This article reviews the organizational structure factors relating to the implementation of strategic planning in quantity surveying firms and its growth. It is generally thought that strategic planning of the firm in the construction industry is less developed than in other industries. Based on organizational factors perspective, we suggest that organization’s structure is the determining factors in implementation of strategic planning in quantity surveying firms. Strategic planning is the mechanism needed for organizations to stay competitive and enhance performance of the firm. However, the literature on strategic planning is mostly for large organizations in other industries and not directly applicable to the context of professional firms in construction industry. This research aims to 1) to identify the organization structure (mechanistic/organic) of Malaysian quantity surveying firms. 2) to establish these variable (mechanistic/organic) and size of firm in the implementation of strategic planning process? and 3) to establish the relationship between the strategic planning process and quantity surveying firms’ growth. The data is obtained from literature review, semi-structured interviews with 15 directors of quantity surveying firms and final survey. This paper concludes that Malaysian quantity surveying firms is mostly mechanistic in their operation and significantly correlated with the implementation of strategic planning. In fact, being small and growing firms is not the barrier in implementing strategic planning and there is a significant correlation between strategic planning implementation and growth.

Keywords
Organizational factors, quantity surveying firms, strategic planning, growth

Introduction

There are many ways in interpreting the organization structure as mentioned by many authors in terms of the organisation structure, management style, problem-solving skills, transaction cost, codification-diffusion theory and cultural theory. The importance of assessing an organization structure has clearly been a traditional focus within strategic planning (Ackoff, 1970; Hofer and Schendel, 1978). The organization structure has become one of the determining factors in the implementation of strategic planning within the firm. In
addition, the managerial factors in terms of experience, involvement and knowledge in strategic planning influence the execution of the strategic planning. However, the literature on strategic planning carried out by many authors is mostly for large organizations in other industries and not directly applicable to the context of professional firms in construction industry. Therefore, it is important to investigate the effects of the quantity surveying firms’ organisation structure and managerial capabilities on the strategic planning used.

Strategic planning is the mechanism needed for organizations to stay competitive and adapt to environment changes. Strategic planning is the process of specifying an organization’s objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve these objectives, scanning the external and internal environment, allocating resources to implement the policies including evaluation and control in order to achieve the organization’s objectives. There are three dimensions involved in strategic planning process namely strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation.

Furthermore, strategic planning is one of the tools for firm’s improvement in terms of growth. Penrose (1966) observed that the rate at which a firm can grow depends on the rate at which new management can be absorbed, which is determined by the quality of existing management. Hillebrandt (1990) identifies management (and not fixed capital) as the most important determinants of the capacity as well as capability in construction firms. Hillebrandt suggests that construction is particularly management-intensive because of the large number of decisions which require to be taken from day to day on site as well as within the organization. The author has identified three dimensions of quantity surveying firms’ growth which are profit growth, increase manpower and diversified clients. Therefore, could quantity surveying firms improve growth with strategic planning? For the purpose of this research paper, the author attempts to identify only five (5) year period started from 2001 to 2006 in identifying the firm’s growth. The reason of taking five (5) year period is to ensure that the strategic planning process and firm growth which are the second objectives is confined in the same period to avoid mismatch of the overall research objectives.

Research Methodology

Data collection was by survey questionnaire of 34 quantity surveying firms represented 55.73% of the total preliminary survey of 61 firms and semi structured interview with fifteen directors of quantity surveying firms. Descriptive statistic and Spearman Rho correlation test were used to analyse data obtained.

Organizational Factors

There are six different models and theories of the ways organisations could be analysed. They are the organisation structure, management style, problem-solving skills, transaction cost, codification-diffusion theory and cultural theory. The organisation structure, management style and problem solving skills are seen from the perspective of conventional organisation theory put forward by Burns and Stalker (1961), Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) and Galbraith (1973). Whereas transaction cost, proposed by Williamson (1975) and codification-diffusion, put forward by Boisot (1987) and cultural theories are more recent, only emerging in mid 1970s.

Lansley (1994) said that despite the wide range of models and theories of analysing organisation, there are strong links between each model. It is possible to show that despite their different perspectives and objectives, the models and theories can be reconciled and harmonised since their characteristics are parallel to each other. For any dimensions in one
model, there is an equivalent in another. The presence of common characteristics between the models and theories helps to provide a convergence point for those who have studied organisations from different perspectives.

