

# STRATEGIC PLANNING DIMENSIONS IN ITALIAN UNIVERSITIES

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper examines the strategic planning process in Italian Universities. We identify two macro strategic planning dimensions: one for the process and one for the plan substance. We create a synthetic indicator of plan and process quality. Based on quality of plan and process we create a cluster matrix of universities. We also conduct empirical research to determine if university size is correlated with quality of strategic planning. We find a positive correlation between university size and the process and plan quality.*

**JEL:** L52, O21

**KEYWORDS:** Strategic Planning, Italy, University

## INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is an approach to plan the future for the university. Through strategic planning, resources are assigned to increase benefits to various stakeholders including students, employers and society. The tool of strategic planning is the plan that guides reallocation of resources. Formalized strategic planning developed in America during the 1950s, in the mid-1960s and throughout the 70s expanding to most large corporations (Mintzberg, 1994). In public organizations strategic planning developed during the 1980s in Anglo-Saxons contest and during the 1990s in Italy. In higher education the idea was spreading knowledge was a target to be pursued independent from the costs incurred (Kelly and Shaw, 1987). Recently however, universities face funding reductions requiring them to optimize choices. Strategic planning assumes the key role for design the future path of the university (Shirley, 1983). In other words, it has become necessary for universities to define their mission, analyze their frontiers and identify eventual growth and improvement opportunities in a competitive setting. All this planning and programming autonomy would guarantee a successful result.

In the Italian university context, strategic planning has received strong support through a law (State Law 168/03/89). The law is designed to favor university autonomy and rationalization of the problem of scarce availability of resources (Rebora and Turri 2008; Borgonovi, 1996) and offer universities new planning possibilities in line with the new requirements. Adoption of new laws, as defined by article 1 ter of the Italian State Law n. 43/2005 represents a cornerstone of the new setting. It entrusts universities with the planning task and responsibility within the macro-areas of intervention ad defined by Ministry of Education and Research (MIUR).

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the strategic plans of public Italian universities, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual plans, and to provide a report on best practice. To identified strengths and weaknesses of individual plans we recognized two macro strategic planning dimensions: one for the process and one for the plan substance. We value a synthetic indicator of plan and process quality. We have adopted the Higher Education Management Review Committee's (Hoare Committee) and the English Higher Education Funding Council's (HEFCE, 2000) criteria as a way of evaluating the plans, and added to these our own judgment. While style is not as important as substance, the

effectiveness of a plan can be influenced by its conciseness or verbosity and its precision or vagueness. Based on quality of plan and process we create a cluster matrix of universities.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we briefly discuss the relevant literature on strategic planning in universities. In the third section we present legislative references. Data selection and research methodology are described in section four. In sections five and six we illustrate the dimension of strategic planning and analyze the empirical findings. We summarize our conclusion and research future perspectives in the final section.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic planning is a relatively recent business innovation. An organization's strategic plan represents its planning at the highest level (Kotler et al. 2007). It is generally a tool for formalizing the organization's vision, mission and values; opportunities and threats, strengths and weaknesses; goals and objectives and their strategies (Robbins & Coulter, 2005). The strategic plan provides an idea of the overall direction of a company indicating how it will develop if it is able to control matters (Hannagan, 2005). Strategic planning has several benefits: it encourages management to think ahead systematically; forces the company to sharpen its objectives and policies; leads to better coordination of company efforts, provides clearer performance standards for control (Kotler et al., 2007) and helps organizations understand how to compete more effectively for the future (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994).

Although public sector institutions, including universities, were generally slower than their private sector counterparts to adopt strategic planning, it is now a widely accepted management practice in the institutional sector (Bryson, 1995; Legge, 2002; Scott, 1998, 2005). The planning process is simply a means with which universities respond to external challenges of ever greater complexity. Universities are unlike productive or bureaucratic organizations because uncritical acceptance of planning practices developed in different contexts could be dysfunctional. Universities should not be considered homogeneous institutions. Each university is organized into faculties with distinctive educational capabilities shaped to provide a knowledge base for the array of different professions (Chaffee, 1985; Keller, 1983; Olsen, 1989). Furthermore, the difference between academic and corporate personnel lays in the nature of their autonomy. Academics are not subject to institutional or directional authority. Their sole role and purpose is to promote knowledge through distinctive competences. Governance systems of corporate and academic landscapes are equally different. Universities are characterized by joint governance consisting of the Academic Senate, Board of Directors and boards of each faculty and department (Paletta, 2004). A process known in Italy as "aziendalizzazione" has received strong support through a law designed in favor of the university autonomy and rationalization of the problem of scarce availability of resources (Rebora, 2008). In this derived setting programming, controlling tools took a central role in strategic planning, as demonstrated in various studies (Osborne, Gaebler, 1992; Hood, 1995; and Borroni, 1996).

