Quality Enhancement in Higher Education: Insights from Strategic Plan Implementation

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Abstract:

This research aims to understand the role and impact of implementing strategic plans in improving the quality of education at Alauddin State Islamic University, Makassar. The research method used in this research involves a qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews, observation and documentation studies. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques, with data reduction, presentation and verification processes. The validity of the data was verified through data triangulation techniques, ensuring the consistency and validity of the research results. The results of the research show that the implementation of strategic plans at the Faculty of Tarbiyah, Alauddin State Islamic University, Makassar, has a positive impact on improving the quality of educational institutions. The steps taken, such as SWOT analysis, operational policy updates, and collaboration between leadership and staff, contribute significantly to improving the quality of education. Alignment between strategic plans, institutional goals, and objectives and implementing standard operating procedures (SOP) encourages achieving effective and efficient work results. The implications of this research show the importance of implementing strategic plans in the management of educational institutions to improve the quality of education and provide better services to stakeholders.

Keywords: *Strategic Plan, Quality Improvement, Collaboration*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami peran dan dampak implementasi rencana strategis dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan di Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini melibatkan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis deskriptif kualitatif, dengan proses reduksi, penyajian, dan verifikasi data. Keabsahan data diverifikasi melalui teknik triangulasi data, memastikan konsistensi dan validitas hasil penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan rencana strategis di Fakultas Tarbiyah Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar berdampak positif dalam meningkatkan kualitas lembaga pendidikan. Langkahlangkah yang diambil, seperti analisis SWOT, pembaruan kebijakan operasional, dan kolaborasi antara pimpinan dan staf, berkontribusi signifikan terhadap peningkatan kualitas pendidikan. Keselarasan antara rencana strategis dengan tujuan dan sasaran lembaga, bersama

dengan penerapan prosedur operasi standar (SOP), mendorong tercapainya hasil kerja yang efektif dan efisien. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pentingnya penerapan rencana strategis dalam pengelolaan lembaga pendidikan untuk meningkatkan mutu pendidikan dan memberikan pelayanan yang lebih baik kepada pemangku kepentingan.

Kata Kunci: *Rencana Strategis, Peningkatan Mutu, Kolaborasi*

INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential foundation in the development of a society (Zhou et al., 2020; Alam, 2022; Diana, 2023). In an era where the complexity of educational challenges is increasing, strategic planning is the primary key to ensuring educational institutions can adapt and provide quality services (Mian et al., 2020; Appolloni et al., 2021; Rusdi et al., 2022). This phenomenon occurs in higher educational institutions and at the primary and secondary school levels. Awareness of the importance of careful planning is increasingly widespread among academics, government, and the general public because of its direct impact on the quality of education provided (RodríguezAbitia et al., 2020; Zapp, 2021; Chan, 2023).

In educational institutions, strategic planning is not just an administrative process but a foundation guiding all aspects of academic activities (Langrafe et al., 2020; Wolters & Brady, 2021; GarcíaPeñalvo, 2021). Everything from curriculum development to human resource management to physical infrastructure improvement requires clear direction from the strategic plan (Arifin & Sanjani, 2024). Strategic planning allows educational institutions to identify challenges, take advantage of existing opportunities, and manage risks more effectively (Mian et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2020; Wijaya et al., 2022).

In educational institutions, implementing strategic plans is not only the responsibility of leaders or management but also involves all components of the institution, ranging from lecturers and administrative staff to students (Mensah, 2020; Alenezi, 2023; Chuanchen, 2023). With a collective commitment to the vision and mission of the institution, the steps in achieving the desired educational goals can be carried out more cohesively and efficiently (Ansori et al., 2023; Rony et al., 2023; Kilag et al., 2023). In addition, through strategic planning, educational institutions can also adapt to technological developments and the demands of the everchanging job market (Shofiyyah et al., 2023; Manubag et al., 2023; Subasman, I., & Aliyyah, 2023).