For practical reason, in the context of this research paper, we consider that it is sufficient to analyse the organisation of the quantity surveying firms from one perspective only. This would avoid the repetitions of explaining similar ideas present in each model. For this study, a conventional model, organisation structure, was chosen. The organisation structure stipulates how tasks are to be allocated, who reports to whom, formal co-ordination devices and which interaction patterns will be followed (Hall, 1972).

Since the this paper is concerned with strategic planning, therefore deals mainly with long-term, the organisation structure model was considered to be the most appropriate for analysing the organisational characteristics of the quantity surveying firms.

Even within organisation structure, different models have been presented by various organisational writers such as Burns and Stalker (1961), Sadler and Barry (1970), Handy (1976), Mintzberg (1983), Galbraith (1973), Keidal (1984), Hall (1972) and Lansley et al (1974). Though the dimensions are presented under different labels, they explain similar organisation characteristics.

In this study, the two components of organisation structure of the quantity surveying firms are measured. There are the 1) mechanistic and organic system and 2) size of firm. The result of the organisation structure on the extent to the implementation of strategic planning is presented below.

**Mechanistic and Organic System**

There are two different types of organization: mechanistic and organic. Applying the term mechanistic to organization similar to machinelike system designed for efficient operation. Organic system on the other hand frequently proposed as solutions to mechanistic problems. The feature of mechanistic organization is its predictability where every task is pre planned, and quality and quantity of task performance is highly regulated. A highly specialised system of roles, clear reporting relationships, and an unambiguous reward system achieves this stability. Ambiguity and confusion are nonexistent.

The characteristics and method of measuring the degree of mechanistic and organic by Mintzberg (1979) was used in the study. The organic and mechanistic are to cover decisions that are related to the strategic planning process.

From the returned final postal questionnaire, this study measured the characteristics of organization in terms of mechanistic and organic in quantity surveying firm. It was measured using five-point scale, from 1 not at all to 5, very high extent. The higher the point, the mechanistic the organization is. The results are shown in Figure 1.
Director sets target for employees. Director consulted employees when making decision. Director made most decisions. Clear hierarchy in firm. Allowed managers consideration in making decisions. Director consulted employees when making decisions. Director sets target for employees.

Characteristics of organization—mechanistic and organic

Figure 1: The extent of mechanistic and organic in quantity surveying firms.

Based on the results derived from the final survey, it can be said that most of the quantity surveying firms are mechanistic in its characteristics where the scale were higher than 3 points. The data obtained from the final postal questionnaire survey only partly supports Mintzberg’s (1979) statement in the specific characteristics essentially needs for the mechanistic model of organization where being as professional service firms, jobs are sufficiently narrowed in scope, permitting employees to become experts in specialised functions, tasks are well defined by rules and procedures so that standard performance can be achieved. In fact, being as professionals in quantity surveying firms, responsibilities are clear, employees know what is expected of them and a clear hierarchy of authority exists to control and coordinate the work of specialist and every employee knows who should report to whom.

Therefore, this research paper seek to investigate whether or not the mechanistic factor of the firm significantly correlated with the implementation of strategic planning in quantity surveying firms.

The general hypothesis tested in this study was that there is a relationship between the strategic planning and organization structure (mechanistic). The specific hypotheses deduced from the general hypothesis were tested using the Spearman Rho test. Every single dimension of strategic planning stage was tested against every single organization structure variables, therefore, 54 hypotheses were tested using bivariate analysis.

What emerged from this bivariate relationship testing was that most strategic planning were significantly related to organization structure (mechanistic) (p<0.05). Table 1 is a matrix of all the significant relationships produced by the bivariate data analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Planning Process</th>
<th>Organization structure (mechanistic/organic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My firm had few standard operating procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy formulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) My firm had formal statement of goals &amp; objectives</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) My firm considered globalization situations when formulating strategies.</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) My firm considered employee capabilities when formulating strategies.</td>
<td>-0.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) My firm restructured when implementing strategic plans</td>
<td>0.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) My firm allocated adequate resources to carry out strategic plans</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) The strategic plans overused firm's resources</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation and control</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) My firm measured firm's performance against objective set</td>
<td>0.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) My firm took corrective actions when objectives were not achieved</td>
<td>0.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) My firm carried out periodic assessment to check firm's performance</td>
<td>-0.103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All correlations were significant (p<0.001) and (p<0.05).

