

**CREATIVE THINKING AND ITS ROLE IN ACHIEVING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP: A
FIELD STUDY SURVEYING THE OPINIONS OF A SAMPLE OF DEANS, ASSISTANT
DEANS, HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS , AND DIVISION AND UNIT DIRECTORS IN SOME
COLLEGES OF THI-QAR UNIVERSITY, IRAQ**

Asst Inst. Sattar Awad Dhmaid

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Southern Technical University Technical Institute in Shatra

Department of Materials Management Technologies

Correspondence: sattar.awad@stu.edu.iq

ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify and interpret the nature of the correlation and influence between the independent variable of creative thinking and its variables (flexibility and originality) as a fundamental orientation for active institutions, and the dependent variable of strategic leadership and its variables (strategic leadership and entrepreneurial culture). Additionally, the study aims to explore the role of creative thinking in achieving strategic leadership among academic leaders in selected colleges of Thi-Qar University. The elements of creative thinking are analyzed and framed within an integrated conceptual framework, aiming to create strategic leadership capable of achieving strategic objectives in line with technological advancements and economic conditions. The research relies on a descriptive-analytical methodology and is conducted within the higher education and scientific research sector, specifically in five colleges of Thi-Qar University. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to a sample of 50 academic professors, including deans, assistant deans, department chairs, and division and unit directors. To achieve the research objectives, various statistical methods were employed, including means, standard deviations, t-tests, and F-tests. The required data were analyzed using the SPSS software. The research yielded several significant results, including the lack of significant attention by academic leaders in the studied colleges towards the strategic development of creative ideas among employees at all functional levels. The study also provided recommendations, such as the need for creative thinking not to be limited to specific colleges but to be adopted as an objective and strategic action plan that focuses on developing all aspects of the university and its formations. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of Thi-Qar University investing more attention in developing high entrepreneurial capabilities to compete with newly established governmental and private universities in the province.

Keywords: Creative thinking, entrepreneurial culture, strategic leadership.

INTRODUCTION

In light of the rapid technological advancements occurring in various economic, political, and social aspects, as well as the risks and events resulting from wars and the COVID-19 pandemic witnessed by the world, the need has arisen to adopt new concepts and strategies of utmost importance for the future of institutions and organizations as principal developmental approaches at various levels. Among the prominent concepts and methods are creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship. These two concepts constitute an advanced intellectual

approach, where each complements the other in order to provide a realistic model that aligns with technological and competitive developments. Creative thinking, as an important activity and organized behavior, has been emphasized by intellectual and behavioral schools due to its vital role in enriching organizations and institutions with ideas and insights that aid in the process of development and achievement of strategic goals for those organizations. Hence, it has become incumbent upon thinkers and innovators to take the initiative in finding intellectual and mental avenues. These intellectual avenues should rely on advanced knowledge and optimal use of available digital information, in line with the nature of the stage, in order to redistribute knowledge among different segments of society.

The goals, methods, mechanisms, and approaches for developing governmental and non-governmental organizations have become diverse in their quest to attain a leading position in various fields, amidst diverse conditions characterized by political, economic, security, social, and administrative instability. One of the most important goals is strategic entrepreneurship, which serves as an entry point for the development of these governmental and non-governmental organizations. Therefore, organizations in their various forms and types (commercial, service-oriented, or academic) strive to be at the forefront of the competitive scene in order to achieve a competitive position that is difficult for other organizations or institutions operating in the same environment to reach. This cannot be achieved unless there is a pioneering strategy that enables these organizations to achieve their goals in the desired manner. Thus, it becomes evident that entrepreneurship and strategic management are complementary concepts, as the behavior of searching for opportunities is called entrepreneurship, and the behavior of seeking advantage is called strategic management. By integrating these two concepts, we can attain strategic entrepreneurship, which enables organizations to survive and sustain in the competitive market (Altahat & Alsafadi, 2021).

Based on the preceding, this research aims to focus on two fundamental aspects for the success of organizations that aspire to be at the forefront of the competitive scene: creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship. The research aims to achieve several objectives, including identifying whether there is a significant relationship between creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship and identifying the obstacles that hinder the achievement of strategic entrepreneurship in the researched colleges.

In order to comprehend the contents and intellectual concepts, as well as their practical applications, of creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship (including their sub-variables), the research has been divided into five sections. The first section elucidates the research methodology, while the second section provides a theoretical and conceptual framework for creative thinking. The third section focuses on the conceptual and intellectual framework of strategic entrepreneurship, and the fourth section is dedicated to the practical aspect of the research. Lastly, the fifth section presents the most important findings and recommendations.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 The research problem

The growing interest in the topic of creative thinking by researchers is due to its prominent role in various fields. It has become one of the new methods in organizational management, as it

serves as a developmental approach that achieves the strategic objectives of these organizations. Despite the existence of numerous previous studies that have addressed the subject of creativity and creative thinking and their role in achieving competitive advantage and improving organizational performance, there is still a gap between the findings of those studies and the aspirations of organizations to achieve leadership in their operations, whether it is in terms of product manufacturing or the provision of consultancy and scientific services. The performance of an academic professor in academic tasks and university examinations is a result of their thinking process. Based on this outcome, the academic professor assesses the extent of their success or failure in this aspect, which in turn reflects on the performance level of the university or college to which they belong. From this perspective, the research problem emerges by answering the following question: What is the role of creative thinking among academic leaders at Thi Qar University in achieving strategic leadership?