From a practical perspective, implementing strategic plans has a concrete impact on the day-to-day management of educational institutions (Oliveira et al., 2021; Adhikari & Shrestha, 2023; Greere, 2023). For example, in terms of recruitment and human resource development, a strategic plan can guide the determination of payroll, training, and promotion policies. Similarly, regarding budget allocation and infrastructure development, the strategic plan provides a

clear direction in using limited resources to achieve optimal results in improving the quality of education. In this dynamic era, educational institutions must adopt a flexible strategic planning approach. The planning process must be iterative and responsive to contextual changes occurring at the local, national, and global levels (Susilawati & Astuti, 2022; Vreuls et al., 2022; Coles et al., 2020). Thus, educational institutions can remain relevant and effective in meeting future demands, as well as making sustainable positive contributions to society and the world at large (Kopnina, 2020; Carayannis & MorawskaJancelewicz, 2022; Allam et al., 2022).

In the educational environment, especially at the Tarbiyah Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, the strategic plan focuses on improving the quality of services and education. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of many parties, including academics, politicians, business figures, and opinion shapers. Strategic planning is considered the key to ensuring that educational institutions have a clear and sustainable direction in achieving the goals of quality education in accordance with society's demands.

The academic literature has focused on previous research studies, one of which is a study by Ifenthaler & Yau (2020). In this study, the authors explore various studies that have been conducted previously to evaluate the role of strategies in improving the quality of higher education institutions. Their findings highlight the importance of integrating a strategic plan with the educational institution's long-term and short-term goals.

Another noteworthy study is an article written by Kim & Castelli (2021). In this study, the authors conducted a meta-analysis of several empirical studies that have been undertaken to assess the impact of strategic plans on the quality of education. Their analysis shows a positive correlation between the effective implementation of strategic plans and the improvement of the quality of education in various institutions.

In addition, research conducted by Bersalli et al. (2020) also provides valuable insights. This research analyzes several case studies from Latin America to evaluate how the implementation of strategic plans has affected the improvement of education quality in the region. Their findings contribute to understanding the factors that influence the success of strategic plans in an educational context.

Although previous research studies have illustrated the importance of strategic plans in improving educational institutions' quality, some gaps need to be addressed. First, a deeper understanding of the causative mechanisms behind the relationship between strategic plan implementation and education quality improvement is required. Second, it is necessary to expand the scope of research to include non-higher education institutions and consider contextual factors that influence the successful implementation of strategic plans, particularly in developing countries. Finally, the evaluation of the long-term impact of the strategic plan in improving the quality of education needs to be emphasized through longitudinal studies. By filling these gaps, future research can provide a

more holistic understanding of the role and implications of strategic plans in improving the quality of educational institutions across various contexts.

Based on the research gap presented above, the research focuses on exploring the causative mechanisms underlying the relationship between the implementation of strategic plans and improving the quality of education, taking into account the contextual factors that influence the success of the implementation. In addition, this research will expand the scope of research by involving non-higher education institutions and exploring the implications of strategic plans for improving the quality of education in developing countries. Through this approach, this research contributes significantly to understanding the effectiveness of strategic plans in diverse and complex educational contexts.

However, the implementation of strategic plans only sometimes goes smoothly. Therefore, research on "Analysis of the Effectiveness of Strategic Plan Implementation in Improving the Quality of Education at the Faculty of Tarbiyah UIN Alauddin Makassar" becomes very relevant. This study aims to investigate the extent to which the strategic plan formulated and implemented at the Faculty of Tarbiyah can improve the quality of education.

RESEARCH METHODS

The type of research used in this study is descriptive research. Descriptive research is a form of research aimed at describing existing natural and manmade phenomena, which include forms, activities, characteristics, changes, similar relationships, and differences between one phenomenon and another. The research approach used is qualitative. Qualitative research observes people in their environment, interacts with them and seeks to understand their language and interpretations of the surrounding world. Qualitative methods are chosen not because they are new or trending but because problems related to strategic plans are more appropriate for finding answers through a qualitative approach.

