



Linking strategic planning and performance in a university in South Africa

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy: Corporate Strategy.

27 November 2023

Abstract:

This exploratory study delves into the complex relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes at South African universities, with a special focus on a specific university herein referred to as University X. It aims to bridge the knowledge gap regarding the effectiveness of strategic planning in a unique educational and cultural setting. A qualitative methodology, involving semi-structured interviews with 14 University X management members, is employed to gather perspectives on strategic planning processes and their efficacy. The findings highlight the importance of strategic planning in shaping university performance, emphasizing the role of well-managed internal resources and inclusive stakeholder engagement. The study supports the applicability of the Resource-Based View (RBV) in the context of higher education, while acknowledging the complexities and hurdles encountered in its practical implementation. It modestly contributes to a deeper, yet still developing understanding of strategic planning within the South African higher education sector and offers practical recommendations for improvement. Furthermore, it opens avenues for future research, underscoring the necessity for ongoing inquiry into strategic planning and performance in the ever-evolving field of higher education.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Performance, South African Higher Education, Qualitative Research, Resource-Based View.

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy [insert programme name here] at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

27 November 2023

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the research

1.1. Background to the research problem

Universities worldwide are grappling with numerous challenges, such as funding constraints, rapidly changing technology, shifting student demographics, and evolving societal expectations (Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe, 2022; Smith 2020; Seale & Cross, 2015; Singh, 2016). In the face of such challenges, strategic planning is becoming increasingly crucial for universities to align their activities, effectively allocate resources, and make informed decisions that drive performance (Kilag et al., 2023; Bryson, 2017; Goldman & Salem, 2015).

In South Africa, higher education institutions are dealing with added complexities, including socio-economic disparities, governmental policy changes, and unique demographic realities (Du Plessis, 2021; Seale & Cross, 2015; Singh, 2016). Despite strategic planning being recognized as a vital tool for helping universities navigate these complexities and enhance performance, there is a lack of thorough understanding of how strategic planning specifically influences performance in the South African university context (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022).

The specific mechanisms through which strategic planning impacts university performance remain underexplored (Bryson & George, 2020). Likewise, the contextual factors within South African universities that affect the implementation and effectiveness of strategic planning require in-depth investigation (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). Moreover, the challenges and barriers universities face when implementing strategic planning, such as resistance to change, bureaucratic structures, and limited stakeholder engagement (Aleixo, Leal, & Azeiteiro, 2018; Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022), as well as the potential repercussions of a lack of strategic planning on performance, have not been thoroughly examined (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022).

1.2. The business rationale

The necessity of this research has been clearly demonstrated by its findings. As central institutions in higher education, universities are crucial to societal development through education, research, and community involvement, a role underscored by the impact they have on national development and competitiveness (Seale & Cross, 2015; Singh, 2016).

This study has shown that the drive for improved performance extends beyond the private sector to the public domain, especially in educational organizations. The research has highlighted the criticality of performance in organizational analysis, confirming theories that emphasize its role (Alosani et al., 2020). In the context of South African universities, this research has provided a deeper understanding of the relationship between strategic planning and performance. Our findings have identified specific strategies that can significantly enhance the strategic planning processes in these institutions, leading to improved educational outcomes and societal benefits (Seale & Cross, 2015; Singh, 2016).

Addressing the unique challenges and dynamics of South African universities, this study has adopted a context-specific approach, yielding insights particularly relevant to the realities of these institutions (Seale & Cross, 2015; Singh, 2016). It has identified barriers to effective strategic planning and proposed viable strategies to overcome them (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). Moreover, the research has underscored the importance of understanding the consequences of inadequate strategic planning and has contributed to the development of preventive measures against poor performance (Aleixo et al., 2018).

In filling these knowledge gaps, the research has contributed to the establishment of best practices in strategic planning for South African universities. The findings have provided practical guidance for these institutions to refine their strategic planning processes, thereby enhancing performance outcomes and ensuring sustainability in a competitive higher education landscape. These contributions are of significant value to universities, policymakers, and stakeholders in the higher education sector, offering a roadmap for future strategic initiatives and research directions.

1.3. The theoretical rationale

The purpose of this study was to address several identified gaps in the existing research concerning the influence of strategic planning on performance within South African universities. The specific rationales behind this study, each supported by the literature, were as follows:

Specific Linkages: While the broader significance of strategic planning for organizational performance is widely acknowledged (George et al., 2019; Bryson, 2017), there was a notable scarcity of research exploring the precise mechanisms through which strategic planning affects performance specifically in university contexts (Bryson & George, 2020; Dibrell et al., 2014). This gap in understanding underscored the necessity for this study.

Contextual Factors: Previous studies in various contexts have suggested a positive link between strategic planning and performance (Dibrell et al., 2014; George et al., 2019). However, the unique attributes of South African universities, as indicated by limited focus in the literature (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022; Swartz et al., 2019), warranted a more detailed

examination to understand how these contextual factors might influence the relationship between strategic planning and performance.

Implementation Challenges: The existing literature identified various barriers that hinder effective strategic planning in higher education institutions, including resistance to change, bureaucratic structures, insufficient resources, and limited stakeholder engagement (Aleixo et al., 2018; Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). However, there was a lack of research that thoroughly investigated these challenges and suggested actionable strategies for universities to overcome these obstacles, hence the impetus for this study.

Consequences of Lack of Strategic Planning: Moreover, there was limited understanding of the repercussions of deficient strategic planning on the performance of universities (Bryson, 2017). Gaining insights into these implications was essential to contribute to the development of preventive strategies and measures, underlining another rationale for our study.

By addressing these research gaps, this study aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the role of strategic planning in enhancing university performance in the South African context. This investigation has helped in the creation of effective strategies and practices for South African universities to improve their strategic planning efforts and, consequently, their performance outcomes.

1.4. Research problem, aim of the study, and research questions

1.4.1. Problem statement

The problem identified in this study, based on the literature review, pertains to the specific mechanisms and influences of strategic planning on performance in the context of universities, particularly within South African institutions. The linkages between strategic planning and institutional performance have not been adequately explored or documented (Bryson & Geoge, 2020; Dibrell, Craig, & Neubaum, 2014). Furthermore, the challenges and barriers to effective strategic planning within universities, such as resistance to change, bureaucratic structures, lack of resources, and insufficient stakeholder engagement, need investigation (Aleixo *et al.*, 2018; Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022).

The literature also reveals a dearth of research exploring the consequences of inadequate strategic planning on university performance. Despite the broadly recognized significance of strategic planning in shaping organizational outcomes (Bryson, 2017; George, Walker, & Monster, 2019). This deficiency suggests a need for more detailed understanding, particularly regarding its impact on university performance.

In the specific context of South African universities, the limited research attention further magnifies this problem. While strategic planning is generally seen as beneficial, the

specific environmental factors, resource allocations, internal dynamics, and socio-political influences in South African higher education institutions necessitate a more contextual examination of its impact on performance (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022; Swartz, Ivancheva, Czerniewicz, & Morris, 2019).

In summary, the main problem that this study aims to address is the lack of thorough understanding of how strategic planning influences performance in the university context, particularly in South African universities. This includes a need to explore the barriers and challenges hindering effective strategic planning (Aleixo *et al.*, 2018; Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022), the potential repercussions of a lack of strategic planning (Bryson, 2017), and the context-specific factors that may influence the effectiveness of strategic planning in the South African higher education sector (Swartz *et al.*, 2019).

1.4.2. Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to delve into the relationship between strategic planning and performance in South African universities, examining the specific mechanisms and contextual factors that influence this dynamic. Additionally, it focused on identifying challenges in implementing strategic planning and the potential repercussions of inadequate planning efforts. The following are the accompanying research questions.

1.4.3. Research questions

This study is driven by two central research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1):

How do managers in a South African university describe and perceive the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes?

Research Question 2 (RQ2):

What narratives or stories do university managers share about the specific mechanisms that underlie the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes in their context?

1.5. The research contribution

The study contributed to the field by shedding light on the specific ways in which strategic planning influences performance in South African universities. It offered insights into how strategic objectives and university performance are interconnected, particularly within the context of higher education.

In examining the barriers to effective strategic planning, the study identified key challenges such as resistance to change and bureaucratic constraints. It provided a clearer

understanding of these obstacles, potentially aiding in the development of strategies to address them within the university setting.

Additionally, the study explored the potential repercussions of inadequate strategic planning on university performance. This aspect aimed to highlight the risks associated with ineffective planning and to suggest possible preventive measures.

By focusing on the unique context of South African universities, the study contributed an understanding of how environmental factors, resource allocations, and socio-political dynamics can influence strategic planning. These findings are intended to be relevant not only to South African universities but also to offer perspectives for higher education institutions in similar situations.

In essence, the study made contributions towards a more nuanced understanding of strategic planning in higher education, particularly in the context of South African universities, aligning with its initial objectives.

1.6. Scope of the research

In this qualitative research, an in-depth exploration was conducted of the perceptions and understandings of managers at a specific university in South Africa, focusing on the relationship between strategic planning and performance. Utilising a case study methodology, the research concentrated on a single university to achieve a detailed and contextualized understanding within this particular setting.

The study involved an intricate examination of the various mechanisms through which strategic planning impacted performance outcomes, illuminating the processes and practices that contributed to effective strategic management in a university context. Part of this exploration included understanding the unique socio-political and internal dynamics at the university. This entailed examining how resource allocations, bureaucratic structures, and stakeholder engagement influenced strategic planning processes.

Additionally, the research delved into the challenges and barriers in implementing strategic planning. Key issues such as resistance to change and bureaucratic hurdles were investigated to understand how these factors affected the effectiveness of strategic initiatives. Parallel to this, the study assessed the potential repercussions of both robust and inadequate strategic planning on university performance, exploring the varied consequences of different strategic approaches.

A significant aspect of the research was capturing the narratives and stories of university managers. These insights were important in gaining a view of their perceptions and experiences with strategic planning and its impact on the university's performance.

By focusing on a single institution, the study aimed to provide a nuanced and in-depth understanding of the strategic planning-performance relationship within this specific context. The findings from this case study have not only enriched the academic discourse on strategic planning in higher education but have also offered practical insights and recommendations for enhancing strategic management practices in South African universities.

1.7. Outline of the research report

The first chapter of this report introduces the research problem, delineating the business and theoretical rationales underpinning the study. It articulates the research problem, defines the study's aim, and outlines the pertinent research questions. Additionally, the chapter delineates the contributions and scope of the research.

Chapter 2 comprises a literature review, addressing the evolution of strategic planning in higher education institutions globally and the relevant theoretical frameworks. This includes an emphasis on the Resource-Based View in higher education strategy. The chapter also examines the history and development of strategic planning within South African universities, discussing their historical context, global influences, local adaptations, and recent developments. The integration of strategic planning and performance, particularly as elaborated by Biondi & Russo (2022), is critically analysed, focusing on strategic planning in South African higher education.

The third chapter outlines the research questions and propositions that guided the study, setting the foundation for the methodology employed. Chapter 4 details the research methodology, including the research setting, unit and level of analysis, sampling and sample size, data gathering instruments, data analysis approach, research quality and rigor, limitations of the research design and methods, and ethical considerations.

The fifth chapter of the report is dedicated to presenting the results and findings of the study. It begins by providing a detailed profile of the respondents, which sets the context for understanding their perspectives, and then offers an overview of the findings, focusing on various dimensions of strategic planning in South African universities. This chapter is crucial in elucidating the practical implications of strategic planning as perceived and implemented by key university personnel.

Chapter 6 discusses these findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This includes an analysis of the evolution of strategic planning in higher education, the application of the theoretical framework, the historical context of South African universities, and the interplay between strategic planning and performance. The final chapter, Chapter 7, concludes the report with a summary of the principal theoretical conclusions, the contributions

of the research, recommendations for management and stakeholders, the limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research. The report culminates with a list of references.

Chapter 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review systematically investigates the relationship between strategic planning and performance management in higher education institutions, emphasizing the South African context. The roadmap outlined in Table 1 provides a structured approach to exploring this relationship across various dimensions:

Table 2.1: Literature review roadmap

Heading	Description
2.1. Introduction	Overview of the literature review's purpose and structure.
2.2. Evolution of strategic planning in higher education institutions globally	Examination of how strategic planning has evolved globally in higher educational institutions.
2.3. Theoretical framework	Introduction to the theoretical framework with a focus on major theories, concepts, and the applicability of RBV in higher education strategy.
2.4. The history and development of strategic planning within South African universities	The history of strategic planning in South African universities, including historical context, global influences, internal tensions, and recent developments.
2.5. Biondi & Russo (2022): Strategic planning and performance integration	Analysis of Biondi & Russo's work on the interplay between strategic planning and performance.
2.6. Strategic planning in higher education South Africa:	In-depth study on strategic planning's role in South African universities, its influence on performance, driving mechanisms, and the implications of insufficient planning.
2.7. Strategic planning and performance in higher education institutions	Exploration of the relationship dynamics between strategic planning and performance, both directly and indirectly, with a spotlight on the South African context.
2.8. Summary of the reviewed literature	Recap of the main findings, themes, and conclusions from the literature discussed.
2.9. List of references	The compilation of all the sources and references used in the literature review.

Central to this review is the study by Biondi and Russo (2022) offers a pioneering approach by intertwining the realms of strategic planning and performance management, laying the groundwork for this review's exploration.

Building on Biondi and Russo's (2022) insights, this review delves into the South African context. It scrutinises the direct and indirect impacts of strategic planning on performance outcomes, examining the mechanisms driving this relationship. The goal is to shed light on these constructs, equipping the South African higher education institution, used

as a case in this study with knowledge to optimise their strategic planning processes, with the aim of enhancing performance.

The importance of strategic planning in guiding organisational performance is championed by scholars like Bryson (2017), George et al. (2019), Smith (2021), and Bryson & George (2020). Especially in the vibrant setting of universities, the role of strategic planning is paramount. However, there's a discernible knowledge chasm: a holistic grasp of strategic planning's influence on university performance, its challenges, and the determinants of its efficacy, particularly in the South African backdrop. Bridging this gap is the cornerstone of this literature review.

The subsequent sections will traverse the themes encapsulated in Table 1. I will probe into strategic planning's significance in South African universities, repercussions of subpar planning, relevant theoretical frameworks, performance indicators in academic institutions, and research methodologies of prior strategic planning studies.

In essence, this literature review aspires to weave together the rich tapestry of existing scholarship, highlighting the lacunae this study wishes to fill. By amalgamating the insights from Biondi and Russo (2022) with the wider literature, it lays the groundwork for an investigation into the dynamics of strategic planning and performance within South African higher education institutions.

2.2 Evolution of strategic planning in higher education institutions globally

This section delves into the evolution of strategic planning in higher education institutions globally, setting a foundational context to analyse its current state and challenges in South African universities. This historical perspective is essential to understand the global trends and practices in strategic planning, which provides a comparative baseline for the research questions focused on the South African context.

The concept and practice of strategic planning have their roots in military and business sectors. Tracing back to Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" (Tzu, 1994; Walden, 2020), strategic planning's importance in military campaigns laid early foundations. The concept gained significant traction in the corporate world post-World War II, especially highlighted in the mid-20th century by Drucker's works (Drucker, 1994). The adoption of military strategic principles for business competitive advantage (Simeone, 2020) marked a pivotal shift in the approach to strategic planning, emphasizing the need for organizations to forecast, set objectives, and plan for future challenges.

As strategic planning's role in the corporate world solidified, higher education institutions globally began to recognize and incorporate its principles. This integration marked a nuanced and multifaceted evolution within academia, shaped by socio-economic, political,

and global educational shifts (Holstein, et al., 2018). Historically, decision-making in higher education was more collegial and less bureaucratic, characterized by informal processes within decentralized faculties or departments (Ahlbäck Öberg & Boberg, 2023). However, this approach evolved, particularly in response to broader socio-political and economic landscapes (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022), leading to a transition from decentralized decision-making to contemporary structured planning methods, a trend analysed by various scholars including Bryson & George (2020) and George, Walker & Monster (2019).

The latter half of the 20th century saw universities adopting more formalized and centralized strategic planning paradigms (Holstein, et al., 2018; Biondi & Russo, 2022). This shift, influenced by globalization, competition for resources, and demands for accountability (Aleixo et al., 2018; Gupta, 2022), was also a response to the surge in demand for higher education and the intricacies of public funding (Jalal & Murray, 2019; Kostyukevich, 2022).

Nevertheless, the adoption of strategic tools like scenario planning and SWOT analysis, originating from the corporate world (Sawhney, Gupta, & Kumar, 2019), into academia raised critical concerns. Critics, including Bryson & George (2020) and Mittelman (2019), argued that these tools might not align well with the unique ethos and values of educational institutions. The debate revolves around the transferability of these strategies to educational settings and the need for customization to align with the core values and objectives of higher education.

This historical context of strategic planning's evolution in academia is critical for the current study's focus on South African universities. It raises pertinent questions about the applicability and efficacy of 'imported' strategic methodologies in the South African educational context. The research aims to explore the relationship between strategic planning and performance in South African universities, investigating the direct and indirect impacts of these global strategic methodologies on local performance. This exploration seeks to illuminate areas for innovation in strategic planning tailored to the specific needs and nuances of higher education in contexts like South Africa.

