

Strategic Leadership and Its Impact on the Marketing of Educational Services in Private Schools in the State of Kuwait

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Abstract

This study investigates the extent in which private school principals in the State of Kuwait practice strategic leadership and examines its impact on the marketing of educational services. Employing a descriptive correlational approach, the research utilized a questionnaire administered to a purposive non-random sample of 95 principals (both male and female) from private schools across the state of Kuwait. The findings revealed that participants perceived a high level of strategic leadership practice among school principals, as well as a high level of marketing of educational services. No statistically significant differences were found in perceptions of strategic leadership or marketing practices based on gender. However, significant differences emerged based on job position (favoring principals), school type (favoring bilingual schools), and school gender composition (favoring schools that teaches both genders male and female). In the context of marketing educational services, significant differences were noted in relation to job level (favoring assistant principals), school type, and gender composition, with no significant differences based on gender alone. Furthermore, strategic leadership dimensions accounted for 47.5% of the variance in educational service marketing levels, indicating a predictive relationship. The study concludes with several recommendations, including the enhancement of strategic leadership practices through specialized training programs, the implementation of scientific and practical criteria for the selection of school leaders, and the development of integrated marketing strategies alongside improvements to educational infrastructure to bolster competitive advantage.

Keywords: strategic leadership, educational services marketing, private education, Kuwait

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Introduction

In recent years, the private education sector in Kuwait has witnessed considerable growth. According to the Ministry of Education Statistical Report (2022–2023), the number of private schools has reached 609, compared to 875 public schools. Student enrollment figures further reflect this expansion, with 58,852 Kuwaiti students and 109,511 non-Kuwaiti students registered in private schools (Ministry of Education, 2023).

This growth carries several implications. It reflects the strong financial viability of private schools, particularly as evidenced by their continued operation during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also reflects an increasing parental tendency to enroll children in private — especially foreign-language and bilingual — schools, driven by a perception of superior educational quality. As enrollment figures rise and the number of institutions multiplies, competition among private schools has intensified, placing heightened emphasis on the marketing of educational services and on shaping parental decision-making regarding school selection.

Within this context, strategic leadership emerges as an effective managerial framework for guiding and enhancing marketing practices in private educational institutions. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the degree to which private school principals in Kuwait practice the dimensions of strategic leadership, and to investigate its impact on the marketing of educational services. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, a local research gap exists with respect to the nexus between strategic leadership and educational service marketing in Kuwaiti private schools.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

- To what degree do private school principals in the State of Kuwait practice the dimensions of strategic leadership?
- What is the level of educational service marketing in private schools in the State of Kuwait?

Research Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses:

- Statistically significant differences exist in the degree of strategic leadership practice and the level of educational service marketing in Kuwaiti private schools based on gender, job position, school type, and student gender composition.
- Strategic leadership practice has a statistically significant impact on educational service marketing in private schools in Kuwait.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

- Examine the degree of strategic leadership practiced by private school principals in Kuwait.
- Determine the influence of selected demographic variables on strategic leadership and educational service marketing.
- Identify the level of educational service marketing in private schools in Kuwait.

- Explore the effect of strategic leadership on the marketing of educational services in Kuwaiti private schools.

Study Contribution

This study makes several contributions to the existing body of knowledge:

- It identifies strengths and weaknesses in strategic leadership practices and their impact on educational service marketing in private schools.
- It supports the development of more effective leadership practices in response to contemporary educational challenges.
- It addresses a local research gap linking strategic leadership and educational service marketing in Kuwait.
- It provides insights that may assist policymakers and private educational institutions in evidence-informed decision-making.

Operational Definitions

Strategic Leadership is defined as a form of leadership characterized by future vision, imaginative thinking, flexibility, and the capacity to drive necessary strategic change within an organization (Mohammed & Tabidi, 2019). Operationally, it refers to the school principal's ability to positively influence teachers and administrators, develop human capital, and strengthen organizational culture and strategic oversight.

