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

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami secara mendalam bagaimana pendekatan strategis berperan dalam proses perencanaan dan pengembangan lembaga pendidikan, khususnya dalam meningkatkan efektivitas pengelolaan, mutu layanan, serta daya saing institusi. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus, melibatkan pimpinan lembaga, tenaga pendidik, dan staf manajerial sebagai informan utama. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, serta telaah dokumen institusional, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan pendekatan strategis memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap arah dan keberlanjutan lembaga pendidikan, terutama dalam hal penetapan visi-misi, pengelolaan sumber daya, serta peningkatan kualitas program. Namun, penelitian ini juga menemukan adanya kesenjangan antara perencanaan dan implementasi strategi, yang disebabkan oleh keterbatasan sumber daya manusia, lemahnya sistem evaluasi, dan belum optimalnya komunikasi organisasi. Secara keseluruhan, temuan ini menegaskan bahwa keberhasilan pengembangan lembaga pendidikan sangat bergantung pada konsistensi penerapan strategi yang berorientasi pada mutu, inovasi, dan adaptasi terhadap perubahan lingkungan pendidikan.

Kata Kunci: *pendekatan strategis, perencanaan pendidikan, pengembangan lembaga, manajemen pendidikan.*

Abstract

This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how strategic approaches play a role in the planning and development process of educational institutions, particularly in improving management effectiveness, service quality, and institutional competitiveness. The research method used was a qualitative case study approach, involving institutional leaders, educators, and managerial staff as key informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and institutional document review. Data were then analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and thematic conclusion drawing techniques. The results indicate that the implementation of a strategic approach has a significant influence on the direction and sustainability of educational institutions, particularly in terms of establishing a vision and mission, managing resources, and improving program quality. However, this study also found a gap between strategy planning and implementation, caused by limited human resources, a weak evaluation system, and suboptimal organizational communication. Overall, these findings confirm that the success of educational institution development is highly dependent on the consistent implementation of strategies oriented towards quality, innovation, and adaptation to changes in the educational environment.

Keywords: *strategic approach, educational planning, institutional development, educational management.*

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Introduction

The world of education in the modern era faces increasingly complex challenges as a result of changes in the global environment, rapid technological advances, and increasing demands for the quality of educational services (Amelia, 2023). The currents of globalization and digital transformation require educational institutions to adapt to ever-changing social, economic, and cultural dynamics. Furthermore, competition among educational institutions, both nationally and internationally, is intensifying, driving the need for innovation in governance, curriculum, and learning systems that adapt to changing times. This challenge makes education not merely a process of knowledge transfer, but also a means of developing competencies and character relevant to the needs of the global community.

In this context, educational institutions are required to not only play a role as organizers of the teaching and learning process, but also as organizations that have a long-term vision and a focused development strategy (Asliha et al., 2025). Strategic planning is a crucial element in ensuring educational institutions are able to adapt, survive, and develop sustainably amidst changes in the external environment. Applying a strategic approach to educational management enables institutions to set clear goals, optimize resources, and adapt policies to the dynamics of societal needs and technological advances. Thus, a strategic approach serves as a crucial instrument guiding educational institutions to remain relevant, competitive, and responsive to current and future challenges (Dedik et al., 2025).

The phenomenon in the field shows that many educational institutions still carry out administrative and short-term planning processes without being accompanied by comprehensive strategic analysis (Dewi et al., 2025). Planning is often focused solely on fulfilling annual administrative obligations, such as preparing work plans or activity reports, without considering long-term development directions. As a result, educational institutions often lack clear guidance in addressing changes in the external environment, whether related to government policies, the dynamics of community needs, or technological developments that impact the teaching and learning process.