In sum, understanding the global evolution of strategic planning in academia, particularly its shift from decentralized paradigms to structured strategies influenced by global pressures and accountability, provides a crucial backdrop for this research. The study, set in the context of South African universities, aims to elucidate the implications of these global strategic planning strategies on institutional performance, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of strategic planning's trajectory in higher education. This analysis is vital for comprehending the complexities and underlying mechanisms in the relationship between strategic planning and performance in the unique socio-political landscape of South African higher education institutions.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In this section, the theoretical frameworks pivotal to the study are introduced, with a focus on how these theories elucidate strategic planning's impact on performance in South African universities. This analysis is foundational in understanding the internal dynamics and external influences that shape strategic planning within educational institutions.

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory: Originating from the works of Penrose (1959), Wernerfelt (1984), and Barney (1991), the RBV theory emphasizes the critical role of internal resources and capabilities in determining organizational performance. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of higher education, where strategic planning is both a resource and a capability that can significantly influence a university's performance trajectory. The works of Ali Mohsen et al. (2018) and Vasudevan (2021) extend this perspective, highlighting the connection between strategic planning and improved institutional performance. The RBV theory is instrumental in the study for understanding how the unique resources and capabilities of South African universities, such as knowledge bases, teaching methodologies, and research capacities, can be harnessed to enhance their performance, directly addressing the research questions focused on internal resource utilization.

Institutional Theory: This theory, discussed by Lewis et al. (2019) and stemming from sociology and organizational studies, posits that organizations are profoundly shaped by the institutional environments they operate within. It identifies coercive, mimetic, and normative influences, as outlined by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Scott (2001), which impact strategic decisions in higher education. This theory is useful for understanding how external pressures, such as governmental policies and societal expectations, shape strategic planning in South African universities. It provides insights into the external factors that influence strategic planning and performance, thereby addressing research questions related to the impact of external influences.

Contingency Theory: Highlighted by Woodward (1965) and further developed by Burns and Stalker (1961), Contingency Theory underscores the absence of a universal approach to organizational strategies. It emphasizes the need for alignment between an organization's internal characteristics and its external environment. In the context of South African universities, this theory sheds light on the importance of adaptability and responsiveness to changing educational landscapes, societal needs, and governmental policies. It informs how strategic planning can be tailored based on specific environmental factors and institutional characteristics, thus addressing research questions related to strategic planning's adaptability in achieving optimal performance.

In summary, each of these theoretical frameworks could provide a lens to examine the dynamics of strategic planning and performance in South African universities. The RBV

focuses on leveraging internal strengths, the Institutional Theory on understanding external pressures, and the Contingency Theory on the necessity of strategic alignment and adaptability. Together, they could form a robust foundation for investigating the key research questions of the study, offering insights into how strategic planning can be effectively implemented and how it influences performance outcomes in the unique context of South African higher education institutions.

However, within this specific study "Linking strategic planning and performance in a university in South Africa," the RBV theory was advocated for its applicability and relevance. The RBV theory, drawing from seminal works, emphasised the crucial role of an organization's internal resources and capabilities in shaping its performance. This perspective was particularly relevant for addressing the study's central research questions:

Advocacy for RBV in Relation to Research Question 1 (RQ1): This research question explored how managers in a South African university perceived the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes. The RBV theory was uniquely suited for this inquiry as it highlighted the significance of internal resources and capabilities in determining an organization's performance. The theory aided in understanding how effectively managing and leveraging internal resources such as academic expertise and institutional culture directly influenced the university's performance.

Advocacy for RBV in Relation to Research Question 2 (RQ2): This question sought to uncover the narratives and stories shared by university managers about the mechanisms linking strategic planning and performance outcomes. The RBV theory provided a framework to understand how strategically utilizing internal resources and capabilities led to specific performance outcomes. This perspective was critical for identifying and analysing the mechanisms within the university that drove this relationship, thereby contributing to understanding how strategic allocation of resources and development of capabilities led to desired performance outcomes.

Overall, the RBV theory offered a focused and context-specific examination of how internal resources and capabilities within a South African university influenced strategic planning and its impact on performance. By leveraging RBV's insights, the study aimed to provide detailed answers to the research questions, highlighting the vital role of internal resources and capabilities in shaping strategic direction and performance achievements in higher education institutions.

2.4 The history and development of strategic planning within South African universities

This part delves into the specific history and development of strategic planning in South African universities, including historical context, global influences, internal tensions, and recent developments. It directly relates to our research questions by providing a contextual background and identifying unique factors influencing strategic planning and performance in the South African higher education sector.

Strategic planning in higher education is a topic that has gained significant traction globally. However, its manifestation and development within South African universities are unique, influenced by the country's historical, socio-political, and cultural fabric (Bosire, 2017). This section argues that while South African universities have attempted to integrate strategic planning models similar to their global counterparts, the nation's distinct challenges and trajectory have necessitated unique adaptations, leading to a particular evolution of strategic planning within the sector. Furthermore, there are evident gaps in literature that delve deep into the South African perspective. Building on this foundation, the following subsections – Historical backdrop, Global influences and local adaptations, Tensions and conflicts, and Recent developments – will provide a detailed exploration of the intricate dynamics shaping the strategic planning landscape in South African universities.

2.4.1 Historical backdrop

The historical backdrop of strategic planning in South African universities, deeply intertwined with the nation's apartheid past, has had a profound influence on their current performance management strategies. The transition to democracy in the 1990s presented these universities with significant challenges such as addressing societal inequities, expanding access to education, and enhancing overall quality. These challenges necessitated strategic thought and planning, which, as Idahosa & Vincent (2018) note, was often more reactionary than forward-looking initially.

The early post-apartheid strategic planning in South African universities tended to be reactionary, focusing on immediate crises rather than long-term vision. Wolf & Floyd (2017) critique this approach for its lack of foresight, which often led to missed opportunities for significant growth and transformation. Swartz et al. (2019) further elaborate that such short-sighted strategies hindered institutions from fully capitalizing on potential advancements. This approach often resulted in resource misallocation, as noted by Jooste & Hagenmeier (2022), where universities, preoccupied with emergent issues, diverted resources away from initiatives with potentially greater long-term benefits.

This misalignment of strategic planning with broader institutional goals impacted the performance of universities. Without a well-conceived strategic plan, performance metrics could not align with the university's objectives. Aleixo et al. (2018) and Swartz et al. (2019)

highlight that such misalignment leads to inefficiencies and can lower morale among staff, impacting the overall quality of education. Additionally, reactionary planning eroded trust among university stakeholders, as observed by Wolf & Floyd (2017), destabilizing the institutions' broader goals and vision.

The pivotal objective of strategic transformation in South African universities during the 1990s was to achieve equity and broader access, as pointed out by Idahosa & Vincent (2018). However, without a future-oriented strategic planning approach, these critical objectives risked remaining unfulfilled. The reactionary nature of planning often neglected these long-term goals of transformation and equity, thereby impacting the universities' ability to serve as equitable and accessible centres of learning.

To effectively navigate the complex terrains of transformation, equity, and performance enhancement, South African universities require strategic planning that is both proactive and deeply attuned to their unique context. This shift from a reactionary to a proactive approach in strategic planning is crucial for these institutions to achieve their performance and transformational goals.

Understanding this historical development is essential for the current study, "Linking strategic planning and performance in a university in South Africa." By recognizing the impact of past strategic planning approaches on current performance management, the study can offer insights into more effective, equitable, and successful strategies for South African institutions. This understanding enables the study to identify better practices that align with the long-term goals and unique challenges faced by these universities, ultimately contributing to more effective educational outcomes.

2.4.2 Global influences and local adaptations

The historical development of strategic planning in South African universities, particularly their interaction with global influences and local needs, significantly impacts their current performance management strategies. This dynamic is evident in the way these universities have adapted global strategic planning models to their unique context, balancing international standards with local imperatives.

Influenced by global trends, South African universities initially sought to emulate strategic planning models from leading Western institutions, as noted by Bosire (2017) and Scott (2018). These models, successful in their original contexts, often emphasized aspects such as high-impact research and international collaborations. However, as Majee (2020) points out, the direct import of these models into South Africa's distinct socio-cultural and historical context presented challenges. South African universities, in their pursuit of global

academic excellence, faced the dilemma of aligning these imported strategies with local needs and objectives, such as addressing historical inequities and fostering social cohesion.

One example is the emphasis on global research prominence in Western strategic models. These models prioritized metrics like international publications and research collaborations, which often did not align with the pressing local issues and educational objectives of South African universities (Madela, 2020). The need to address the country's unique socio-economic disparities and historical injustices required a different focus, one that resonated with the local context and contributed to national development (Ngobeni, Chibambo, & Divala, 2023).

Another critical aspect is the influence of global rankings. While striving for higher positions in global academic rankings could enhance international reputation, it sometimes led universities to prioritize parameters misaligned with their local missions and goals (Carnegie, 2023; Gadd, 2023). This focus on global rankings could inadvertently result in neglecting the universities' commitment to local community engagement and nation-building.

In line with the approaches advocated by Eric Fredua-Kwarteng, universities across African countries, including South Africa, have initiated a process of customizing global strategic planning models to align with their distinct local contexts. This adaptation involves integrating global strategies with comprehensive layers of local insights and perspectives, emphasizing participatory planning and ensuring alignment with the universities' core missions (Fredua-Kwateng, 2023). The aim was to create strategic plans that not only met global standards but also addressed local challenges and priorities, ensuring a balance between international competitiveness and local relevance.

This nuanced approach to strategic planning has direct implications for performance management in South African universities. It ensures that performance metrics are not solely globally benchmarked but also reflective of the institutions' impact and relevance within the local context (Dampson & Edwards, 2019). By achieving this balance, South African universities can attain holistic excellence, fulfilling both their international aspirations and their national responsibilities.

Thus, the historical developments in strategic planning, shaped by both global influences and local adaptations, have crucially influenced how South African universities manage and measure their performance today. This history underscores the importance of contextualized strategic planning in achieving a balance between global standards and local needs, directly impacting the universities' performance outcomes.

2.4.3 Tensions and conflicts

The historical developments in South African universities' strategic planning have significantly impacted current performance management, particularly in navigating the tensions and conflicts between global aspirations and local responsibilities. These developments offer valuable insights into how universities can balance these competing demands to optimize performance.

For example, the legacy of apartheid in South Africa imposed a moral obligation on universities to address historical injustices and promote social cohesion. This requirement fundamentally influenced strategic planning, as universities had to focus on transformational strategies that prioritized equity, access, and inclusivity. However, these locally centered strategies often clashed with the global trend of pursuing excellence in research and teaching, as measured by international rankings and collaborations (Majee, 2020).

As universities strived to enhance their global standing, they faced the challenge of allocating resources between internationally recognized academic pursuits and local community engagement and development. This dilemma is evident in the strategic decisions regarding faculty responsibilities, curriculum design, and budget allocation. For instance, faculty members were often pressured to produce high-impact research for international journals while also engaging in community service and teaching that resonated with local contexts (Majee, 2020).

These historical developments have led to a fragmented strategic focus in some South African universities. Strategic plans that attempted to bridge global and local goals sometimes resulted in diluted efforts in both areas, impacting the overall performance and efficacy of these institutions. The resulting tensions necessitated a re-evaluation of strategic planning approaches to ensure they are holistic, acknowledging both global excellence and local relevance without compromising on either front.

In performance management, these historical tensions have underscored the need for more nuanced and flexible strategies. Performance indicators now need to reflect not only global academic standards but also the degree to which universities contribute to local societal needs and national development goals. This dual focus impacts how performance is measured and managed, calling for a more inclusive approach to strategic planning and performance evaluation in South African higher education institutions.

Overall, understanding these historical tensions and conflicts is crucial in shaping current and future strategic planning and performance management practices in South African universities. It highlights the importance of developing strategic plans that are sensitive to both global standards and local imperatives, ensuring that universities can fulfil their dual role effectively.

2.4.4 Recent developments

The recent developments in the strategic planning of South African universities, particularly since the early 2010s, have had a profound impact on their current performance management strategies. These developments, marked by a shift towards more inclusive and context-sensitive planning, demonstrate how universities have adapted their strategies in response to both internal and external pressures, significantly influencing their performance management practices.

One of the most significant recent developments was the #FeesMustFall movement in 2015. This student-led protest not only demanded financial reforms in tuition structures but also called for a decolonized curriculum that reflects South Africa's diverse history and culture (Griffiths, 2019). This movement highlighted critical gaps in existing strategic plans of universities, particularly in terms of social responsiveness and inclusivity. In response, universities like the University of the Witwatersrand and University of Pretoria began adopting more inclusive strategic planning approaches, involving a broader range of stakeholders such as students, faculty, alumni, and community members (Soudien, 2019; Idahosa & Vincent, 2019).

These recent shifts towards inclusivity and contextual relevance in strategic planning have directly impacted performance management in several ways. Firstly, they have led universities to redefine their performance metrics to include not only academic excellence and research outputs but also social impact and inclusivity. This redefinition acknowledges the role of universities in addressing societal challenges, an aspect underscored by the #FeesMustFall movement.

Furthermore, the move towards inclusive strategic planning has required universities to develop more adaptive and responsive performance management systems. These systems are now designed to be flexible enough to accommodate changes in strategic priorities, such as the incorporation of decolonized curricula and enhanced social engagement. As a result, performance management in South African universities has become more dynamic, aligning more closely with the evolving needs and expectations of diverse stakeholders.

These developments underscore the importance of understanding the historical and contemporary context of strategic planning in South African universities. They highlight how strategic planning processes, influenced by both global trends and local challenges, directly impact the ways in which these institutions manage and evaluate their performance. The lessons learned from these developments are crucial for informing future strategic planning and performance management initiatives, ensuring that they are not only globally competitive but also locally relevant and responsive to the unique socio-political landscape of South Africa.

In summary, the recent developments in strategic planning within South African universities, characterized by a shift towards more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches, have significantly influenced current performance management practices. These changes have led to the adoption of more broad performance metrics and the development of flexible performance management systems, ensuring that universities can effectively balance global excellence with local relevance and social impact.

Building on the previous discussions, the discussion now turns the focus to the seminal work of Biondi and Russo (2022) on integrating strategic planning and performance of universities. This study delves deep into the interplay between these two areas, shedding light on their mutual dependencies and potential impacts on the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education institutions.

2.5 Biondi & Russo (2022): Strategic planning and performance integration

The examination of Biondi and Russo's (2022) insights into the integration of strategic planning and performance management in Italian universities offers a valuable lens through which to view and adapt these concepts to the unique challenges and dynamics of strategic planning in South African higher education institutions. Analysing the work of Biondi and Russo (2022) offers insights into how strategic planning and performance management are integrated, laying a foundation for exploring these elements in South African universities. Their findings guide our investigation into the mechanisms driving the relationship between strategic planning and performance, a central focus of our research questions.

Biondi and Russo's (2022) study is pivotal in understanding the correlation between strategic planning and performance management systems in higher education institutions. Their investigation focuses on the extent to which strategic planning tools contribute to performance management systems and how performance management systems assist in reshaping universities' strategies.

The researchers use a qualitative approach, involving a multiple case-study analysis in the Italian context. Their methodology comprises documentary analysis and interviews as primary research methods. This approach helps to delve deeper into the complexities of the strategic planning-performance management relationship, offering significant insights into the area, which has been largely unexplored.

A noteworthy aspect of their study is its originality, as it connects two crucial research fields—strategic planning and performance management—in the context of universities, areas

which have mostly been examined independently. This bridging enables an understanding of the mutually dependent relationships these fields have with each other.

Biondi and Russo's (2022) compared strategic planning and performance management methodologies employed by three different Italian universities, highlighting the varied approaches and practices. The comparisons ranged from planning periods, strategic processes, team compositions, degree of participation, reliance on external consultants, the production of monitoring reports, the link between strategic planning and performance management, and the interaction with budget allocation.

The study underlines that the information arising from performance management systems should be periodically used to reshape strategies, advocating for a virtuous cycle between strategic planning and performance management systems. This suggestion holds significant implications for universities' governance bodies in supporting their decision-making processes while defining their long-term objectives and managing performance systems (Biondi & Russo, 2022).

An intriguing finding from their study is the varied approach to planning teams, with one university employing an internal team, another using a mixed team of internal staff and external consultants, and the third predominantly engaging institutional bodies and Vice-Rectors. Such differences in team formation could potentially influence the strategic planning and performance management process.

The pioneering work of Biondi and Russo (2022) forms a valuable foundation for this research, raising pertinent questions that guide this study. Building on their work, this research explores the following:

1. How do managers in South African universities describe and perceive the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes?
2. What narratives or stories do university managers share about the specific mechanisms that underlie the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes in their context?

Biondi and Russo (2022) found that the interaction between strategic planning and performance management played a significant role in shaping the effectiveness and efficiency of Italian universities. They emphasized the interconnectedness of strategic planning and performance management, noting that the utilization of information from performance management systems to periodically reshape strategies could lead to enhanced governance. Their work provokes further exploration into how such integration can lead to efficient and effective governance in higher education institutions, especially in the context of South African universities.

The first research question aligns with the key findings of Biondi and Russo (2022), asking how strategic planning, as investigated in their study, influences performance outcomes. This is a natural progression of their work, seeking to quantify the impact of strategic planning on university performance outcomes.

The second research question aims to delve deeper into the mechanisms underpinning this relationship. Biondi and Russo (2022) have already explored some possible mechanisms, such as the involvement of various teams in the planning process, the integration of strategic planning and performance management, and the use of information from performance management systems to reshape strategies. This research question intends to further investigate these mechanisms, and potentially uncover more, within the context of South African universities. This follows Biondi and Russo's (2022) call for further research into the mutual interdependencies of strategic planning and performance management.