Table 1: Significant relationships between organization structure (mechanistic/organic) and strategic planning process in quantity surveying firms
Size of Firm

Strategic planning issues are not the only found in large firms. The small and growing firms are facing the same issues as strategic planning is concern (Robinson & Pearce, 1984; O’Regan & Ghobadian, 2002; Stonehouse & Pemberton, 2002) which it is nonetheless the majority of quantity surveying firms in Malaysian construction industry is shaped by small and medium set up. Unfortunately, the state of knowledge pertinent to the strategic planning of small and growing firms is inadequate (Robinson & Pearce, 1984). In addition, many authors in their findings of strategic planning in small firms recognized that small firms’ planning was unstructured, irregular and incomprehensive, only few individuals involved (Still, 1974; Shuman, 1975; Sexton and Dable, 1976; Hastings, 1961) owners/managers did not practically carried out formal planning because they lacked of time, education, and training (Anderson, 1970; Hastings 1961), the planning approach was non-rational and non systematic (Rice and Hamilton, 1979), planning was the most difficult function to perform well in the small companies (Cohn and Hamilton, 1972) which setting goals in companies was the weakest aspect of small business planning. On the other hand, ineffective implementation of strategic planning in many firms is the main reason for the failure to achieve expected or projected performance (Nobel, 1999). This has been expressed in the literature and described by many authors in their empirical research, where strategic planning is the set of processes undertaken in order to develop a range of strategies that will contribute to achieving the firm’s direction. Therefore, this research paper seek to investigate whether or not size of firm is an influence factor to undertake strategic planning research in predominantly small and growing professional quantity surveying firms and to what extent the implementation of strategic planning affect the growth of quantity surveying firms.

The study measured the size of the quantity surveying firms in terms of the number of employees engaged between 2001 and 2006. The result is shown in table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Quantity surveying firms (N=34) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small (lesser than 10 employees)</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (11 to 30 employees)</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (more than 30 employees)</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: The size of quantity surveying firms: based on employees between 2001 and 2006

Langford and Male (2001) classified small sized firm in construction professions is by number of workforce where small is fewer than five, medium sized firm between 6 to 20 staff and large firm has more than 20 staff. Fadhlin in her survey in 2004 of Malaysian quantity surveying firms’ profile classified the total workforce in firms where lesser than 10 considered to be small, 11 to 30 under medium sized category and more than 30 staff is categorized as high. Therefore, we use Fadhlin’s categorization of quantity surveying firm profile as it is related to the study which it is within the scope of quantity surveying firms in Malaysia.
By employing the Spearman's correlation technique, this study found that the size of firm was significantly associated with two third of the process of strategic planning used (formulation and evaluation stage).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Planning Process</th>
<th>Size of firm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy formulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) My firm had formal statement of goals &amp; objectives</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) My firm considered globalization situations when formulating strategies</td>
<td>0.248 (**)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) My firm considered employee capabilities when formulating strategies</td>
<td>0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) My firm restructured when implementing strategic plans</td>
<td>0.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) My firm allocated adequate resources to carry out strategic plans</td>
<td>0.163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) The strategic plans overused firm's resources</td>
<td>0.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation and control</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) My firm measured firm's performance against objective set</td>
<td>0.215 (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) My firm took corrective actions when objectives were not achieved</td>
<td>0.180 (*)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) My firm carried out periodic assessment to check firm's performance</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Significant relationships between strategic planning and growth in quantity surveying firms

**Strategic Planning Process**

Strategic planning is a discipline originated in the 1950s and 60s. Although there were numerous early contributors to the literature, the most influential pioneers were Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., Philip Selznick, Igor Ansoff, and Peter Drucker. Alfred Chandler recognized the importance of coordinating the various aspects of management under one all-encompassing strategy. Prior to this time, the various functions of management were separate with little overall coordination or strategy. Interactions between functions or between departments were typically handled by a boundary position, that is, there were one or two managers that relayed information back and forth between two departments. In addition, Chandler also stressed the importance of taking a future looking long term perspective. In his 1962 groundbreaking work *Strategy and Structure*, Chandler showed that a long-term coordinated strategy was necessary to give a company structure, direction, and focus. He says it concisely, "structure follows strategy."
Strategy is a term widely used by senior and middle managers. The term, however, seems to have a multitude of meanings. This is not surprising, as there is no commonly accepted and universal definition of strategy (Quinn, 1980). An examination of the definitions to-date suggests that strategy encompasses the following elements; a focus on long-term direction of the organisation, matching the activities of the business to the environment in order to minimise the threats and maximise opportunities, as well as matching the organisation’s activities to the resources available (McDonald, 1996).

