The Effectiveness of Strategic Management Practices at a Public University in South Africa

Sithembile Khuzwayo* and Pfano Mashau

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Sithembile Khuzwayo* and Pfano Mashau**

ABSTRACT

This study evaluates strategic management practices at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Using a quantitative approach, an online survey collected data from diverse staff members. Positive perceptions of strategy clarity and impact were found, but resource adequacy concerns emerged. Transparent resource allocation, stakeholder involvement, and performance metrics are crucial for successful strategy implementation. The research highlights the need to align resource allocation with strategic objectives. It emphasises transparent decision-making processes, involving stakeholders in resource allocation, and monitoring performance metrics. By applying resource-based theory and Mintzberg's 5Ps framework, the study provides valuable insights for higher education institutions. Recommendations include enhancing transparency, conducting regular assessments, and prioritising strategic initiatives. This research contributes to organisational effectiveness and long-term strategic goals. It highlights the importance of strategic alignment and resource optimisation in higher education contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) encounter challenges in their quest to render higher education accessible and impactful. The success of HEIs hinges on their capacity to attract requisite resources and world-class academics and students, possibly necessitating a shift towards a business model for long-term sustainability[1]. Siegel and Leih[2] argue that higher education policy

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*   University of KwaZulu-Natal. Corresponding Author: 221108321@stu.ukzn.ac.za

mandates HEIs prioritising affordable, quality tertiary education to enhance accessibility. This highlights the importance of HEIs devising sustainable strategies to achieve long-term objectives. Additionally, redefining quality education from the student's perspective is imperative to ensure its value and enhance the quality of life, despite South Africa's strides towards inclusive access to basic education not translating into improved academic performance in higher learning[3].

Sammut-Bonnici[4] posits that strategic management involves assessing, planning, and executing tactics to bolster an organisation's competitive advantage. This encompasses evaluating the competitive environment, organisational structure, and strategies and ensuring effective leadership implementation. Streiss[5] emphasises strategic management as anticipatory decision-making concerning an organisation's future activities. It interfaces an organisation's performance and external environmental challenges and opportunities, intending to expand the basis for significant decision-making. Critics like Berry[6] contend that strategic management often leans heavily on theoretical constructs rather than addressing managerial complexities. Maleka[7] contends that organisations with competitive edges closely adhere to strategic management plans, resulting in high performance, optimal resource allocation, engaged human capacity, and financial benefits.

1   Christensen, C M, Horn, M B, Caldera, L, & Soares, L (2011). Disrupting college: How disruptive innovation can deliver quality and affordability to postsecondary education. Innosight Institute. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119449492

2   Siegel, D. S., & Leih, S. (2018). Strategic management theory and universities: An overview of the Special Issue. Strategic Organization, 16(1), [6]-[11]

3   Baijnath, N. (2018). Learning for development in the context of South Africa: Considerations for open education resources in improving higher education outcomes. Journal of Learning for Development, 5(2). https://doi.org/10.56059/jl4d.v5i2.299

4   Sammut-Bonnici, T. (2015). Strategic Management. In. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781111785317.weom060194

5   Streiss, A. (2019). Strategic Management for Public and Nonprofit Organizations. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781482275865

6   Berry, M, 'Strategic Planning in Small High-Tech Companies' (1998) 31(3) Long Range Planning, 455-466 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-6301(98)80012-5>

7   Maleka, S, 'Strategy Management and Strategic Planning Process' (2014) 1(1) DTPS Strategic Planning & Monitoring 1-29

HEIs primarily aim for quality teaching, research, and community engagement, with shortcomings attributed to insufficient emphasis on strategic management[89]. Gibb and Haskins[10] stress the urgency of transitioning HEIs from basic learning institutions to business-focused entities. Leadership within HEIs requires strong academic credentials, executive attributes, effective communication, and management skills to drive institutions forward. Prioritising strategic management in institutions enables a sharper focus on strategic goals, reducing distractions and ineffective conflicts[11].

Thompson[12] outline five phases of the strategic management process: establishing a strategic perspective, defining objectives, developing strategies, instituting and applying strategies, and monitoring progress. Work engagement, as highlighted by Bakker and Albrecht[13], is a pivotal indicator of employee, team, and organisational outcomes. Engaged employees actively contribute to organisational success by aligning with strategic objectives.

Strategic planning and management enhance HEIs' alignment with societal objectives Hadji and Osunkunle[14] (2020), empowering organisations to

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8   Dev Raj Adhikari, & Prakash Shrestha, 'Knowledge Management Initiatives for Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4.7: Higher Education Institutions' Stakeholder Perspectives' (2023) , 27(4) Journal of Knowledge Management, 1109-1139 < https://doi.org/10.1108/JKM-03-2022-0172>

9   Hénard, F, & Roseveare, D, "Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices" (2012). 1(1) An IMHE Guide for Higher Education Institutions, 7-11

10   Alan A Gibb, & Gay Haskins, 'The University of The Future: An Entrepreneurial Stakeholder Learning Organisation' (2014) Handbook on the entrepreneurial university, 25 <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781007020.00008>

11   MJB Kabeyi, 'Organizational Strategic Planning, Implementation and Evaluation with Analysis of Challenges and Benefits' (2019) 5(6) International Journal of Applied Research and Studies, 27-32 https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch.2019.v5.i6 a.5870

12   Thompson, A A, Peteraf, M A, Gamble, J, Strickland, A J, Janes, A, & Sutton, C (2017) Crafting And Executing Strategy: The Quest for Competitive Advantage (2nd international edition ed.). McGraw-Hill London.

13   Bakker, A. B., & Albrecht S, 'Work Engagement: Current Trends'(2018), 23(1) Career Development International, , 4-11 <https://doi.org/10.1108/cdi-11-2017-0207>

14   Hadji, M. J., & Osunkunle, O, 'The South African Higher Education Strategic Planning Process: Compliance or Shaping The Future' (2020). African Journal of

observe strategy execution, identify risks or deviations, and take corrective actions. Lorenzo et al.[15]. Lorenzo et al[16] advocate for strategic positioning decisions in the evolving Higher Education market, emphasising continuous enhancement in the strategic management phase. Topaloglu et al.[17] suggest capitalising on and developing diverse organisational resources can yield sustainable competitive advantages.