The analysis of Biondi and Russo's (2022) study on the connection between strategic planning systems and performance management systems in Italian universities offers relevant insights for the South African higher education context. Their findings, which emphasize the interdependence of strategic planning and performance management, can inform approaches within South African universities, despite differences in challenges faced by Italian and South African institutions.

Shifting from the general findings of Biondi and Russo's (2022) study to a comparative perspective, this analysis juxtaposes the challenges and strategies of Italian universities with those in the South African context, aiming to glean cross-contextual insights and adaptations.

In examining the challenges faced by universities in strategic planning, there are notable similarities and differences between the Italian context, as explored by Biondi and Russo (2022), and the South African higher education landscape.

Similarities in Challenges

South African universities, much like their Italian counterparts, are deeply engaged in processes of modernization and governance reform. These institutions are striving to adopt new governance models and managerial methods to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. This journey mirrors the Italian experience, where universities have been evolving to meet contemporary expectations of governance in higher education.

Another shared challenge lies in the balance between strategic and performance goals. Both Italian and South African universities wrestle with aligning their strategic planning with performance management systems. Integrating these two aspects is vital for improved decision-making and setting long-term objectives, a common hurdle in both contexts.

Additionally, adapting to regulatory changes is a challenge that transcends geographical boundaries. Italian universities have been responding to shifts in regulations that impact strategic planning and performance management, a scenario mirrored in South Africa. South African universities, however, navigate these changes within a unique regulatory landscape shaped significantly by the post-apartheid era, adding a layer of complexity to their strategic planning processes.

Differences in Challenges

The historical and socio-political context in which South African universities operate presents distinct challenges compared to the Italian context. The legacy of apartheid in South Africa has deeply influenced the strategic planning of universities, necessitating a focus on addressing historical inequities and ensuring broader access and transformation. These specific challenges are less prominent in the Italian context, where the historical backdrop differs significantly.

In terms of global and local dynamics, South African universities face the dual challenge of aligning with global benchmarks while addressing pressing local socio-economic disparities and historical injustices. This balancing act is more pronounced in South Africa than in Italy, where the focus on global standards may not be as intensely juxtaposed with deep-rooted local issues.

Finally, the priorities in resource allocation in South African universities are uniquely influenced by the need to balance global competitiveness with pressing local issues such as social cohesion and transformation. This contrasts with the Italian scenario, where resource allocation may be driven more by considerations highlighted in the study by Biondi and Russo, such as global research prominence and institutional efficiency.

In summary, while there are overarching similarities in the challenges faced by universities in both Italy and South Africa, the nuances of the South African context - shaped by its historical, socio-political, and economic landscape - bring forth distinct challenges that influence strategic planning and performance management in unique ways.

In applying the insights from Biondi and Russo's (2022) study to the South African higher education context, it is important to consider the specific challenges and dynamics unique to this environment. Firstly, the concept of adopting a comparative approach resonates strongly with South African universities. By understanding the diversity in strategic planning across different institutions, as demonstrated in the Italian context, South African universities can better tailor their strategies to their unique circumstances, such as addressing the legacy of apartheid and ensuring inclusivity in educational access and opportunity.

Secondly, learning from the varied approaches employed by Italian universities, particularly in team compositions and planning processes, offers valuable lessons for South African institutions. This can guide them in developing strategic planning and performance

management processes that are both inclusive and representative of the diverse South African academic community. Such an approach could be instrumental in integrating various perspectives, from historical redress to modern academic excellence.

Finally, the emphasis on continuous adaptation, as advocated by Biondi and Russo, is highly relevant for South African universities. Given the dynamic socio-political landscape of South Africa, including ongoing transformation in the post-apartheid era, and rapidly evolving global academic standards, universities must remain agile. Adopting a strategy that allows for regular reassessment and adaptation of plans in response to both internal developments and external changes can ensure that these institutions remain responsive to their immediate context while striving for global competitiveness and excellence. This approach aligns with the need for continuous evolution in strategic objectives to meet both local and global academic challenges.

In summary, while there are distinct differences in the challenges faced by Italian and South African universities, the principles outlined in Biondi and Russo's study offer valuable insights. Their emphasis on the interconnectedness of strategic planning and performance management can guide South African universities in developing strategies that are both globally competitive and sensitive to their unique socio-political context.

Building on the insights from Biondi and Russo (2022), the focus now shifts to deepening the understanding of strategic planning's impact on performance outcomes in higher education. Applying these global insights to the South African context reveals several key aspects of particular relevance. These aspects include an emphasis on shared and collective efforts in strategy definition, participatory processes, and the integration of strategic planning with performance management. Each of these elements, resonant in the Italian study, has distinct implications and applications within the unique socio-political and educational landscape of South Africa.

The discussion and conclusions of Biondi and Russo's (2022) study offer several important insights that could be valuable for understanding strategic planning and performance management in the context of South African universities:

The study underscores the effectiveness of a shared and collective approach to strategy definition in public organizations, particularly in universities. This approach could be particularly relevant for South African universities, which must navigate a complex array of internal and external stakeholders with varying interests. Incorporating diverse perspectives could enhance the strategic planning process and ensure that it aligns with both local and global priorities.

The study highlights the benefits of participatory and formalized processes in strategic planning, as seen in the Italian universities analysed. South African universities could benefit

from engaging a wider range of stakeholders, including both internal and external actors, to ensure that their strategic plans are inclusive.

The findings suggest a need for a balanced approach that integrates both political vision and administrative execution in the strategic planning process. For South African universities, this could mean aligning high-level strategic goals with practical, operational objectives that address both academic excellence and social transformation mandates. The research emphasizes the importance of linking strategic planning with performance management systems. South African universities could strengthen their governance by ensuring that performance management systems are aligned with strategic objectives, thereby enhancing accountability and effectiveness.

The study indicates the importance of ensuring continuity and a medium- to long-term vision in strategic planning. This is particularly relevant for South African universities, which face the challenge of navigating a rapidly changing higher education landscape while addressing long-standing issues such as equity and transformation.

An important recommendation from the study is the use of performance information to periodically reshape strategies. This approach can be instrumental for South African universities in adapting their strategies to emerging challenges and opportunities, ensuring continuous improvement.

The study notes that performance management in universities should go beyond bureaucratic compliance and should be integrated into the management system. For South African universities, this means developing a performance management system that not only measures outcomes but also informs strategic decisions and organizational improvements.

In summary, Biondi, and Russo's (2022) findings provide a framework that could guide South African universities in developing strategic planning and performance management systems that are participatory, responsive, and aligned with both institutional goals and broader societal needs. These insights can help South African universities in navigating their unique challenges, ensuring that their strategic plans are dynamic, inclusive, and effective.

Having explored the foundational insights from Biondi and Russo (2022) regarding the integration of strategic planning and performance management in universities, it becomes imperative to situate these insights within a specific geographic context. Consequently, this brings review to the next essential subsection: an examination of strategic planning in higher education within the unique socio-political and cultural landscape of South Africa.

2.6 Strategic planning in higher education South Africa:

An in-depth study on strategic planning's role in South African universities, this section examines its influence on performance, driving mechanisms, and implications of insufficient

planning. It directly addresses our research questions by exploring how strategic planning impacts performance in South African higher education institutions.

As seen in the above section, strategic planning, long hailed as a crucial tool for organisations to traverse their unpredictable environments, has a special significance in higher education institutions (Sawhney *et al.*, 2019). Within South African HEIs, strategic planning's impact on performance remains a subject of profound intrigue. While Bosire (2017) and Mensah (2020) offer illuminating insights, an argumentative exploration is warranted to gauge the extent, mechanics, and complexities of this relationship.

2.6.1 Strategic planning's influence on performance:

While Bosire's (2017) study serves as a cornerstone for the importance of strategic planning in dynamic environments, its somewhat dated nature suggests the need for a fresh perspective, especially within the South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) context. Bosire notably emphasized the value of strategic planning in bolstering performance in these volatile settings, but his exploration lacked depth in illustrating the direct linkage between the two, particularly in the milieu of South African universities.

This research endeavour aims to plug that gap. By delving into the intricate nexus between strategic planning and performance in South African universities, it aspires to validate and potentially expand upon Bosire's findings. The study not only reevaluates the relevance of Bosire's conclusions in the current academic landscape but also delves into the specific catalysts that foster enhanced performance outcomes. Key areas of focus include stakeholder engagement and the harmonization of plans across different levels within HEIs.

Moreover, while Bosire heralded the importance of management buy-in and the efficacy of business intelligence reports, he did not delineate their direct impact on performance outcomes. Recognizing the foundational insights of Bosire's work but acknowledging its aging perspective, this research seeks to furnish a more updated and nuanced understanding of the variables underpinning strategic planning and its influence on performance in South African universities. The first research question, in particular, is geared towards shedding light on this critical dimension.

This research acknowledges the need for a contemporary exploration of this dynamic within South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Bosire's study, while foundational, leaves a gap in understanding the direct linkage between strategic planning and performance outcomes, especially in the context of South African universities. This research seeks to address these gaps by employing a methodological approach tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities within South African HEIs.

To explore the intricate relationship between strategic planning and performance, this research opts for a qualitative methodology. The choice of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, is driven by the need to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities in strategic planning within South African universities. This approach allows for exploring the perspectives of key stakeholders in these institutions, thereby providing rich, context-specific insights.

Furthermore, the qualitative approach is justified by the literature's suggestion of a lack of empirical data in this specific area. In-depth interviews and case studies enabled the research to delve into the specific catalysts and variables that foster enhanced performance outcomes, which Bosire's study only touched upon. This method provided a platform for stakeholders to share their experiences and perceptions, thereby uncovering the nuanced mechanisms that underlie the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes in South African HEIs (More details in chapter 4).

Additionally, this research focus on how stakeholder engagement and the harmonization of plans across different levels within HEIs impact performance. These areas, identified as key in the literature but not deeply explored in previous studies, can be effectively examined through a qualitative approach. By employing methods that allow for detailed exploration and discussion, the research will fill the gaps in existing literature, providing a fresh perspective and updated understanding of the dynamics at play.

In summary, the methodological approach of this research is directly informed by the literature review. The qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews, and a case study, are chosen to address the gaps and limitations identified in existing studies, such as Bosire's (2017) work. This approach is poised to offer a more context-specific exploration of the strategic planning-performance nexus in South African HEIs.

2.6.2 Mechanisms underlying the relationship:

Mensah's (2020) study provided insightful revelations on the role strategic planning plays in enhancing the quality of HEIs in developing countries. Rooted in his findings, Mensah advocated for a strategic plan (SP) as a transformative tool, crucial in directing HEIs towards their desired futures by streamlining paths to quality improvement. His analysis suggested numerous benefits: from offering wider participation in institutional governance, to prioritizing resources effectively, and even cultivating a sense of collective ownership through stakeholder engagement.

Key to Mensah's argument was the practice of environmental scans, both internal and external. These scans give institutions an understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, thereby underpinning a structured SP aligned to an institution's

core vision, mission, and values. Yet, despite the foundational insights provided by Mensah, a significant gap remains when contextualizing these findings within the realm of South African universities.

This study intends to dissect and contextualize the relationship between strategic planning and performance within the specific milieu of a South African university. By extrapolating from Mensah's theoretical foundation, the first research question delves into understanding how the principles of strategic planning translate into performance outcomes within South African universities. What facets of planning hold the most weight? And are there unique contextual variables at play?

Further, Research Question 2 delves deeper, aiming to comprehend the very mechanisms that act as conduits between strategic planning and performance. While Mensah points towards tools like stakeholder engagement and environmental scanning, this research seeks to explore the nuanced intricacies of these mechanisms in the South African context. How do they function? Are there additional mechanisms or facets that come into play, given the unique socio-economic and academic landscape of South Africa?

In essence, while Mensah's study provides a foundational framework, this study endeavours to not only build upon it but tailor it to the specificities of South African HEIs, enriching the dialogue on strategic planning and its role in performance enhancement.

Contextual Factors and Challenges: South Africa, with its multifaceted socio-historical landscape, offers a unique backdrop against which its Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) operate. Hadji & Osunkunle (2020) delved into the transformative journey of the country, highlighting the pivotal shifts post-democratization that resonated deeply within its higher education realm. One significant observation they made is the increasing propensity for universities to emulate corporate strategic planning models. This emulation has roots in the pursuit of efficiency and excellence. Yet, it is not without potential pitfalls.

Corporate models, primarily designed for profit-driven entities, prioritize efficiency, scalability, and returns on investment (Mittelman, 2019). While universities do benefit from operational efficiencies, their core mission revolves around education, research, knowledge dissemination, and community engagement (Tshishonga, 2020). Can a model that thrives on profit-maximization principles be seamlessly integrated into an institution whose ultimate goal is often intangible and societal? Moreover, the South African Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, which seeks to democratize and decolonize education, adds another layer of complexity. How well can corporate strategic planning models align with the tenets and objectives laid out in this act?

Seale & Cross (2015) introduce yet another facet to this intricate puzzle: the issue of leadership. The challenges faced by South African university deans are not solely about administrative duties; they encapsulate the nuances of steering academic excellence amidst

changing national mandates and global trends. Their research underscores the lack of adequate leadership training for these pivotal roles, posing a crucial question: Without the right leadership in place, how can strategic planning be effectively realized? Even if corporate strategies offer tools for efficiency, their success is contingent on informed and apt leadership (Hebron & Kilika 2020).

In the grander scheme, the lack of properly trained leadership might not only impede the strategic planning process but could also adversely affect the performance of the institution. This study, therefore, seeks to address these issues head-on, striving to understand the interplay between South Africa's unique context, the increasing corporatization of strategic planning, and the role of leadership in shaping HEIs' performance. The goal is to provide a holistic understanding that recognizes the intricacies of South Africa's HEI landscape, ensuring that strategic planning efforts are both efficient and in line with the broader educational mission.

2.6.3 Repercussions of inadequate strategic planning:

Inadequate strategic planning can lead to misaligned university functions, poor resource use, and diminished performance, while its absence can result in reactive decision-making and missed opportunities. Biondi and Russo (2022) emphasize that strategic planning's impact on performance is dynamic, with poor planning potentially triggering a negative feedback loop. This understanding is crucial for examining the relationship between strategic planning and performance in South African universities.

Swartz *et al.* (2019) provide a poignant exploration into the fundamental purpose of South African public universities, drawing attention to the critical balance between fulfilling a university's societal mandate and navigating the often-competing financial pressures. The financial challenges, which can be accentuated during times of economic and societal crises, bring to the fore a pivotal question: What consequences might South African universities face when strategic planning is either poorly executed or entirely absent?

Further insights come from the works of Jooste & Hagenmeier (2022) and Abugre (2018). Jooste & Hagenmeier, in their examination of South Africa's Policy Framework for Internationalisation, underline the importance of not only having robust policies in place but also effective strategies for their successful implementation. Their work suggests that without a clear, well-thought-out strategic plan, even the most well-intentioned policies could fall by the wayside, leading to lost opportunities for South African universities on the global stage.

On a broader note, Abugre's (2018) analysis of the challenges faced by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Sub-Saharan Africa emphasizes the imperative for policies

that are tailored to the unique contexts and challenges of the region. In the absence of strategic planning that considers these specificities, institutions risk implementing generic policies that may not address the root challenges or fully harness the potential opportunities within their contexts.

In synthesizing perspective from various authors, one can discern a theme: while strategic planning is universally acknowledged as critical, the specific contexts and nuances of the South African and broader university landscape make it even more essential (Dampson & Edwards, 2019). Bryson's (2017) claim concerning the limited grasp of the repercussions of insufficient strategic planning is accentuated by a chorus of scholarly voices. Bosire (2017) highlights the elusive link between strategic planning and performance, especially in South African HEIs. Mensah (2020) underscores the benefits of strategic planning for quality improvement in developing nations' HEIs.

Hadji & Osunkunle (2020) reflect on the complexities of South African universities adopting corporate planning models. Seale & Cross (2015) spotlight the potential pitfalls stemming from leadership challenges in strategic planning. Swartz *et al.* (2019) introduce concerns about the tension between universities' societal roles and financial pressures. And both Jooste & Hagenmeier (2022) and Abugre (2018) provide overarching perspectives on the implications of inadequate planning frameworks in broader African contexts. Together, these contributions fortify the case for a deeper exploration into the consequences of subpar strategic planning in higher education institutions. This study aims to address this gap, shedding light on the potential pitfalls and, more importantly, helping institutions develop pre-emptive strategies and measures to avoid them.

2.7 Strategic planning and performance in higher education institutions

This exploration of the relationship dynamics between strategic planning and performance, with a focus on the South African context, is pivotal to answering our research questions. It scrutinizes both direct and indirect impacts of strategic planning on performance outcomes, delving into specific case studies and examples within South Africa.

2.7.1 Interplay and outcomes

Strategic planning plays a crucial role in shaping the performance and outcomes of organizations, including universities, by providing a roadmap to align activities, allocate resources effectively, and make informed decisions (Bryson, 2017). While the importance of strategic planning is widely recognized, there is a need for a deeper understanding of its specific linkages with performance in the context of universities (Bryson & George, 2020). This

literature review aims to provide an overview of the current state of knowledge regarding the relationship between performance and strategic planning in a university setting, identify gaps in the existing literature, and highlight key findings and themes.

Research has shown that strategic planning positively influences organizational performance in various sectors (Dibrell *et al.*, 2014). Effective strategic planning aligns an organization's activities, resources, and decision-making processes, leading to improved performance outcomes (George *et al.*, 2019). However, the specific mechanisms through which strategic planning impacts performance in the university context require further investigation (Bryson & George, 2019).