It has become apparent that the strategies defined and medium and long run objectives imposed by universities are a result of strategic planning. The strategic plan is a formalized written document which contains a complete list of decisions taken by the university governing institutions and defines the streams of action to undertake in order to attain the predefined objectives. At this point the plan is considered a pivotal element of the strategic planning process and requires explicit elaboration as established by law.

An evolution of university legislation has caused Italian universities to adopt strategic planning tools and controlling mechanisms. The evolution path is summarized by two laws. Italian State Law 9/03/89 n.168, Ministry of University (MURST) granted teaching, research, organizational, financial and accounting autonomy. Italian State Law 15/03/97 n.59 ratified planning criteria of the university education system.

The Law Decree dated march 31, 2005 n.43 has profoundly modified the preceding legislation introducing both a different methodology and procedures. In accordance with the new Law Decree implementation, the Ministry of Education was entrusted the task and responsibility to define medium and long-term strategic objectives directly for the universities as well as the responsibility to plan their actions. This allows them to enhance specific characteristics as well as distinctive capabilities and other skills related to particular academic context. The implementation decree 43/2005 issued throughout the course of 2007 has defined a procedure for the three-year strategic plan. The result of this action has been practical application of the strategic planning within Italian universities. It is also important to understand the phases of the planning process and the players involved as well as the substance of the documents and their formalization as established by legislation.

The legislation establishes a draw-up plan procedure to be accomplished within a three-year period and approved by July 30 of the following year. The legislation does not elaborate on the substance of the plan or its specifics. Generally as established by university statute and/or internal regulations the universities assign an academic council for the definitive plan approval. DM 216/2006 specifies that the validity of approved plans is for three years with the most recently approved plans relating to the 2010-2012 time period. The plan may be adapted annually by 30 July of each year on the basis of evaluation and monitoring carried out by the referent Ministry and the National Committee for University System Evaluation (NCSVU). The monitoring and measuring criteria are established by the Ministry. Programmers need not be delivered to the Ministry. Instead weights are assigned to the results obtained as established by the article 4, comma 33, of Ministerial Decree as of July 3 2007, n.362. As new regulations of university programs are evaluated with reference to implementation as a function of specific indicators. An ex-ante quantification of indicators is not required by law.

New legislation requires that any activity related to planning is defined by the system general guidelines. Furthermore universities most adopt a three-year plan containing 21 predefined indicators. The Ministry constantly monitors and evaluates programs offered by the universities. Monitoring and evaluation activities are relevant for the distribution of the Fund of University Financing (FFO).

## **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the three-year strategic plans of the public universities with regard to process and substance. Our enquiry line has a two-fold research objective: 1. Identify the dimensions the authors consider a “good practice” of the strategic planning, and 2. Examining the implementation state of the strategic planning tools in the Italian public universities.

The research work accomplished is characterized by four distinctive phases. The first phase is data mining and analysis of the public universities three year plans/strategic plans. The next phase involves identifying elements considered “positive” within the process and the substances of the strategic planning process. The third phase is construction of the “process-content” matrix on the basis of the “positive elements” identified. Finally, the last phase is positioning and pattern analysis for the set of universities subject to strategic planning process research.