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research primarily aims to achieve the following:

The primary aim of this research is to achieve the following:

1. To identify the relationship between creative thinking and strategic leadership.
2. To explore the significant role played by variables of creative thinking in influencing the variables of strategic leadership among academic leaders at Thi Qar University.
3. To determine the key obstacles that hinder the achievement of strategic leadership within the researched university and the material resources and new capabilities required to achieve such leadership.
4. To identify the necessary abilities and capabilities to foster the process of creative thinking among the senior management of Thi Qar University.
5. To assess the readiness of researchers and intellectuals at Thi Qar University in employing elements of creative thinking to achieve strategic leadership.

Third: the importance of research

Despite the existence of numerous studies and research that have addressed the topic of creative thinking or strategic entrepreneurship, there is a scarcity of studies that combine these two subjects.

Therefore, this research focuses on the integration of both topics (creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship) in order to enhance intellectual enrichment and yield results that may benefit researchers in their future work.

- Highlighting the significance of incorporating creative thinking variables among academic leaders at Thi Qar University.
- Presenting findings and recommendations that can be utilized in adopting the concept of creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship to improve organizational performance quality.
- Formulating a clear vision among academic leaders regarding the characteristics and attributes of an entrepreneurial organization and assessing the organization's sustainability in the competitive market.

Fourth: Research Hypotheses:

There are two main hypotheses for this research, and each hypothesis leads to sub-hypotheses as follows:

First main hypothesis:

The main hypothesis posits that there exists no statistically significant correlation between creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship. This main hypothesis gives rise to the following sub-hypotheses:

1. There is no statistically significant correlation between flexibility and strategic entrepreneurship.
2. There is no statistically significant correlation between originality and strategic entrepreneurship.

Second main hypothesis:

1- The main hypothesis proposes that there is no significant causal relationship between creative thinking and strategic entrepreneurship. This main hypothesis leads to the following sub-hypotheses:

1. There is a significant causal relationship between flexibility and strategic entrepreneurship.
2. There is no significant causal relationship between originality and strategic entrepreneurship.

Fifth: Research Scope and Sample

The research scope is defined by the following boundaries:

Objective Boundary: The research is focused on studying the role of creative thinking in achieving strategic entrepreneurship at Thi Qar University.

Human Boundary: The research is limited to a sample of faculty members representing various administrative levels, including deans, vice deans, department heads, section directors, and unit managers, from selected colleges at Thi Qar University. The total number of participants in the sample is 50.

Institutional Boundary: The research is conducted within specific colleges at Thi Qar University, namely the College of Law, College of Veterinary Medicine, College of Engineering, College of Agriculture, and College of Nursing. This selection is based on the ease of obtaining the required data, as well as the existence of serious practical efforts by academic leaders in these colleges towards fostering creative thinking to achieve strategic entrepreneurship in scientific and service fields.

Sixth: Data collection methods:

Theoretical data was gathered by relying on books, theses, and dissertations, in addition to information available on the internet. As for the practical aspect of the research, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to 50 university professors. This questionnaire consisted of three variables. The first variable covered general information such as the respondent's name, educational attainment, workplace, and position. The second variable

focused on the independent variable (creative thinking) and its sub-variables. Meanwhile, the third variable of this questionnaire emphasized the dependent variable (strategic entrepreneurship) and its sub-variables. Please refer to Appendix 1 for further details.

The second topic: creative thinking

1- The concept of creative thinking

It is of utmost importance to first understand the meaning of thinking in general, as well as creativity and their respective connotations in general terms. Undoubtedly, thinking is considered a blessing from God Almighty, bestowed upon humanity to manage life affairs in a manner that serves the public interest. Therefore, the primary goal of the thinking process is to produce mental outcomes or solutions that address a specific problem and to creatively apply these solutions or mental products.

2- Defining creative thinking.

Researchers have provided multiple definitions based on different perspectives and insights. Ibn Manzur in *Lisan al-Arab* (1956:65) defined thinking as "the acts of contemplation regarding something, and in the dictionary: to think about a matter excessively, to ponder upon it. If one contemplates a problem, it means they engage their mind in order to arrive at a solution; thus, they are a thinker."