Despite extensive discussions on strategic management, there is a noticeable gap in empirical evidence concerning its application in South African HEIs. This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating strategic management practices at UKZN. The paper's significance lies in its potential to provide actionable insights into aligning resource allocation with strategic objectives and identifying barriers to sustainable strategy implementation. By employing resource-based theory and Mintzberg's 5Ps framework, this research not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also offers practical recommendations for enhancing strategic management in higher education.

South African Higher Education Institutions must develop a five-year strategic plan and annual and immediate objectives to ensure accountability to relevant stakeholders[18]. The University of KwaZulu-Natal, aligning with the Department of Higher Education and Training, is responsible for delivering high-quality education, conducting impactful research, engaging critically with society, and addressing historical disadvantages, inequities, and

Development Studies, 10(3), 189 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2020/10n3a10>

[15] Lorenzo, J R F, Rubio, M. T. M., & Garcés, S A, 'The Competitive Advantage in Business, Capabilities and Strategy. What General Performance Factors Are Found in The Spanish Wine Industry?' (2018), 7(2) Wine Economics and Policy, 94-108< https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wep.2018.04.001>

[16] Lorenzo, J R F, Rubio, M T M, & Garcés, S A, 'The Competitive Advantage in Business, Capabilities and Strategy. What General Performance Factors Are Found in The Spanish Wine Industry?' (2018) 7(2) Wine Economics and Policy, 94-108< https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wep.2018.04.001>

[17] Topaloglu, O, McDonald, R E, & Hunt, S D, 'The Theoretical Foundations of Nonprofit Competition: A Resource-Advantage Theory Approach'(2018) Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, 30(3), 229-250 https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2018.1452818

[18] Hadji, M J, & Osunkunle, O, 'The South African Higher Education Strategic Planning Process: Compliance Or Shaping The Future' (2020) African Journal of Development Studies, 10(3), 189. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31920/2634-3649/2020/10n3a10

imbalances. In accordance with these objectives, the university is required to formulate and annually review a five-year strategic plan and a performance plan. The effective execution of these plans is further supported by periodic reviews of the organisational structure and implementing a robust performance management system.

Despite these measures, the university encounters persistent challenges, such as falling short of targets outlined in the strategic and annual performance plans and difficulties in spending allocated funds for specific programs. These challenges are believed to emanate from shortcomings in the strategic management process within the institution. Phadermrod et al.[19] emphasise that the core of strategic planning in higher education is establishing a continuous system for analysing and evaluating an institution's strengths, weaknesses, goals, resource needs, and long-term prospects.

This article is divided into six parts. Part one is the introduction, which contextualises the challenges faced by higher education institutions (HEIs), highlights the importance of strategic management, the study's significance, and identifies the specific challenges faced by the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in strategic management and resource allocation. Part two describes the research design, detailing the quantitative approach used to gather data from UKZN staff members and the ethical considerations involved. Part three comprises the literature review, discussing strategic management theories, including resource-based theory and Mintzberg's 5Ps framework, and their relevance to HEIs. Part four presents the findings and discussion, showcasing the survey results, highlighting positive perceptions and concerns, and examining the implications for strategic management. Part five is the conclusion, summarising the study's contributions and suggesting areas for future research. Part six offers actionable recommendations based on the findings, focusing on transparency, stakeholder involvement, and performance metrics.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research methodology section provided a comprehensive overview of the framework and processes utilised to investigate strategic management

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[19] Phadermrod, B, Crowder, R M, & Wills, G B, 'Importance-Performance Analysis Based SWOT Analysis' (2019). International journal of information management, 44, 194-203. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2016.03.009

phenomena within UKZN[20]. It began by highlighting the imperative of aligning the strategic plan with the organisation's workforce and introduced the chosen research methodology as the guiding framework for exploration. The section discussed the three principal research philosophies in social science research: positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism, with the study opting for positivism, emphasising objectivity and quantitative data analysis[21]. It employed a quantitative approach to address specific research questions related to strategy implementation at UKZN. The population consisted of selected leaders and managers within the Colleges of Agriculture, Engineering and Science as well as Health Sciences. Data was collected using a census approach due to practical constraints, resulting in 61 respondents to the survey. Data collection methods included survey methodology, ensuring alignment with the research philosophy and practical constraints.

Data collected underwent thorough editing, coding, and analysis using SPSS to derive meaningful insights and establish statistical relationships. Primary data collection involves surveys, interviews, and observations, selected based on the research objectives and philosophy[22]. A pilot study was conducted to refine the survey instrument, ensuring clarity and feasibility before full-scale implementation. Strategies such as pilot testing and statistical analysis were employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the research instrument[23]. Proactive measures were taken to address ethical considerations, including confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation.

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[20]   Mishra, S B, & Alok, S, 'Handbook of Research Methodology' (2022). In: Edu creation publishing.
[21]   Nickerson, C (2022). Positivism in sociology: definition, theory & examples. Simply Psychology.
[22]   Queirós André F D, Almeida Fernando, 'Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods'(2017) European Journal of Education Studies< https://doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v0i0.1017>
[23]   Ikart, E M, 'Survey Questionnaire Survey Pretesting Method: An Evaluation of Survey Questionnaire via Expert Reviews Technique'(2019) 4(2) Asian Journal of Social Science Studies, 1. https://doi.org/10.20849/ajsss.v4i2.565

3. THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Bleiklie et al.[24] highlight utilising theoretical frameworks in identifying organisational reforms and strategies within higher education institutions. Strategic management constructs such as competitive advantage, organisational competencies, and sustainable effectiveness can aid higher education leaders in recognising challenges, formulating strategies, and determining necessary leadership functionalities to address obstacles and achieve strategic objectives. Given the anticipated future volatility, higher education institutions must adopt management concepts and techniques to navigate new variables, including competitive environments and growth prospects.