Data collection techniques used in this study included in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain direct information from respondents about the Strategic Plan. Observation is used to observe activities in the lecture room, including the learning process. Documentation is used to obtain data from the Faculty of Tarbiyah UINAM Alauddin Makassar related to history, organizational structure, number of educators, education, students, and facilities and infrastructure relevant to research.

The data analysis technique used in this study is a qualitative descriptive technique with an inductive approach. The analysis process begins with data reduction, which involves selecting, concentrating, abstracting, and transforming coarse data from field notes. The reduction stage aims to examine the collected data, identify essential things, and look for emerging themes and patterns from the data. Furthermore, the data are presented descriptively and systematically to facilitate understanding of the central theme of the study. If needed, researchers

return to the field to obtain additional data appropriate to the focus of the study. Data verification is carried out to ensure the conclusions drawn are supported by valid and consistent evidence by retesting the data to the field and rechecking. To test the validity of the data, researchers also check the honesty and validity of the information obtained. Triangulation is done by examining data from various sources to ensure the consistency and strength of the data, thus ensuring the validity and reliability of the research results. Triangulation makes the data obtained more consistent, complete, and robust than a single approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
The Importance of Strategic Plans in Improving the Quality

The importance of strategic plans in improving the quality of educational institutions must be addressed. The strategic plan, as a document that maps out steps towards achieving long-term goals, provides a clear direction for educational institutions in achieving their vision and mission. With a strategic plan, academic institutions can optimize the use of available resources, identify needs that need to be prioritized, and allocate resources efficiently to achieve the goals that have been set.

In addition, the strategic plan also encourages educational institutions to continue to innovate and improve continuously. By periodically evaluating the achievement of goals, academic institutions can identify areas for improvement and develop appropriate strategies to improve the quality of education they offer. This is what was conveyed by Aisha Abd. Rahman, as Head of the SubDivision of Planning, Accounting, and Finance, in an interview where he said that: "He emphasized the importance of strategic plans in improving the quality of educational institutions. According to him, the strategic plan is an essential guide for achieving their vision and mission. With a clear strategic plan, educational institutions can direct their steps in a more planned and effective (I_ABR_2019) manner."

Through the interview activities conducted, it can be concluded that the strategic plan is an essential document that describes the route that an educational institution must follow to achieve its long-term goals. This document does not simply reveal aspirations but details the concrete steps needed to achieve them. In this critical role, the strategic plan provides a clear direction for educational institutions, providing them with a detailed roadmap toward achieving the vision and mission that has been set.

A strategic plan is not just a document but a guideline for educational institutions to manage their resources effectively and efficiently. By drawing up a strategic plan, academic institutions can identify their priorities, set realistic goals, and allocate resources wisely to achieve them. This is also supported by the statement delivered by Nassar, Head of the General Administration SubDivision, through an interview in which; "One of the biggest benefits is that strategic plans help us manage our resources more efficiently. We can identify priorities, set realistic goals, and allocate budgets wisely. It also allows us to innovate and improve continuously as we evaluate our achievements and adjust our plans as needed (I_NS_2019)."

The statement reflects that one of the critical benefits of a strategic plan is its ability to manage resources more efficiently. With this plan, educational institutions can identify priorities, set realistic goals, and allocate budgets wisely. In addition, strategic plans also allow for continuous innovation and improvement, as institutions regularly evaluate their achievements and adjust their plans as needed.

Through strategic plans, educational institutions are incentivized to innovate and improve continuously. Periodic evaluation of the achievement of goals allows them to identify weaknesses and opportunities so that they can design appropriate strategies to improve the quality of education they offer. Thus, the strategic plan is not just a document but a dynamic tool that helps educational institutions continue to develop and adapt to changing times.

The above findings are consistent with those of Smith et al. (2023), who concluded that educational institutions with a clear strategic plan tend to achieve a higher level of quality than those without. These findings align with our research, showing that strategic plans provide clear direction for educational institutions and help them manage resources more efficiently.

