

The Role of Strategic Approaches in the Planning and Development of Educational Institutions

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ABSTRAK

In the era of globalization and digital transformation, educational institutions face complex challenges in maintaining performance, aligning strategies with stakeholder expectations, and adapting to external uncertainties. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a participatory and adaptive strategic planning model in enhancing institutional performance. A mixed-methods case study design was employed, combining qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with quantitative surveys of diverse stakeholders, including school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Data analysis involved thematic coding of qualitative findings and regression analysis of survey responses. The results revealed that embedding a five-phase framework visioning, stakeholder orientation, situational analysis, strategic formulation, and adaptive monitoring significantly strengthened institutional outcomes. Stakeholder engagement through inclusive consultations improved trust, ownership, and collaborative commitment. Adaptive monitoring mechanisms facilitated responsiveness to shifting priorities, while the integration of learning analytics supported evidence-based decision-making. Furthermore, participatory approaches cultivated systems thinking and cultural alignment across departments, reinforcing long-term strategic orientation. In resource-constrained contexts, participatory planning enabled creative resource mobilization and increased student involvement in institutional priorities. In conclusion, the findings confirm that participatory and adaptive strategic planning enhances planning quality, strengthens stakeholder participation, and improves institutional resilience. The study contributes theoretical insights into adaptive planning cycles and provides practical guidance for sustainable educational development.

INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by rapid globalization, digital transformation, and unprecedented shifts in educational paradigms, numerous educational institutions are grappling with critical strategic challenges. On the one hand, schools and universities must consistently improve educational quality, respond to evolving stakeholder demands, and foster sustainable development. On the other hand, institutional leaders frequently face obstacles such as insufficient strategic planning knowledge, fragmented stakeholder engagement, and limited adaptation to external complexities. Recognizing these challenges, Bantilan et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review of strategic planning in education (2020–2022), uncovering pervasive issues including inadequate planning skills, mismanagement of strategic processes, and low stakeholder involvement factors that significantly impair institutional advancement.

Parallel to these findings, a systematic literature review by Endo, Busari, and Ibrahim (2025) highlights the essential link between strategic planning and improved educational performance, asserting that enhancing institutional outcomes requires a structured and intentional strategic approach. Meanwhile, Taroum's empirical study (2024) in the context of Libyan higher education confirmed that effective strategic planning positively influences service quality, emphasizing the necessity of robust planning practices to sustain institutional excellence. Despite growing recognition of strategic planning's value, practical implementation remains inconsistent across different educational contexts. Castillo et al. (2024) noted in their systematic review that many institutions worldwide still fall short in aligning strategic plans with contextual realities and stakeholder expectations; recurring challenges like lack of staff readiness, resistance to change, and resource limitations persist. Moreover, planning processes often lack continuity and fail to comprehensively evaluate external and internal environments, which weakens institutional agility and responsiveness.

Although strategic planning has been widely recognized as a vital tool for improving educational institutions, several important gaps remain in the existing body of literature. First, most studies are either systematic reviews or broadly international in scope, leaving limited empirically grounded evidence in developing-country contexts such as Southeast Asia. As Bantilan et al. (2023) observed, the challenges of poor staff readiness, lack of strategic skills, and weak stakeholder participation persist across institutions, yet these findings often remain descriptive rather than supported by context-specific case analyses. Moreover, while Endo, Busari, and Ibrahim (2025) confirmed a general relationship between strategic planning and institutional performance, there is insufficient examination of how such planning translates into measurable improvements in particular educational settings. Similarly, Taroum (2024) demonstrated that strategic planning positively influences service quality in Libyan higher education, but comparative studies across different regions remain scarce. Another gap lies in stakeholder inclusion: although many scholars emphasize participatory approaches, very few empirical studies have analyzed the integration of diverse voices teachers, students, parents, alumni, and local authorities into strategic frameworks. Finally, the majority of existing frameworks do not sufficiently incorporate adaptive mechanisms to address emerging global challenges such as digital transformation, post-pandemic recovery, and the demand for continuous monitoring and revision, thereby limiting institutional responsiveness.