Ohmae (1983) encapsulates the meaning of strategic planning when he states that:

> business strategy is about competitive advantage. The sole purpose of strategic planning is to enable a company to gain, as efficiently as possible, a sustainable edge over its competitors.

Strategic planning thus implies an attempt to alter a company’s strength relative to that of its competitors, in the most efficient and effective way. Strategic planning focuses on the direction of the organization and actions necessary to improve its performance. It is the process by which firms derive a strategy to enable them to anticipate and respond to the changing dynamic environment in which they operate (Hewlett, 1999).

Collectively, strategic planning is the process of specifying an organization’s objectives, developing policies and plans to achieve these objectives, allocating resources to implement the policies including evaluation and control in order to achieve the organization’s objectives. Strategic planning is a combination of i) strategy formulation, ii) strategy implementation and iii) evaluation and control.

**Strategy Formulation**

Formulation of strategy is about deciding what new businesses to enter, what businesses to abandon, how to allocate resources, whether to expand operations or diversify, whether to enter international markets, whether to merge or form a joint venture, and how to avoid a hostile takeover. Because no organization has unlimited resources, strategist must decide which alternative strategies will benefit the firm most. Strategy formulation includes:
- developing a vision and mission
- identifying an organization’s external opportunities and threats
- determining internal strengths and weakness
- establishing long-term objectives
- generating alternative strategies
- choosing particular strategies to pursue

**Strategy Implementation**

Implementing strategies successfully is vital for any organization. Without implementation, even the most superior strategy is useless (Aoltonen and Ikavalko, 2002). Action stage of strategic management- often considered to be the most difficult stage in strategic management. It requires personal discipline, commitment, and sacrifice.) Strategic formulated but not implemented serve no useful purpose. Interpersonal skills are especially critical for successful strategy implementation. Strategy implementation activities affect all employees and managers in an organization. Strategy implementation includes:
- establish annual objectives
- devise policies,
- motivate employees, and
allocate resources so that formulated strategies can be executed.
- developing strategy-supportive culture
- creating an effective organizational structure
- redirecting marketing efforts
- preparing budgets
- developing and utilizing information systems
- linking employee compensation to organizational performance

Strategy Evaluation

Strategy evaluation is the final stage in strategic management. Managers need to know when particular strategies are not working well, strategy evaluation is the primary means for obtaining this information. All strategies are subject to future modification because external and internal factors are constantly changing. Three fundamental strategy evaluation activities are:
1) reviewing external and internal factors that are the bases for current strategies
2) measuring performance, and
3) taking corrective actions

After deliberating the definition and dimensions of strategic planning process, the result of the study shows that most of the quantity surveying firms strongly agree that they have carry out the strategic planning process in their firms by taking into account the three dimensions of strategic planning namely strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

The quantity surveying firms were asked to what extent they agree that their firms carried out the key activities in strategic planning process. A five-point scale was used, from 1, totally disagree to 5 totally agree. The results are shown in figure 2.

![Figure 2: The extent of implementation of strategic planning in quantity surveying firms for the past five years](image-url)
Growth of Quantity Surveying Firms

The professional organization covers the structural and strategy formation aspects of the professional organization in detail. The most important part of professional organizations like these is their operating cores, which are populated by highly trained professionals (Mintzberg, et al. 1995). This has been supported by Langford and Male (2001) in identifying professional firms in construction industry which concentrating on core technical tasks whilst maintaining the professionalism. However, majority of professional firms in construction industry is formed by small and medium set up and this has no exception in quantity surveying firms which majority of them fall under the category of small and medium (Fadhlin, 2004).