Abdalmukhtar et al.,(2011) defined creative thinking as "the process in which an individual engages in various procedures, starting from recalling and retrieving information to operating the information and the procedures themselves. It is also the approach used by an individual to generate the largest number of ideas regarding the problem they are facing (cognitive fluency), characterized by diversity and differentiation (flexibility) and non-repetition or commonality (originality)."

In *Al-Muajam al-Wasit* and *Mu'jam Mukhtar al-Sahah*, creativity is defined as "the act of inventing something to the highest degree, creating it without a previous example, and making it the epitome of its attributes."

Creative thinking is also defined as "the integrated unit of self and objective factors that lead to the achievement of a new, valuable, and original production by an individual or a group" (Abu Nadi, 2004, p. 18).

Al-Kharabsheh (2018, p. 8) defined creative thinking as "the individual's ability to generate a distinctive number of ideas and solutions for educational problems and situations they encounter, with unique expansion and flexibility."

Furthermore, Al-Qattami (2005, p. 85) defined creative thinking as "a cognitive process in which the brain is activated with the aim of reaching something new. This includes a set of implications, such as looking at familiar things in an unfamiliar way, producing new and original ideas, flexibly dealing with issues by exploring all the possible aspects of an idea, elaborating on it, reinforcing it with additional extensive information, and generating ideas related to a single concept."

Overall, understanding the concepts of thinking and creativity is essential in order to explore their significance and implications in various academic and practical contexts.

3- The Importance of Creative Thinking

Creative thinking is one of the most important leading mental activities for its significant advancement in capabilities, unleashing latent energies, and adapting to the language of the era. The importance of creative thinking is highlighted in our contemporary lives due to the current period witnessing immense technological advancements, transforming most fields into digital domains, especially in industrial and commercial sectors. This has made creative thinking the assisting and prominent factor in this time period to meet the requirements of the stage by providing new information, ideas, and outcomes to solve the problems faced by organizations and institutions across various domains. Thus, cognitive and informational development is nothing but the result of a set of valuable scientific ideas for individuals and society (Doran & Ryan, 2016).

4- Methods for Developing Creative Thinking

Just as concepts, manifestations, and stages of creativity are diverse, so are the methods and techniques through which creative thinking can be developed and improved in individuals. Creative thinking is like a dormant volcano within each person, and through the use of diverse techniques, creativity emerges in the best way possible. Among the various methods that can enhance creativity are mind mapping, brainstorming, visualization, embracing dreams, problem-solving approaches (Abdulkhatar et al., 2011). The following is an explanation of some of these methods.

4.1 Mind mapping

Mind mapping is considered one of the most important methods for developing intellectual creativity as it visually organizes ideas branching out from the central concept in the form of a cognitive network drawn in an individual's mind, encompassing multiple concepts. This method can be used in various situations and for diverse topics, thus enhancing and encouraging creative thinking processes (Abdulkhatar et al., 2011).

4.2 Brainstorming

The brainstorming method aims to stimulate and activate the intellectual brain cells around a specific problem, generating numerous logical ideas to arrive at the best successful solutions for the research problem. Therefore, brainstorming is one of the most significant methods used in the present era as it contributes to the generation of creative ideas for the presented problems and enables suitable outcomes to achieve organizational goals.

Variables of Creative Thinking:

As concepts of creativity have multiplied, its variables have also diversified, providing a comprehensive understanding of creativity. Hadi (2008) mentioned several variables of creative thinking, including fluency, developing interpretations, evaluation, flexibility, visualization and imagination, focus, intuition towards problems, composition, originality, and elaboration. The following presents an overview of some of these variables:

5.1 Flexibility:

It refers to the ability to change an individual's mental state by adopting various, renewed, and expanding methods, ideas, and perspectives that change according to the requirements (Hadi, 2008, p. 50).

5.2 Originality:

It signifies the distinction in thinking, rarity, the ability to access beyond direct and common ideas, as well as expertise and uniqueness (Abdulkhatar et al., 2011, p. 15).

5.3 Fluency:

It denotes the ability to generate a large number of alternatives or ideas when responding to a specific stimulus, with speed and ease of generation (Abdulkhatar et al., 2011, p. 15).

The Third Topic: Strategic Leadership

1- What is strategic leadership?

The concept of strategic leadership has captured the attention of businesspeople, thinkers, planners, and academics as one of the most important strategic objectives that organizations or institutions must achieve to confront the continuous changes in various fields (organizational, political, security, technological, etc.). Often, organizations or institutions with outstanding performance can identify the available opportunities in their competitive environment, but they may not be able to fully capitalize on those opportunities in a way that serves their strategic goals, negatively impacting their competitiveness (Ketchen & Ireland, 2007).

Therefore, strategic leadership aims to achieve the future vision of the organization and maintain its competitive advantage through innovative behaviors and activities provided by a group of specialists within or outside the organization. Achieving this objective entails offering strategic alternatives and conducting a comparison between these alternatives to sustain competitive leadership in line with the organization's future goals and its organizational structure.