3.1 Resource-Based Theory
Wernerfelt is credited with writing the first seminar papers on the resource-based theory. According to this theory, precious, scarce, difficult-to-emulate, and non-substitutable resources position an organisation for lasting prosperity. While this theory provides a solid foundation for understanding competitive advantage, it often overlooks the dynamic and complex nature of resource accumulation and deployment in HEIs. These strategic resources serve as the foundation for developing organisational capabilities that lead to superior long-term performance[25]. Holdford[26] suggests that the resource-based theory highlights the organisation's long-term success, dependent on its internal resources, its competence in leveraging those resources to gain a competitive edge over substitutes, and the impact of innovation on the organisation's market liquidity. Yet, limited empirical evidence demonstrates

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[24] Bleiklie, I, Enders J, & Lepori B, 'Organizational Configurations of Modern Universities, Institutional Logics and Public Policies—Towards an Integrative Framework' (2017) Managing Universities: Policy And Organizational Change From A Western European Comparative Perspective, 303-326. <https://doi.org/10. 1007/978-3-319-53865-5_12>

[25] Brandon-Jones, E, Squire, B, Autry, C W, & Petersen, K J, 'A Contingent Resource-Based Perspective of Supply Chain Resilience and Robustness'(2014) 50(3) Journal of Supply Chain Management, 55-73. <https://doi.org/10.1111 /jscm.12050>

[26] Holdford, D A, 'Resource-Based Theory Of Competitive Advantage-A Framework For Pharmacy Practice Innovation Research'(2018) 16(3) Pharmacy Practice (Granada) <https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.18549/pharmpract .2018.03.1351>

how HEIs can effectively leverage these resources in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Omalaja and Eruola[27] propose that the resource-based theory emphasises the crucial role of resources and competencies in driving organisations' competitive advantage and improved performance in strategic management, particularly those that are valuable and difficult to replicate. However, they do not fully address the unique challenges faced by HEIs, such as fluctuating funding, regulatory constraints, and diverse stakeholder expectations. Figurska[28] further asserts that if a resource adds value to the organisation's strategy, it significantly influences goal setting, client satisfaction, and operational efficiency. However, applying this principle in HEIs remains underexplored, particularly in how these institutions can develop and maintain such resources amidst budget cuts and increased accountability. If the resource is challenging or highly complex to replicate, its interchangeability and replacement become difficult, allowing the organisation to retain economic benefits and establish it as a strategic competitor.

Researchers have identified two types of organisational resources: tangible and intangible[29]. Tangible resources include fixed assets like equipment, plants, raw materials, and capital goods. Intangible resources are complex and resistant to duplication attempts by rivals due to the intricacies of their accumulation process[30]. Tabares et al.[31] elaborate that intangible and abstract resources are often categorised as intellectual capital, further subdivided into human, structural, and relational capital. Human capital comprises employees' abilities, perceptions, insight, skill sets, competence in tackling organisational challenges or driving innovation, and how effectively an

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[27] Omalaja, M A, & Eruola, O, 'Strategic Management Theory: Concepts, Analysis and Critiques In Relation to Corporate Competitive Advantage From The Resource-Based Philosophy'(2011) 44(1-2) Economic analysis, 59-77

[28] Figurska I, 'Knowledge Strategy of the Organization' (2011) Human Resources Management and Ergonomics, 5(2), 18-32

[29] Drucker, P F, 'The Theory of The Business' (1994). Alfred P. Sloan: Critical Evaluations in Business and Management, 2, 258-282

[30] Kamasak, R, 'The Contribution of Tangible and Intangible Resources, And Capabilities To A Firm's Profitability And Market Performance' (2017) 26(2) European Journal of Management and Business Economics, , 252-275 <https://doi.org/10.1108/ejmbe-07-2017-015>

[31] Tabares, A, Alvarez, C, & Urbano, D, 'Born Globals from The Resource-Based Theory: A Case Study In Colombia'(2015) 10(2) Journal Of Technology Management & Innovation,155-165

organisation utilises its personnel[32,33,34]. However, there is a need for more specific insights into how HEIs can effectively harness these types of capital to enhance their competitive positioning and adapt to evolving educational demands. Structural capital refers to organisational or technological capital, while relational capital involves building internal and external stakeholder connections to the organisation.

3.2 Strategic Management

Porter's theory asserts that competitive advantage revolves around being distinct, deliberately selecting a unique sequence of functions to provide a combination of values distinct from competitors. Strategy, derived from the Greek word "stratçgos" meaning "army" and "ago" meaning "leading/moving"[35], involves competitive placement, differentiation to the customer, and adding value through unique practices, according to Porter. Mintzberg et al.[36] define strategic management as aligning core competencies with external pressures, including action plans, trends, positions, perceptions, and plots. Rumelt[37] characterises strategy as a unified response to significant challenges. This is particularly relevant for HEIs, which face unique external pressures such as policy changes, societal expectations, and technological advancements.

Durand et al.[38] note that strategic management is a cross-disciplinary subject drawing from economics, sociology, psychology, politics, biology, systems science, and philosophy, creating its concepts, theories, and research streams such as resource-based and knowledge-based views of the firm, behavioural

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[32] Ogueyungbo, O O, Chinonye, L M, Igbinoba, E Salau, O Falola, H, & Olokundun, M, 'Organisational Learning and Employee Engagement: The Media ting Role Of Supervisory Support'(2020) 7(1) Cogent Business & Management, 1816419 <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1816419>

[33] Mfanafuthi, M, Nyawo J, & Mashau, P, 'Analysis of The Impact Of Artificial Intelligence And Robotics On Human Labour'(2019) 17(3) Gender And Behaviour, 13877-13891

[34] Mathaba, G P, Nzimakwe, I, Pfano, M, & Munapo, E Employees Perception on Improving Service Delivery at The Department Of Public Works (2013) (Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban).