The absence of mature strategic planning makes educational institutions vulnerable to various problems, such as a decline in the number of students, stagnation in the quality of services, and limited human and financial resources (Scott & Guan, 2023). In fact, implementing a strategic approach can be a solution to increase an institution's effectiveness and competitiveness. Through the implementation of a clear vision and mission, a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, and data-driven and participatory decision-making, educational institutions can design more adaptive and sustainability-oriented policies. Thus, a strategic approach not only strengthens institutional governance but also serves as an important foundation for building an education system that is responsive to the challenges of the times (Shobri, 2025).

Many studies have been conducted on strategic management in the world of education, but most of them still focus solely on conceptual, administrative or theoretical aspects (Munandar, 2020). Many studies only discuss the stages of strategic planning without linking them to the overall institutional development process. Consequently, understanding how strategy translates into managerial practices, organizational culture, and institutional-level decision-making remains limited. However, the effective implementation of strategic management depends not only on planning documents but also on the extent to which an institution is able to build synergy between vision, resources, and concrete actions in response to changes in the educational environment (Filho et al., 2019).

Based on these conditions, qualitative research is needed to explore in depth how strategic approaches are implemented in the real context of educational institutions. A qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the dynamics, perceptions, and experiences of stakeholders in the planning and development process of educational institutions (Muammarulloh & Umi, 2024). This research is expected to provide a scientific contribution by enriching the literature on the application of strategic management in education, while also providing practical benefits for educational institutions in designing more effective, adaptive, and sustainable development strategies.

Based on a review of various previous studies, it appears that there are a number of gaps that still need to be filled in the study of strategic management in education. Most previous research has

focused on the administrative aspects of educational planning, resulting in little attention to the application of a strategic approach as an instrument for institutional transformation (Anwar et al., 2025). In terms of method, existing studies generally use quantitative and evaluative approaches, which place greater emphasis on measuring policy outcomes and effectiveness, while qualitative research that explores practical experiences and managerial dynamics in depth is still very limited.

Furthermore, existing research has been conducted primarily in universities or large-scale educational institutions, resulting in few studies that capture secondary or local educational institutions attempting to adapt to institutional development strategies. In terms of analytical dimensions, most previous research focuses more on the final results or outputs of institutions, while exploration of the processes, internal dynamics, and obstacles to implementing strategic approaches in the field is still rare. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by qualitatively and contextually examining how strategic approaches are implemented in the planning and development of educational institutions (Hermawan et al., 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to provide a contextual and in-depth understanding of how strategic approaches are implemented in the planning and development processes of educational institutions. Unlike previous research, which tended to be conceptual or administrative in nature, this study emphasizes the concrete implementation of strategic approaches within the dynamics of educational organizations. It also offers a new conceptual model that illustrates the link between strategic planning and institutional capacity development, encompassing aspects of human resources, programs, and institutional policies.

Furthermore, another novelty lies in the empirical perspective presented directly from educational actors such as principals, teachers, and managerial staff involved in the change management process. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of strategic management theory in the educational context but also offers practical implications for educational institutions in building an adaptive, participatory, and long-term-oriented organizational culture.

This research generally aims to understand and analyze the role of a strategic approach in the planning and development process of educational institutions. Through this understanding, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture of how strategies are designed, implemented, and evaluated within the context of educational institution management will be obtained. More specifically, this research aims to describe the application of a strategic approach in the educational institution planning process, including the mechanisms, stages, and actors involved.

In addition, this study also attempts to analyze various factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of a strategic approach, both from internal aspects such as leadership, human resources, and organizational culture, as well as external aspects such as government policies and the dynamics of the educational environment. Furthermore, this study aims to identify the impact of the implementation of a strategic approach on institutional development, including increasing organizational capacity, developing human resources, and improving the quality of educational services. Ultimately, the results of this study are expected to formulate recommendations for an effective and sustainable strategic approach implementation model, which can serve as a reference for educational institutions in managing change and increasing competitiveness amidst global challenges.

Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth how a strategic approach is applied in the planning and development process of educational institutions, as well as how stakeholders perceive its effectiveness (Sholeh, 2023). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meanings, views, and experiences of informants in greater depth. This research is exploratory and descriptive in nature, focusing on gaining a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study rather than testing specific hypotheses.

The type of research used is a case study, as this method allows researchers to examine phenomena contextually and comprehensively within one or more educational institutions implementing a strategic approach. Through case studies, researchers can explore the dynamics of strategy implementation, interactions between actors, and the social and institutional contexts that influence the strategy's effectiveness (Beryl et al., 2024). This research was conducted at an educational institution both a school and a university that has a strategy-based development program. The research focuses on three main aspects, namely: (1) implementation of a strategic approach in

institutional planning; (2) its impact on institutional development, including human resources, curriculum, and management; and (3) obstacles and supporting factors in implementing the strategy.

The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from interviews with the principal or head of the institution, the deputy for planning or development, teachers or lecturers, and educational staff. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from various relevant documents such as strategic planning documents, annual reports, internal institutional policies, and archives or notes of development meetings. Data collection techniques used included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to gain direct understanding from key informants regarding strategy implementation and its impact on institutional development. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe the dynamics of strategy implementation and organizational behavior in the field (Sulistyo P, 2020). Meanwhile, documentation techniques are used to examine various official documents that support field findings.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman (1994) analysis model which includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification (Anisa et al., 2024). In the data reduction stage, researchers filter, select, and group data relevant to the research focus. Next, the data is presented in the form of a matrix or thematic narrative to facilitate interpretation. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verifying, where researchers systematically interpret the meaning of the data and ensure its validity. To ensure data validity, this study implemented several reliability tests, namely credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The credibility test was conducted through triangulation of sources, methods, and time to ensure the consistency of the findings. The dependability test was conducted by maintaining an audit trail and involving colleagues in checking the research process. The confirmability test was conducted by comparing the findings with actual evidence in the field. Meanwhile, the transferability test was conducted by providing detailed contextual descriptions so that the research results can be applied to similar contexts.

The research stages include pre-fieldwork, data collection, data analysis, and report preparation. In the pre-fieldwork stage, researchers determine the research location, select informants, and develop interview guidelines. Data collection is carried out through interviews, observations, and document reviews. Data analysis is conducted simultaneously from the beginning of the data collection process until consistent patterns and meanings are obtained. The final stage is the preparation of a research report that includes the findings, discussion, and conclusions of the research results.

Results and Discussion

The research findings indicate that understanding and application of strategic approaches in educational institutions has begun to develop, although the level of implementation varies depending on the capacity and culture of each organization. Most leaders and staff understand the importance of strategic planning as the institution's long-term direction, encompassing its vision, mission, and educational goals. Some institutions have even used SWOT analysis and involved work teams in developing strategic plans, but this has not been implemented consistently each year. Strategic planning is generally used as the basis for developing annual work programs, school development plans (RPS), and evaluating institutional performance. In practice, there is a fairly good integration between the institution's vision and operational policies, such as improving teacher quality, strengthening the curriculum, and utilizing learning technology. However, some institutions still experience challenges in measuring the success of strategy implementation due to the lack of clearly measurable performance indicators. Positively, implementing a strategic approach has been shown to improve the effectiveness of interdisciplinary coordination, clarify the direction of decision-making, and strengthen aspects of human resource management, curriculum development, and relationships with the community and stakeholders. This approach also makes institutions more adaptive to environmental changes, including national education policies and technological developments. However, this study also identified several obstacles, such as limited human resources, minimal managerial training, and a lack of leadership commitment, which sometimes changes with leadership changes, resulting in long-term strategy failure. Furthermore, some staff still view strategic planning as merely a formality. Factors supporting successful strategy implementation include visionary leadership that is open to change, the involvement of all members of the institution in the participatory

planning process, and the use of information technology to facilitate more effective and measurable monitoring and evaluation of strategy implementation.