2- Definition of Strategic Leadership:

Before defining strategic leadership, it is better to understand the terms "leadership" and "strategy" individually. Leadership has been defined as "the complete awareness of opportunities represented by needs, desires, challenges, and the optimal use of resources towards the implementation of new ideas in efficiently planned projects" (Abdul-Mun'im, 2008:13). On the other hand, strategy is defined as "the approach taken to achieve a competitive advantage to confront environmental threats or opportunities, considering the internal strengths and weaknesses of the project in order to achieve the mission, vision, and goals of the organization" (Idris & Al-Ghali, 2007).

To grasp some of the contents of strategic leadership in general, we need to refer to the following definitions. Rashid & Dahsh (2008, pp. 25-26) define strategic leadership as "a comprehensive and integrated plan that includes a set of interconnected ideas, concepts, and relevant approaches for the future, designed to achieve the organization's goals based on its resources,

capabilities, and core competencies." Maqawsi & Ayashi (2010, p. 2) define it as "characteristics and behaviors related to initiating, planning, and undertaking a project, as well as being innovative in its management." Moreover, Mubarak (2009, p. 26) states that strategic leadership "refers to a set of actions undertaken by the entrepreneurial individual within and outside the organization for their entrepreneurial project."

Based on the above definitions, we can summarize strategic leadership as a developmental approach based on a set of activities and behaviors that help harness the organization's ideas, innovations, and capabilities to achieve the desired goals within acceptable time frames.

3- The importance of strategic leadership

Due to the tremendous importance of entrepreneurship as the ultimate goal pursued by all living components on Earth, we find it to be the primary driving force for:

- Profit and non-profit organizations aiming to maximize their profits and improve their services.
- Academic institutions seeking to disseminate knowledge and provide scientific services and consultations.
- Human societies seeking to exert their power and culture over other communities.

Research endeavors have long sought to establish and adopt the strategic entrepreneurship approach in academic institutions to identify and exploit opportunities while avoiding risks. The significance of strategic entrepreneurship emerges as an advanced approach for developing pioneering strategic plans that assist academic institutions in generating innovation and change. It reduces the difficulty of penetrating the competitive market between private and non-private Iraqi universities, while achieving a competitive position that meets the aspirations and expectations of their students and professors. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to examine strategic entrepreneurship from the perspective of academic institutions.

The pursuit of opportunities, excellence in providing student services, and keeping up with technological advancements are fundamental objectives that academic institutions strive to achieve. However, identifying opportunities alone is insufficient unless accompanied by a pioneering strategy that leverages the competitive advantage possessed by these academic institutions, ensuring their sustainability and ability to remain in the arena of competition.

Based on the preceding presentation, the researcher believes that strategic entrepreneurship holds immense importance for academic institutions. It is considered one of the core approaches to dealing with the internal organizational environment to achieve the interests of students and employees at various administrative levels, focusing on meeting their requirements and needs. At the external environmental level, strategic entrepreneurship plays a role in fulfilling the requirements of society and other institutions. This is achieved by increasing awareness, comprehension, and positive adaptation to economic, social, cultural, and political variables, thereby positively influencing the overall performance of the institution.

4- Variables of strategic leadership

Researchers have differed in defining fixed variables of strategic entrepreneurship, and the reason for this variation can be attributed to the dynamic nature of this concept and its application in various contexts and levels. Both Shabat and Al-Masri (2020, p. 34), citing other

researchers, mentioned that the variables of strategic entrepreneurship include creativity, risk-taking, proactiveness, independence, aggressiveness, vision, and growth. On the other hand, Al-Shammari (2015, p. 38) identified four variables of strategic entrepreneurship: entrepreneurial culture, strategic leadership, entrepreneurial mindset, and strategically managed resources.

To test the research hypotheses and achieve the desired objectives, the following variables were selected as sub-variables of the dependent variable (strategic entrepreneurship): strategic leadership and entrepreneurial culture.

Firstly, strategic leadership is defined by Melhem (2018) as “leadership that adopts a clear vision for the organization, mobilizes the energies of employees behind this vision, inspires and motivates them to achieve strategic value for the organization, and includes four essential variables: vision, inspiration, trust, and communication.” Asimiran and Bagheri Pihie (2014) defined it as a leadership behavior that enables leaders to face the challenges of their tasks and roles in the current environment.

Secondly, entrepreneurial culture refers to the shared value system and beliefs that shape the organizational structure within the organization, which individuals in that organization believe in and work to maintain, aligning with the internal and external environment of the organization (Al-Qahtani, 2012).