In the context of higher education institutions, strategic planning is essential for adaptation, innovation, and long-term sustainability (Mensah, 2020). It helps universities define their mission, set objectives, and allocate resources effectively (Bryson & George, 2020). Strategic planning enables universities to respond to internal and external pressures, such as changes in student demographics, technological advancements, and funding constraints (Swartz *et al.*, 2019). By developing a strategic plan, universities can articulate their vision and direction, enhance coordination among departments, and improve their overall performance. Bryson (2018) emphasizes that strategic planning allows organizations, including universities, to clarify their vision, mission, and goals. It provides a roadmap for aligning activities and resources, which leads to improved performance outcomes.

In their study on strategic planning in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Majama and Magang (2017) found that strategic planning positively impacts coordination among different departments and functions within organizations. This finding can be extended to universities, as strategic planning helps foster collaboration and alignment among academic departments, administrative units, and support services. The work of Swartz *et al.* (2019) explores the role of strategic planning in public universities, highlighting its significance in improving overall performance. They argue that strategic planning enables universities to adapt to changing environments, set priorities, and allocate resources effectively, ultimately enhancing organizational performance. However, barriers and challenges hinder effective strategic planning in higher education.

Resistance to change, bureaucratic structures, limited resources, and insufficient stakeholder engagement are common barriers to strategic planning in universities (Aleixo *et al.*, 2018; Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). Bureaucratic structures and entrenched practices may hinder effective strategic planning, limiting the ability of universities to adapt and innovate. Furthermore, the lack of resources and capacity, both financial and human, poses challenges to strategic planning implementation (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). Insufficient stakeholder engagement and limited participation in the strategic planning process also undermine its effectiveness (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). Overcoming these challenges is crucial for

universities to enhance their strategic planning efforts and improve performance. The consequences of a lack of strategic planning can be detrimental, resulting in inefficient decision-making, lack of coordination, and failure to meet performance indicators.

2.7.2 The relationship between strategic planning and performance in South Africa:

Research on the relationship between strategic planning and performance in universities is limited, particularly in the context of South Africa. For example, Jooste and Hagenmeier (2022) conducted a study on the internationalization of higher education in South Africa, and while their focus was on a specific aspect, they noted a scarcity of research on strategic planning and its impact on performance in South African universities. This indicates a gap in the literature specific to the South African context. In addition, Swartz, Ivancheva, Czerniewicz, and Morris (2019) conducted research on the purpose of public universities in South Africa. They identified a gap in the literature regarding strategic planning and performance in the South African higher education sector. This study emphasizes the need for more research to explore the relationship between strategic planning and performance in South African universities.

However, studies conducted in other contexts provide valuable insights. Strategic planning has been found to positively impact organizational performance in various sectors (Dibrell *et al.*, 2014; George *et al.*, 2019). Effective strategic planning aligns an organization's activities, resources, and decision-making processes, leading to improved performance outcomes. It enables organizations to focus their efforts, allocate resources efficiently, and adapt to changing circumstances.

In the specific context of universities, the relationship between strategic planning and performance is intricate and multifaceted. Strategic planning plays a pivotal role in assisting universities in setting clear goals and objectives, thereby facilitating the alignment of various departments and units towards a shared vision (Bryson, 2017). It enhances the coordination of efforts, resulting in improved efficiency and effectiveness within the university.

Supporting this notion, Ali Mohsen *et al.*, (2018) conducted a study specifically examining the impact of strategic planning on institutional performance at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology in Malaysia. Their findings underscored the positive influence of strategic planning on institutional performance. The study emphasized that strategic planning enables the university to define its goals, align its activities, and allocate resources effectively, leading to improved performance outcomes. Thus, a well-designed and

effectively implemented strategic planning process contributes to enhancing institutional performance in the university context.

While the study by Ali Mohsen *et al.*, (2018) focused on a university in Malaysia and did not directly address South African universities, it aligns with the broader understanding that strategic planning positively impacts institutional performance in the university setting. It highlights the importance of strategic planning in establishing clear goals, aligning activities, and improving overall performance.

Additionally, strategic planning empowers universities to leverage opportunities, mitigate risks, and make informed decisions in the face of a rapidly changing higher education landscape. A meta-analysis conducted by George *et al.*, (2019) examined the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance across various sectors, including higher education. Their findings revealed a positive association between strategic planning and performance outcomes in organizations. Although their study encompassed different sectors, the identified positive relationship can be extended to the university context. Strategic planning in universities facilitates the establishment of clear goals, the alignment of departments, and the enhancement of overall performance.

By integrating these insights, it becomes evident that strategic planning in universities is a vital process that fosters goal clarity, alignment, and improved performance. The study by Ali Mohsen *et al.*, (2018) supports the understanding that strategic planning positively influences institutional performance, even though it does not specifically focus on South African universities. Furthermore, the meta-analysis conducted by George *et al.* (2019) reinforces the notion that strategic planning contributes to enhanced performance outcomes in organizations, including universities.

To recapitulate, the existing literature acknowledges the potential benefits of strategic planning in universities. However, there is a lack of understanding of how strategic planning specifically influences performance in the university context. This finding is supported by Bryson and George (2019) who emphasize the need for further research to explore the specific mechanisms through which strategic planning impacts performance in universities. They note the limited empirical evidence on the direct linkages between strategic planning activities and performance outcomes in the university setting. Similarly, Dibrell *et al.*, (2014) highlight the scarcity of empirical research investigating the relationship between formal strategic planning processes and performance outcomes in organizations, including universities. Collectively, these references underscore the gap in the literature and the need for more studies to enhance our understanding of how strategic planning influences performance in the university context. Further research is needed to explore the specific mechanisms through which strategic planning impacts performance outcomes in universities. Additionally, the literature gap lies in examining the barriers and challenges universities face in effectively implementing strategic

planning and the potential consequences of a lack of strategic planning on organizational performance.

Understanding the linkage between strategic planning and performance is essential to unpacking the role of strategic planning in universities and how it influences outcomes. Although the relationship between strategic planning and performance has been examined extensively in the literature, the findings are mixed and are characterized by a diverse range of perspectives. This section seeks to address the direct and indirect influences that strategic planning has on performance, based on existing literature.

2.7.3 Direct influence of strategic planning on performance

In the modern academic environment, especially within South African universities, the impact of strategic planning on performance remains a topic of notable significance. The prevailing viewpoint suggests that strategic planning substantially and positively influences organizational performance. Bryson & George (2020) support this view, arguing that strategic planning enables clear goal setting and directs organizational paths. These processes define resource allocation and collaborative efforts that enhance performance. Furthermore, they posit that strategic planning fosters a shared vision, prioritizes essential matters, manages resources, and regularly checks progress towards goals.

Jalal and Murray (2019) complement this perspective, arguing that strategic planning allows organizations to anticipate and navigate external changes, thereby directly boosting performance. Through strategic planning, organizations can predict evolving scenarios, capitalizing on opportunities, and mitigating risks.

However, within South African universities, the direct relationship between strategic planning and performance may not be as linear. Adoli & Kilika (2020) highlighted leadership's broader role within strategic management processes, emphasizing leadership's crucial role in enacting strategic plans, subsequently affecting performance.

Ahlbäck Öberg & Boberg (2023) investigated the evolving nature of higher education institutions in Sweden, focusing on the trend of decollegialisation, defined as a process in which decision-making authority and power within an organization, such as a university or college, shift away from faculty and academic staff (collegial bodies) and toward centralized administrative bodies or external entities. Their findings showed a transition from traditional collegial governance models emphasizing academic freedom to centralized models granting top management more decision-making power. While centralized models target efficiency, they might curtail faculty autonomy, affecting teaching, research, and recruitment quality.

This shift has implications for South African universities. If they follow similar centralization trends, it could reshape strategic planning's influence on performance.

Balancing efficiency and foundational principles of higher education, such as intellectual freedom, is critical. Sweden's experience shows the perils of prioritizing efficiency over academic freedom.

In the South African context, understanding how governance structures relate to strategic planning is essential. If South African universities exhibit trends seen in Swedish institutions, it could alter strategic planning's influence on performance.

Bolland (2020) detailed strategic planning's evolution from a foresight tool to an integral part of strategic management. He emphasized the significance of including employees in this process, given their intimate knowledge of daily organizational challenges. Their input makes strategic planning more holistic, enabling organizations to anticipate obstacles.

Yet, Bolland also observed ambiguities in differentiating strategic planning from long-term planning in some contexts, such as Ukraine. Misunderstandings can hinder strategic planning's full potential.

Applying Bolland's insights to South African universities, it's clear that for them to navigate their unique challenges, strategic planning should be a continuous, inclusive process. This process, informed by academic excellence and administrative efficiency, can steer universities towards their mission and core values.

In conclusion, while the direct influences of strategic planning on performance are recognized, the specific mechanisms in the academic environment need more exploration. There's a recognized gap in understanding how different stakeholders, including academic staff, administrative staff, and students, influence, and benefit from strategic planning. Addressing these gaps can provide an understanding of strategic planning's role in South African universities and beyond.

Given the aim and research questions of the study, the reviewed literature provides a foundational framework to pursue this investigation within South African universities. The literature underscores the significance of strategic planning in influencing performance outcomes in academic institutions.

Direct Influence of Strategic Planning on Performance: The prevalent viewpoint, supported by scholars like Bryson & George (2020), posits that strategic planning has a direct and positive impact on organizational performance. This sets the groundwork for exploring the nature and extent of this influence within South African universities, directly addressing Research Question 1.

Mechanisms Underlying the Influence: Dibrell et al. (2014) and Adoli & Kilika (2020) offer insights into how strategic planning capacitates organizations to forecast and adapt to external changes. Moreover, Bolland (2020) emphasizes the importance of employee inclusion in the strategic planning process. These insights provide initial leads to uncover the

specific mechanisms that drive the relationship between strategic planning and performance in the context of South African universities, catering to Research Question 2.

Contextual Factors and Challenges: The insights from Ahlbäck Öberg & Boberg (2023) on the changing dynamics of higher education institutions in Sweden, especially the trend of decollegialization, suggest that strategic planning doesn't operate in a vacuum. There are contextual factors, like governance models and academic freedom, which can potentially influence the effectiveness of strategic planning. Exploring similar contextual challenges and dynamics in South African universities will offer depth to the study.

Potential Repercussions of Lack of Strategic Planning: The literature review suggests that universities might risk compromising academic freedom, teaching quality, and research innovation if they don't strategically plan with these core values in mind. Such observations create a foundation for the study to delve deeper into the potential pitfalls South African universities might face if they overlook or inadequately implement strategic planning.

In essence, the reviewed literature sets the stage for an exploration of the relationship between strategic planning and performance in South African universities. By addressing the proposed research questions, this study aims to bridge the identified gaps in literature, offering a nuanced understanding tailored to the South African academic context.

2.7.4 Indirect influence of strategic planning on performance

While the direct influence of strategic planning on performance is well documented, the literature also suggests that strategic planning may indirectly affect performance through several pathways. Ali Mohsen et al., (2018) posit that strategic planning has an indirect impact on performance by fostering a sense of direction and shared understanding within the organization. The process of strategic planning helps align the organization's members around a common vision and goals, promoting coordination and collaboration. This alignment and collaboration indirectly enhance the organization's performance by streamlining efforts and reducing conflicts and wastages.

Moreover, strategic planning also indirectly influences performance by facilitating better decision making. By providing a clear framework for understanding the organization's current situation, future direction, and the challenges and opportunities in its environment, strategic planning helps inform the decisions made by the organization's leaders. These improved decisions indirectly lead to enhanced performance.

In sum, the literature suggests that strategic planning influences performance in both direct and indirect ways. By providing a clear direction, aligning resources, facilitating better decision making, and promoting alignment and collaboration, strategic planning directly and indirectly contributes to improved organizational performance.

These insights shed light on the first research question: "How does strategic planning influence performance outcomes in the context of South African universities?" The next section will explore the specific mechanisms underlying this relationship, addressing the second research question.

The nexus between strategic planning and performance, especially within the unique socio-historical backdrop of South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), is both multifaceted and consequential. Drawing from a multitude of scholarly works, it becomes evident that the magnitude and complexity of the relationship, and its resultant impact on universities, is influenced by myriad factors, ranging from leadership competencies, societal pressures, financial constraints, and the inherent challenges of adopting corporate planning models.

Given South Africa's distinct socio-political milieu, coupled with the global challenges and mandates universities face, the essence of strategic planning cannot be understated. Authors such as Bosire, Mensah, Hadji & Osunkunle, and others offer valuable lenses through which to view this dynamic. However, each also highlights areas in need of further exploration, underscoring gaps and nuances that could be pivotal for South African universities.

This research venture endeavours to weave these disparate threads into a cohesive understanding, addressing the very heart of the challenges while paving a roadmap for institutions. Through addressing the posed research questions, the study seeks not only to decipher the dynamic relationship between strategic planning and performance but also to provide actionable insights that South African HEIs can employ to ensure their planning processes are robust, contextually relevant, and poised to deliver exceptional performance outcomes. The aim is to fortify South African universities in their mission to deliver outstanding education, research, and societal contributions, even amidst the whirlwind of changing landscapes and pressures.

2.8 Summary of the reviewed literature

It is evident that the exploration of strategic planning and performance management in higher education, particularly within the South African context, is both vital and timely. This review has systematically traversed various dimensions of strategic planning, from its global evolution and theoretical underpinnings to the nuanced dynamics within South African universities. The seminal work of Biondi and Russo (2022), along with other scholarly contributions, has been instrumental in framing the research questions and guiding the methodological approach of this study.

The literature underscores the pivotal role of strategic planning in guiding organizational performance, especially in the vibrant and complex landscape of universities. Notably, the insights from Biondi and Russo (2022) reveal the intricate interplay between strategic planning and performance management, emphasizing the need for a cyclical and integrated approach. This understanding is crucial in the South African context, where universities face unique challenges shaped by historical, socio-political, and global influences.

Through this review, it becomes apparent that while the value of strategic planning in enhancing performance is widely recognized, there is a noticeable gap in understanding its direct and indirect impacts, particularly in the milieu of South African universities. This study aims to bridge this gap, offering a fresh perspective on the mechanisms driving the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes. The exploration of how managers in South African universities perceive and describe this influence, along with the narratives and stories about specific mechanisms in their context, is poised to contribute significantly to the field.

Moreover, this review has illuminated the challenges and barriers to effective strategic planning within universities, such as resistance to change and bureaucratic inertia. The consequences of inadequate strategic planning, notably in the realm of South African higher education, are yet to be fully understood and addressed.

In summary, this literature review sets a robust foundation for the ensuing research. By amalgamating insights from various scholarly works and contextualizing them within the South African higher education landscape, it highlights the lacunae this study aims to fill. The research is positioned to not only contribute to the academic discourse on strategic planning and performance management but also provide actionable insights for higher education institutions in South Africa. This endeavour seeks to enhance the strategic planning processes and, in turn, optimize performance outcomes, thereby strengthening the role of universities in both local and global contexts.

2.8.1 Contextual relevance and impetus:

Historically, higher education institutions, with their unique challenges, have sought innovative avenues to optimize performance, ensure quality, and maintain sustainability. The universality of such pursuits, underscored by strategic planning, quality assurance, and performance monitoring (Vumilia, 2020), establishes a common ground. Yet, the South African universities' landscape, marked by its distinct historical evolution, global influences, and nuanced local challenges, necessitates a specialized examination. The broad strokes of global

understanding, while informative, often fall short of painting the complete picture of strategic planning's intricate role in South African higher education institutions.

2.8.2 Choosing the appropriate theory

Three key theoretical frameworks were analysed for their relevance to this study: the Resource-Based View (RBV), the Institutional Theory, and the Contingency Theory. Of these, the RBV was chosen for its focus on unique resources and capabilities, particularly apt for South African universities with their rich and diverse assets. Within the RBV, strategic planning isn't just a process; it's a vital resource. It encourages institutions to harness their innate strengths, pivotal for both academic and operational success. Given the research's goal of understanding strategic planning's impact on performance in these universities, the RBV provides an apt framework. While all three theories have merit, the RBV aligns best with this study's focus and setting.

2.8.3 Identified gaps and challenges:

While strategic planning's role in shaping performance is indisputable, the depth and detail of its influence, especially in the realm of South African universities, are conspicuously absent (Bryson & George, 2020; Dibrell et al., 2014). The barriers to implementing effective strategic planning in universities—resistance to change, entrenched bureaucratic frameworks, resource limitations, and insufficient stakeholder engagement—have been observed, but not deeply understood within this specific context (Aleixo et al., 2018; Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). More so, the ramifications of lacklustre strategic planning and its direct repercussions on university performance have scarcely been explored in depth, leaving a significant gap in the academic discourse (Bryson, 2017; George et al., 2019).

2.8.4 Direction for the current study:

The literature's clear call is for a nuanced exploration of strategic planning's role within South African universities. Given the landscape's unique socio-political and internal dynamics, a mere replication of global best practices may not suffice. This study, therefore, endeavours to unravel the specific mechanisms through which strategic planning interfaces with performance in these universities. The goal is not merely to understand, but to provide a foundation for effective strategy formulation, uncover the obstacles that may stymie such efforts, and discern the potential outcomes of misaligned or absent strategic endeavours. This

focused exploration seeks to provide invaluable insights for university leaders, stakeholders, and scholars to harness strategic planning as a potent tool for institutional excellence.