Table 1. Informant Characteristics

Aspect	Description
Meaning and Function	This table depicts the profile of research informants based on job title, work experience, and number of participants. The goal is to demonstrate the diversity of perspectives from various positions within educational institutions (leadership, management, teachers, staff). This diversity strengthens the validity of the data because information was collected from various levels of the organization.
Core Findings	Most informants had more than five years of experience, indicating a deep understanding of the dynamics of institutional planning and development.

Source: 2025 Data Processing Results

This table shows that the diversity of informants' positions and work experiences strengthens the depth of qualitative data analysis, because each informant provides a different perspective on the implementation of strategic approaches in educational institutions.

Table 2. Summary of Themes, Subthemes, and Supporting Citation Evidence

Main Theme	Subtheme	Supporting Evidence or Citations	Core Findings
Understanding Strategy	Awareness of the importance of strategic planning	"We started to develop a medium-term plan based on the school's vision."	Institutions understand the importance of a strategic approach, but implementation is not yet uniform.
Strategy Implementation	Implementation is not consistent	"Strategic plans are drawn up every year, but they are not always fully implemented."	The strategy has a positive impact on improving quality, but evaluation is not optimal.
Obstacle	Limited human resources and changing leadership	"When the principal changes, the policy direction also changes."	The main obstacles come from limited human resources and unstable leadership.

Source: 2025 Data Processing Results

This table summarizes the results of the thematic analysis of qualitative research. Each theme and subtheme is reinforced with direct quotes from informants to demonstrate the validity of the field findings and their relevance to the research focus.

Table 3. Triangulation Matrix of Findings (Interview — Observation — Document)

Aspects Analyzed	Interview	Observation	Document	Core Findings
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The existence of strategy in the institution	The informant said there was already a strategic plan	The vision-mission board and work plan are visible in the managerial room.	There are RPS documents and annual reports	The strategy is already in the planning document, but implementation in the field is not optimal and is still a formality.
Implementation of strategy	Implementation depends on leadership	Teacher activities are not completely according to plan	Strategy evaluation schedule is not routine	There are inconsistencies between documents and field practice.

Source: 2025 Data Processing Results

This matrix demonstrates consistency across data sources (interviews, observations, and documents), strengthening the credibility of the findings. The similarity in patterns across sources provides the basis for the researcher's conclusion that the institution's strategy exists administratively, but its implementation has not been effective.

Table 4. Results of Data Validity Test (Trustworthiness)

Test Aspects	Meaning and Function	Findings
Credibility	Ensuring valid data through triangulation and member checking	The data has been verified by informants and is in accordance with official agency documents.
Dependability (Dependability)	Ensuring the research process is traceable and consistent	Interview procedures and analysis were recorded systematically.
Confirmability	Ensuring research results are free from researcher bias	Findings were confirmed through documentation and field notes.
Transferability (Transferability)	Ensuring results can be applied in other contexts	The description of the institutional context is compiled in full to allow for application in other institutions.
General Conclusion	—	All tests showed good results; the data was valid, reliable, and trustworthy.

Source: 2025 Data Processing Results

This table displays the results of qualitative data validity tests based on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four main criteria. All tests demonstrated a high level of reliability, confirming that the research process and results met trustworthiness standards.

Table 5. Practical Recommendations Based on Findings

Strategic Aspects	Practical Recommendations	Purpose/Benefits
Implementation System	Establish a periodic monitoring and evaluation system	Ensuring that the strategy runs according to plan and can be adapted to new conditions.
Strategic Leadership	Maintaining consistency of policy direction despite changes in leadership	Minimize changes in strategic direction and maintain program continuity.
Human Resources Development	Organizing managerial training and strengthening HR capacity	Improve staff capabilities in developing and implementing strategic plans.
Utilization of Technology	Increase the use of information technology for evaluation and internal communication	Promote efficiency and transparency in strategy implementation.