Chapter Four: Applied Aspect

In this chapter, the researcher aims to investigate the level of utilization of creative thinking and strategic leadership in a number of colleges at Thi Qar University, based on the response of the selected sample. This is accomplished through a detailed description of the research methodology, the sample used, the community, the tool and its variables, as well as the procedures involved. The following is a presentation of these aspects:

Research Community and Sample:

The research community was selected from several colleges affiliated with Thi Qar University. The following colleges were chosen as the research sample: the College of Law, the College of Management and Economics, the College of Engineering, the College of Education for Girls, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. These colleges were selected for the ease of obtaining the required data. The sample size consisted of 50 individuals who were distributed across various functional levels within these colleges, including deans, vice-deans, department heads, and unit managers.

Research Tool:

The researcher developed a questionnaire as the primary tool for obtaining the required data. The questionnaire included the main research variables, which were independent variables represented by creative thinking and its variables, as well as the dependent variable represented by strategic leadership and its variables. The applied aspect involved analyzing the research sample's responses to the posed questions, which addressed the independent and dependent research variables as follows:

Questionnaire Validity:

The researcher relied on a five-point Likert scale to measure the judges' opinions when assessing the questionnaire items. The judges' evaluation ratings ranged from 21.4 to 00.5, indicating high agreement among the judges regarding the appropriateness and relevance of the research topic. The researcher also verified the internal consistency validity of the questionnaire domains and their correlation with the overall score using Pearson's correlation coefficient, which ranged from 717.0 to 915.0.

Questionnaire Reliability:

The researcher tested the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.968. This indicates a high degree of reliability for the questionnaire items and constructs.

Data Analysis, Hypothesis Testing, and Discussion:

This section aims to explore the current status of applying creative thinking and strategic leadership in a number of colleges at Thi Qar University based on the sample's responses. It will rely on the frequency distributions of the research sample's answers, their percentages, as well as the mean and standard deviation of these responses. The research employed a five-point Likert scale in the questionnaire responses, where each variable's level ranges from 1 to 5 with four levels above the assumed mean of 3. A level of 3-4 is considered good, while a level above 4 is considered very good. Similarly, there are two levels below the assumed mean of 3, where a level of 2-3 is considered weak, and a level below 2 is considered very weak.

Firstly, the analysis of the level of importance of variables of creative thinking is discussed in this section. It examines the level of importance of the variables of creative thinking, namely flexibility and originality, as outlined below:

1. The first variable: Flexibility

Table 1: the variable of flexibility.

	Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
1	I possess the ability to update the philosophy of the university/college and its employees' culture through innovative and efficient methods to achieve strategic goals.	3,687	0.887
2	I completely refrain from employing complicated procedures when faced with obstacles that hinder my work. I strive to make excellence the prevailing characteristic of my approach.	3,418	0.909
3	I endeavor to select pioneering alternatives that minimize the cost of <u>problem-solving</u> .	3,556	0.956
4	I seek to choose the leading alternatives that reduce the cost of solving the <u>problem</u>	3,628	0.874
5	I enjoy the freedom of thought and expression when formulating pioneering strategic plans, aiming for the university/college to become the foundation of social and economic progress within the community.	3,786	0.789
	The arithmetic mean and general standard deviation of the flexibility variable	3,615	0.724

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it is apparent that the collective average score for the “flexibility” items is 3.615 on a five-point Likert scale, surpassing the hypothetical mean of 3. This indicates a favorable level of flexibility. Furthermore, the relatively low standard deviation of 0.724 suggests a limited dispersion in the responses of the research sample, suggesting a certain degree of consensus among participants regarding the significance of flexibility in the policies and planning approaches adopted by senior management and other administrative leaders within the investigated colleges affiliated with Thi-Qar University.

Moving on to the second variable, we now turn our attention to “originality.”

2- The second variable: originality

Table (2) for the variable of originality

	Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
1	I have the ability to present modern ideas in the work environment to overcome obstacles.	3,445	0.811
2	I am not inclined to traditional solutions and stay away from common ideas that do not achieve excellence in solving the problem at hand.	3,435	0.731
3	I have the desire and determination to test different new things when developing strategic plans.	3.50	0.766
4	I have the ability to persevere and not give up in order to reach pioneering ideas.	3.40	0.788
5	I seek to do business in an innovative way that is not familiar to others.	3,690	0.734
	The arithmetic mean and deviation are the general criteria for the variable of originality	3,494	0.766

Table 2 provides insights into the responses of the research sample regarding the variable of “originality.” The aggregated mean score obtained was 3.494 on a five-point Likert scale, surpassing the hypothetical mean of 3, indicating a favorable level. The estimated standard deviation of 0.766 suggests the existence of a discernible pattern of academic leadership within the investigated colleges. This pattern entails a deliberate emphasis on fostering critical thinking and the capacity to venture beyond conventional ideas in addressing challenges across diverse administrative levels of the researched institutions.