[35] Nickols, F Strategy, Strategic Management, Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking (2016) 1(1) Management Journal, 4-7

[36] Mintzberg, H, Ahlstrand, B, & Lampel, J B Strategy Safari (2020) Pearson UK

[37] Rumelt, R P Good Strategy/Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters (2012) 28(8) Strategic direction, <https://doi.org/10.1108/sd.2012.05628haa.002>

[38] Durand R, Grant R M, & Madsen T L, 'The Expanding Domain of Strategic Management Research And The Quest For Integration' (2017) 38(1) Strategic Management Journal, 4-16 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2607>

strategy, competitive dynamics, and competitive heterogeneity. This interdisciplinary approach benefits HEIs, which operate in complex environments requiring diverse perspectives. However, Steiss[39] and Hunger[40] note that strategic management involves continuous assessment and adaptation, an area where many HEIs struggle due to rigid administrative structures and resistance to change. More research is needed to explore effective strategies for fostering agility and innovation within HEIs.

3.3 Strategic Management in Higher Education Institutions

Mahardhika and Raharja[41] assert that HEIs align with trends by employing strategic management to establish, communicate, and execute long-term strategic objectives. Unlike profit maximisation, HEIs focus on enhancing competitive advantage against other institutions Pizarro Milian & Quirke[42]. Fumasoli et al.[43] emphasise that the primary goal of strategy development in HEIs is to enhance teaching quality, research, innovation, and community engagement. Strategic planning in HEIs heavily relies on the triple helix concept, representing relationships among universities, industry, and government to foster new knowledge, innovation, and economic development. Parasii-Verhunenko et al[44] observe that HEIs increasingly resemble businesses, accumulating intellectual, material, and physical resources to produce expertise, skill sets, and competencies in degree holders. State educational institutions are accountable for efficiently using state resources and enhancing collective societal knowledge. Meeting new

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[39] Steiss, A W, Strategic Management for Public and Nonprofit Organizations (2019) Routledge

[40] Hunger, J D, 'Essentials Of Strategic Management' (2020)Pearson London.

[41] Mahardhika, B N, & Raharja, S, 'The Importance of Strategic Planning with Modern Trends in Education' (2023). AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan, 15(2), 1807-1820< https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i2.2527

[42] Pizarro Milian, R, & Quirke, L (2017). Alternative pathways to legitimacy: promo tional practices in the Ontario for-profit college sector. Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 27(1), 77-98. https://doi.org/10.1080/08 841241.2016.1212450

[43] Fumasoli, T, Barbato, G, & Turri, M (2020). The determinants of university strategic positioning: a reappraisal of the organisation. Higher Education, 80(2), 305-334. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00481-6

[44] Parasii-Verhunenko I, Kuznetsova I, Misko H, Biriuk O, & Zharikova O, 'Strategic Analysis of The Competitiveness Of Educational Products In The Management Of Higher Education Institutions' (2020) 11(9) Independent Journal of Management & Production, 2496-2515. <https://doi.org/10.14807/ijmp.v11i9.1421>

standards requires impactful strategies to adapt to evolving economic and academic environments shaped by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as job market demands for new academic offerings[45].

Ali and Taha[46] contend that HEIs face intensified global competition due to increased internationalisation and heightened societal accountability expectations. These issues indicate a need for more targeted research on strategic management practices that can help HEIs navigate these challenges while maximising their unique strengths, such as their intellectual and social capital. Nevertheless, some universities struggle with higher education administration, where human resources are crucial in achieving institutional goals and aspirations[47]. Hence, strategic management relies on appropriate data management for effective institutional governance.

3.4 The 5Ps in Strategic Management

Mintzberg[48], a Canadian management scientist, introduced the "5 P's of Strategy" in 1987, outlining five key elements crucial for organisational strategy. These elements provide a framework for developing a more effective strategy that considers an organisation's long-term vision and various aspects. According to Mintzberg, crafting a successful strategy is a multifaceted process involving integrating diverse elements and perspectives facilitated by the 5 Ps of the Strategy framework. While this framework is well-regarded, its application in HEIs requires further exploration to address their specific needs and contexts.

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45 Parasii-Verhunenko, I, Kuznetsova I, Misko H, Biriuk O, & Zharikova O, 'Strategic Analysis Of The Competitiveness Of Educational Products In The Management Of Higher Education Institutions' (2020) 11(9) Independent Journal of Management & Production, 2496-2515 < https://doi.org/10.14807/ijmp.v11i9.1421>

46 Ali, H T M & Taha H, 'Harmonizing Universities with Globalization by Creating Institutional Adaptability to Internationalization Approaches in Higher Education: A Case Study in Nawroz University'(2023) 7(2) Journal of Education and Development, 8< https://doi.org/10.20849/jed.v7i2.1342>

47 Hitka, M, Kucharčíková A, Štarchoň P, Balážová Ž, Lukáč M, & Stacho Z, 'Know ledge and Human Capital as Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Human Resource Management'(2019) 11(18)Sustainability, 4985 <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11184985>

48 Mintzberg H, 'The Strategy Concept I: Five Ps for Strategy'(1987) 30(1) California Management Review, 11-24<https://doi.org/10.2307/41165263>

3.4.1 Plan

Every strategy necessitates planning, as the two concepts are inherently intertwined[49]. However, it's important to differentiate between strategy and planning, as they serve distinct functions. According to Mintzberg, planning represents just one strategy component and is insufficient to ensure success. In the strategic context, the planning phase entails comprehending the broader landscape, assessing your position within it, and understanding the implications of that position on your strategic decisions. This phase determines whether a comprehensive evaluation was integrated into the strategic planning process. Tools like PESTEL and SWOT analyses[50] are useful but often underutilised in HEIs, where strategic planning processes may lack depth and adaptability. The plan outlines a growth trajectory and directly aligns with the organisation, which serves as the theoretical framework existing prior to the organisation's inception and resulting from decisions made at each stage of the organisation's future development[51].

3.4.2 Ploy

WenJun[52] suggests that a ploy represents a strategic manoeuvre characterised by intense pressure behaviours employed by organisations when confronted with externally undesirable influences. Ploy can only yield results if a deep understanding of the competitive landscape exists. HEIs can benefit from this concept by anticipating and responding to competitive actions, yet there is limited research on effective ploy strategies tailored to the higher education context. Therefore, when assessing your strategy, including elements specifically related to competition is important. Strategists often use tools like Porter's five forces to comprehend current market dynamics. To be effective, leaders must identify and evaluate potential upcoming opportunities, anticipate the actions of competitors, and discern how organisational initiatives may influence competitors[53].