Data mining of documentation for the first phase of the research framework was carried out online for those universities with online access. A written request was sent to the strategic planning, controlling and evaluation departments of those universities that do not offer online access to the data. Written requests were targeted to individuals considered cornerstones of the strategic planning process. In the second phase, we defined the strategic planning dimensions with respect to the doctrinal positions (Cugini, Pilonato, 2007) and the guidelines related to research on both national and international levels (Miur, Higher Education Management review Committee’s, English Higher Education Founding Council’s – HECFE, Civit). We identified two macro strategic planning dimensions; one for the process and one for

the substance. The process dimension included 6 elements and 11 elements were used to define the substance dimension. The choice of elements stems from earlier studies that have examined these types of issues (Bouckaert-Halligan, 2008) and Otley, 1999). These elements have also been used in OECD studies (OECD, 1997, 2004, 2005). The elements been taken in account in order to define the two macro dimensions are presented in Table 1.

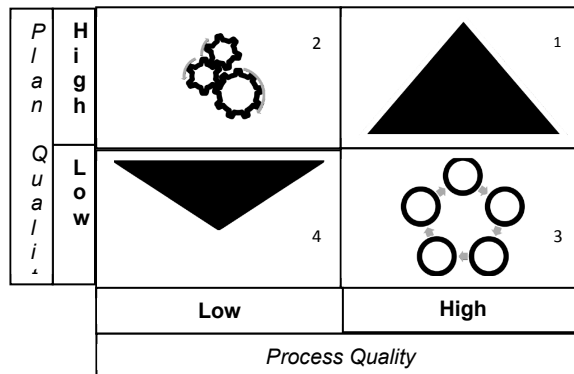
We have omitted points 5 and 6 relating to process dimension from further consideration due to the impossibility of explain these dimensions in quantitative terms and the impossibility of distinguishing between the quality of two different plans approved by the Academic Senate and the Board of Directors. Moreover, Hoare Committee (1995) and HEFCE indicated it as desiderata for sound university strategic planning. Assuming the above defined elements of the process and the substance dimensions we construct a matrix with the X-axis defined as “the process quality” and Y-axis as “the plan quality”. The graph is presented in figure 1. We synthesized the elements of the substance dimension in the “plan quality” variable. We have synthesized the elements of the process dimension in the “ process quality” variable. Two macro-variables, process quality and substance quality, allow us to construct a matrix with a “low” and “high” quadrant area.

Table 1: Key Element of Process and Substance Dimensions

Process Dimension		Substance Dimension	
1)	Form of document presentation and web release to obtain larger transparency;	1)	Plan formalization of mission, vision and social values of analyzed university;
2)	Shareholder participation in defining mission, vision, strategy and objectives (involvement strategy);	2)	SWOT analysis construction to identify stakeholder expectations and strategies;
3)	Process clarification;	3)	Definition of strategic plans and their coherence with ministerial guidelines (MIUR)
4)	Strategic plan synchronization with other planning documents and available financial resources;	4)	Presence of ministerial indicators;
5)	Devotion and competence of participating support institutions in plan drawing up;	5)	Presence of alien indicators of performance to those defined by Ministry;
6)	Voting body individuation.	6)	Temporal consistency of data analyzed (historic value series);
		7)	Target definition;
		8)	Specification of liable parties;
		9)	Benchmark analysis;
		10)	Explicit monitoring related expectations;
		11)	Description of strategic plan process framework and dynamics.

*In this table are synthesized the six key element of process dimension and the 11 key element of substance dimension. This key element are used to evaluate the universities' strategic plan.*

Figure 1: Dimensions of “Process-Substance” Matrix



*The matrix is built according to the quality of the plan (high/low) and the process (High/low). The quadrant 1 contains the "best" (▲) performance strategic planning; quadrant 2 contains the "lagging behind" (◄) while quadrant 3 described as "hermetic" situation (⊙) and quadrant 4 represent really with The dynamic elements" (⊙).*

Based on these variables we identify four different theory profiles which define the diverse approaches to the strategic planning process. Quadrant 1 contains characteristics of “the best” performance strategic planning adopters. The first quadrant represents a distinctive plan of quality and presence of impact and result indicators, historic value series and target measurement dimensions. There is an interconnection and synchronization with other documents called coherent dimension. Stakeholders are involved at process planning called the strategic involvement dimension. Finally the strategic plan is distributed to various users, both externally and internally called the transparency dimension.

Universities characterized as lagging behind in new governance policy implementation are those that have scored low on levels of distribution and disclosure to the external parties, the performance dimension, as well as those that receive low scores on the description of the plan substance and mission, vision and values to the external and internal users called mission and strategy. Universities with low levels of objective quantification and resources, the presence of indicators without targets are also placed in the fourth quadrant.