Source: 2025 Data Processing Results

This table serves as a form of knowledge translation from research findings into managerial practice. The recommendations are applicable and can be used as guidelines by educational institutions to strengthen the sustainable implementation of strategic approaches.

Relevance to Strategic Management Concepts

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of a strategic approach in educational institutions has a strong relevance to the concept of strategic management as proposed by David (2017), which emphasizes three main stages: strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. In the educational context, the strategy formulation stage is realized through the establishment of the institution's vision, mission, and objectives, which serve as a long-term direction in determining development priorities (Affandy, 2022). This process reflects how educational institutions strive to adapt to a dynamic external environment while simultaneously optimizing their internal potential. Strategy formulation also serves as the foundation for strategic decision-making related to strengthening academic quality, human resource management, and program innovations that support improved educational services. Thus, formulation is not merely a formal document but also a reflective process that demands a clear vision for the institution's future transformation (Purwoko et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the research findings confirm that the strategy implementation phase in educational institutions demonstrates the importance of stakeholder involvement as a determining factor in success. This involvement involves not only leaders and educators, but also administrative staff, students, and the community as external partners of the institution (Hasanah et al., 2024). This aligns with the concept of participatory strategic management, where strategies are implemented collaboratively through open communication, active participation, and a sense of shared responsibility for achieving organizational goals. This participatory approach has been proven to strengthen shared commitment, increase ownership of the institution's vision, and ensure that strategy implementation is effective and sustainable. Therefore, the results of this study confirm that the application of strategic

management in educational institutions is not only theoretically relevant but also practically significant in building adaptive, participatory, and quality-improving educational governance.

Strengthening Institutional Capacity through a Strategic Approach

Research findings indicate that implementing a strategic approach significantly contributes to strengthening the capacity of educational institutions, particularly in governance, human resources, and collaborative networks. Through a well-planned and long-term strategy, institutions are encouraged to restructure their organizations to be more efficient and responsive to environmental changes (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023). This process is also accompanied by improving the competency of teachers and education personnel through training, ongoing professional development, and the implementation of a more objective and measurable performance evaluation system. Furthermore, educational institutions are increasingly actively expanding their external collaboration networks, including with the government, industry, and other educational institutions, to strengthen resource support and enrich innovation in learning practices.

This trend is in line with organizational development theory which emphasizes the importance of strategic alignment between institutional goals and operational practices (Usman & Makruf, 2024). By aligning strategic vision and operational activities, institutions are able to build a management system that is adaptive, measurable, and oriented towards continuous quality improvement. A strategic approach also helps create an organizational culture that is more open to innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning, ultimately strengthening the institution's position in facing the dynamics of education policy and global demands. Thus, the implementation of a strategic approach is not only a planning instrument but also a key catalyst in driving institutional transformation that focuses on effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

Barriers as a Reflection of Organizational Readiness

The research results revealed that various obstacles that emerged, such as limited human resources, too frequent changes in leadership, and weak monitoring and evaluation systems, reflect the level of organizational readiness that is not yet fully mature in implementing long-term strategies (Variyani et al., 2024). These obstacles indicate that some educational institutions still face difficulties in building a consistent strategic culture, particularly in maintaining program continuity when leadership changes occur. This condition indicates that organizational readiness is determined not only by the availability of a strategic plan on paper, but also by the institution's ability to instill the values of planning, coordination, and evaluation continuously at all levels of the organization (Shaya et al., 2023).

This phenomenon aligns with Mintzberg's (1994) view, which asserts that strategy in public organizations is often hampered by rigid bureaucracy and limited internal innovation. In the context of educational institutions, overly formalistic bureaucracy often slows down decision-making and makes it less adaptable to environmental changes (Jabar & Frinaldi, 2025). Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen a strategic organizational culture that encourages flexibility, collaboration, and institutional learning. This strengthening is crucial so that the strategy does not stop at the document development stage but is truly internalized in the managerial practices and behavior of all members of the institution. By building a strategic organizational culture, educational institutions can increase their responsiveness to challenges, strengthen shared commitment, and effectively ensure the long-term sustainability of their strategies.