Following the literature review, the subsequent chapter, Chapter 3, discusses the research questions and guiding propositions for this study. The chapter outlines the central inquiries into how key stakeholders perceive the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes and the narratives they share regarding the underlying mechanisms within the context of South African universities.

Chapter 3: Research Questions and Propositions

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research questions and propositions that guide this qualitative study. In the preceding chapter, chapter 2, I explored the relevant literature, uncovering gaps and challenges in understanding the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes within the context of South African universities. In this chapter, I convey the key research questions and propositions that guided this inquiry, enabling an exploration of this interplay.

3.2 Research Questions

This study is driven by two central research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1):

How do managers in a South African university describe and perceive the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes?

Research Question 2 (RQ2):

What narratives or stories do university managers share about the specific mechanisms that underlie the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes in their context?

The formulation of these research questions stems from the deficiencies highlighted in the literature review. While the critical role of strategic planning in shaping performance outcomes is acknowledged, research into the scope and particular mechanisms of its effect in South African universities remains scarce, as previously discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.8.3. These inquiries will serve as the beacons guiding this qualitative investigation, facilitating a more profound comprehension of the interplay between strategic planning and performance within the distinctive context of higher education in South Africa.

3.3 Propositions

In addition to our research questions, we propose several guiding propositions to frame our qualitative inquiry:

Proposition 1 (P1):

- Effective strategic planning plays a pivotal role in shaping performance outcomes in South African universities. This proposition aligns with the literature's recognition of strategic planning's significance in the global higher education sector (Bryson & George, 2020; Dibrell et al., 2014).

Proposition 2 (P2):

- Stakeholder perceptions of the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes may vary based on their roles and responsibilities within the university. This proposition acknowledges the diversity of stakeholder perspectives and their potential impact on strategic planning outcomes (Aleixo et al., 2018; Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022).

Proposition 3 (P3):

- The narratives and stories shared by university stakeholders will reveal a range of mechanisms underlying the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes. This proposition emphasizes the need to explore the multifaceted nature of this relationship in the South African university context.

Proposition 4 (P4):

- Challenges and barriers, such as resistance to change, entrenched bureaucratic frameworks, resource limitations, and insufficient stakeholder engagement, may hinder the effectiveness of strategic planning in South African universities, potentially leading to suboptimal performance outcomes. This proposition reflects the challenges outlined in the literature (Bryson, 2017; George et al., 2019) and underscores the importance of understanding and addressing these obstacles.

These propositions provide direction to our qualitative investigation, helping us frame our exploration of the intricate interplay between strategic planning and performance within the unique socio-political and internal dynamics of South African universities. The next chapter, chapter 4 delves into the methodology employed for this study. This chapter elaborates on the research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques, providing a blueprint of the research process.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This study aimed to explore the relationship between performance and strategic planning in a University in South Africa. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of organisational performance within the educational sector (Rafiq, Zhang, Yuan, Naz, & Maqbool, 2020)., the research was designed to adopt a qualitative approach. This choice was informed by the desire to delve deeply into managerial perspectives and experiences, which are often rich in context and complexity and therefore better captured through qualitative methods (Grodal, Anteby, & Holm, 2021). As opposed to quantitative methods, which seek to quantify variables and test hypotheses, the qualitative approach facilitated a more nuanced exploration of the strategic planning process and its impact on performance from the standpoint of those directly involved in management roles as advocated for by Shaver (2021).

To achieve this objective, the study therefore employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews to collect data from management personnel within the university. The research study employed an interpretivist, inductive approach with epistemological philosophical assumptions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, following guidance from Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2019) and Bryman (2016). This methodology allowed for the collection of rich insights through open-ended questions, which were then interpreted with respect to the research questions. Epistemological philosophical assumptions related to the researcher's beliefs about how knowledge is obtained (Bell et al., 2019). Interpretivism emphasized understanding the subjective meanings people attached to their experiences, while an inductive approach started with specific observations and drew general conclusions based on those observations (Bell et al., 2019). These philosophical assumptions and research approaches guided the data collection and analysis methods used in the study.

4.2. Choice of Methodology

Bell et al., (2019) argue that exploratory qualitative research methodology is particularly useful for investigating complex relationships and gaining a deeper understanding of relatively new areas of research. Saunders and Lewis (2018) argue that exploratory studies can provide new perspectives and understanding of phenomena that have received limited research

attention. As a result, this research study employed an exploratory approach to collect data given the limited research on the relationship between performance and strategic planning in higher education (Jooste & Hagenmeier, 2022). Furthermore, Bell et al., (2019) justify the use of qualitative research methodology by emphasizing the need to focus on "words" rather than numbers in gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

Thus, this study investigated the research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1):

How do key stakeholders in a South African university describe and perceive the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes?

Research Question 2 (RQ2):

What narratives or stories do university stakeholders share about the specific mechanisms that underlie the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes in their context?

The investigation delved into the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance in higher education institutions. It offered an analysis of this intricate interplay within the setting of South African universities. This exploration aimed to guide the creation of effective strategies to enhance organizational performance. Ultimately, the findings from this study were poised to support the progression towards sustainable and thriving higher education institutions.

4.3. Population and/or Research Setting

The target population of this research study was individuals in managerial positions within university settings in South Africa. As recommended by research scholars such as Bell et al. (2019) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), selecting a population of interest that has direct knowledge and experience with the research topic is a key principle for ensuring the validity and reliability of the research findings. Therefore, the selected population included Heads of Departments, Deans, Directors, Deputy Directors, Senior Directors, and Deputy Vice-Chancellors in university settings, as these individuals are positioned to provide valuable insights and perspectives on the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance in higher education institutions. Additionally, selecting individuals in managerial positions aligns with the study's objective of exploring the link between strategic planning and

organizational performance, as managers are responsible for implementing strategic plans and are accountable for the performance outcomes.

4.4. Unit and Level of Analysis

The selection of the unit of analysis is a crucial step in research design as it determines the level of abstraction at which data will be collected and analysed (Bryman, 2016). According to Kumar (2018:70), the unit of analysis is "the person or object from which the business researcher collects data. It answers the question of 'what' and 'who' is being studied in business research." In other words, it refers to the specific entity or phenomenon that is being studied in the research. The unit of analysis can vary depending on the research question and can include individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, or even entire societies. In this study, the unit of analysis was individual management personnel within the university, as they are the primary decision-makers responsible for implementing and executing strategic plans, hence will be able to provide valuable insights into their lived experiences. Focusing on these individuals would provide insights into their perceptions, experiences, and strategies related to strategic planning and organizational performance in the university setting.

The organizational level, which is the university, was the level of analysis in this study. This choice aligns with the research question that examines the impact of strategic planning on the performance of higher education institutions. According to Kumar (2018), the level of analysis should be determined by the research question and objectives. In this case, the organizational level provides a view of the effects of strategic planning on university performance. Additionally, focusing on the university as the organization under study is appropriate as it is the setting where the research will take place. Bell *et al.* (2019) emphasize the importance of selecting research setting that is relevant to the research question and allows for the collection of data that can address the research objectives.

Furthermore, by focusing on the university as the organization, the study explored various factors that affect the effectiveness of strategic planning in enhancing organizational performance. According to Abugre, (2018). the organizational level provides a platform to analyse internal and external factors that influence organizational performance. This analysis can inform the development of strategies to improve performance.

In summary, the choice of the organizational level as the level of analysis in this study is appropriate because it allowed for an analysis of the effects of strategic planning on university performance. It also provided insights into the factors that influence organizational performance. The choice is based on research principles that advocate for selecting relevant research setting and level of analysis based on the research question and objectives.

4.5. Sampling and Sample Size

The sampling strategy and sample size for this study was carefully determined to ensure the selection of appropriate participants. Purposive sampling was employed to select management personnel from the University, specifically targeting individuals in positions such as Heads of Departments, Deans, Directors, Deputy Directors, Senior Directors, and Deputy Vice Chancellors. This approach allowed for the deliberate selection of participants who hold key management positions and possess valuable insights and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The determination of the sample size was based on the concept of saturation, which involves collecting data until no new information or themes emerge from the interviews (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). Saturation ensures that the data collected is and sufficient for addressing the research questions. As such, the sample size for this study was approximately 12 participants. In reality I ended up interviewing 14 participants. This allowed for a thorough exploration of perspectives and experiences within the selected management personnel group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To support the decision to employ purposive sampling and determine the sample size through saturation, the literature provides relevant insights. Braun and Clarke (2019) discuss reflexive thematic analysis, emphasizing the importance of purposeful sampling in qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) highlight the significance of adequate sample sizes that allow for data saturation and in-depth exploration of research phenomena.

Therefore, by employing purposive sampling to select management personnel in the University and determining the sample size based on the concept of saturation, this study ensured the inclusion of participants who possess relevant knowledge and experiences. This approach is supported by literature in qualitative research design and will facilitate the exploration of the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance in South African universities.

4.6. Research Instrument and Data Gathering Process

The research instrument chosen for this study was semi-structured interviews, which allowed for a flexible yet focused exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives on the relationship between performance and strategic planning. The interview protocol was developed based on the research questions and aims of the study, ensuring that the questions aligned with the objectives of the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Pilot testing the interview protocol before data collection ensured its effectiveness and appropriateness for the study's objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The selection of semi-structured interviews as the research instrument was underpinned by literature. Bell et al. (2019) discuss the use of interviews in qualitative research, underscoring their capability to elicit rich and nuanced data. Braun and Clarke (2019) also accentuate the advantages of reflexive thematic analysis, which semi-structured interviews facilitate. These references validate the election of semi-structured interviews as a fitting method for gathering data.

Data collection was conducted through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the selected management personnel (See Appendix 1 for the guiding questions). Audio-recording was employed during the interviews to enable an accurate capture of participants' responses, ensuring that no valuable information was missed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The interviews were transcribed verbatim and stored on a password-protected computer to maintain confidentiality and data security. Additionally, field notes were taken during the interviews to document nonverbal cues and contextual information, providing additional insights during the analysis process (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013).

The chosen data collection process was in line with established qualitative research practices. The methodologies supported by Bell et al. (2019), Denzin and Lincoln (2018), and Guest et al. (2013) were incorporated into the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews and the capture of both verbal and nonverbal data.

Consequently, by utilizing semi-structured interviews as the research instrument and employing face-to-face data collection methods, the study aimed to do a thorough examination as far as was possible of the relationship between performance and strategic planning in South African universities. The adopted methodology was solidly rooted in the qualitative research tradition, facilitating the collection of in-depth and impactful data.

4.6.1 Adjustments in data collection process

During the course of this study, practical challenges arose in the data collection process, particularly concerning the method of recording interviews. Out of the 14 participants, only six consented to have their interviews recorded using Microsoft Teams. The remaining eight participants, citing concerns over the sensitive nature of the subject matter and personal comfort, declined audio recording of the interviews. This hesitance is understandable, considering the close-knit environment of our small university where most staff members are acquainted.

To respect the preferences and ensure the comfort of these participants, an alternate approach was adopted. For these interviews, detailed notes were manually taken instead of audio recordings. This adjustment was crucial in maintaining trust and ethical standards with

participants, especially given the sensitive nature of the topic and the potential implications within our shared professional environment.

The shift from audio-recorded to manually noted interviews required additional diligence. During these interviews, careful attention was paid to accurately capture key points, quotations, and nuances of the participants' responses. To ensure the thoroughness and accuracy of these notes, immediate post-interview reviews were conducted, allowing for the refinement and clarification of any ambiguities in the recorded information.

This modification in the data collection process, while not initially anticipated, underscores the dynamic nature of qualitative research. It also reflects a commitment to ethical research practices, prioritizing participant comfort and trust over methodological uniformity. While this change might have implications for the data analysis process, notably in terms of uniformity in data format and potential limitations in capturing verbatim responses, it also provided an opportunity for closer engagement during interviews and a deeper understanding of participant perspectives.

In summary, this reflection not only provides transparency about the research process but also exemplifies adherence to ethical standards and participant-centric research practices.

4.7. Data Analysis Approach

The data analysis approach for the study involved a manual thematic analysis of the interview transcripts. Thematic analysis is a recognized method in qualitative research for identifying and analysing patterns, themes, and relationships within data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The data were coded using a deductive approach, aligning the codes with the pre-established research questions and objectives of the study. This deductive coding process ensured that the analysis remained concentrated on the specific research goals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, an inductive approach was employed to discern emerging themes from the data. This permitted flexibility and openness to new insights and perspectives that surfaced during the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). By integrating deductive and inductive coding methods, a thorough analysis was conducted that addressed the research questions and permitted new themes to arise from the data.

The efficacy of this approach is endorsed by academic literature. Bell et al. (2019) expound on the implementation of thematic analysis in qualitative research, noting its efficacy in discerning patterns and themes across diverse cases. This method facilitated a systematic scrutiny of the nexus between performance and strategic planning.

Braun and Clarke (2019), Creswell and Creswell (2018), Denzin and Lincoln (2018), and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) all support the adoption of thematic analysis as an appropriate method for data analysis. They stress its relevance in qualitative research and its proficiency in identifying significant themes and patterns in the data.

Consequently, the application of thematic analysis with a blend of deductive and inductive coding techniques guaranteed a rigorous and inclusive analysis of the interview data. This method aligns with established qualitative research practices and theoretical frameworks, enabling the identification and examination of themes and patterns pertinent to the relationship between performance and strategic planning in South African universities.

4.8. Research Quality and Rigor

To ensure research quality and rigor, the study implemented several measures supported by the literature. Initially, a purposive sampling method was employed to select management personnel with expertise in the area of study (Bell et al., 2019). This strategy facilitated the selection of participants who had relevant knowledge and experience pertinent to the research topic, thus enhancing the credibility and depth of the data collected.

Secondly, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to maintain data accuracy (Guest et al., 2013). Audio recording preserved the participants' exact words, ensuring that no details were omitted during transcription, which bolstered the reliability and validity of the data.

Third, to improve inter-coder reliability and reduce bias, assistance was sought from an experienced qualitative researcher for co-coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The involvement of a secondary coder strengthened the integrity of the data analysis by offering diverse viewpoints and sustaining consistency in coding practices.

Fourth, member-checking was conducted to confirm the accuracy of the findings with the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This entailed presenting the research results or interpretations back to participants for their feedback, thereby supporting the confirmability and trustworthiness of the research by verifying the findings and ensuring the participants' perspectives were precisely captured.

To adhere to the principles of trustworthiness in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, the study implemented additional strategies. An audit trail was maintained, recording all research actions, decisions, and adjustments made during the study, which aided in the dependability of the research by allowing for the tracing and validation of the research process. Furthermore, all data were securely stored in an electronically protected file to assure confidentiality and mitigate the risk of unauthorized access.

By enacting these measures, the study assured research quality and rigor, in line with recognized guidance and scholarly recommendations in qualitative research (Bell et al., 2019; Guest et al., 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These approaches promoted the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings, thus enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the research.

The study upheld research quality and rigour through meticulous design and implementation, as substantiated by scholarly literature. Ensuring internal validity, the research process was transparent and systematic, allowing for potential replication. The study was designed to meet qualitative research's quality criteria, including credibility and transferability, with clear documentation of each step to facilitate auditing. By adhering to these standards, the study not only provided in-depth analysis within its context but also laid a foundation for application in broader settings, thus supporting the potential transferability of its findings.

4.9. Limitations of the Research Design and Methods

In aiming to elucidate the connection between strategic planning and organizational performance in higher education institutions, the study recognized several limitations that were critical for a thorough understanding of the findings. The anticipated limitations included:

Sample Size: The study had a relatively small sample size of approximately 10-15 participants. Despite attempts to select participants with relevant expertise, the findings might not fully represent the broader population. Nevertheless, this was counterbalanced by ensuring participant diversity across various roles, departments, and university levels to capture a spectrum of perspectives.

Generalizability: Given its specific focus on South African universities, the study's findings had limited applicability to other institutional contexts. Despite this, the study provided valuable insights by deeply exploring the strategic planning-performance relationship within this particular setting.

Subjectivity: The qualitative approach introduced potential subjectivity in data gathering and interpretation. While measures to bolster research rigor were taken, the researcher's and coders' perceptions could still sway the results. Rigorous methodologies like member-checking and collaboration with an experienced co-coder were implemented to bolster study objectivity and credibility.

Time Constraints: The study was bound by a set timeframe, possibly curtailing the scope of data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, the concept of data saturation directed the sample size, ensuring coverage of the research questions until no new themes were identified.

Despite these constraints, the study's value was upheld through its methodological strengths. Utilizing purposive sampling, collecting detailed qualitative data via semi-structured interviews, and applying thematic analysis for data examination, the research offered significant insights into strategic planning and performance in South African universities. The explicit acknowledgment of its limitations and the employment of robust methodologies reinforced the reliability and relevance of the research outcomes.

4.10. Ethical Considerations

In adherence to ethical standards, this study secured ethical clearance before commencing data collection, safeguarding participant anonymity and confidentiality. The process involved submitting a detailed proposal to the university's ethics committee, outlining the study's purpose, potential risks, and benefits, as well as data management procedures. Participants were informed about the study's objectives and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interviews. The consent form clearly stated the voluntary nature of participation and addressed data storage, privacy, and the use of data solely for research purposes. All ethical protocols as outlined by the university's ethical clearance form were meticulously followed, ensuring the study's adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Chapter 5: Results/Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents empirical results from interviews conducted with 14 management personnel. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, then transcribed and analysed manually. The chapter begins by profiling University X (UNIVERSITY X) as the case study. It then also provides the profile of the 14 interviewees. It then explores the identified themes, initially presented in a conceptual framework table, followed by a narrative presentation of the findings.