A situation described as hermetic is characteristic of universities that place more importance on the plan quality with respect to process quality. These universities fail to launch and implement the strategic plan and/or fail to connect the plan to financial resources. These universities use external plan distribution for political/formal purposes without any strategic involvement present.

The dynamic elements represent an exemplary reality where the strategy involvement process has been launched and aspects of the substance in terms of objective indicators and target have been met. These universities are classified into the 2nd quadrant. Universities which freely disclose the strategic plan to external parties have completed part of the transparency elements. Inside each quadrant the process quality and the substance quality vary. The value grows as one moves up and to the right in the graph.

The research was carried out on 59 Italian state universities combined into the following groups based on enrollment in the 2009-2010 academic year: Mega size (over 40,000 enrolled), large (20,000 to 40,000 enrolled), medium (10,000 to 20,000 enrolled) and small (less than 10,000 enrolled). The data has been extrapolated from the MIUR National Student Record, last update September 2010). There are 11 mega size universities, 18 large universities, 18 medium universities and 12 small universities. We have omitted from our research two public universities for foreign students in Perugia and Siena and six specialized academic institutions (Scuola Normale di Pisa, S. Anna di Pisa, SISSA Trieste, SUM Firenze, IMT Lucca, IUSS Pavia). We collected online sixteen three year strategic plans out of 59 universities in total. The remaining universities were contacted by phone or e-mail. Five more planning documents were collected giving a sample size of 21 universities. The sample is described in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample Description

University Size	University (Number)	Sample (Number)	% Impact on the total sample	University Sample
Mega	11	6	55%	University of Bari, Bologna, Firenze, Palermo, Roma La Sapienza and Torino
Grandi	18	4	22%	University of Calabria, Pavia, Politecnico Torino e Verona
Medi	18	5	28%	University of Ferrara, Macerata, Modena e Reggio Emilia, Udine e Trieste
Piccoli	12	6	50%	University of Cassino, Foggia, Reggio Calabria, Roma Foro Italico, Sannio e Teramo
Totale	59	21	36%	

*This table indicates the Universities included in the sample. There are 6 mega size universities (55% out of total); 4 large universities (22% of total); 5 medium size universities (28% out of total) and 6 small size universities (50% out of total).*

## RESULTS

### Process Variable Results

The first phase of the research framework revealed scarce web disclosure of the three-year plans. Only 16 universities disclose to the public the strategic plan and three other universities the document has been identified on the web but not accessible to the general public due to password protection (University of Milano, University “Cà Foscari” Venezia and University of Tuscia). The web pages for the rest of the sample have no visible trace of the three year plan/strategic plan. Online document searches and phone and e-mail requests gave us insight into the level of transparency of strategic plan distribution to users. A disturbing level of external and internal disclosure emerged. The principle of external transparency is foreign to 73% of the universities. This includes 68% that do not publish the strategic plan online and 5% that keep it password protected. Over the course of this research we discovered that most internal support offices do not know precisely all the information disclosed in the strategic plan while some portion of the contacted personnel are not aware of its existence. According to academic literature, stakeholder involvement is a crucial element of strategic planning process (Coda, 1988; Donaldson-Preston, 1995; Freeman, 1984). In the public sector citizen expectations are centered around predefined objectives where a key element is the process quality of strategic planning implementation.

Analysis of the documents revealed discouraging examples of strategy involvement. In order to examine the existence of the strategy involvement process we considered those plan contents which contain a description of the implemented process. From this analysis it is clear that not all universities describe the process within the plan. Furthermore, in those that do disclose the description of the process it is not always clear that the involvement strategy was implemented.

Plans that do disclose tend to share the plan and its strategic objectives to different interest-motivated parties. The example of shareholder involvement refers to University of Bari. The proposals and observations regarding the plan definition are integrated in the final version of the plan. Furthermore the University of Foggia refers to stakeholder involvement citing the following: “the process has to be of ongoing and open kind.” Politecnico of Torino included the following sentence in their strategic plan: “the process is fruit of democratic involvement of parties.” In 48% of cases the strategic objectives have been jointly defined.