Marketing of Educational Services is defined as a set of managerial and social activities aimed at satisfying the needs of relevant stakeholders through the development and promotion of value-based services (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Operationally, it refers to the school principal's ability to implement marketing practices that attract prospective students, retain stakeholders, and enhance institutional value.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The target population comprised all private school principals in Kuwait (N = 609) (Ministry of Education, 2023), with a sample of 95 principals selected through non-probability sampling. Data were collected across the academic years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of three sections: a demographic information section, a strategic leadership scale (24 items), and an educational service marketing scale (22 items). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale.

Validity

Content validity was established through expert review by academic specialists. Modifications to the instrument were made based on reviewer feedback prior to final administration.

Reliability

Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding high reliability coefficients for both scales: $\alpha = 0.968$ for the Strategic Leadership scale, and $\alpha = 0.821$ for the Educational Service Marketing scale.

Study Results

The first research question examined the degree to which private school principals in the State of Kuwait practice the dimensions of strategic leadership. The findings revealed a high level of strategic leadership practice, with an overall mean score of ($M = 4.17$). This result indicates that strategic leadership is effectively implemented across private schools in Kuwait, and that principals demonstrate a strong command of its constituent dimensions.

The second research question examined the level of educational service marketing in private schools in the State of Kuwait. The findings indicated a high level of marketing practice across all dimensions overall, with the exception of the promotion dimension. The overall mean score was ($M = 3.70$), reflecting a positive indicator that private schools broadly adopt effective marketing strategies for their educational services.

The first hypothesis examined whether statistically significant differences exist in the degree of strategic leadership practice and the level of educational service marketing based on gender, job position, school type, and school gender composition.

With respect to gender, no statistically significant differences were found across any of the strategic leadership or educational service marketing dimensions. With respect to job position, significant differences emerged in select strategic leadership dimensions — namely human capital, organizational culture, and strategic control — all in favor of school principals. In the domain of educational service marketing, significant differences were identified in the pricing dimension, in favor of assistant principals.

Regarding school type, significant differences were observed in the human capital dimension, favoring bilingual schools, as well as in the educational service marketing and physical environment dimensions, also in favor of bilingual schools. Similarly, findings based on school gender composition revealed significant differences in the human capital, educational service marketing, and physical environment dimensions, generally in favor of mixed-gender schools.

The second hypothesis examined the impact of strategic leadership on the marketing of educational services in private schools in Kuwait. The findings revealed that the dimensions of strategic leadership collectively account for 47.5% of the variance in educational service marketing levels, indicating a statistically significant predictive relationship. Among the individual dimensions, human capital demonstrated the greatest influence on educational service marketing, followed by strategic control and strategic orientation.

Notably, when all strategic leadership dimensions are considered in combination, they account for 67.3% of the total effect on educational service marketing. This finding suggests that the comprehensive and integrated practice of strategic leadership exerts a considerably stronger influence on educational marketing outcomes than the application of any single dimension in isolation.

Conclusion

Summary of Study Findings

This section presents the key findings and recommendations of a study examining the impact of strategic leadership on educational service marketing in private schools in the State of Kuwait. Statistical analyses and fieldwork revealed a set of significant findings that contribute to understanding the nature of the relationship between the study variables, alongside practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of school leadership and improving educational service marketing in private schools.

Strategic Leadership Practices

Participants' perceptions of the degree to which private school principals in Kuwait practice strategic leadership were rated **high**, with an overall mean score of ($M = 4.17$). This positive indicator suggests that private school principals demonstrate a strong command of the dimensions of strategic leadership.

Educational Service Marketing

Participants' perceptions of the level of educational service marketing in Kuwaiti private schools were rated **high** across all dimensions overall, with the exception of the *promotion* dimension. The overall mean score was ($M = 3.70$), a positive indicator reflecting that private schools adopt effective marketing strategies for their educational services. This further underscores principals' commitment to strengthening their competitive positioning in the educational marketplace and their recognition of the importance of differentiation within the private education sector.

