in which organisations have to operate, and where they pursue similar core activities. The external environment is made up of variables that an organization cannot effect or could only influence to a certain extent, such as the key actors in its environment like customers, competitors, government agencies, suppliers, employees and banking organizations with whom it interacts. In addition, external forces including political, economical, social and technological are linked to extend beyond the direct level of the company affect its functioning and decision making.

## 3. Results

### Strategic Awareness of the Internal Environment

Strategic internal awareness is centered on the identification and interpretation of factors and dynamics that influence the inner workings of an organization. This includes insight on organisational goals, financial resources, management skills and competences, strengths weaknesses and core competencies in areas such as marketing, production process (manufacturing) finance and human resource [5]. It includes the human dimension including knowledge and skills, nature of employees and personality - attitudes - competences for success relevant to organizational goals. Considering that "human being are at the very center of any business success" [6], it is vital to invest in employees development for long run strategic growth.

### Strategic Awareness of Strategic Goals

Strategic objectives act as critical reference for performance evaluation and desired business results in an enterprise. These goals are not just allowing the measurement of a results, but become essential for strengthen the organization's competitive advantage [7].

Adjacent to the organization's mission, and objectives, are strategic goals that serve as a map for realizing plans in various time horizons: short-, medium- and long-term. When they are irrespectively well defined, these enable leaders to maximise the operations of their business and lead it beyond the capability of competitors. A clear expression of these designs guarantees that efforts performed by an organization are still purpose oriented and highly related to the overall vision or mission [8].

### **Strategic Mindset**

**Strategic Mindset** The scientific use of: historical evidence, empirical data Models and benchmarks to develop new ideas and face the unexpected. It is the realisation of this domain-general approach, based on the use of metacognitive strategies (e.g., planning, monitoring of progress, adaptive actions), to achieve goals in multiple domains [9]. Secondly, such an attitude can be trained in the laboratory. Activating the Strategic Mindset frequently includes asking inwardly questions such as, 'What can I do to help myself?', "How can I improve this?", or "Can I think of a more friendly way to say this?" Questions like this are good triggers, sparking people to create and wield their own tools for purposes close to home [10]. This proactive attitude can be particularly useful if you are dealing with new challenges or moving through a period of tough times. Immensely important, a Strategic Mindset is about more than understanding specific strategies or using random tactics. It embodies a more general attitude towards metacognitive strategy use, where it has implications for the development of self-esteem and personal control. By experiencing and molding this perspective, one is able to see how concretely people play into strategic displays in order to achieve their ends- building the success of their consequences. At the heart of it, Strategic Mindset represents a strategic leader's consciousness and ability to perform effectively and efficiently. It develops from the relationship between a leader's skills, knowledge and abilities and internal/external organizational factors. Because strategic leaders manage in complex environments, they both respond to such complexity and shape these variables. A Strategic Mindset does not require prolonged committee deliberation or significant resources; activities can be initiated quickly and grow gradually [11]. Developing this way of thinking means understanding long-term business results while setting major objectives over time intervals and linking it to measurables. It also enables leaders to reconcile daily choices with immediate business consequences, and a path aimed at larger objectives. At The Heart of Strategic Mindset is its Futuristic approach focusing on imagining and realizing the future organisation [12]. According to Pisapia and coauthors, SM is characterized by three fundamental dimensions :

### **Systems Thinking**

The notion of systems thinking is a unifying theme that encompasses the variety of scientific discoveries and methodologies over the last half-century to provide an intuitive way to consider phenomena toward achieving desired changes. Spruill et al. examined systems thinking theories and observed that the majority of these are mathematical based. But for all of its progress, the ideas and advances it embodies are not limited to computer science Alone: they have been embraced by medicine, engineering, psychology, political science — even art. Thereby, because systems thinking is historically deep, one could look at it as a synthetic science within which individuals can view the world through more lenses or points of view than other forms of single viewpoints. Ideas like closed-loop thinking have origins in mathematics, homeostasis (the principle of biological systems to counteract environmental change) is an idea from biology and theories around control and communication are derived from areas of cybernetics [13]. Furthermore, the systems thinking has been defined as a perspective to develop functional, physical and operational performance necessary for stakeholders in the target environment and projected system life cycle satisfying given cost, schedule or other limitations.

At its most basic level, systems thinking contends that "the whole is more than the sum of the parts." This view is concerned with system as a whole, but not its specific

components (Rosen 1983: 677), and more useful when explaining organic organizations. Traditional systems thinking (sometimes mechanistic, linear or reductionist) differs fundamentally as it focuses first on the parts and then subsequently on the whole [14]. It was this move away from parts and to wholes that gave the later modern theorists a better grip on living things. The genetic code, representing the universal properties all open systems possess (a cherished notion by system thinkers, BTW) underlies their methodology. Based on this introduction, follow-on processes that are included in a systems thinking approach are delineated.