The next element considered is “Competence of the support departments in the plan drawing up process” We were able to analyze this element for only for those universities which explicitly state the name of participating group members. Some strategic plans reveal that during the strategic planning process specialized committees/discussion groups were organized. The University La Sapienza is the only Italian university which delegated a supporting role to the Evaluation Committee. The University of Bologna employed the Planning and Controlling Department to design the strategic plan. We found that in 54% of cases the plan design was supported by committees and commissions created for that purpose.

We have also found a link between the strategic plan and financial resources provided for planning documentation. The evidence shows a link between financial resources available specifically to the operational part of the plan. The University of Ferrara has limited themselves to the simple listing of financial resources needed without further explanation of their application. University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria provided more detailed information on those activities which require more financial resources than available.

It appears from the analysis conducted on the statutes, in 33% of cases the plan development is the explicit responsibility of the Academic Senate. The remaining cases show that the competences of the Academic Senate are generally those of coordination and planning of the teaching and research process.

However in 58% of cases the plan was approved by the Academic Senate or the Senate in close cooperation with the Board of Directors.

We identified only one case where the approval was voted inside an adjusted body such as the Enlarged Academic Senate. The sole case where the Board of Directors was responsible for the plan approval is at University of Pavia. In two cases responsibility of the Academic Senate consisted only of plan design with no explicit guidance of how the plan should be approved.

Substance Variable Results

Plans have been given names including “The Three Year Plan” (Bari, Foggia, Modena-Reggio, Emilia and Florence), “The Program and the Three Year Plan” (Roma Foro Italico, La Sapienza, Udine, Verona and Cassino), “The Planning” (Pavia) and “The Planning Plan” (Torino). Some call it “The Document of Three Year Period Planning” (Trieste). There are also variations such as “The Three Year Development Plan” (Macerata, Sannio and Benvento). However in the majority of cases it is called “The Strategic Plan” (Bologna, Calabria, Ferrara, Mediterranea Reggio Calabria, Teramo, Politecnico Torino and Palermo). These terms are outlined in Figure 2.

The level of detail and substance quality for the above mentioned plans differs significantly despite the fact some plans carry the same name. Generally speaking all plans include the minimum amount of content established by legislation. At first this might seem obvious. However universities should not limit themselves to established legislation but seek more explicit ways to formalize the plans. The legislation does not obligate universities to send more information to the Ministry than raw results obtained from the established indicators. As an example the strategic plan of the University of Bologna presents beyond what is written in the general guidelines. University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria, the University of Palermo and The Politecnico of Torino also follow this trend.

Figure 2: Document Taxonomy

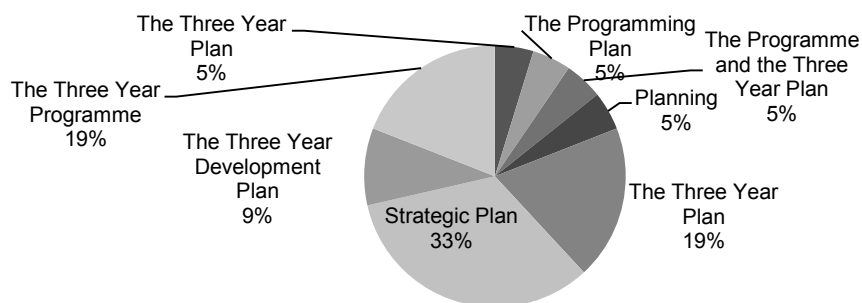


Figure 1 shows the different names of the planning documents.

The level of detail and document quality can be attributed to university aspirations. For example, the University of Palermo seemed to build a base for wider consensus among faculty on the future university path that could strengthen its position among other universities on national level. University of Bologna found the plan as an opportunity to motivate the work of academic staff on process quality and other activities and how they may be linked to scarce financial resources without raising tensions among the faculty. The level of detail decreases in cases where the sole purpose of the document is to meet regulatory compliance.

The plan must be flexible and in line with the ministerial guidelines. Constant adjustment is need in accordance with interim results obtained. However, we have found only two cases in which the annual plan adaption process took place (Bari, Calabria). There is one case in which the university Statute

prescribes the plan adaption process every fourth year (Mediterranean University) despite what has been established by legislation.