Statistically Significant Differences

Statistically significant differences were identified among the mean scores of participants' perceptions regarding strategic leadership and its impact on educational service marketing in Kuwaiti private schools, as follows:

- (a) **Gender.** No statistically significant differences were found among participants' mean scores across all dimensions of strategic leadership or educational service marketing based on the gender variable.
- (b) **Job Title.** Statistically significant differences were identified in certain dimensions of strategic leadership — namely *Human Capital*, *Organizational Culture*, and *Strategic Control* — all in favor of school principals. With respect to educational service marketing, statistically significant differences were found in the *Pricing* dimension, in favor of assistant principals.
- (c) **School Type.** Statistically significant differences were found in the *Human Capital* dimension, favoring bilingual schools. Additionally, significant differences were observed in two dimensions of educational service marketing — *Educational Service Marketing* and *Physical Environment* — both in favor of bilingual schools.
- (d) **School Gender Composition.** Statistically significant differences were identified in the *Human Capital* dimension in favor of mixed-gender schools, as well as in the *Educational Service Marketing* and *Physical Environment* dimensions, also in favor of mixed-gender schools.

Predictive Power of Strategic Leadership

The dimensions of strategic leadership collectively accounted for **47.5%** of the variance in educational service marketing levels, indicating that the degree to which private school principals practice strategic leadership dimensions can serve as a reliable predictor of educational service marketing outcomes. Among individual dimensions, *Human Capital* demonstrated the greatest influence on educational service marketing, followed by *Strategic Control*, and then *Strategic Orientation*. Notably, when all strategic leadership dimensions are considered together, they account for **67.3%** of the variance in educational service marketing in Kuwaiti private schools. This finding suggests that the combined practice of strategic leadership dimensions yields a markedly stronger effect on educational service marketing than the practice of any single dimension in isolation.

Study Limitations

The sample at the level of private school principals constituted a **non-random convenience sample**, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The study sample comprised 95 principals and assistant principals. The relatively small sample size was largely attributable to the unwillingness of certain private school administrations to cooperate, despite the availability of a formal facilitation letter issued by the Private Education Directorate of the Ministry of Education, which constrained access to a broader sample.

The reliability coefficient for the *Promotion* sub-scale within the Educational Service Marketing instrument was found to be ($\alpha = 0.545$), which is considered relatively low. This may be attributed to the limited number of items in this dimension, which consisted of only three items. The researcher elected to retain these items within the questionnaire to avoid adversely affecting the overall reliability of the Educational Service Marketing scale, which yielded an acceptable coefficient of ($\alpha = 0.821$).

Study Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the researcher puts forward the following recommendations:

- **Principal Selection and Pre-service Training.** Private school principals should be selected according to rigorous academic and professional criteria commensurate with the demands of the private education sector. Furthermore, pre-appointment training programs should be provided to raise prospective principals' awareness of the significance of strategic leadership skills and their impact on enhancing educational service marketing.
- **Improvement of Educational Service Marketing.** Schools should develop comprehensive, integrated marketing strategies alongside the renewal of physical infrastructure and educational facilities, thereby strengthening their competitive value proposition in the marketplace.
- **Establishing Specialized Marketing Units.** Private school owners should be made aware of the importance of establishing dedicated educational marketing units within their institutions. This should be accompanied by the development and activation of programs designed to measure beneficiary satisfaction and conduct systematic market needs analyses.
- **Institutional Development.** Schools are encouraged to adopt comprehensive quality management systems, introduce innovative educational programs that are responsive to

market demands, and develop integrated information systems to support strategic decision-making processes.

- **Enhancing Competitiveness.** Private school administrations should develop specialized academic programs that differentiate their institutions from competitors, establish interactive digital platforms tailored to their school communities, and create research and innovation centers for students.
- **Human Capital Development.** Private school principals should prioritize the recruitment of highly qualified educational professionals and ensure the sustained activation of continuous professional development programs for all staff.
- **Improving the School Environment.** Principals are urged to align their institutions with international standards pertaining to the quality of educational facilities. This includes the establishment of smart laboratories, advanced learning centers, and the design of flexible, innovative learning spaces that foster creativity and engagement.
- **Strengthening Community Relations.** Schools should build strategic partnerships with the private sector and reinforce corporate social responsibility initiatives. Additionally, the establishment of dedicated communication platforms for engagement with parents and guardians is strongly recommended.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Claude (Anthropic) for the purpose of translating selected sections of the paper from Arabic into English, as well as for proofreading and refining the translated content for academic clarity and consistency. Following the use of this tool, the author reviewed and edited all outputs as necessary and takes full responsibility for the content of the published work.

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