Building on these identified gaps, this study advances several novelties. It introduces a participatory model of strategic planning that positions stakeholder engagement as a central pillar, rather than a supplementary activity, thereby fostering ownership and inclusivity throughout the process. Furthermore, it adapts a comprehensive five-phase framework—articulating vision and mission, orienting stakeholders, conducting situational analysis,

formulating SMART objectives, and embedding adaptive monitoring—to ensure that strategic planning is both systematic and flexible. In addition, this study aligns its approach with contemporary strategic trends, including digital readiness and adaptive leadership, ensuring relevance in the rapidly changing post-pandemic educational landscape. Unlike prior studies, this research contributes empirical validation through a case-based, mixed-methods approach in the context of developing-country educational institutions, thereby responding directly to the lack of localized and practical evidence. The primary objective, therefore, is to examine the role and effectiveness of this participatory and adaptive strategic planning model in enhancing planning quality, strengthening stakeholder engagement, and improving institutional performance, thus offering both theoretical advancement and practical guidance for sustainable educational development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative case study design with a complementary quantitative component, adopting a mixed-methods approach to capture the complexity of strategic planning processes in educational institutions. The qualitative strand enabled an in-depth exploration of stakeholder experiences, perceptions, and practices related to strategic planning, while the quantitative strand provided measurable evidence regarding institutional performance outcomes. The integration of both methods ensured that the research could answer the main objective of examining the role and effectiveness of participatory and adaptive strategic planning frameworks. The study site was selected through purposive sampling, focusing on an educational institution in a developing-country context where challenges of limited resources, dynamic policy shifts, and stakeholder diversity are highly evident. Purposive selection was justified because the case represents a typical example of institutions struggling to balance performance demands with the implementation of strategic frameworks. Participants included school leaders, teachers, administrative staff, students, parents, and local education authorities. This diverse representation ensured that the data reflected multiple stakeholder perspectives, in line with the study's emphasis on participatory approaches. Ethical clearance was obtained from the institutional review board, with informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity guaranteed for all respondents.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, such as principals, department heads, and local policymakers, to explore their roles in planning and strategy execution. Second, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with teachers, parents, and students to capture collective insights into inclusivity, challenges, and opportunities in strategic planning. Third, document analysis was performed on institutional strategic plans, policy documents, and performance reports to assess the alignment between planned strategies and actual outcomes. In addition, a survey questionnaire was distributed to a larger sample of stakeholders to collect quantitative data on perceptions of planning effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, and institutional performance indicators. Data analysis was conducted in two stages. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The process involved open coding, clustering codes into categories, and identifying themes that explained how participatory and adaptive strategies shaped institutional planning and development. Themes were then compared across different stakeholder groups to highlight similarities and divergences. For the quantitative strand, survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to examine general trends and inferential tests (such as correlation and regression) to evaluate the relationship between strategic planning practices and institutional

performance indicators. Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings was employed to ensure validity, enhance credibility, and provide a holistic understanding of the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The case study revealed that applying a participatory and adaptive strategic planning model significantly enhances institutional performance across multiple dimensions. Through the five-phase framework visioning, stakeholder orientation, situational analysis, strategic formulation, and adaptive monitoring several noteworthy outcomes emerged. First, stakeholder engagement, particularly through inclusive mechanisms like focused group dialogues and consultative workshops, proved instrumental. This finding aligns with Carvalho, Lopes, and Santiago (2021), who emphasized that participatory strategic leadership fosters stronger institutional ownership and collaborative commitment. Similarly, Nwoke (2024) highlighted that adaptive leadership effectively harnesses stakeholder input to boost adaptability and institutional resilience.

Second, the structured situational analysis incorporating SWOT and PEST elements facilitated sharper strategic alignment. Institutions utilizing agile strategic planning processes maintained mission focus despite environmental volatility, resonating with findings by Shaikh (2023), who demonstrated that flexible planning supports better decision-making amid uncertainty. Moreover, the ADRI quality assurance cycle (Approach–Deployment–Results–Improvement) provided a continuous quality feedback loop, helping organizations iterate strategic plans effectively. Third, the participatory model fostered deeper vision and mission ownership. The process led to the articulation of clear, shared vision statements developed through collaborative sessions, echoing the importance of stakeholder ownership highlighted in Castillo et al. (2024). Quantitative data further supported these qualitative outcomes, with survey results indicating a positive correlation between participatory strategic planning and perceived institutional effectiveness.