The document introduction describes the process of the document creation in 72% of plans examined. Mission and strategy definition is present in 71% of the plans analyzed and objectives are defined as a function of SWOT analysis in 57% of cases and in line with ministerial guidelines. In general all universities used a uniform method to identify objectives.

Each University gives different taxonomy to objectives and ministerial directives. University of Bari defines first the university guidelines, not in line with the Ministerial guidelines, and priority areas to follow in the three-year period. It then turns to the definition of strategic objectives which are coherent with the University mission and values. Strategic objectives should be a function of operational objectives and their attainment directly related to them. University of Calabria has identified five areas of ministerial involvement which are later transformed into the strategic objectives, operational objectives and defined streams of action. The Politecnico of Torino, University of Modena-Reggio Emilia and University of Palermo have omitted operational objectives substituting them with development guidelines which are combined with the distinctive strategic objectives and initiatives/specific actions defined. The strategic plan of Mediterranean of Reggio Calabria is similar with the change in taxonomy and number of designed elements, 12 strategic missions, 75 objectives and 160 strategic micro actions. University of Firenze discloses branches of action, traditional, research and teaching, organizational and human resource articulated through the functional initiatives to be implemented.

A variety of objectives require adequate measuring tools (Bryson, 1995), which are defined as indicators. The Ministry identifies 21 indicators or target values related to predefined action areas. In 71% of the cases universities explicitly refer to the indicators, while in 60% of the cases historic values series are available for the indicators. Few universities have assigned weights to choice areas of study despite the lists easily available in the three-year planning program of Cineca (PRO3). The universities include other than ministerial indicators in the 63% of cases. University of Bari, for example, proposes positioning indicators and performance indicators specific to each activity carried out. University of Calabria uses indicators used by institutions such as FFO, ACQUIS and the National Italian Census. University of Foggia, Torino, Bologna, Politecnico of Torino, University of Torino and University of Sannio do not explicitly disclose formalized information on measurement tools even if the formal documents include these measurements. Interim target evaluation is another important element of university comparison. This practice has not been popular among the universities. Among those that adopt a “good practice” are the University of Bologna. The deadlines for actions undertaken is specified. The University of Teramo draws up predicted results not only qualitatively, how to evaluate academic programs in light of international standards. University of La Sapienza and Mediterranean give the exact year that an initiative must be accomplished. For one case targets were assigned for each objective branch defined, University of Calabria, and for some and for all guidelines (University of Bologna and University of Ferrara).

Some universities explicitly state the responsible party for objective attainment (University of Teramo, Calabria, Bologna, Palermo and Bari). The definition of responsible parties is a central issue of the supervisory system. Not all universities explicitly state the process of implementation of interim monitoring and planning activities. These elements are disclosed in strategic plans of Bologna, Calabria, Ferrara, Macerata, Pavia and Mediterranean. A few universities which carry out benchmark analysis (La Sapienza Roma, Mediterranean, Bari). University of Firenze, Sannio, Teramo, Udine and Verona are excluded from these analysis as their plans did not contain this information.



### University Positioning

The analyzed universities are distributed using a ranking system in the above described matrix. University positions are obtained from values attributed to the process and substance variables. Quality of the process variable depends on nominal values which could not be quantified. However, it is possible to express quantitatively the information contained in qualitative variables. For this purpose we control the categorical variables, process and quality, for the presence of the modalities. We assign the variable two values: one if the condition exists and zero if the condition is absent. With this approach the maximum value obtained for the process quality is four and maximum value obtained for the plan quality is eleven. Once the process quality variable and plan quality variable have been quantified we need to determine the medians. The four quadrants of the matrix function as medians determined. Those universities for which plan quality and process quality are above the median representing a sample of universities with superior quality of planning activities. On the other hand universities which score below the median have weak planning activities. Our intention is not to identify “good” and “bad” universities but to compare universities against the identified variables. The universities are positioned in the matrix as described in Figure 3.