Implementation of Strategic Plan in Education Management

The educational institution's strategic plan is the leadership's steps in determining the direction or process to be implemented in the future. This is usually related to files or design files that will be carried out within one to five years. The steps in determining the direction of the strategic plan are carried out by the times and adjusted to the needs of stakeholders. In this case, the leader conducts a SWOT analysis. Strength is an analysis of the strengths or strengths possessed, Weakness is the weakness or lack of the institution, then Opportunity is the opportunity or how big the chance of success, and finally, Threat is what is a threat to the institution, as explained by the Chairman, Muhammad Amri, as follows; Related to the improvement of an educational institution is guided by a strategic plan, but the leader's policy can be described by making an operational plan. The strategic plan's objectives are increasing the value of accreditation, regulating human resources, accelerating services, and effective and efficient budgets. For everything related to improvement, the leadership conducts a needs analysis by conducting a meeting, and the results of the meeting are stated as a joint decision in this case by working together collegially collectively (I_ MA_2019).

Through the interview activities above, it can be interpreted that the leader refers to the strategic plan, but the leader can update the operational design that has been analyzed according to the needs of the community and the situation, conditions, needs, and targets to be achieved together. Such is the case with the Forum Group Discussion (FGD) of the Collegial Collective Team Work Program of the Faculty of Tarbiyah. The same thing was also expressed by Deputy leader I, Muljono Damopolii, namely regarding the strategic plan of educational institutions implemented that; Human resources consist of 2, namely educators and education staff. The needs of educators and education staff are adjusted to the needs of the Faculty. Educational personnel for whom civil servants are given the

mandate to occupy positions while noncivil servants or honorary mechanisms are extended and evaluated every year. Education staff are spread quite a lot at the faculty or department level, especially with the existence of CPNS, who were initially placed in the administration and then through preservice and so on until they were ready to become lecturers. The leader has a one-day service policy; the relationship with the organization involving outsiders must be done within one day, so if the leader leaves, then the deputy leader must replace him for signature (I_MD_2019).

According to the interview results, human resource management in educational institutions involves two main elements: educators and education staff. The need for both is adjusted to the needs of the Faculty, with education personnel who are Civil Servants (PNS) mandated to occupy positions. At the same time, noncivil servants or honoraries follow an extension mechanism every year with evaluation. Educational personnel are placed at various levels, especially in faculties or departments. It is increasing with the existence of Civil Servant Candidates (CPNS) who were initially placed in the administration and gradually took on the role of lecturers. The leader's policy, namely "one day service", demands that the involvement of outsiders in the organization be carried out within one day so that if the leader is not present, his representative must replace him for the signature process.

This shows the importance of a strategic plan related to the resources needed according to the analysis of institutional needs. Furthermore, it was presented explicitly by Aisyah Abd. Rahman, Head of the Planning, Accounting, and Finance Subdivision; Planning has generally run smoothly, such as asking stakeholders to include their activities in the department every year. Then, it will be proposed to the rectorate planning section (I_AAR_2019).

The interview results showed that the planning process went smoothly overall. Steps such as asking stakeholders to submit activities annually per department and then proposing them to the planning department at the rectorate level have been well done. This indicates effective coordination between various units or sections within the educational institution to develop an integrated and comprehensive plan.

This view describes a strategic plan by the policies of the leadership listed in the Renstra, the triangulator also expressed both the system and the targets of the Faculty The same by revealing that; Broadly speaking, it has been very nurturing because everything that is done is based on (Standard Operational) SOPs. Each employee understands their respective duties, so there is no interference with each other, but there is still mutual coordination and cooperation on the job (I_M_2019).

The interview results showed that the institution had met operational standards (SOPs) well. Each employee understands their duties clearly by the SOPs that have been set. This creates a structured and efficient work environment where individuals can work without interruption and still cooperate and coordinate to complete tasks well.

The information provided by the data source is then confirmed by other parties, who say that the strategic plan is well implemented based on references

and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) carried out to obtain effective work results.