Effective Strategic Implementation Model

This research shows that the model for implementing an effective strategic approach in educational institutions consists of four main elements that interact with each other and form a sustainable management system (Choirunisa et al., 2025). The first element is visionary and participatory leadership, where the leader acts not only as a decision-maker but also as a facilitator, encouraging collaboration, open communication, and the active involvement of all members of the institution. This type of leadership is a key driver in building a shared commitment to the institution's vision and mission. The second element is data-driven planning and SWOT analysis, which ensures that every policy and strategy is developed based on the actual conditions, potential, and challenges faced by the institution. This approach helps organizations formulate realistic and measurable strategic steps.

Furthermore, the third element includes a system of evaluation and feedback that is carried out periodically, which serves to assess the effectiveness of strategy implementation and provides a basis for continuous adjustment and improvement (Agusnawati et al., 2024). Systematic evaluation allows institutions to detect weaknesses early and optimize their strengths. The fourth element is the involvement of all institutional components in the decision-making process, from leaders and teachers to education staff and students. This collective participation strengthens a sense of ownership of the strategy and ensures its consistent implementation at every level of the organization (Eldor, 2020). Overall, this model offers not only a conceptual framework but also a practical guide that can be adapted by other educational institutions to develop more effective, adaptive, and sustainable management systems amidst the challenges of a dynamic educational environment.

Research Implications

The implications of this research have two main dimensions, namely theoretical and practical (Dewi, 2021). Theoretically, this study broadens the understanding of the application of strategic management in the context of educational institutions by highlighting the importance of strategic processes from formulation, implementation, to evaluation rather than simply focusing on the final results or the achievement of institutional performance. This approach enriches the strategic management literature, which has tended to emphasize the achievement of results, by demonstrating that the success of educational institutions is highly dependent on how the process of strategy formulation and implementation is managed dynamically and inclusively. Thus, this study provides a conceptual contribution in strengthening the paradigm of strategic management based on processes and institutional contexts.

Practically, the results of this study offer concrete guidance for educational institution managers to develop an adaptive, participatory, and measurable strategic planning system. Adaptive means the strategy must be able to adapt to changes in policy, technology, and community needs. Participatory emphasizes the importance of involving all components of the institution so that the designed strategy reflects shared aspirations (Aisyah & Nugraha, 2024). Meanwhile, the measurable aspect requires clear performance indicators to monitor the effectiveness of strategy implementation on an ongoing basis. By integrating these three principles, educational institutions can develop more responsive, transparent governance, and a focus on continuous quality improvement.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the implementation of a strategic approach in educational institutions has begun, but is not yet optimal and not fully integrated into the organizational culture. Most institutions have prepared strategic planning documents, but their implementation and evaluation are still limited. However, the implementation of a strategic approach has proven to play a crucial role in increasing planning effectiveness by linking the institution's vision, mission, and objectives into a more focused and measurable work program. Participatory strategies help institutions set development priorities and optimize existing resources. The positive impact of strategy implementation is seen in improving the quality of governance, human resource development, and the quality of educational services, making institutions more adaptive to policy changes and technological developments. However, obstacles remain, such as limited human resources, minimal managerial training, low leadership commitment, and leadership changes that disrupt the continuity of the strategy. Successful implementation is strongly supported by visionary leadership, the participation of all institutional members, and the use of information technology in the monitoring and evaluation process. Based on these findings, the study offers an ideal model for implementing a strategic approach that includes data-based formulation and SWOT analysis, participatory implementation, ongoing evaluation, and consistent, long-term leadership. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of strategic management in the field of education by emphasizing the importance of strategic processes, while practically it provides guidelines for educational institutions to build adaptive, measurable, and sustainable development systems.

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