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[49] Steiner G A Strategic Planning(2010) Simon and Schuster.

[50] WenJun, J, 'Reinterpretation of the Strategic Concept Based on Mintzberg's Stra tegic 5p Model'(2019) 1(6) The Frontiers of Society, Science and Techno logy,<https://doi.org/10.25236/FSST.2019.010606>

[51] Lampel J, Mintzberg H, Quinn J, & Ghoshal S 'The Strategy Process: Concept, Context, Cases'(2013)

[52] WenJun, J, 'Reinterpretation of the Strategic Concept Based on Mintzberg's Strategic 5p Model'(2019) , 1(6) The Frontiers of Society, Science and Technology< https://doi.org/10.25236/FSST.2019.010606>

[53] Prasetyo, A H, & Lo W, 'Towards Strategic Mix 5P' (2016) 7(3)International Journal of Business Management and Economic Research (IJBMER) , 654-661.

3.4.3 Pattern

Strategy as a pattern involves examining behaviour patterns that have previously proven successful for the organisation[54]. The organisation must then decide which patterns to maintain or enhance. Pattern refers to leveraging analysed effective elements that contribute to strategic success. HEIs need to identify and enhance these patterns, but often face challenges in adapting them to changing circumstances and integrating them into broader strategic initiatives. WenJun[55] suggests that it involves responding to opportunities, threats, and unexpected outcomes in ways that lead to success. According to Fildes[56], organisations may adjust or add strategic objectives due to unforeseen circumstances, unexpected events, or a proactive response to an opportunity that naturally aligns with the organisation and its ongoing development.

3.4.4 Position

According to Mintzberg[57], it is crucial for businesses to engage in continuous self-evaluation, recognise their strengths and weaknesses, and establish distinctive market positions. The internal allocation of resources and external brand image characteristics reflect the enterprise's positioning WenJun[58]. HEIs must balance internal resource optimisation with external positioning, but the literature often lacks practical guidance on achieving this balance effectively. Although the extent of strategic execution and the overall quantity under the organisation's control may be unclear, effective utilisation of the organisation's limited resources and the assurance of efficient reserves within constrained time and space are achievable through strategic initiatives. Strategic guidance becomes essential following the formulation and intensification phases. A thorough understanding of the brand's core cultural values can enhance the brand image and foster the company's development

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[54] Mintzberg H, Ahlstrand B, & Lampel, J B (2020) Strategy Safari. Pearson UK

[55] WenJun J, 'Reinterpretation of the Strategic Concept Based on Mintzberg's Strategic 5p Model'(2019), 1(6) The Frontiers of Society, Science and Technology<https://doi.org/10.25236/FSST.2019.010606>

[56] Fildes, R, Goodwin P, Lawrence M, & Nikolopoulos K, 'Effective Forecasting and Judgmental Adjustments: An Empirical Evaluation And Strategies For Improvement In Supply-Chain Planning' (2009) 25(1) International journal of forecasting, 3-23.

[57] Mintzberg H, Ahlstrand B, & Lampel J B (2020) Strategy safari. Pearson UK

[58] WenJun, J, 'Reinterpretation of the Strategic Concept Based on Mintzberg's Strategic 5p Model'(2019) 1(6)The Frontiers of Society, Science and Technology,. https://doi.org/10.25236/FSST.2019.010606

when coupled with the right strategy[59]. By identifying product positioning, businesses can enhance the competitiveness of their products in the market, effectively countering their competitors.

3.4.5 Perspective

WenJun[60] highlights that every organisation's perspective is unique. Some organisations strictly adhere to the rules, while others actively innovate. HEIs can struggle with achieving this due to diverse stakeholder groups and complex governance structures, suggesting a need for more research on fostering a unified strategic perspective. In a rapidly changing environment, organisations are uncertain whether their strategy will positively or negatively impact them[61]. Gordon[62] suggests that culture inspires an organisation's decisions about its strategy. Just as behavioural patterns can arise as strategy, patterns of cognition will frame an organisation's perspective, and the elements at which it can excel. Perspective can only be beneficial if all organisation members share it and should also be reflected in the behaviour everyone in the organisation takes daily[63]. Therefore, a significant part of the leadership's task is to get everyone on the same wavelength. Organisations typically communicate the organisation's vision, values, and blueprint for achieving that vision[64].

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[59] Mintzberg, H, Ahlstrand, B, & Lampel, J B (2020). Strategy safari. Pearson UK.

[60] WenJun, J, 'Reinterpretation of the Strategic Concept Based on Mintzberg's Strategic 5p Model'(2019) 1(6) The Frontiers of Society, Science and Technology <https://doi.org/10.25236/FSST.2019.010606>

[61] Gwala R S & Mashau P, 'Tracing the Evolution Of Agency Theory In Corporate Governance'(2023) In Governance as a Catalyst for Public Sector Sustainability (pp. 260-285). IGI Global.

[62] Gordon, J (2022, 23 September 2023). Mintzberg's 5Ps of Strategy - Explained. The Business Professor. https://thebusinessprofessor.com/en_US/business-management-amp-operations-strategy-entrepreneurship-amp-innovation/mintzbergs-5ps-of-strategy accessed 12 May

[63] Gordon, J (2022, 23 September 2023) Mintzberg's 5Ps of Strategy - Explained.The Business Professor. Retrieved 12 May from https://thebusinessprofessor. com/en_US/business-management-amp-operations-strategy-entrepreneurship-amp-innovation/mintzbergs-5ps-of-strategy

[64] Gordon, J. (2022, 23 September 2023). Mintzberg's 5Ps of Strategy - Explained. . The Business Professor. Retrieved 12 May from https://thebusinessprofessor .com/en_US/business-management-amp-operations-strategy-entrepreneurship-amp-innovation/mintzbergs-5ps-of-strategy

3.5 Allocation of Resources to Achieve the Strategic Objectives

Nwachukwu[65] argue that HEIs must effectively leverage their resources and technology to deliver innovative teaching, learning, and research to establish and sustain a global competitive advantage. A well-planned and implemented strategy can enhance information flow and innovation capability, accelerating product innovation and enhancing stakeholder satisfaction. While the resource-based theory has traditionally been associated with the private sector, While Vasudevan[66] suggests the applicability of resource-based theory to HEIs, there is a gap in understanding how these institutions can overcome resource limitations and funding challenges. Miotto et al.[67] and Lynch and Baine[68] call for innovative methods and frameworks, but practical implementation strategies are often lacking.