5.2. University X (UNIVERSITY X) as a case study

Established as a Technikon in 1955 and transformed into a University of Technology (UoT) in 1988, UNIVERSITY X is one of the six UoTs in South Africa and one of two in KwaZulu-Natal. It began with an initial intake of 15 students and has grown to a headcount enrolment of 14,651 students in 2020.

UNIVERSITY X is situated in a Township, within the Apple Metropolitan area, making it the only university of technology in a township setting. This location plays a significant role in the university's demographic composition and its approach to higher education.

The university's mission emphasizes technological, career-directed educational programs with a focus on innovative problem-solving research. It has three faculties: Engineering, Management Sciences, and Natural Sciences. A significant proportion of its enrolments are in the field of Science, Engineering, and Technology.

As part of its strategic goals, UNIVERSITY X places a strong emphasis on community engagement, aiming to leverage its resources to impact the Umlazi Township community meaningfully. The university's location and demographic composition reflect its commitment to providing access to higher education for historically disadvantaged and under-served students.

UNIVERSITY X faces challenges related to physical infrastructure and resource constraints. The university operates from a main campus and a north campus, with limited available land for expansion. Strategic initiatives and discussions are ongoing for potential expansion and establishment of satellite sites.

Initially focused on undergraduate education, UNIVERSITY X has made significant strides in research and development in recent years. This includes an increase in DHET-approved research publications and the registration of patents.

The majority of UNIVERSITY X students are African, reflecting the university's commitment to widening access to higher education for disadvantaged youth. The university has a balanced gender representation and accommodates a high proportion of students in residences, contributing to their academic success.

UNIVERSITY X navigates challenges such as student protests, budget reallocation towards pandemic-related needs, and the transition to hybrid teaching modes. Despite these challenges, the university has shown resilience and adaptability, particularly in maintaining financial sustainability and advancing academic outputs.

UNIVERSITY X's strategies align with global Sustainable Development Goals and national priorities, focusing on quality education and contributing to socio-economic development. This profile of UNIVERSITY X provides a background for understanding the context in which the research on the relationship between strategic planning and performance in higher education institutions is conducted.

5.3. Profile of the respondents

The following table, Table 5.1, summarizes the profiles of the participants by their appointment level and service duration.

Table 5.1. Profile of the Respondents

Pseudonym	Designation	No of Years in Position
Interviewee 1	Deputy Director (Support)	Less than 5
Interviewee 2	Dean (Academic)	Less than 5
Interviewee 3	Director (Support)	5+ years
Interviewee 4	Deputy Director (Support)	More than 10
Interviewee 5	Exec Director (Support)	Less than 5
Interviewee 6	Deputy Registrar (Support)	Less than 5
Interviewee 7	Head of Department (HoD) (Academic)	More than 10
Interviewee 8	HoD (Academic)	More than 15
Interviewee 9	Senior Director (Support)	More than 15
Interviewee 10	Director (Support)	More than 15
Interviewee 11	HoD (Academic)	5+ years
Interviewee 12	HoD (Academic)	More than 15
Interviewee 13	Senior Director (Support)	Less than 5

Pseudonym	Designation	No of Years in Position
Interviewee 14	Senior Director (Support)	More than 10

As shown in Table 5.1, the participants occupy managerial roles at the university, ranging from academic heads to managerial support staff, with tenure in their current positions varying from under five years to over fifteen years.

The findings indicate that a portion of the support staff, specifically Interviewees 1, 5, and 13, are relatively new to their positions, each serving less than five years. This group's fresh perspective could be pivotal as they navigate the strategic direction and operational goals of their departments.

Conversely, Interviewees 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, and 14 are well-established members of the university staff, each with tenures exceeding ten years. Their longstanding service may provide a stable foundation for strategic planning and execution, with their historical knowledge aiding in guiding the university's trajectory.

Interviewees 2 and 6, despite being in their positions for less than five years, occupy roles of significant responsibility that can influence departmental and institutional strategies. Their insights are particularly relevant given their recent assumption of these roles and the potential introduction of new strategic elements during their tenure.

Interviewee 3 and 11, both holding academic directorships and department head positions for over five years, represent a group with moderate tenure. This tenure provides them with a perspective that spans multiple strategic cycles and an opportunity to evaluate the impact of these strategies over time.

Interviewee 14 holds a unique position, having served for more than ten years, and transitioned from an academic role to a senior advisory capacity within the Vice Chancellor's office. This trajectory offers a vantage point that encompasses a broad scope of university operations and strategic considerations.

The distribution of tenures among the interviewees, encompassing both newer appointees and seasoned staff members, offers a dynamic blend of perspectives across the university's strategic planning participants. Fresh appointees likely introduce innovative approaches, while experienced individuals add depth with their institutional memory. This diverse mix of tenures and roles enhances the university's capacity for strategic development and change management, providing a multi-dimensional view that is essential for understanding the intricacies of institutional performance and change dynamics.

5.4. Overview of the findings

The qualitative analysis of interviews with management personnel at the university revealed key themes. These themes provide insights into how strategic planning influences performance outcomes and the underlying mechanisms in this context. The themes were identified through an interpretivist, inductive approach, focusing on the rich, descriptive data from semi-structured interviews. Below is a conceptual framework table outlining these themes, along with their corresponding constructs and theories.

Table 5.2. Overview of research findings

Theme	Constructs/Theories
Strategic Alignment and Accountability	Alignment with organizational vision and mission, Role clarity, Engagement in strategic processes, Accountability mechanisms
Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement	Diversity in stakeholder participation, Influence of internal and external constituencies, Stakeholder-driven strategic initiatives
Cultural and Operational Shifts: Emphasis on Change Management	Change management, Cultural transformation, Operational adaptability, Resistance to change
Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation	Resource alignment with strategic objectives, financial planning, Human and material resource management
Institutional Preparedness and Adaptability	Adaptability to educational and societal changes, Readiness for future challenges, Strategic anticipation, and response
Communication and Transparency	Clarity in communication, Transparency in processes, Stakeholder understanding and buy-in
Performance Management and Impact Assessment	Performance evaluation of strategic initiatives, Impact assessment, Performance management systems and metrics
Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development	Collaboration and conflict between executive management and academia, Influence in strategy formulation and implementation
Institutional Memory and Continuity in Strategic Planning	Leveraging historical insights, Strategic continuity, Learning from past experiences

This table presents a structured overview of the key themes identified in the research, each theme representing a crucial aspect of the strategic planning process and its impact on institutional performance. Next is a presentation of the first theme namely strategic alignment and accountability.

5.4.1. Strategic alignment and accountability

This theme examines the alignment of strategic planning with the university's vision and mission, and the role of individual and departmental accountability in executing strategic goals. It focuses on how the strategic planning processes at the university correspond with broader institutional objectives and underscores the importance of accountability in achieving these goals.

A notable variation in role clarity among interviewees significantly impacts their involvement in strategic planning. For instance, Interviewee 1 demonstrates a profound understanding of her responsibilities within the strategic planning division, emphasizing the direct impact of individual roles on the university's strategic objectives. She states, "In my role, I am responsible for overseeing the reporting aspects within the planning division. My primary duty involves compiling and packaging statistical information that aids in both planning and performance evaluation." (Interviewee 1). This statement underscores the crucial role of clear responsibilities in strategic planning.

In contrast, Interviewee 6 experiences a disconnect due to limited involvement in strategic planning, expressing, "I'm not really involved at the strategic planning level. Usually, I rely on my line manager to fill me in on what was discussed or decided in those meetings." (Interviewee 6). This lack of direct involvement contrasts sharply with Interviewee 1's experience, highlighting variability in role clarity and engagement in strategic planning processes across different institutional levels.

Further insights into the strategic planning process are provided by Interviewees 4 and 5, who discuss the challenges in integrating strategic planning with daily operations. Interviewee 5 notes a disconnect between existing activities and the strategic advancement of the institution. Similarly, Interviewee 4 points out a misalignment between strategic planning and budgeting processes, emphasizing the complexities of aligning departmental strategies with the university's broader goals.

The importance of effective communication and transparency in strategic planning is highlighted by Interviewee 3, who emphasizes inclusive communication for university-wide buy-in. "Effective communication of the strategy is crucial for collective ownership and successful implementation," she states (Interviewee 3), underscoring the need for participatory approaches in strategic planning.

Additionally, Interviewee 12 offers a unique perspective on balancing the preservation of the university's heritage with embracing innovation. She suggests strategies that resonate with the university's history and identity, advocating for a balanced approach in strategic planning.

The insights from newer staff members, especially those with less than five years at the university, bring additional depth to the discussion. These staff members emphasize the need for clear role definitions and active engagement in strategic planning, which are crucial for effective strategy implementation and individual accountability. Their perspectives highlight how well-defined roles and responsibilities can enhance the strategic alignment and accountability within the university.

Overall, the theme of strategic alignment and accountability emerges as a critical component in realizing the university's performance objectives. The insights provided by various interviewees reveal the multifaceted nature of strategic planning at the university and the challenges arising from misalignments and gaps in accountability mechanisms. The next theme, "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement," will delve deeper into the role of diverse university constituencies in the strategic planning process, an aspect pivotal to achieving strategic outcomes.

5.4.2. Inclusivity and stakeholder engagement

This theme focuses on the significance of including a diverse range of stakeholders in the strategic planning process at the university. It underscores the critical role of engaging academic staff, management, and potentially students, to ensure buy-in and effective implementation of strategic plans.

Interviews across different management roles within the university revealed a consensus on the necessity of diverse participation in strategic planning. Many interviewees highlighted the importance of engaging various stakeholders in strategic decision-making to foster a sense of ownership and commitment towards the university's strategic goals.

A common theme identified was the need for more inclusive strategy development processes. For instance, Interviewee 7 highlighted a critical deficit in stakeholder engagement, noting that past strategy development exercises often felt more like rubber-stamping pre-determined decisions than genuinely incorporating diverse inputs. Echoing this sentiment, Interviewee 8 advocated for a more inclusive strategy development process, emphasizing the importance of collective input from faculty, staff, and students. This perspective aligns with Interviewee 7's concern about past strategies being more about rubber-stamping than genuine engagement. Similarly, Interviewee 10 called for her department's early and significant involvement in the strategic planning process, emphasizing the need for meaningful engagement from different departments to enhance the execution of the strategy.

Interviewee 12 emphasized the necessity of a collaborative process in strategy formulation, involving a broad range of stakeholders. This approach is essential for genuine

engagement, as highlighted by Interviewees 7 and 8. Additionally, Interviewee 11 underscored the underutilization of academic expertise in strategic planning, advocating for a model where academics are central to strategy discussions, reflecting their crucial role in developing practical and relevant strategies.

Moreover, the interviews underscored the importance of aligning strategic initiatives with the university's broader vision and mission. Interviewees like 3, 2, and 11, among others, emphasized this alignment as essential for fostering engagements that benefit both the university and its partners. However, challenges such as delays in document approval and a lack of performance management systems were identified as impediments to effective strategic planning.

The role of communication was repeatedly mentioned, with interviewees advocating for clear, ongoing communication channels to ensure clarity and alignment on strategic intentions and expectations. Interviewees 8 and 9, in particular, highlighted the need for effective communication strategies. Interviewee 8 focused on the necessity of clear and ongoing communication for aligning strategic intentions, while Interviewee 9 observed a disconnect between strategic planning and daily operations within academic departments.

In summary, the theme of "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement" reveals the need for a more integrated, collaborative approach to strategic planning. The insights suggest that for strategic plans to be successful, they must be developed through a process that is not only inclusive but also aligns with the university's vision and mission, ensuring effective implementation and enhanced performance outcomes. The next theme, "Cultural and Operational Shifts," will be explored below.

5.4.3. Cultural and operational shifts: Emphasis on change management

This theme highlights the need for transformative changes within the university's environment to facilitate more effective strategic planning. Interviewees identified a 'toxic culture,' characterized by ingrained negative behaviours and attitudes within the university community. This culture includes pervasive blame, a lack of accountability, resistance to change, and factional groupings, all of which hinder collaborative efforts and strategic progress. These cultural issues create an environment where strategic goals are not taken seriously, leading to inefficiency and a lack of commitment in their execution.

A critical aspect impacting the university's strategic planning and operational efficiency is the pervasive blame culture. This cultural facet, as highlighted by several interviewees, directly relates to the research question exploring the mechanisms underlying the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes. Interviewees 6, 13, and 2 particularly emphasized this aspect. For instance, Interviewee 6 noted a general lack of accountability and

low morale, attributing these issues to the absence of a robust performance management system. This sentiment was echoed by Interviewee 13, who observed that the blame culture fosters an environment of scapegoating rather than collective responsibility. Interviewee 2 highlighted the gap between strategy documentation and practical enforcement, further illustrating the challenge of accountability and implementation within the university.

The impact of the blame culture on strategic execution is significant, as observed by Interviewees 4 and 11. Interviewee 4 noted the lack of integration between departmental strategies and financial planning, attributing it to a culture where strategic planning is not prioritized. This leads to misalignments and missed objectives. Conversely, Interviewee 11 emphasized the need for cultural shifts towards integrating academic achievements into strategic planning, advocating for a transition from a compliance-driven culture to one centered on academic-led growth.

While the majority highlighted the negative aspects of the blame culture, Interviewee 12 offered a different perspective. She emphasized the importance of leveraging institutional memory and experience in strategic planning, suggesting that understanding the university's history and challenges could help address the roots of the toxic culture.

The findings indicate that the pervasive blame culture at the university significantly hinders effective strategic planning and execution. It affects morale and accountability and impedes the university's ability to align its strategies with its vision and mission, as well as to meet performance targets effectively. Addressing this culture is therefore crucial in fostering a more collaborative, accountable, and strategically focused environment, aligning with the research questions that explore the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes and the underlying mechanisms.

Several interviewees, including Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and Interviewee 6, highlighted significant gaps in accountability within the university. For example, Interviewee 1 pointed to financial and human resource constraints and decision-making hesitancy, suggesting a lack of clear accountability structures. Interviewee 2 emphasized the disconnect between strategic planning and operational execution, revealing accountability issues in translating plans into actions. Similarly, Interviewee 6 critiqued the superficial nature of the strategic planning process and the absence of a performance management system, which is central to establishing accountability.

The lack of accountability notably affects the effectiveness of strategic planning and the overall performance of the university. Interviewees 4 and 11 brought attention to critical aspects of this issue. Interviewee 4 noted a disconnection between strategic planning and budgeting, highlighting an accountability problem in aligning financial resources with strategic priorities. Interviewee 11 pointed out the underutilization of academic expertise in the strategic

planning process, indicating a lapse in holding decision-makers accountable for integrating diverse and essential perspectives.

Interviewees like Interviewee 12 and Interviewee 14 offered nuanced views on accountability. Interviewee 12 stressed the importance of leveraging institutional memory in strategic planning, hinting at the need for accountable leadership aware of the university's historical context. Interviewee 14 emphasized the need for a collaborative strategic culture and rethinking the role of external governance, suggesting shared responsibility across all university levels.

The findings highlight a significant accountability gap at the university, impacting the effectiveness of strategic planning and the realization of performance outcomes. Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach, including the establishment of robust performance management systems, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and fostering a culture where accountability is ingrained in all aspects of university operations. This aligns with the research objectives to understand how strategic planning influences performance and the role of accountability in this dynamic.

Furthermore, resistance to change emerged as a significant theme in the interviews, with several interviewees expressing concerns about the university's adaptability to new strategies and processes. Interviewee 6 identified a pervasive resistance to change, attributing it to the prevailing culture within the university. He noted that this resistance was particularly evident in the face of new strategic initiatives, where entrenched attitudes and practices hindered effective implementation.

Interviewee 2 echoed this sentiment, pointing out the challenges in integrating new strategic plans with existing operational realities. He emphasized that the resistance was not only at the individual level but also institutionally ingrained, making it difficult to enact meaningful changes.

Interviewee 13 observed that the resistance to change was often due to a lack of understanding or alignment with new strategic directions. This lack of alignment, he suggested, stemmed from inadequate communication and engagement during the strategic planning process. Contrasting these views, Interviewee 12 argued for the need to balance change with institutional memory. She stressed that while adaptability was crucial, it was equally important to ensure that changes were aligned with the university's core values and history.

These perspectives collectively highlight the complexity of addressing resistance to change in the university context. The findings indicate that while there is recognition of the need for change, particularly in adapting to new strategic directions, there are significant barriers due to cultural inertia, lack of clear communication, and insufficient stakeholder engagement. This resistance has implications for the research question concerning the

university's ability to effectively implement new strategies and achieve its objectives, pointing to the need for a more nuanced approach that acknowledges and addresses these underlying issues.

The prevalence of factional groupings within the university emerged as a key factor hindering collaborative efforts and strategic progress. This issue was highlighted by several interviewees, who provided insights into how these groupings impact the university's cultural and operational dynamics.

Interviewee 4 noted that factional groupings often resulted in misaligned priorities between departments. He observed that these groupings created silos that impeded the flow of information and collaboration, which are essential for effective strategic planning and implementation.

Interviewee 7 emphasized that factionalism led to a lack of trust and cooperation among staff, which directly impacted the development and execution of strategic plans. She pointed out that these internal divisions often reflected in the execution of strategies, where different factions would either support or resist initiatives based on their interests rather than the university's overall goals.