### **Reframing**

Change processes and influence are critical in the area of reconciliation, negotiation, mutual problem-solving. Guided manipulation of these perspectives in such frameworks can bring with it significant changes, both of the frames and also how they operate vis-à-vis conflict dynamics. This purposeful process is denoted by the term reframing, as delineated in Kaufman et al. Reframing is the process of looking at events, ideas, concepts and situations from a different perspective, to make it more palatable to some parties where original negativity existed. Both aspects provide key portions for a holistic view of the given situation. When well done, reframing provides leadership with the power to make sense of their environments so that: they can diagnose large challenges; easily share new strategies and plans in ways that inspire and engage the people who work with and for them [15]. A broad understanding of the world certainly builds confidence to take on any challenges. Importance of reframing has been on rise since the mid-1980s, especially after Gareth Morgan published his path-breaking book, *Images of Organizations*. The process of framing and reframing has multiple important objectives as described by Kaufman et al.

1. Re-framing or re-juvenating perceptions of 'problematic' topics to enable improved information exchange, new ideas to be considered that were not thought possible before and expanding the domain of knowledge for problems at stake in order to find new solutions or actions.
2. Learning accurate interests of each party and then assessing the extent to which their respective modes actually facilitate their interests, enabling a reformulation of more productive conflict-management strategies (including reconsideration of stakeholder relationships).
3. Recognizing issues where parties disagree, even if the reasons for disagreement are well-understood. This helps reveal potential trade-offs to be made in light of such clearly understood differences.

Understanding irreconcilable differences to fully comprehend the complexity of conflict, consider possible means for reducing conflict without good faith compromise of core attitudes, weigh the value placed on perceived differences, and understand how differences can potentially be managed in positive ways.

### **Reflection**

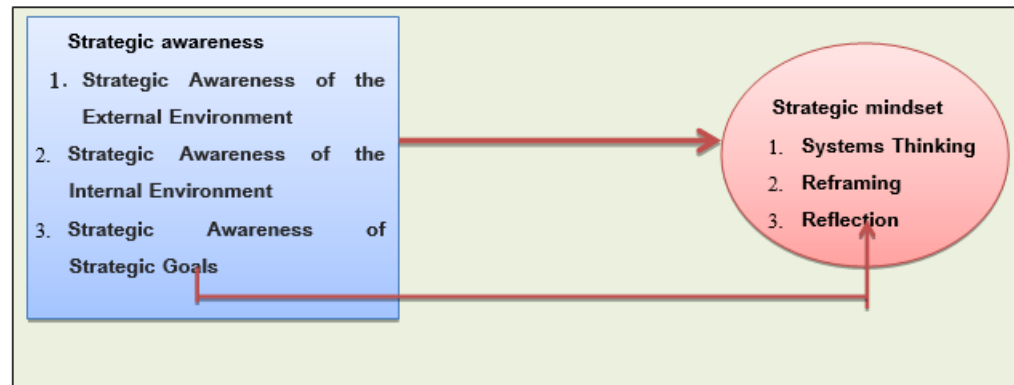
Reflection means trying to see an event or experience in a new way. " It consists of transcending perceptual anchoring in the here and now to foresee outcomes of alternative actions. Reflective thinking Reflective thinking is an active process in which individuals deliberately attempt to consider statements or actions deeply for the purpose of better understanding a situation, so they can respond to it based on new insight [16]. This work is based on the analysis of evidence, ideas, and experience in a critical context against which current events are assessed and helps to transform reflective insight into functional theory. Dewey on Reflection Dewey interprets "reflection" as a method of creating meanings intentionally, with emphasis on the active processing, in contradistinction to ordinary thinking. It helps focus attention on shared experiences and knowledge, and therefore cultivate a more complex understanding [17].

### **The proposed design framework of the study**

The diagram that is featured with respect to the study gives a simple and concise overview of the investigated situation. It depicts potential cause-and-effect relationships

using hypothetical arrows, which have not yet been confirmed by empirical evaluation [18]. Based on a series of hypothetical and suggested hypotheses, this visualization was designed to focus on the practicality of measuring individual variables and the general applicability and relevance of the diagram (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Presents the conceptual foundation and theoretical structure underpinning the study



### Hypotheses of the study

1. **The central premise of the study posits that strategic awareness is closely linked to the development of a strategic mindset. This foundational hypothesis is further broken down into several specific sub-hypotheses, detailed as follows:**
  - a. **The first sub-hypothesis** states that an understanding of the external environment significantly influences the formation of a strategic mindset.
  - b. **The second sub-hypothesis** asserts that an awareness of the internal environment plays a critical role in shaping a strategic mindset.
  - c. **The third sub-hypothesis** proposes that clarity regarding strategic goals markedly impacts the development of a strategic mindset.