In the evolving higher education sector, innovative methods and conceptual frameworks are needed to manage and develop strategies that leverage internal and external capabilities[69]. Strategic resources in higher education must be unique, hard to replicate, and beneficial to the institution, particularly in a shrinking resource pool[70]. Human resources are critical for higher education institutions as they are pivotal in achieving organisational

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[65] Nwachukwu, C, Chládková, H, & Fadeyi, O (2018). STRATEGY FORMULATION PROCESS AND INNOVATION PERFORMANCE NEXUS. International Journal for Quality Research, 12(1). https://doi.org/10.18421/IJQR12.01-09

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[68] Lynch, R, & Baines, P, 'Strategy Development In UK Higher Education: Towards Resource-Based Competitive Advantages' (2004) 26(2) Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 171-187 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080042000218249>

[69] Junaidah J, Basyar S., Pahrudin A, & Fauzan A, 'Strategic Management Roadmap: Formulation, Implementation, and Evaluation to Develop Islamic Higher Education Institution'(2020) Tadris: Jurnal Keguruan dan Ilmu Tarbiyah, 5(2), 335-347 <https://doi.org/10.24042/tadris.v5i2.7301>

[70] Lynch R, & Baines P, 'Strategy Development In UK Higher Education: Towards Resource-Based Competitive Advantages' (2004) Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 26(2), 171-187 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080042000218249>

goals, including teaching and learning objectives[71]. International collaboration has become increasingly prevalent, offering cost-effective globalisation opportunities and fostering innovation[72]. Collaborations are essential to higher education globalisation, facilitating innovation and resource sharing[73]. However, effective collaboration requires visionary leadership and constant alignment with strategic goals, where many HEIs face difficulties. More research is needed to explore how HEIs can develop and sustain such leadership and collaborative practices. The resource-based theory intersects with globalisation processes, with collaborations providing exposure to strategic resources at a lower cost than internal development[74]. Effective collaboration requires visionary leadership that prioritises synchronisation and constant collaboration based on societal and strategic visions[75].

3.6 Challenges of Strategic Alignment
Resource constraints present a significant challenge to achieving strategic alignment in organisations. Effective allocation of resources is essential to support the organisation's strategy. Human capital emerges as a critical resource, highlighting the importance of recruiting, training, and retaining top talent. According to Biggs et al.[76], initiatives such as staff training

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[71] Patnaik S, Munjal S, Varma A, & Sinha S, 'Extending the Resource-Based View Through The Lens Of The Institution-Based View: A Longitudinal Case Study Of An Indian Higher Educational Institution'(2022) 147 Journal of Business Research, 124-141 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.03.091>

[72] Makarova E A, Makarova E L, & Korsakova T V, 'The Role Of Globalization And Integration In Interdisciplinary Research, Culture And Education Development '(2019) 8(1) Journal of History Culture and Art Research, 111-127 <https://doi.org/ 10.7596/taksad.v8i1.1957>

[73] Kong E, & Prior D, 'An Intellectual Capital Perspective of Competitive Advantage In Nonprofit Organisations' (2008). International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, 13(2), 119-128 <https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.315>

[74] Sanders J S & Wong T, 'International Partner Selection Among Higher Education Institutions In Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan: A Resource-Based View'(2021) Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 43(2), 214-229 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2020.1774097>

[75] Inga E, Inga J, Cárdenas J, & Cárdenas J, 'Planning And Strategic Management of Higher Education Considering The Vision Of Latin America' (2021) 11(4) Education Sciences, 188 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci1 1040188>

[76] Biggs A, Brough P, & Barbour J P, 'Strategic Alignment with Organizational Priorities And Work Engagement: A Multi-Wave Analysis' (2014) 35(3) Journal of Organizational Behavior 301-317 <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1866>

programs, leadership development programs focusing on transformational leadership styles, and performance feedback mechanisms can enhance strategic alignment. HEIs often struggle with recruiting and retaining top talent due to limited resources. Initiatives such as staff training and leadership development are crucial, but their implementation and effectiveness in HEIs require further exploration. There is a need for more targeted strategies that address the unique resource and administrative challenges faced by HEIs. It is imperative to allocate adequate resources to hire highly qualified professionals and cultivate an attractive work environment to ensure organisational alignment[77]. By investing in human capital development and creating supportive workplace conditions, organisations can better align their resources with their strategic objectives, enhancing overall performance and competitiveness.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of strategic management, focusing on key factors for successful strategy alignment, resource allocation efficiency, and barriers to sustainable strategy implementation at UKZN. The ultimate goal is to provide informed recommendations for establishing a sustainable strategic management strategy. This section presents the research findings, including a response rate analysis, demographics of the population, detailed data analysis and interpretation, and examination of the findings about the study objectives. It provides a comprehensive discussion to offer insights into the effectiveness of strategic management practices at UKZN.