Interviewee 10 highlighted the impact of factional groupings on decision-making processes. He argued that such divisions often led to decisions that favoured certain groups over others, thereby compromising the objectivity and effectiveness of strategic planning.

In contrast, Interviewee 12, while acknowledging the existence of factional groupings, suggested that these could be leveraged positively if managed properly. She proposed that understanding the dynamics of these groupings could lead to more inclusive and representative strategic planning processes.

The insights from these interviewees suggest that factional groupings within the university significantly impact its ability to effectively collaborate and progress strategically. These divisions not only affect the operational aspects of strategic planning but also the cultural environment, leading to resistance, misaligned priorities, and compromised decision-making. Addressing these factional divisions is thus critical for fostering a culture of collaboration and ensuring the successful implementation of strategic initiatives, directly relating to the research questions concerning the university's operational efficiency and strategic effectiveness.

Now moving on to the need for change management as sentiment by the interviewees, the theme of "Cultural and Operational Shifts" within the university highlights a compelling need for transformative changes to foster more effective strategic planning. This section focuses on managing change and overcoming resistance, aspects critical for implementing these shifts successfully.

At the core of the university's struggle with strategic planning and execution lies a deeply ingrained resistance to change. This resistance, as illuminated by the interviews with personnel like Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 8, manifests in a palpable disconnect between strategic aspirations and the operational realities on the ground. Such resistance is not merely a matter of individual reluctance but is deeply embedded within the institutional fabric, making the task of aligning new strategies with existing practices daunting.

Complementing this issue is the toxic work environment, a significant barrier to implementing effective change and strategy. As observed by Interviewee 13 and Interviewee 11, this environment is characterized by a blame culture and a conspicuous absence of collective responsibility, factors that critically undermine the efforts to introduce and manage change within the university.

Another crucial factor impacting this dynamic is the prevalence of interim leadership roles. Interviewees like Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 12 highlight how such temporary roles lead to short-term decision-making and a lack of consistent leadership, severely hampering sustained strategic focus, and effective change management.

In the face of these challenges, the university needs a multi-pronged approach to manage change effectively. One crucial strategy is fostering inclusivity in the development of strategic plans. As advocated by Interviewee 7 and Interviewee 10, involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders - from students and staff to department heads - ensures that the strategic direction receives wide buy-in and commitment. This approach not only promotes a sense of shared ownership but also enriches the strategic plan with diverse perspectives, enhancing its relevance and feasibility.

Addressing the gap between strategic intent and operational execution is a critical area of focus. The misalignments in budgeting and quality assurance, as highlighted by Interviewee 4 and Interviewee 10, underline the importance of grounding strategic plans in practical realities. It is essential for these plans to be not only visionary but also executable, with clear implementation pathways.

The role of enhanced communication and transparency is fundamental in this process. As emphasized by Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 8, the establishment of clear and open communication channels is vital. Effective communication ensures that strategic objectives are universally understood and accepted throughout the university, thereby reducing resistance, and fostering alignment.

Another imperative aspect is the establishment of robust performance management systems. The concerns raised by Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 12 regarding the absence of such systems highlight a significant gap in accountability and the measurement of strategic outcomes. Aligning individual and departmental performance with strategic goals can cultivate a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

Furthermore, the role of institutional memory, as emphasized by Interviewee 12, is crucial in change management. Acknowledging the university's historical context and past experiences provides invaluable insights for current strategic planning, helping to circumvent past mistakes and build upon previous successes.

To realize the benefits of these change management strategies, their integration into the broader theme of cultural and operational shifts is essential. The university's environment, characterized by resistance to change, factional groupings, and a blame culture, necessitates concerted efforts to foster a more collaborative, accountable, and strategically focused environment. By directly addressing these cultural and operational challenges, the university can better align its strategies with its vision and mission, thereby more effectively meeting its performance targets.

The theme of "Cultural and Operational Shifts" within the university is significantly enhanced by the interviewees' observations about a toxic work culture and resistance to change. These real-world examples from different levels within the university underscore the urgent need for transformative changes to facilitate more effective strategic planning.

Interviewee 6 highlights the pervasive lack of accountability and low morale, attributing these to the absence of a robust performance management system, which fosters a blame culture. This sentiment is echoed by Interviewee 13, who notes the environment of scapegoating rather than collective responsibility. The insights from these interviewees emphasize the detrimental impact of a toxic work culture on strategic planning and execution.

In addition to this, Interviewee 2 discusses the gap between strategy documentation and practical enforcement, highlighting the challenge of accountability and implementation. Interviewee 4 further explores the lack of integration between departmental strategies and financial planning, attributing it to a culture where strategic planning is not prioritized. This leads to significant misalignments and missed objectives.

Furthermore, Interviewee 11 advocates for a shift towards integrating academic achievements into strategic planning, suggesting a transition from a compliance-driven culture to one focused on academic-led growth. This perspective aligns with the need for cultural transformation within the university's strategic planning framework.

Interviewee 12 provides a unique viewpoint, stressing the importance of leveraging institutional memory in strategic planning. Her perspective suggests that understanding the university's history and challenges could help address the roots of the toxic culture.

The theme also delves into the significant resistance to change within the university, as identified by several interviewees. Interviewee 6 observes this resistance, particularly evident in the face of new strategic initiatives. Interviewee 2 and Interviewee 13 note challenges in integrating new strategic plans with existing operational realities, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach that acknowledges and addresses these underlying issues.

The existence of factional groupings within the university, as highlighted by Interviewees 4, 7, and 10, further complicates collaborative efforts and strategic progress. These groupings lead to trust issues and compromised decision-making processes, necessitating a strategic overhaul to address cultural and operational dynamics.

By integrating these perspectives, the discussion on "Cultural and Operational Shifts" becomes more grounded. It emphasizes the critical need for change management and cultural transformation in the university's strategic planning process, aligning with the broader research objectives of exploring the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes and the underlying mechanisms. This integration ensures a holistic approach to addressing the university's strategic challenges, fostering a more collaborative, accountable, and strategically focused environment.

In conclusion, the findings from the interviews underscore the complexity of managing cultural and operational shifts in the university context. Strategies like overcoming resistance to change, fostering inclusivity, enhancing communication, ensuring accountability, and leveraging institutional memory are pivotal. These strategies are critical for the university's strategic success and require an integrated approach that harmonizes cultural shifts with strategic objectives for effective implementation and improved outcomes.

5.4.4. Strategic planning and resource

The theme emphasizes the importance of integrating financial management with strategic objectives. It further expands to include human and infrastructural resources, advocating for an approach that aligns all resources with the university's strategic goals.

Interviewee 1 highlights the necessity of aligning financial resources with strategic objectives. In her role involving reporting and statistical analysis for planning, she underscores the challenges of synchronizing financial resources with strategic aims, particularly given constraints in both financial and human resources.

Interviewee 4 identifies a significant gap between strategic planning and budgeting at the university. He suggests that the lack of integration between these areas may hinder the achievement of strategic goals, advocating for an approach that views budgeting as an integral component of strategic planning.

Interviewee 10 emphasizes the importance of inclusivity and quality assurance in strategy development. He argues that a quality-focused strategy should be supported by a robust performance management system, incorporating accountability in both strategy formulation and resource allocation.

Interviewee 11 points out the misalignment of resources in the current strategic planning process, critiquing its failure to adequately incorporate academic expertise and resources. This indicates a broader issue in effectively utilizing all resource types in alignment with strategic goals.

Collectively, these insights advocate for a more integrated and inclusive approach to strategic planning. Effective strategic objectives are achievable only through the harmonization of financial management and resource allocation, ensuring efficient utilization of all resources—financial, human, and academic—in pursuit of the university's strategic goals.

The role of human resources in strategic planning is further emphasized by Interviewee 3, who highlights the importance of staff involvement and wellness in aligning human resources with strategic goals. This is reinforced by Interviewee 10's call for a strategy that necessitates the input and commitment of all staff members.

Interviewee 13 brings attention to the role of infrastructural resources in strategic planning. He discusses the challenges of infrastructural neglect and the misalignment between the university's strategic ambitions and operational realities, advocating for a strategy that encompasses both financial planning and infrastructural development.

The disconnection between strategic planning and its practical application, especially in financial and operational realms, is highlighted by Interviewees 1 and 4. This underscores the need for an interconnected approach where all resources—human, financial, and infrastructural—are integral to strategic planning. Such an approach ensures that strategic objectives are realistic and attainable.

Leadership's role in resource alignment is underscored by Interviewee 14. He notes the impact of inconsistent leadership on resource alignment and emphasizes the need for a stable leadership structure to ensure resources are allocated and utilized effectively.

Enhancing Strategic Planning with Focused Resource and Role Allocation

This theme delves deeper into the interplay between resource allocation and strategic planning at the university, highlighting the crucial role of effectively managing both financial and human resources in achieving strategic goals.

Interviewee 1 emphasizes the importance of aligning financial resources with the university's strategic objectives. She points out the challenges faced due to financial constraints, underscoring the need for a strategic approach that synchronizes budgeting with long-term university goals. Interviewee 1's insights shed light on the critical role financial management plays in strategic planning, especially considering the limitations in financial and human resources.

Interviewee 4 identifies a significant disconnect between the strategic planning process and budgeting. He observes that the lack of integration between these vital areas can impede

the achievement of strategic goals. Interviewee 4 advocates for a strategic planning approach that integrates budgeting as a core component, ensuring that financial planning is not an afterthought but a guiding element of the university's strategy.

Interviewee 10 highlights the interdependence of quality assurance and resource allocation in strategic planning. She argues for a strategy that is grounded in quality benchmarks and supported by a robust performance management system. This approach, she suggests, will ensure accountability and effectiveness in both strategy development and resource utilization.

Interviewee 11 points out the underutilization of academic expertise in the strategic planning process. He critiques the current strategy for not fully incorporating the academic resources available within the university, indicating a broader issue of misalignment in resource allocation vis-à-vis strategic goals.

Interviewee 3 brings to light the importance of human resource management in strategic planning. She discusses the necessity of staff involvement and wellness in aligning human capital with the university's strategic ambitions. This perspective is complemented by Ms. Mehta's emphasis on the need for inclusive strategies that engage all staff members in the strategic process.

Interviewee 13 underscores the role of infrastructural resources in strategic planning. He discusses the challenges posed by infrastructural neglect and the resulting misalignment with the university's strategic ambitions. He advocates for a strategic approach that encompasses financial planning and infrastructural development to meet operational and strategic needs effectively.

The interconnection between strategic planning and its practical application, particularly in financial and operational realms, is further highlighted by Interviewees 1 and 4. Their insights underscore the necessity of an interconnected approach where financial, human, and infrastructural resources are considered integral components of strategic planning.

Finally, Interviewee 14, underscores the impact of leadership in resource alignment. He notes how inconsistent leadership affects the effective allocation and utilization of resources, emphasizing the need for stable leadership to ensure that resources are allocated strategically and utilized efficiently.

In summary, this theme underscores the critical role of effective resource management in strategic planning. It acknowledges that achieving strategic objectives hinges on the harmonization of financial, human, and infrastructural resources. By integrating these diverse elements in a holistic and inclusive manner, the university can align all aspects of its operations with its long-term goals and vision. This approach not only enhances the university's capacity

to meet its strategic objectives but also ensures its relevance and success in the dynamic landscape of higher education.

5.4.5. Institutional preparedness and adaptability

This theme scrutinizes the university's readiness to navigate and adapt to emerging challenges, aligning closely with the broader focus on cultural and operational shifts, as well as the necessity for change management.

The interviews revealed a complex landscape of preparedness and adaptability at the university. Interviewee 1 underscored the critical role of data-driven decision-making in enhancing the university's adaptability. She highlighted the need for strategic plans to be informed by both historical performance and current resource constraints, emphasizing the importance of financial synchronization within strategic planning.

Interviewee 2, brought attention to the challenges in aligning strategic planning with operational execution, pointing out the absence of a performance management system as a major impediment. This gap between strategy and practice was seen as diminishing the university's ability to effectively implement strategic initiatives and respond to changing circumstances. Interviewee 4 highlighted a significant disconnect between strategic planning and budgeting. His insights suggested a need for greater integration between these two areas to ensure that financial resources align with strategic priorities, thereby enhancing institutional preparedness.

Interviewee 6 raised concerns about the general work ethic and morale within the university, linking these to the absence of a robust performance management system. His observations pointed to a broader issue of institutional culture that impacts the university's readiness to adapt and evolve.

Interviewee 7 touched upon the critical role of stakeholder engagement in strategy development. She suggested that past failures in genuine multi-stakeholder engagement, including the underutilization of academic expertise, have hindered the university's ability to develop strategies that are both innovative and feasible.

Interviewee 8 advocated for a more inclusive and collaborative approach to strategic planning. She emphasized the need for strategies to be adaptable to department-specific challenges and informed by ground-level feedback, highlighting the importance of a bottom-up approach in enhancing institutional adaptability.

Interviewee 9 underscored the importance of early and significant involvement of various departments, including marketing and communications, in the strategic planning process. Her perspective suggested that such inclusivity is vital for aligning departmental actions with overall strategic plans, thereby enhancing the university's performance.

Interviewee 10 and Interviewee 11 both highlighted the necessity for involving quality assurance and academic expertise in strategic planning, respectively. Their insights pointed to the need for a strategic approach that is not only but also integrates various aspects of university operations, from quality checks to academic contributions.

The overarching narrative from these interviews suggests that the university faces challenges in being fully prepared and adaptable to changing environments. Issues such as the disconnect between strategic planning and execution, lack of stakeholder engagement, and an entrenched resistance to change were recurrent themes. These challenges underscore the necessity for a strategic overhaul that considers not only the immediate operational needs but also long-term sustainability and adaptability.

In conclusion, the findings align with the research questions focusing on the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes and the mechanisms underlying this relationship. The interviews collectively indicate that for the university to improve its performance outcomes, a shift in culture, operational practices, and strategic thinking is essential. This shift should aim to foster an environment that is not only responsive to current needs but also proactively prepared for future challenges.

5.4.6. Communication and transparency

The theme of "Communication and Transparency" in strategic planning is underscored by the insights of various interviewees at the university, highlighting the necessity of open dialogue and clear information dissemination. This approach is crucial for fostering trust and collective ownership of strategic goals.

Interviewee 3 emphasizes the importance of transparently developing strategic documents and inclusive processes that engage the university community. Her advocacy for open forums and idea exchange among staff highlights the pivotal role of transparent communication in nurturing a sense of ownership over strategic initiatives.

Interviewee 4 draws attention to the disconnection between strategic planning and budgeting, underscoring a gap in clear communication aligning these two critical aspects. He suggests thorough communication strategies, like roadshows and sessions, to disseminate strategic understanding, underlining the need for transparency in planning and execution.

Interviewee 6 focuses on the necessity of thorough consultation with stakeholders in strategic development, critiquing the planning process for its superficial nature and pointing to a deficiency in transparent and meaningful communication.

Interviewee 8 calls for a more inclusive, bottom-up approach to strategy development, emphasizing the significance of clear communication channels for clarity and alignment on strategic intentions and expectations.

Interviewee 10 accentuates the role of marketing and communications in effectively disseminating and promoting the university's strategic goals. Her focus on coherent communication strategies aligning with university objectives reflects the essential need for clear and consistent messaging in strategic planning.

The collective insights of these interviewees reveal that for effective strategic planning and execution, prioritizing transparent communication and inclusive dialogue is crucial. This approach involves more than just sharing information; it necessitates active involvement of diverse stakeholders in the strategic process, fostering a culture of trust, collective ownership, and alignment with the university's strategic vision.

In summary, the insights of these interviewees reinforce the theme of Communication and Transparency. Effective communication strategies are integral to successful strategic planning, ensuring that all stakeholders are well-informed, engaged, and committed to the university's strategic vision. This approach enhances the overall effectiveness and coherence of the strategic planning process.

5.4.7. Performance management and impact assessment

This theme explores the alignment of strategic initiatives with the university's overarching vision and mission, underlining the essential role of accountability and performance evaluation in realizing strategic goals. The concerns over the lack of a robust performance management system, as echoed by several interviewees, are central to this discussion.

Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 6 bring attention to the challenges posed by interim leadership roles, noting their negative impact on strategic decision-making and execution. The prevalence of these temporary roles leads to hesitancy and misalignments between strategic plans and university needs, significantly impeding accountability, and strategic focus.

Interviewee 10 and Interviewee 11 highlight the detrimental effects of prolonged acting positions, which foster instability and adversely affect strategic direction, particularly in areas like quality assurance. They emphasize the need for permanent appointments and a stable leadership core to ensure strategic continuity and effective performance management.

Interviewee 12 and Interviewee 14 discuss the high turnover in leadership and the prevalence of acting positions, underscoring how inconsistent leadership leads to discrepancies in strategic direction and implementation. They advocate for a governance model that delineates clear roles and responsibilities, reinforcing accountability across all levels of the university.

The interviews also reveal the critical role of individual staff members in performance management. Interviewee 1, through her responsibilities in monitoring and evaluating strategic

initiatives, illustrates how individual roles directly impact the university's strategic outcomes. This is contrasted by Interviewee 6, who experiences a disconnect due to limited involvement in strategic planning, highlighting variability in engagement and accountability across different university levels.

Interviewee 4 and Interviewee 11 address integration issues between strategic planning and practical execution. Interviewee 4 notes a significant disconnection between strategic planning and budgeting, while Interviewee 11 calls for more active involvement of academic staff in strategic planning to bridge the gap between strategic intent and execution.