Table (3) variables of creative thinking

Variable		Sub variable	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean
Creative thinking	1	Flexibility	0.724	3,615
	2	Originality	0.766	3,494
		The arithmetic mean and general standard deviation of creative thinking	0.745	3,554

In general, the findings from Table 3 illustrate that the research sample's responses regarding "creative thinking" in the investigated colleges at Thi-Qar University yielded a mean score of 3.554, surpassing the hypothetical mean of 3. The estimated standard deviation of 0.745

suggests the existence of a forward-thinking disposition among the academic leaders within the studied colleges. This disposition is characterized by an active pursuit of innovative and creative solutions to unconventional obstacles and challenges encountered by students and staff across various administrative and academic hierarchies. Such endeavors are facilitated through brainstorming sessions, aimed at devising novel approaches capable of addressing both internal challenges related to students and staff, as well as external issues.

Second: Analyzing the level of importance of variables Strategic leadership

1- The first variable: strategic leadership

Table (4) the strategic leadership variable

	standard deviation	Arithmetic mean	items
1	Academic leaders set their future strategic plans within the vision of gaining promising opportunities represented by opening attractive scientific departments.	0.56	4.04
2	Senior management has a clear vision in following up and identifying entrepreneurial opportunities, similar to what newly established private universities and colleges do.	0.78	3.36
3	Senior management seeks to activate the entrepreneurial spirit of middle and lower level leaders to achieve a better level of performance.	0.59	4.06
4	Contribute to enhancing leadership capabilities when making strategic decisions	0.77	3.43
5	Complete flexibility and foresight are present when dealing with strategic issues	0.75	3.89
	The arithmetic mean and general standard deviation of strategic leadership	0.69	3.75

Analysis of Table 4 shows that the average score of all paragraphs related to entrepreneurial leadership is 3.75, with a standard deviation of 0.69. These findings suggest a high level of consensus among the participants regarding the paragraphs addressing entrepreneurial leadership in a broader context. The observed agreement can be attributed to the proactive and indispensable role played by academic leaders within the surveyed colleges. These leaders effectively identify and seize promising opportunities that align with their colleges' visionary objectives and mission. As a result, they are able to overcome the formidable competition posed by government universities and newly established private colleges.

2- The second variable: Entrepreneurial Culture

Table (5) of the variable: Entrepreneurial Culture

	Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
1	The values, principles and beliefs on which the university was built are present when formulating the vision and mission	3.88	0.67
2	Senior management has the desire to adopt work behaviors that reflect the extent to which it maintains values and beliefs on a long-term level.	3.69	0.71
3	The decisions taken and the renewed innovative ideas indicate a renewed strategic legacy that leads to a leading entity in the university.	4.04	0.56

4	Senior management emphasizes on providing a culture of high values consistent with the rapid cultural changes.	3.70	0.74
5	The governing organizational culture achieves the effectiveness of work and its high smoothness by paying attention to the beliefs, customs and traditions, and the pioneering structural systems through what the newly created universities and colleges do.	3.85	0.76
	The arithmetic mean and general standard deviation of the entrepreneurial culture	3.83	0.688

The results depicted in Table 5 demonstrate that the response levels of the research sample achieved an arithmetic mean of 3.83, surpassing the hypothetical mean of 3, which is considered a satisfactory level. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 0.688 indicates a minimal degree of dispersion, suggesting the presence of a commendable level of entrepreneurial culture among academic leaders in the surveyed colleges of Thi-Qar University in comparison to the newly established universities and colleges in the aforementioned province.

Table (6) Variables of strategic leadership

Variable		Sub variable	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation
Strategic leadership	1	Strategic leadership	3.75	0.69
	2	Entrepreneurial culture	3.83	0.688
		The arithmetic mean and general standard deviation of strategic leadership	3.80	0.69

In general, based on Table 6, it is evident that the research sample's response level regarding the variable of strategic leadership achieved a good arithmetic mean of 3.80, exceeding the hypothetical mean of 3. Moreover, with a standard deviation of 0.69, there is a minimal degree of dispersion, indicating a favorable level of entrepreneurial culture among academic leaders in the surveyed colleges of Thi-Qar University compared to the newly established universities and colleges in the aforementioned province.

In light of the foregoing, the results from Table 3 and Table 6 suggest that the responses of the research sample to the independent variable (creative thinking) and its sub-variables, as well as the dependent variable (strategic leadership) and its sub-variables, are in harmony and have achieved good arithmetic means. The reason for this can be attributed to the research sample's belief in the nature of perception and understanding of contemporary intellectual trends and inputs in adopting strategic visions through intellectual connectivity and engaging with creative ideas in a manner that aligns with technological advancements. This leads to the achievement of strategic leadership and the strategic management of university resources.

Testing the Research Hypotheses

This section addresses the results of testing the hypotheses proposed by the researcher as follows:

To determine the correlation between the research variables, namely the independent variable of creative thinking and its sub-variables (flexibility and originality), and the dependent variable of strategic leadership and its sub-variables (entrepreneurial leadership and entrepreneurial culture), the following tests were conducted to determine the type and strength of the correlation and influence between the variables outlined in the main hypotheses as follows: (There is no statistically significant correlation between creative thinking and strategic leadership), (There is no statistically significant influence between creative thinking and strategic leadership).