4.1 Response Rate and Demographics
Wu et al.[78] study highlights the importance of achieving a substantial response rate in online surveys as a key indicator of survey quality. Online surveys are preferred for their efficiency and effectiveness, offering advantages such as cost savings, expedited implementation timelines, reduced transcription errors, and simplified data analysis[79]. According to Baruch[80], the response rate

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[77] Herse, R, 'How to achieve strategic alignment?' (2012) Evolutionalizer. <https://www.evolutionizer.com/en-blog/strategic-alignment > accessed 5 April

[78] Wu M.-J, Zhao K, & Fils-Aime F, 'Response Rates of Online Surveys In Published Research: A Meta-Analysis' (2022) 7 Computers in Human Behavior Reports, 100206. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2022.100206>

[79] Nayak M, & Narayan K, 'Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Surveys' (2019) technology 6(7), 31-38 <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2405053138>

is calculated by dividing the number of participants who complete the questionnaire by the total population size, typically expressed as a percentage. Baruch suggests that an acceptable response rate for studies involving top management or organisational representatives is around thirty-five percent (35%). In this survey, the response rate was 47%, which is considered good and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the research objectives. A response rate of 47% is statistically significant in quantitative studies, providing a solid basis for drawing meaningful conclusions and generalising findings to the broader population. The high participation enhances the study's statistical power, ensuring that the results accurately reflect the sentiments and characteristics of the surveyed group. This robust response rate strengthens the overall reliability of the study. It enables a more thorough exploration of the variables under investigation, contributing to the credibility and validity of its quantitative findings.

4.1.1 Demographics

The demographics section offers insight into the fundamental characteristics of the study participants, encompassing variables such as gender, age, race, and rank.
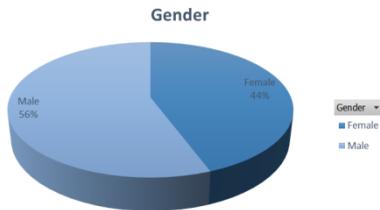
Gender

Figure 4 - 1: Gender distribution of respondents. Source: compiled by author

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, a distinct gender distribution is evident, with the majority of respondents being male, comprising fifty-six percent (56%) of the population, while female respondents represented forty-four percent (44%) of the total participants.

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[80]   Baruch Y, 'Response Rate In Academic Studies-A Comparative Analysis'(1999) Human relations, 52(4), 421-438 <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679905200401>
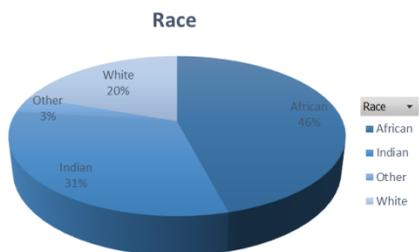
Race

Figure 4 - 2: Race of respondents. Source: compiled by author

Forty-six percent (46%) of the respondents were Africans, thirty-one percent (31%) were Indians, twenty percent (20%) were White, and three percent (3%) were Other.
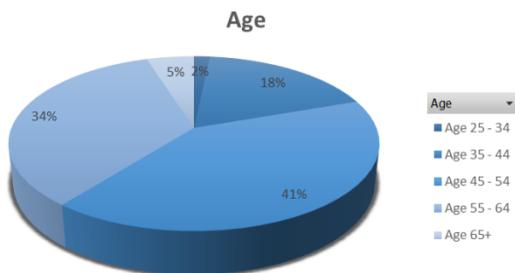
Age

Figure 4 - 3: below shoes the age composition of the respondents. Source: compiled by author

Forty-one (41%) of respondents were between the age of 45 and 54, thirty-four percent between 55 and 64, eighteen percent (18%) were between 35 and 44, five percent (5%) were over the age of 65, and two percent (2%) were between 25 and 34.

Rank

Figure 4 - 4: Rank of the respondents. Source: compiled by author

Thirty-three (33%) of the respondents were Associate Professors, twenty-six percent (26%) were Senior Lecturer, sixteen (16%) were Managers, thirteen percent (13%) were Professors and twelve percent (12%) were lecturers.

4.2 Presentation of Data

The participants were requested to express their level of agreement or disagreement regarding the alignment of resource allocation with the University's overarching strategy by indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with specific statements.

Table 4- 1: Descriptive Statistics: Objective one

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation
The University strategy is clear and easy to understand	4.05	0.740
There is an alignment of resources to the overall strategy	3.41	0.955
The University provide adequate resources to ensure that there is alignment with the overall strategy	3.15	0.980
The University's resources assist in improving competitive advantage against other institutions	3.30	1.054

The University's resource adds value to the accomplishment of the organisation's strategy	3.56	0.904
The University strategy has a substantial impact on goal-setting	4.03	0.657
The University strategy improves client satisfaction	3.90	0.907
The University strategy improves operational efficiency	3.79	0.878
The University has strategic resources that lay the basis for creating organisational capabilities that result in superior long-term performance	3.56	1.009

The table in Section 4.1 above reveals that the statement "The University strategy is clear and easy to understand" received the highest mean value of 4.05, accompanied by a standard deviation of 0.740. This indicates a significant consensus among respondents, with 69% agreeing with the clarity and comprehensibility of the University's strategy. Following closely, the statement "The University's strategy substantially impacts goal setting" garnered the second-highest mean value of 4.03, with a standard deviation of 0.657, signifying that 67% of respondents agreed with its assertion. The statement "The University strategy improves client satisfaction" achieved a mean value of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 0.907, reflecting a 56% agreement among respondents. Similarly, 59% of participants concurred that the University's strategy enhances operational efficiency, as indicated by a mean value of 3.90 and a standard deviation of 0.878.

In contrast, the statement "The University provides adequate resources to ensure alignment with the overall strategy" received the lowest mean value of 3.15, coupled with a standard deviation of 0.980. This suggests that only 48% of respondents agreed with the adequacy of resources for alignment, while 30% expressed disagreement. The data shows that respondents have generally positive perceptions of the University's strategy and its impact, particularly regarding clarity, goal setting, client satisfaction, and operational efficiency. However, there is more mixed feedback on the alignment of resources with the strategy and the adequacy of resources. Additionally, some statements have higher response variability, indicating less consensus among respondents. Within the scope of this thesis, an analysis was conducted to discern whether the allocation of resources aligns with the overarching

strategy of the University. This inquiry entailed a comparative assessment of responses from two distinct groups: "Academics" and "Professional Services" (PS) staff.

4.2.1 Population Sizes (N)

For the "academics" factor, there are data from 51 observations.

For the "Professional Services" (PS) factor, there are data from 10 observations.