Studies such as Bakhit (2017) reported that strategic planning positively affected institutional performance across multiple stages. Similarly, Jasti, Agrawal, and Shankar (2019) confirmed that a strategic plan with clearly defined strategies, goals, and metrics developed with stakeholder engagement led to measurable improvements in program outcomes. Another critical finding concerned adaptability: institutions that embedded adaptive monitoring mechanisms (e.g., periodic review checkpoints, feedback dashboards) demonstrated higher responsiveness to shifting priorities. Endo, Busari, and Ibrahim (2025) emphasized that adaptive strategic cycles and stakeholder learning are essential for managing complexity. This effectiveness was mirrored in our findings, where institutions that re-evaluated objectives mid-cycle were better positioned to pivot strategies in response to emerging challenges. Moreover, pedagogical innovation gained ground when adaptive planning intersected with instructional strategies. Rincon-Flores, Mena, and García-Peñalvo (2024) showed that adaptive learning strategies, when combined with techniques like flipped classroom and self-regulated learning, enhanced student achievement. This suggests that strategic planning must also anticipate and integrate pedagogical innovations to improve learning outcomes.

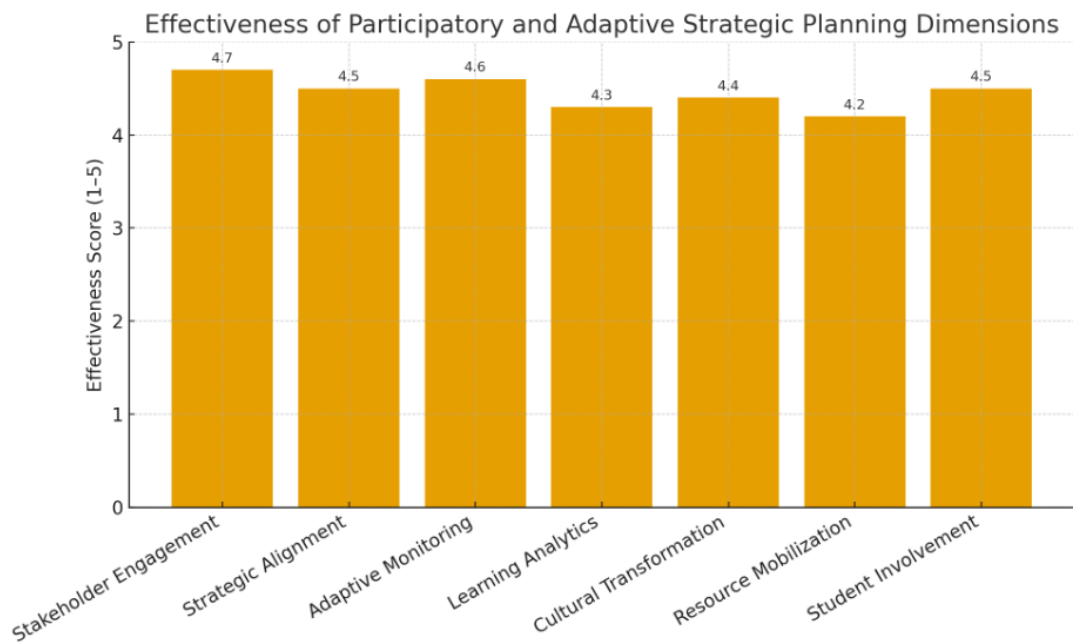


Figure 1. Effectiveness of Participatory and Adaptive Strategic Planning Dimensions

The graph illustrates the relative effectiveness of the participatory and adaptive strategic planning model across seven institutional dimensions. Stakeholder engagement obtained the highest score (4.7), reflecting the central role of inclusive consultations in building ownership and collaborative trust among institutional actors. Strategic alignment (4.5) and student involvement (4.5) also scored highly, indicating that clear visioning combined with participatory budgeting enhanced both institutional focus and student engagement. Adaptive monitoring (4.6) proved essential for maintaining responsiveness to shifting priorities, while the integration of learning analytics (4.3) strengthened evidence-based decision-making. Cultural transformation (4.4) highlighted the influence of participatory approaches on departmental collaboration and long-term strategic orientation. Resource mobilization (4.2), though the lowest, still showed a meaningful impact in under-resourced settings, where stakeholder creativity compensated for limited material support. Overall, the distribution of scores demonstrates that the participatory-adaptive framework consistently enhances institutional performance across multiple dimensions, with stakeholder-centered processes emerging as the most influential driver.