Figure 3 shows the best planning practices are in University Mediterranea of Reggio Calabria which is positioned in the extreme of quadrant 1 with high plan and process quality. University of Calabria, La Sapienza Roma, Palermo, Bari, Ferrara and Bologna also placed among the best. Universities in the 2nd quadrant are defined as hermetic and are characterized by a weaker process quality variable (University of Pavia, Modena, Reggio Emilia and Trieste). The 3rd quadrant is characterized by universities with a weaker plan quality variable (University of Foggia, Macerata, Torino and Politecnico of Torino). Universities identified as “dynamic” have strategies which differ in content from predefined objectives. Hermetic and dynamic universities could transfer to the 1<sup>st</sup> quadrant with small modifications of their strategic plans. Universities in the 4th quadrant are lagging behind in the new governance policy interpretation. These universities have not disclosed the strategic plan in accordance with the ministerial guidelines but have submitted excerpts of other official academic documents (University of Firenze, Verona and Sannio)

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The objectives of this research are to investigate different modalities of strategic planning process implementation and different uses of the three-year plans in the strategic planning process of public universities. Our findings show that universities organize their planning processes both out of necessity and legal obligation. The analyzed strategic plans provide a variety of contents, objectives, detail level, correlated indicators, targets and public disclosure. Autonomy of process formulation make the task of finding common elements suitable for research more difficult but not impossible. The strategic plan can help organizations define and achieve their strategic objectives, align behaviors and attitudes and, ultimately, have a positive impact on performance. In this article, we argue that the strategic plan and definition of its roles are fundamental factors determining its success and impact on university performance.

In this research, the strategic plan analysis allowed us to obtain both qualitative and quantitative results. Summing up the qualitative results we conclude that: 1) public disclosure of the three-year plan has not been satisfactory; 2) there are four different approaches to the strategic planning process as identified by our model, 3) successful placement of universities with strategic plans have been analyzed.

Figure 3 – University Positioning in “Process-substance” Matrix

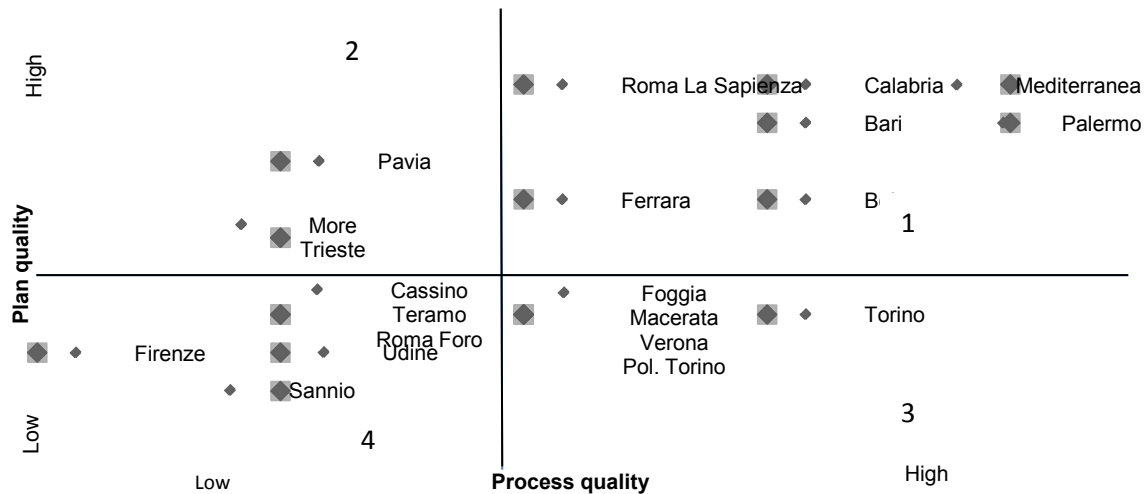


Figure 3 shows the position in the process matrix of the various universities. The quality of the process increases moving from the origin to the right side of the table as the quality of the plan increases going up from the origin. In the first quadrant includes high quality plan and process universities.

The three-year plan formulation is a complex task characterized by a high level of uncertainty, numerous difficulties and asymmetric information. If the scope of the does not have a purpose of obligatory bureaucratic procedure we would witness more harmonic development of universities with greater planning process transparency divided within the academic community.

Our study focuses on the Italian educational system. Further studies might examine other university systems and legal requirements. Other dimensions might also be examined including social and intellectual capital as part of the strategic planning process.

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