### The sample of the study

The study included was (130) leaders at the University of Maysan / Iraq .

### The tool of the study

The study utilized a questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection, comprising two sections. The initial section emphasized strategic awareness, drawing on items derived from Al-Badayneh's work in 2021. Following this, the second section delved into strategic mindset, incorporating elements adapted from Pisapia et al. To evaluate the test's reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was utilized, in line with research indicating that values above 0.70 are deemed acceptable [19]. After conducting the assessment, the findings revealed that the strategic awareness portion achieved a robust reliability coefficient of 0.945, while the strategic mindset segment demonstrated a similarly strong coefficient of 0.882 . Collectively, the two sections yielded a combined reliability coefficient of 0.946, confirming that all sections of the questionnaire produced satisfactory reliability results.

### Hypotheses testing

1. **The study's primary hypothesis suggests a significant relationship between strategic awareness and strategic mindset.**

To evaluate the hypothesis, we examine its sub-hypotheses. The findings presented in Table (1) reveal the following insights:

**Table 1.** Analyzing the impact of strategic awareness in strategic mindset

The explanatory variable and its dimensions	Regression coefficient	R2	F value	P	Responsive variable
<b>Strategic Awareness of the External Environment</b>	1.521	0.589	0.452	243.673	0.000

<b>Strategic awareness of the Internal Environment</b>	1.649	0.451	0.467	212.624	0.000	
<b>strategic awareness of Strategic Goals</b>	1.685	0.622	0.231	233.564	0.000	<b>Strategic mindset</b>
<b>Promote organizational culture with ethical practices</b>	1.537	0.541	0.344	130.611	0.000	
<b>Implementing balanced organizational supervision</b>	1.732	0.473	0.372	178.554	0.000	
Strategic awareness	0.622	0.751	0.566	458.868	0.000	
<b>The value of (F) tabulated at a level of significance (0.05) = 3.841 The value of (F) tabulated at a level of significance (0.01) = 6.635</b>						

The analysis results reveal a positive relationship between Strategic Awareness of the External Environment and strategic mindset. The regression constant (alpha) was calculated at 1.521, while the beta effect factor stood at 0.589. Moreover, the independent variable accounted for 45.2% of the variance in strategic mindset, as indicated by the interpretation coefficient ( $R^2$ ) [20]. The significance of the model was reinforced by the F-statistic value, which surpassed its tabulated counterpart. Additionally, the model's significance fell within the acceptable threshold of less than 0.05, confirming the acceptance of the hypothesis.

Further examination of the findings highlights a similarly positive impact of strategic awareness on strategic mindset [21]. For managers in schools, the regression constant (alpha) was assessed at 0.622, with a beta effect factor of 0.751. This suggests that strategic awareness among school managers explains 56.6% of the variance observed in the dependent variable, a conclusion supported by the corresponding interpretation coefficient ( $R^2$ ). The model's validity was again confirmed through the F-statistic value exceeding its tabulated benchmark, and the significance level adhering to the required range of less than 0.05. These results substantiate acceptance of the overarching hypothesis.

#### 4. Conclusion

The findings indicate that the factor Strategic Awareness of Strategic Goals is the least important in influencing the strategic orientation of private school leaders. It also implies that if strategic alignment does not provide leaders with an opportunity to combine a sound hit balance with strategic sense, it may undermine their strategic mindset. On the other hand, if there is also a high strategic fit with effective implementation, that can potentially help in achieving goals (which in turn may have some positive consequences for managerial behaviour).

Furthermore, the results also demonstrated a significant association between strategic consciousness and strategic integration. This suggests that the school leadership seek to focus on desired ends and work toward improved outcomes by reflecting appropriate means-in-use congruent with current environmental circumstances.

#### 5. Recommendations

1. Challenge awareness needs direction to incorporate the realities of strategic thinking for leaders, in order to support them in promoting a work environment that supports creativity, innovation and flexibility in response to changing environmental conditions.
2. Strategic learning of organizational purpose can be reinforced by practices that allow leaders to more fully internalize and support the mission. This includes giving clear and attainable instructions, combined with transparent relationships that enable the organization to adjust fluidly to changing circumstances and ambiguities.
3. Strategic capability investment is necessary, but this should be counterbalanced by the emphasis on human capital. Organizations need to strike a balance between

stability and innovation, encouraging an environment that has confidence in new ideas. And fostering a climate of continuous peer and external learning will further turbo charge growth and evolution.

4. Granting teams more control over core tasks, and individuals more independence, helps build resilience in your organisation. Secondly, the use of advanced technological solutions means that obstacles can be overcome much more readily by learning new ways to problem solve – i.e. an agile mindset develops making problems seem less ‘big’.

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