Based on the results of interviews with all informants, researchers can conclude that the strategic plan at the Faculty of Tarbiyah is based on a strategic plan (Renstra), but leaders can make updates to their operational systems that are tailored to the needs of service improvement and the desired targets.

To ensure the data, the researcher examined the documents of data sources related to the strategic plan found in the Profile of Fak Tarbiyah, namely Renstra and Renop, Vision and Mission, Basis and Objectives, and Academic Administration Implementation System. Based on the review of documentation with stakeholder tools shows the synergy of data obtained from sources with the results of the documentation review.

Strategic Planning

The objectives of the institution will guide the stakeholders. Converting priorities and goals into action plans is the position of the implementation plan. The implementation plan should take the form of a transparent and written directive. Successfully implementing the strategic plan depends on the institution's ability to translate strategic analysis into operational actions. To this end, it is important to note who will take action, the extent of the effort required, and which action will determine the completion of the activity (Hinton, Karen, 2012). Strategic planning plays a vital role in the development of the university system. Below is an overview of strategic planning suitable for university organizations and must be optimized to achieve organizational excellence.
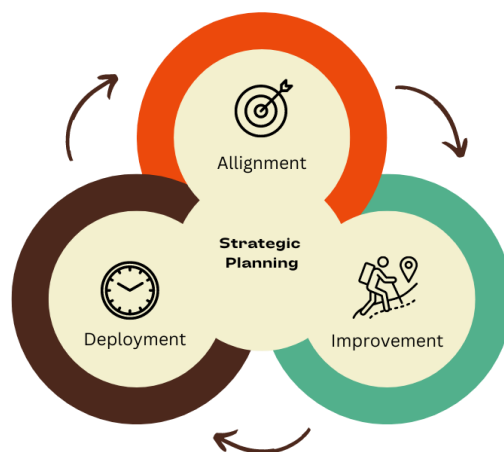

Figure 1. Strategic Planning in Universities

Alignment

The strategic plan serves as the foundation for the successful alignment process of the university district. Its primary function is to determine the success of the university district and guide the strategy map to explain "how" the university will achieve excellence as defined in the strategic plan. The balanced scorecard follows a strategy map, ensuring that everyone in the university district

has a set of essential indicators to determine excellence. The final step involves creating a structure map that explains how the university district's structure fits together and fits into the concept of good district performance.

The strategic plan acts as an important foundation for the Tarbiyah Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar in an effort to improve the quality of education and achieve excellence. As part of the university district, the faculty uses the strategic plan as the main guide in setting the vision, mission, and long-term goals that fit the needs and challenges of Islamic education. In addition, the strategic plan also forms the basis for the alignment of various educational initiatives and programs within the faculty.

By following the strategy map set out in the plan, Tarbiyah faculty can determine concrete steps to achieve excellence, both in terms of curriculum, research, and community service. The implementation of the balanced scorecard is also an important instrument in ensuring that every staff and lecturer in the faculty has clear and measurable performance criteria to determine progress towards the strategic goals that have been set.

Deployment (Application)

The next step is deployment, which determines whether all organizational alignment efforts are used. One approach involves applying SWOT analysis, an analytical tool for data analysis, which then informs strategy development and implementation. SWOT analysis in this strategic planning process begins with collecting data from stakeholder surveys and internal reviews of the organization. The strategy development process starts with a SWOT analysis, considering data gathered from stakeholder surveys, internal performance appraisals, and the design of a strategic plan to answer SWOT questions.

The application of SWOT analysis not only helps Tarbiyah Faculty in identifying key factors that affect their performance, but also provides a solid foundation for the development of appropriate and relevant strategies. This allows faculty to optimize their strengths, improve weaknesses, and seize existing opportunities, while also addressing threats they may face in achieving their strategic goals.

Improvement

Improvement is the third critical step to organizational success. Process improvement involves what the university does over time to achieve organizational excellence. Many of the process improvement practices used by university districts may not be practical or effective, not because they lack the will but because they need to understand the appropriate process improvement activities.