4.2.2 Mean and Confidence Interval (CI)

For the "academics" factor, the mean response is 3.9, with a confidence interval of 3.2 to 4.1 (Mean (CI) = 3.9 (3.2, 4.1)).

For the "PS" factor, the mean response is 3.5, with a confidence interval of 3.0 to 4.0 (Mean (CI) = 3.5 (3.0, 4.0)).

4.2.3 The p-value is reported as 0.22

The analysis seeks to determine whether the allocation of resources aligns with the University's overall strategy by comparing two groups: "academics" and "Professional Services" (PS). The provided means and confidence intervals represent the central tendency and the range within which the true population mean is likely to fall. For "academics," the mean response is 3.9, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.2 to 4.1. For "PS," the mean response is 3.5, with a 95% confidence interval from 3.0 to 4.0. These confidence intervals provide a range of values within which the true population means are likely to lie.

The p-value of 0.22 is a critical statistical measure used to assess the significance of differences between the two groups regarding the alignment of resource allocation with the University's overall strategy. A p-value of 0.22 suggests no statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding the alignment of resource allocation with the University's overall strategy based on the data provided.

Based on the provided statistics and p-value, there is no significant difference in how "academics" and "PS" perceive the alignment of resource allocation with the University's overall strategy. The confidence intervals also indicate that the population means for both groups are likely to be within a similar range. These results suggest that, for this specific variable, the two groups have similar average responses, and the alignment of resource allocation with the University's overall strategy is not significantly different between them.

4.3 Discussion of Results

The study's findings highlight a crucial aspect of strategic management: aligning resource allocation with the university's strategy, significantly contributing to successful strategy implementation. This observation resonates with insights provided by Maritan and Lee[81], who propose that resource-based theory's strategic allocation plays a pivotal role in achieving successful strategic outcomes. The study emphasises the importance of a well-defined strategy complemented by adequate resource allocation, emphasising the correlation between these elements and superior long-term performance, aligning with strategic management principles.

While the study provides a nuanced understanding of the alignment of resources with the strategy, it also highlights variations in feedback regarding the adequacy of resources. This nuanced perspective adds depth to the discussion, acknowledging that the relationship between strategy and resource allocation is multifaceted and may be perceived differently by stakeholders. Moreover, the study's findings align with Kabeyi[82] proposition that a well-structured strategy is a guiding framework for organisational activities and resource allocation. The study suggests that a clear strategy directs the organisation toward long-term goals and provides staff members with a roadmap for efficient resource utilisation.

This resonates with respondents' agreement that the strategy has a tangible impact on goal setting, emphasising the practical implications of strategic management in aligning organisational activities with overarching objectives. The study contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between strategy formulation, resource allocation, and organisational performance, highlighting the importance of strategic alignment for achieving sustainable competitive advantage in higher education institutions.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the identified misalignment between the University's overarching strategy and the allocation of resources, it is recommended to conduct a

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81 Maritan, C A, & Lee, G K, 'Resource Allocation and Strategy'(2017) 43(8) Journal of Management, 2411-2420 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206317729738>

82 Kabeyi, M, 'Organizational Strategic Planning, Implementation and Evaluation With Analysis Of Challenges And Benefits'(2019) 5(6) International Journal of Applied Research and Studies, 27-32. <https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch .2019.v5.i6a.5870>

thorough analysis of specific instances where employees perceive resource inadequacy. This analysis can be carried out through various means, such as interviews, surveys, or case studies, to pinpoint areas of concern and gather detailed insights into resource misalignment. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends implementing strategies to enhance organisational resource alignment. These strategies may include:

Transparent Resource Allocation Process: Establishing a more transparent resource allocation process can help address concerns about fairness and equity in resource distribution. Clearly communicating how resources are allocated and the criteria used, as well as involving relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process, can enhance transparency.

Regular Assessments: Conducting regular assessments of resource utilisation and needs can help identify potential gaps and areas requiring additional support. This proactive approach allows the organisation to adjust resource allocation strategies based on evolving priorities and challenges.

Strategic Prioritisation: Ensuring that allocated resources align closely with the University's strategic priorities is crucial. By clearly defining and communicating strategic objectives, decision-makers can prioritise resource allocation to initiatives that directly contribute to achieving overarching goals.

Stakeholder Involvement: Involving relevant stakeholders, including academic and professional services staff, in the resource allocation process can provide diverse perspectives and insights. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the institution's strategic goals.

Performance Metrics: Implementing performance metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) can help measure the effectiveness of resource allocation. Regularly evaluating the impact of allocated resources on strategic objectives allows for adjustments and improvements over time.

Communication Strategies: Enhancing communication strategies around resource allocation can contribute to a better understanding among employees. Articulating how resources contribute to the strategy and acknowledging constraints can manage expectations and foster a more informed and supportive organisational culture.

These recommendations aim to address the misalignment by creating a more inclusive, transparent, and strategic approach to resource allocation. Implementing these strategies can improve organisational effectiveness,

employee satisfaction, and successfully execute the University's strategic vision.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that the University does indeed have a strategic plan that is clear and easily understandable. This indicates that the institution has a well-defined roadmap outlining its goals, objectives, and the means to achieve them. However, while it emerged that the organisation's strategy positively impacts client satisfaction and operational efficiency, some employees expressed concerns about the adequacy of resources provided by the University to ensure alignment with the overall strategy. This suggests a potential misalignment between the organisation's overarching strategy and the provision of necessary resources.

Despite the positive outcomes observed regarding client satisfaction and operational efficiency, the concerns raised by employees about inadequate resources highlight a critical issue. It hints at a potential gap between the strategic vision set by the organisation and the tangible resources provided to realise it. Employees' perceptions regarding resource insufficiency raise questions about the practical implementation of the strategy and highlight potential challenges and limitations that could hinder full alignment with the established strategic framework. The discrepancy between strategic intent and resource provision introduces a critical dimension to the discussion. Further exploration in the thesis could involve delving into specific examples or cases where resource inadequacy has been perceived, analysing its impact on various aspects of the organisation's operations, and proposing recommendations or strategies for improving alignment between the stated strategy and the resources allocated for its execution.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & DECLARATION