Developing a strategic planning is critical to the creation of a small and medium company’s competitive edge. In other words, the small firm must establish a plan for creating a unique image in the minds of its potential customers. A strategic plan defines what small and medium business will be and developing a strategic plan protects the business from the pitfall of failing to differentiate itself from its competitors. Besides competitiveness, strategic planning is associated with growth of the company. Studies such as those conducted by Ringbakk (1968), Grinyer and Norburn (1974) and Naylor and Gattis (1976) indicate that strategic planning is widely accepted and practiced among large corporations. This general acceptance and use of strategic planning contributes to the overriding industry perspective that corporate growth is enhanced by strategic planning. Steiner (1966) suggested that planning is a major requirement for organizational growth. In later years, Glueck (1980) concluded that formal business planning is a major determinant of organizational growth.

In an investigation of strategic planning and financial performance of Selected U.S. Businesses, Woodrow David Richardson of strategic planning processes of U.S. corporations and their relationships to financial growth. The findings of the study included data that showed that approximately 90% of the firms surveyed use written strategic plans.

Hence, being small and medium set up for majority of quantity surveying firms, it is therefore a clear definition of growth need to be established. Growth for small business is not consistently defined across industries and organizations. In contrast to the growth measurements and requirements, such as shareholder value and return on capital for large corporations, there are no formal reporting requirements for the majority of small businesses. Several empirical studies have incorporated both qualitative and quantitative measurements of business growth and performance (Dalton & Kesner, 1985; Geely, 1986; Venkatraman and Ramanujan, 1987). However, what might be considered strong performance for one industry or organization, may be deemed weak performance for another. Hence, it is extremely difficult to measure and operationalize growth in empirical studies on small firm planning and growth. This is a major weakness in the available research on the topic (Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986). Nevertheless, for this research, growth will be determined by responses to three self reported measures via a questionnaire: (1) profit growth, (2) staff increased, (3) diversified clients. All three growth dimensions are relative to key competitors. Consideration has been given to the fact that some growth indicators may not pertain to certain businesses. For example, some small firms may have no intention of establishing new locations and sites. Hence, several different growth indicators were selected due to their generalizability across numerous and varied industry segments.

This study measured the growth of quantity surveying firms over the last five years, in terms of staffing, profit and types of client. The results are shown in figure 3.
The general hypothesis tested in this study was that there is a relationship between the strategic planning and firm’s growth. The specific hypotheses deduced from the general hypothesis were tested using the Spearman Rho test. Every single dimension of strategic planning stage was tested against every single growth indicator, therefore, 27 hypotheses were tested using bivariate analysis.

What emerged from this bivariate relationship testing was that most strategic planning were significantly related to both financial and non-financial measures of growth (p<0.05). Not one of these strategic planning process or growth indicators failed to be related in at least three hypotheses. Table 1 is a matrix of all the significant relationships produced by the bivariate data analysis. Table 3 indicated the dimension of growth in quantity surveying firms for the past five (5) years.

Figure 3: Growth of quantity surveying firms for the past five years
All correlations were significant (p<0.001) and (p<0.05).

Table 3: Significant relationships between strategic planning and growth in quantity surveying firms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Planning Process</th>
<th>Increase staff</th>
<th>Growth indicators</th>
<th>Diversified clients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy Formulation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) formal goal &amp; objectives</td>
<td>.263</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) considered external situation</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.624</td>
<td>.223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) considered internal capabilities</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) restructuring of firm</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>.330</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) allocate adequate resources</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) overused firm’s resources</td>
<td>.306</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy Evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) measured advantages derived from strategic planning</td>
<td>.373</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) take corrective action when objectives not met</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) periodic assessment</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

There are many factors lead to the implementation of strategic planning in any organization. This research extends the growing empirical evidence that firm size is a vital contingency in an evolving theory of strategic planning. Contrary to the frequently encountered contingency notion that strategic planning is solely a large firm phenomenon, this study suggests that small and growing firms especially in professional quantity surveying firms is an important arena for strategic planning research especially in the construction environment.

Based on the results derived from the research, it can be said that most of the quantity surveying firms are mechanistic in its operation of firms, where being as professional service firms, jobs are sufficiently narrowed in scope, permitting employees to become experts in specialised functions, tasks are well defined by rules and procedures so that standard performance can be achieved. In addition, being mechanistic does not stp the quantity surveying firms from implementing strategic planning in their firms.
The need for strategic planning is therefore paramount for each firm. Developing objectives, mission and vision, identifying strength and weaknesses, scanning the evaluating threats and opportunities will provide a considerable advantage to be competitive among rivals within the dynamic construction environment. This paper has set out to establish that the implementation strategic planning improved the firms' growth in terms of increase employees, profit and more diversified client.

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