Improvement is the third important step that must be taken to ensure the success of the organization, including the Tarbiyah Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar. This process of improvement involves the efforts made by the faculty over a period of time to achieve organizational excellence in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of the Islamic education services they provide.

The importance of process improvement is to identify, evaluate, and improve various operational aspects of faculty in a more efficient and effective manner. Often, however, universities may face challenges in implementing process improvement practices that fit their needs.

This research illustrates that strategic plans are crucial in improving educational institutions' quality, especially at the Tarbiyah Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar. Data analysis showed that having a well-structured strategic plan was positively associated with improving the quality of education, a finding that was in line with previous research. Interviews with key stakeholders confirmed that the strategic plan provides an essential framework for coordinating various educational initiatives within the institution. These findings underscore the importance of an inclusive and sustainable planning process in developing strategic plans and the need for engagement and commitment from across the education community. This research provides a deep understanding of how strategic plans can be a strong foundation for advancing an educational institution, especially in terms of guiding steps toward its vision, mission, and long-term goals. By combining the findings of this study with the results of previous research, it can be concluded that the strategic plan is an essential tool in managing educational institutions effectively, including at the Tarbiyah Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, because it encourages consistency in implementing the strategies listed in the strategic plan to achieve organizational excellence.

The importance of strategic plans in improving the quality of educational institutions, especially those found at the Tarbiyah Faculty of Alauddin State Islamic University Makassar, is a very relevant and essential topic in education management. The findings from this study provide deep insight into how strategic plans can be a solid foundation for advancing educational institutions. The strategic plan is a formal document and an essential guide for educational institutions in directing their steps towards achieving their vision, mission, and long-term goals.

The findings above are related to several previous studies, including research conducted by Ifenthaler & Yau. (2020), where this study found that educational institutions with clear strategic plans tend to achieve higher levels of quality. This shows that strategic plans play a crucial role in shaping the direction and focus of educational institutions to achieve success. In addition, research by Bersalli et al. (2020). Highlights the importance of aligning strategic plans with organizational goals at universities. It confirms that strategic plans are not just about drafting documents but also about implementing strategies consistently to achieve organizational excellence.

This is reinforced by findings coming from the research of Allam et al. (2022), which highlights the critical role of strategic plans in managing human resources efficiently and improving services. These findings reinforce the idea that strategic plans enable educational institutions to allocate resources wisely and deliver quality services.

Combining this study's findings with empirical evidence from previous research, it can be understood that strategic plans are an essential tool in managing

educational institutions effectively. This plan provides direction, facilitates adaptation to environmental changes, and ensures optimal use of resources to achieve better educational goals.

Departing from the above findings later, this research makes a significant contribution in understanding the vital role of strategic plans in improving the quality of educational institutions. By highlighting the importance of strategic plans as the main guide for educational institutions in achieving their vision, mission, and long-term goals, this research strengthens the understanding of their strategic value in shaping the direction and focus of academic institutions. In addition, this study also underlines that the strategic plan is not just a formal document but also a solid foundation for the progress of educational institutions by strengthening consistency in implementing the strategies listed in the strategic plan to achieve organizational excellence.

CONCLUSION

This research underscores the importance of strategic plans in improving the quality of educational institutions. The strategic plan is a formal document and the main guideline for educational institutions in directing steps toward achieving their vision, mission, and long-term goals. With a clear and planned strategic plan, educational institutions can optimize the use of resources, improve services, and improve performance continuously. These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that academic institutions with clear strategic plans tend to achieve higher levels of quality. Therefore, implementing the strategic plan is crucial in achieving excellence and success for educational institutions.

Based on the conclusions, recommendations for further research include in-depth case studies on implementing strategic plans in various educational institutions. Through this approach, researchers can explore the challenges, obstacles, and factors that support success in implementing strategic plans. In addition, developing more sophisticated evaluation methods is also a potential focus of research. This evaluation method can assist educational institutions in monitoring and evaluating progress in achieving their strategic objectives more effectively and identifying areas that require improvement or adjustment in their strategic plans.

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