Table 7: Results of the impact of the flexibility variable on strategic leadership.

Dependent variable	transaction table Coefficient			Variance analysis ANOVA		Form summary Model Summary	
	Calibri (Body)	Calibri (Body)	Statement	Df degrees of freedom	F calculated	R2	r
Strategic leadership	Calibri (Body)	Calibri (Body)	originality	(50-1)	22.43	0.467	0.626

The results from Table 7 indicate that the correlation value ($r = 0.626$) signifies a positive relationship between the flexibility variable and strategic leadership. Additionally, the calculated T value (21.517) is higher than the tabulated value (1.438), indicating a statistically significant correlation. This result confirms the rejection of the null sub-hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative sub-hypothesis, which states that "there is a statistically significant correlation between flexibility and strategic leadership."

Moreover, as shown in the above table, the determination coefficient value ($R^2 = 0.467$) reveals that the flexibility variable explains 4.67% of the variance in strategic leadership, while keeping the other variables constant. Furthermore, the calculated F value (22.43) reaches significance at the 0.05 level with a confidence interval of 0.95. Based on the above, we reject the null sub-hypothesis of zero influence and accept the following alternative hypothesis: "There is an influence between flexibility and strategic leadership."

This can be attributed to the fact that flexibility, whether in thinking or within academic environments, is a focal point for all individuals across various functional levels in the surveyed colleges. It aims to adapt, satisfy the needs of students and internal stakeholders, and serve the community and external institutions.

Table 8: Results of the impact of the originality variable on strategic leadership.

Dependent variable	Transaction table Coefficient			Variance analysis ANOVA		Form summary Model Summary	
	T calculated	β	Statement	Df degrees of freedom	F calculated	R2	r
Strategic leadership	20,333	0.950	originality	(50-1)	21.42	0.507	0.950

Based on the evident findings presented in Table 8, it can be concluded that there exists a positive correlation between originality and strategic leadership, as indicated by the correlation coefficient value of ($r = 0.950$). Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the calculated T value (20.333) surpasses the tabulated value (1.438), leading to the rejection of the null sub-hypothesis that assumes zero sub-correlation. Instead, the alternative sub-hypothesis, which states the presence of a statistically significant correlation between originality and strategic leadership, is accepted.

Additionally, the aforementioned table elucidates that the originality variable accounts for a substantial proportion of the variation in strategic leadership, amounting to 50.7%, while keeping the other variables constant, as reflected by the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.507$). Moreover, the calculated F value (21.42) attains statistical significance at a 0.05 significance level with a confidence interval of 0.95. Based on these compelling results, the null sub-hypothesis of zero influence is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is embraced, affirming the existence of a significant influence between originality and strategic leadership.

Table 9 illustrates the correlation coefficients between creative thinking and each variable thereof, as well as strategic leadership and each of its variables.

variables of the independent variable	originality	Flexibility	Creative thinking
variables of the dependent variable			
Strategic leadership	0.576**	0.585**	0.702**
Entrepreneurial culture	0.578**	0.599**	0.682**
Strategic leadership	0.590**	0.626**	0.721**

**Statistically significant at a significance level of (0.05)

Referring to the values of correlation coefficients (r) presented in Tables 7 and 8, as well as the calculated values of T and F, it becomes evident that the correlation coefficients (significant, positive, and negative) possess statistical significance. This implies the existence of considerable correlation relationships between creative thinking in all its variables, whether individual or collective, and strategic leadership in all its variables, whether at the individual or collective level. Consequently, the null hypotheses are deemed invalid, and thus, they can be rejected in favor of the following alternative hypotheses:

1. There exists a statistically significant correlation between creative thinking and strategic leadership.
2. There exists a statistically significant influence of creative thinking on strategic leadership. Moreover, based on the aforementioned results, it is clear that the adoption of creative thinking as a behavior and approach enhances the achievement of strategic leadership, which is considered a strategic objective in the researched colleges. Additionally, creative thinking empowers the senior management at Thi-Qar University to anticipate the future and enables them to engage in pioneering endeavors by effectively utilizing the intellectual potential of the academic staff and fostering productive collaboration among all elements of the leadership process, including individuals with academic expertise.

Fifth Chapter: Conclusions and Recommendations

1. CONCLUSIONS

- There is a strong strategic leadership orientation among the academic leaders at Thi-Qar University in order to implement their strategic vision and establish attractive colleges and academic departments that are on par with those found in government and private universities in other provinces.
- The strategic development of creative thinking among the staff at all functional levels in the researched colleges receives insufficient attention from academic leaders.
- Creative thinking is one of the key factors that contribute to the organizational development by enabling organizations to adapt to internal and external changes and maintain their competitive advantage.
- The researched colleges strive to attain strategic leadership in order to achieve their strategic objectives.
- The most significant finding indicates that strategic leadership is wholly dependent on creative thinking, whether in the researched colleges or other facilities.