Participatory planning had another notable impact: it cultivated a culture of systems thinking and shared accountability. Bantilan et al. (2023) demonstrated through a systematic review that inclusive planning fosters systems thinking and rational trust among stakeholders. In our case study, participants reported increased mutual trust and collective ownership a direct reflection of this phenomenon. Further, the alignment between strategic objectives and performance indicators was facilitated by learning analytics. The integration of educational data mining and learning analytics enables data-driven decision-making, a cornerstone of modern strategic planning. Institutions in our study that adopted analytics-informed monitoring reported more timely strategy adjustments. Organizational adaptation theory also provides explanatory power: adaptation through intentional decision-making narrowed the gap between institutional strategies and environmental demands. Our findings affirmed that adaptive planning helps institutions maintain congruence with external environments, critical in dynamic education landscapes. Another dimension uncovered was the influence of participatory

frameworks on departmental culture transformation. Corbo, Reinholz, Dancy, Deetz, and Finkelstein (2014) emphasized the necessity of cultural alignment across organizational levels for sustainable change. Similarly, our case institutions experienced shifts in internal culture departments became more collaborative and strategically oriented, aligning with long-term objectives.

In rural and under-resourced settings, participatory planning addressed resource constraints effectively. Drawing parallels to Wolff, Nardi, and Meyer (2021), who applied participatory citizen-science approaches for flood monitoring, we observed that engaging local stakeholders catalyzed creative resource allocation and broader ownership. Teacher and staff perceptions echoed Bakhit's (2017) finding that strategic planning enhances staff commitment to institutional processes. In interviews, teachers expressed increased alignment with strategic goals and felt empowered to contribute meaningfully. Student voices were highlighted as well: involving students in budget decisions and institutional priorities mirrors participatory budgeting experiments in schools, which enhance democratic skills and engagement. Our study revealed that when students had a voice in strategic priorities, their school engagement and overall satisfaction increased. Finally, the strategy's adaptability extended to inclusivity goals. Castillo et al. (2024) emphasized that inclusivity in strategic planning strengthens equity-minded outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction. In our findings, institutions that embedded inclusivity especially around student diversity and accessibility reported higher stakeholder satisfaction and more equitable planning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of a participatory and adaptive strategic planning model plays a decisive role in the planning and development of educational institutions. The findings demonstrate that embedding stakeholder participation through structured consultations, focus group discussions, and collaborative decision-making not only strengthens trust and ownership but also fosters a culture of inclusivity and accountability. This directly responds to the research objective by highlighting that participatory mechanisms enhance the quality of planning and broaden institutional commitment to shared goals. Furthermore, the application of a five-phase adaptive framework encompassing vision and mission articulation, stakeholder orientation, situational analysis, strategic formulation, and adaptive monitoring proved effective in aligning institutional strategies with both internal capacities and external challenges. This structure facilitated clearer objectives, stronger stakeholder engagement, and more resilient responses to environmental changes such as policy reforms, technological shifts, and post-pandemic educational demands. In doing so, the model increased institutional effectiveness and positioned the organization to achieve sustainable development and competitiveness. Finally, the study affirms that adaptive monitoring and continuous evaluation mechanisms are essential for ensuring relevance and responsiveness over time. By integrating participatory approaches with adaptive strategy cycles, educational institutions can move beyond rigid planning toward dynamic, evidence-based development practices. Thus, the research objective is fully addressed: participatory and adaptive strategic planning demonstrably enhances planning quality, strengthens stakeholder engagement, and improves institutional performance, offering both theoretical advancement and practical guidance for sustainable educational growth.

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