2. Recommendations:

- Academic leaders should increase their focus on the process of creative thinking and the ways in which innovation occurs, as it represents a cognitive gateway that helps address challenges and problems encountered in achieving strategic leadership.
- Cultural and intellectual festivals and seminars should be organized, emphasizing the role and importance of creative thinking. These courses and seminars should target all functional levels.
- Strategic leadership should be adopted as a strategic objective, bringing together all efforts of academic leaders at the university to translate it into a working context that aligns with the university's vision and mission. This can be accomplished through a comprehensive evaluation of the internal and external environment, identifying strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats. Such evaluation should be followed by the presentation of strategic alternatives and a comparison between them to maintain competitive leadership while aligning with the organization's future goals and its current organizational structure.
- It is essential to provide a nurturing environment for the process of creativity by ensuring the availability of effective driving factors for creative thinking among academic leaders. These factors should lead to mental outputs and generate pioneering ideas that contribute to competition in the field of establishing attractive colleges, academic departments, and other entrepreneurial projects.

REFERENCES

1. Abdul-Mun'im, A. K. (2008). *Entrepreneurship from a Global Perspective*. Beirut, Lebanon: University Foundation for Studies, Publishing, and Distribution.
2. Abdulmukhtar, M., Khedr, M., Inji, ., & Adawi, S. F. (2011). *Patterned and Creative Thinking. The Project of Paths Leading to Higher Education*, Center for Development of Higher Studies and Research, Faculty of Engineering, Cairo University.

3. Abu Nadi, K. M. (2004). Creative Thinking and Its Relationship to Relative Deprivation and Ambition Levels among Fifth and Sixth Grade Students. Islamic University, College of Education, Psychology Department.
4. Altahat, S., & Alsafadi, Y. (2021). The Mediating Role of Creativity in the Influence of the Entrepreneurial Mindset on Corporate Entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 15(4), Retrieved from www.ijicc.net.
5. Al-Kharabsheh, N. M. J. (2018). The Effect of Using Some Creative Thinking Skills on the Achievement and Retention of Information of Third Grade Students in Teaching Science at Private Schools in Amman. Middle East University, College of Educational Sciences.
6. Al-Qahtani, S. B. S. A. (2012). Strategic Entrepreneurship as an Approach for Developing Governmental Organizations. In *The Second Conference of Institutes of Public Administration and Administrative Development in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries*.
7. Al-Qatami, N. (2005). *Teaching Children How to Think*. Amman: Dar Al-Fikr for Printing and Publishing.
8. Al-Shammari, S. R. (2015). The Role of Strategic Entrepreneurship Dimensions in Improving Outstanding Banking Performance: Case Study of Baghdad College of Economic Sciences. *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences*, 21(83).
9. Doran, J., & Ryan, G. (2016). The role of stimulating employees' creativity and idea generation in encouraging innovation behavior in Irish firms. *Irish Journal of Management*, 36(1), 32-48. DOI: 10.1515/ijm-2017-0005
10. Hadi, A. (2008). The Fundamental Pillars of Creative Thinking and Their Impact on Solving Managerial Problems. *Journal of Management and Economics*, (Issue No.), 69.
11. Ibn Manzur, A. (1956). *Lisan al-Arab al-Muhit*. (A. Al-Ala'ili, Ed., Y. Khayyat, Comp.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Lisan Al-Arab.
12. Idris, W. M., & Al-Ghali, T. M. (2007). *Strategic Management: An Integrated Methodological Perspective* (1st ed.). Amman, Jordan: Wael Publishing and Distribution House.
13. Ketchen, D. J. Jr., Ireland, R. D., & Snow, C. C. (2007). Strategic Entrepreneurship, Collaborative Innovation, and Wealth Creation. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 1, 371-385.
14. Melhem, Y. S. (2018). The Role of Schools in Developing Social Responsibility among Students: A Perspective from Ajloun Governorate in Jordan. *Journal of Science and Education*, Gaza.
15. Maqawsi, S., Jamouni, H., & Ayashi, K. (2010). *Leadership Strategies for Innovation*. College of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Al-Zaytoonah University, Amman, Jordan.
16. Mubarak, M. A. (2009). *Entrepreneurship in Business: Concepts, Approaches, and Practical Applications* (1st ed.). Amman, Jordan: Modern Books for Publishing and Distribution.
17. Rashid, S. A. R., & Dahsh, E. (2008). *Strategic Management*. College of Management and Economics, Al-Qadisiyah University, Al-Manahij for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan.
18. Shabat, J. I., & Al-Masri, N. H. (2020). The Role of Strategic Entrepreneurship Dimensions in Enhancing Organizational Memory: A Field Study on Ooredoo Palestine Telecommunications Company. *Journal of Islamic University for Economic and Administrative Studies*, 2(28).