The importance of effective communication and transparent strategies in performance management is emphasized by Interviewee 3, highlighting the necessity for university-wide engagement and collective ownership of strategic initiatives.

Collectively, these insights underscore the need for a consistent and integrated approach to strategic planning and performance management. The university requires a participatory strategy involving clear roles, robust communication, and a reliable performance management system. Addressing issues such as the culture of temporary leadership and the integration of operational execution with strategic planning is pivotal for successful strategic initiatives.

In conclusion, these interviews highlight the importance of addressing leadership stability and performance accountability. By fostering a culture of committed, permanent leadership and inclusive strategic planning, the university can bolster its capacity to meet strategic objectives, ensuring its long-term success and adaptability in the dynamic higher education landscape.

5.4.8. Executive and academic division in strategy development

This theme delves into the dynamics between executive management and academic staff in strategic planning at the university. It explores the narratives and perceptions around how these two groups interact and collaborate (or lack thereof) in the formulation and execution of strategic initiatives, directly impacting the university's performance outcomes.

The interviews revealed a nuanced picture of this dynamic. Interviewee 1, in her dual roles within the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research division, provided insights into how executive decisions translate into strategic directives at the operational level. She articulated her role in aligning departmental activities with the broader strategic goals set by the executive management, indicating a top-down approach to strategy implementation.

In contrast, Interviewee 7, with a strong focus on academic involvement, presented a different perspective. She highlighted a disconnect between the strategic decisions made by the executive and the operational realities within academic departments. This gap, she

argued, often resulted in strategies that were not fully embraced or effectively implemented by the academic staff, leading to a potential misalignment with the university's core educational and research missions.

Interviewee 11, with over five years of experience in an academic role, echoed this sentiment. He emphasized the limited engagement of academic staff in the strategic planning process, leading to a lack of ownership and commitment to the execution of these plans. His narrative suggested a need for a more inclusive approach, where academics are not only consulted but actively involved in shaping the strategic direction of the university.

This theme of executive-academic division was further elaborated by Interviewee 12, who brought in the aspect of institutional memory and tradition. Her long tenure provided a vantage point from which she observed the ebb and flow of strategic initiatives over the years. She stressed the importance of integrating this institutional memory into the strategic planning process, ensuring that new strategies are informed by the lessons of the past and aligned with the university's enduring values and identity.

Interviewee 13, overseeing a critical operational department, provided a ground-level view of the challenges in aligning departmental strategies with executive-level decisions. His narrative highlighted the practical difficulties in implementing strategies that were often conceived without a thorough understanding of operational constraints and realities.

The narratives from these diverse stakeholders painted a picture of a university grappling with the challenge of effectively bridging the gap between executive decision-making and academic implementation in strategic planning. The insights pointed to a need for greater collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding between these two pivotal groups within the university structure.

In summary, the theme of Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development underscores the complexity of achieving strategic alignment and synergy in a university setting. It highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative environment where both executive management and academic staff can contribute meaningfully to the strategic planning process, ensuring that the university's strategic objectives are both ambitious and attainable.

The narratives from these diverse stakeholders painted a picture of a university grappling with the challenge of effectively bridging the gap between executive decision-making and academic implementation in strategic planning. The insights pointed to a need for greater collaboration, communication, and mutual understanding between these two pivotal groups within the university structure.

Building upon these insights, further exploration into the division between executive management and academic staff reveals a clear need for more collaborative and inclusive strategy development. The existing gap often results in strategies that fail to harness the full

potential of academic expertise, leading to strategies that lack practical applicability and deep-seated commitment from those responsible for their execution.

Interviewee 7 and Interviewee 11 highlight the often top-down approach in strategy formulation, where academic staff feel, their involvement is reduced to mere consultation rather than active participation. This approach can lead to a sense of disconnection and a lack of ownership over the university's strategic direction. Conversely, Interviewee 12 and Interviewee 14 offer perspectives that suggest the value of integrating academic insights and institutional memory into the strategic planning process, ensuring that strategies are not only visionary but also grounded in the university's core values and history.

These additional insights emphasize the critical importance of bridging the divide between executive decision-making and academic implementation. A collaborative strategy development process, where both executive and academic staff work hand-in-hand, can ensure that the university's strategic objectives are both ambitious and realistic. This approach fosters a shared sense of purpose and commitment, enhancing the university's capacity to achieve its strategic objectives effectively.

In conclusion, the theme of Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development underscores the complexity of achieving strategic alignment and synergy in a university setting. It highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative environment where both executive management and academic staff can contribute meaningfully to the strategic planning process, ensuring that the university's strategic objectives are both ambitious and attainable.

5.4.9. Broadening the scope of inclusivity in strategy development

This theme reflects the emerging necessity for a more inclusive strategic planning process at the university, as highlighted by various interviewees. It underscores the importance of involving a diverse array of stakeholders to ensure broad and effective strategies.

Interviewee 3, in her role as the director of community engagement, stressed the need for stakeholder engagement that goes beyond mere formality. She pointed out that true inclusivity involves giving a voice to all university community members, including students and staff, which is critical for achieving buy-in and commitment to the university's strategic plans.

Similarly, Interviewee 7 emphasized the lack of genuine staff engagement in the strategic planning process. She noted that strategies often felt imposed rather than collaboratively developed, leading to a disconnect between the university's strategic direction and the needs and perceptions of its academic staff. Ethel advocated for strategies that are

grounded in the university's cultural and operational realities to ensure their feasibility and effective implementation.

Interviewee 8 highlighted the importance of a bottom-up approach to strategy development. She suggested that those involved in day-to-day university operations are better positioned to contribute realistic and relevant strategic goals. Interviewee 8 also pointed out the critical communication gaps within the university's hierarchy, emphasizing the need for ongoing dialogue to ensure clarity and alignment on strategic intentions and expectations.

Interviewee 10 called for a collaborative approach where insights and expertise from different departments are integrated from the outset. She emphasized that early engagement of various departments can lead to a more complete and actionable strategy, aligning departmental functions with the university's broader goals.

Interviewee 11 championed the concept of full inclusivity, advocating for a strategic planning process where all divisions are consulted and actively contribute. He underscored the significance of individual commitment at all staff levels and suggested a shift towards a bottom-up approach in strategic planning.

In her extensive tenure, Interviewee 12 observed the benefits of incorporating a wide range of stakeholder perspectives into the strategic planning process. She recommended a collaborative approach for strategy formulation, involving stakeholders within and outside the university to ensure a multifaceted and practical approach.

Interviewee 13, the Senior Director of Support Services, highlighted the need for greater involvement of operational perspectives in strategy development. He called for transparent communication and genuine stakeholder engagement to foster a sense of shared responsibility and collective action towards the university's strategic goals.

In conclusion, this theme emphasizes the critical need for a more inclusive and participatory approach in strategic planning at the university. By broadening the scope of inclusivity, the university can develop strategies that are not only comprehensive but also resonate with the diverse needs and aspirations of its entire community. This approach is vital for fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the strategic direction, ultimately enhancing the university's performance outcomes.

5.4.10. Institutional memory and continuity in strategic planning

This theme delves into the role of institutional memory in strategic planning at a South African university, examining how past experiences and historical insights are leveraged to inform current and future strategies. This theme is particularly pertinent in understanding how the university's legacy influences its strategic trajectory and continuity.

Throughout the interviews, the significance of institutional memory in shaping strategic direction was a recurring theme. Interviewee 1 demonstrated a keen awareness of the importance of historical performance data in strategic planning. Her role in Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research allowed her to use past performance metrics to inform and shape future strategies, ensuring that they are grounded in the university's operational realities.

Interviewee 2 emphasized the need for strategic consistency and alignment with the university's vision and mission. His reflections on the strategic planning process highlighted the importance of understanding the university's historical context to ensure alignment and continuity in future planning.

Interviewee 4 brought a financial perspective to the discussion of institutional memory. His insights into the disconnect between budgeting and strategic planning suggested that a lack of consideration for past financial practices and learnings could hinder the university's ability to meet its strategic goals effectively.

Interviewee 7 underscored the dissonance between the developed strategy and the prevailing institutional culture. She pointed to a need for strategies that are not only innovative but also reflective of the institution's operational realities, which are rooted in its history.

Interviewee 12 with her extensive tenure, provided a unique perspective on leveraging institutional memory. She advocated for a strategic plan that respects the university's heritage while being open to innovation, suggesting that a deep understanding of the university's core values, and history is essential for effective strategic planning.

Interviewee 13 highlighted the challenges in aligning the university's strategic ambitions with the operational realities of his department. His insights indicated a need for strategies that consider the practical constraints and historical neglect faced by his department.

Interviewee 14, in a senior advisory role, stressed the importance of historical insights in shaping forward-looking strategies. His extensive experience provided a broad view of the university's strategic direction, emphasizing the value of institutional memory in avoiding past mistakes and building on successes.

Collectively, these interviews highlight the critical role of institutional memory in strategic planning. The insights suggest that understanding and integrating the university's history and past experiences into current strategic initiatives can enhance the effectiveness and continuity of these plans. This approach not only ensures alignment with the university's long-term goals but also fosters a sense of continuity and stability, crucial for long-term success.

The theme's exploration of the role of institutional memory in strategic planning is further enriched by the insights from long-standing university staff. Their deep understanding

and experience provide invaluable perspectives that can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of strategic plans.

For instance, Interviewee 12, with over 15 years at the university, emphasizes the importance of institutional memory in providing strategic continuity and learning from past successes and failures. Her perspective underscores the necessity of integrating this wealth of historical knowledge into current strategies to avoid repeating past mistakes and to build upon previous achievements.

Similarly, Interviewee 14, with a rich history spanning over 18 years at the university, demonstrates how a long tenure can offer a broad view of the university's operations and strategic direction. His insights from transitioning from academia to a senior advisory role highlight the value of incorporating a wide range of institutional experiences into the strategic planning process.

These additional viewpoints reinforce the theme's argument that understanding and integrating the university's history and past experiences into strategic planning are crucial for ensuring the strategies' relevance and sustainability. By doing so, the university can create a strategic roadmap that is informed by its past, responsive to its present needs, and forward-looking in its vision.

In conclusion, the theme of institutional memory and continuity in strategic planning is integral to understanding the impact of strategic planning on performance outcomes. The insights gathered highlight the importance of incorporating historical perspectives and institutional experiences into strategic planning. This approach ensures the development of strategies that are not only relevant to the university's current needs but are also sustainable and forward-looking. Leveraging the university's rich institutional memory is key to creating a strategic roadmap that is informed by its past successes and challenges and is adaptable to future developments.

5.5. Conclusion

Chapter 5 elucidated the complexities and dynamics of strategic planning and performance outcomes. By conducting semi-structured interviews with 14 management personnel, the chapter aimed to uncover insights and perspectives, revealing the multifaceted nature of strategic planning and its consequential impact on institutional performance.

The profile of respondents revealed a dynamic blend of experience and tenure among the university's management team. The group consisted of both newly appointed and long-serving staff members, ranging from academic to support staff, all in managerial positions with tenures varying from under five years to over fifteen years. This diverse mix provided valuable

insights into the strategic planning process, combining fresh, innovative approaches from newer appointees with the deep-rooted institutional knowledge of long-standing members. Such a varied spectrum of perspectives offered a nuanced understanding of the strategic planning environment at the university.

The exploration of ten key themes formed the core of the chapter, providing a deep dive into the multifaceted nature of strategic planning at the university and its impact on performance outcomes. These themes encompassed strategic alignment and accountability, inclusivity and stakeholder engagement, cultural and operational shifts with an emphasis on change management, strategic planning and resource allocation, institutional preparedness and adaptability, communication and transparency, performance management and impact assessment, the dynamics between executive management and academic staff in strategy development, and the role of institutional memory and continuity in strategic planning.

The findings from this chapter do not only underscore the intricate interplay between strategic alignment, stakeholder engagement, cultural shifts, resource allocation, institutional preparedness, communication, performance management, executive-academic collaboration, and institutional memory but also contextualize the achievement or lack thereof of performance outcomes within the higher education setting. These themes collectively provide essential insights into the challenges and opportunities present in strategic planning, as summarized in the table below:

Table 5.3. Insights and outcomes in strategic planning and performance

Theme	Critical Insights	Challenges	Opportunities
Strategic Alignment and Accountability	Importance of aligning strategies with the university's vision and mission; Role clarity and engagement in strategic processes	Variability in role and goal in Misalignment planning and execution	Improved strategic achievement; Enhanced role engagement and clarity
	Necessity of diverse stakeholder participation; Influence of internal and external constituencies	Past deficits in genuine stakeholder engagement; Underutilization of academic expertise	Broader and more effective stakeholder-driven strategies; Enhanced buy-in and commitment
Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement			Cultivation of a collaborative and adaptable culture;
Cultural and Operational Shifts	Need for cultural and operational change;	Resistance to change; Prevailing	

Theme	Critical Insights	Challenges	Opportunities
Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation	transformations; Emphasis on change management	blame culture and factionalism	Improved operational efficiency
	Aligning resources with strategic objectives; Integration of financial, human, and infrastructural resources	Disconnect between strategic objectives; planning Misalignment of resources	Enhanced resource utilization; Holistic and inclusive planning approaches
	Adaptability to changes and challenges; Strategic anticipation and response	Gaps in preparedness and Disconnect between strategy and practice	Proactive preparedness for future strategic adjustments
Institutional Preparedness and Adaptability	changes and challenges; Strategic anticipation and response	Disconnect between strategy and practice	Responsive strategic adjustments
	Importance of clear communication and transparency in processes	Lack of clear communication	Improved stakeholder ownership
Communication and Transparency	communication and transparency in processes	Superficial understanding and buy-in; Enhanced trust and ownership	
	Importance of clear communication and transparency in processes	Lack of robust Evaluation of performance	Improved performance outcomes; Effective assessment
Performance Management and Impact Assessment	strategic initiatives; performance management systems	Role of management Misalignments in execution	Improved performance outcomes; Effective assessment
	Collaboration and conflict dynamics between executive management and academia	Disconnect in strategic formulation and implementation	Improved synergy and alignment in strategy development
Executive Academic Division in Strategy Development	Leveraging historical insights; Emphasis on continuity	Challenges in aligning new strategies with institutional history	Informed planning; Building on past successes and lessons
	Historical insights; Emphasis on continuity	Challenges in aligning new strategies with institutional history	Informed planning; Building on past successes and lessons

This table provides a succinct overview of the key themes, highlighting the intricate relationship between strategic planning and institutional performance in a higher education

setting. Each theme presents its own set of challenges and opportunities, offering valuable insights into the strategic planning process.

Moving forward, Chapter 6 will delve deeper into these findings, contextualizing them within the broader academic literature. This comparative analysis will not only validate the research but also offer an understanding of how the university's strategic planning processes align with, or diverge from, established theoretical paradigms. The upcoming chapter promises to be a critical juncture in this study, bridging empirical findings with theoretical insights to provide a holistic view of strategic planning in higher education.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 marks a pivotal point in this study, synthesizing the empirical findings from Chapter 5 within the context of the literature and theoretical frameworks detailed in Chapter 2. The focus here is to interweave the practical insights from strategic planning and performance outcomes, as observed in a South African university, with the established academic discourse. This chapter is not just about aligning the 10 key themes identified in Chapter 5 with existing theories; it's an in-depth analysis that seeks to critically evaluate and potentially enrich the existing body of knowledge.

The analysis begins with an exploration of the "Strategic Planning Evolution and its Application in Higher Education." This section aims to juxtapose the historical and global perspectives of strategic planning, as explored in Chapter 2, against the specific experiences and findings from Chapter 5. The objective is to discern how global trends in strategic planning are reflected, adapted, or uniquely implemented in the context of South African higher education.

6.2. Strategic planning evolution and its application in higher education

The evolution of strategic planning in higher education institutions globally, as outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.2, serves as an essential backdrop to the findings detailed in Chapter 5. This discussion aims to link the historical and theoretical perspectives on strategic planning with the practical insights and experiences from a South African university.

The origins of strategic planning in military and business sectors, as highlighted by Simeone (2020) and Drucker (1994), reflect a focus on foresight, objective setting, and planning. These principles, when juxtaposed with the themes emerging from Chapter 5, such as "Strategic Alignment and Accountability," in Section 5.3.1 underscore the shift from theoretical planning models to actionable strategies within the academic environment. The role clarity and engagement in strategic processes indicated in section 2.2 OF Chapter 2 resonate with Drucker's emphasis on setting clear objectives and foresight in planning.

As higher education institutions globally adopted more structured strategic planning, reflecting the mid-20th-century transformations (Jalal & Murray, 2019; Kostyukevich, 2022), this trend parallels the "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement" theme in Chapter 5. The necessity of diverse stakeholder participation in strategic planning at the South African university mirrors the global shift towards more participatory and inclusive planning processes in academia, moving away from the previously decentralized models.

Moreover, the challenges faced by universities, as outlined by Mensah (2020) and George et al. (2019), in navigating globalization, resource constraints, and demands for accountability, find echoes in the "Cultural and Operational Shifts" (Section 5.3.3) and "Institutional Preparedness and Adaptability" (Section 5.3.5) themes of Chapter 5. The resistance to change and factional groupings identified by interviewees like Interviewee 6 and Interviewee 4, for instance, reflect global trends of adapting to evolving educational demands and socio-economic pressures.

The adaptation of corporate strategies, such as SWOT analysis, into academia, critiqued by Mittelman (2019) and Bryson & George (2020), has relevance to the "Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation" (Section 5.3.4) theme in Chapter 5. The experiences of Interviewees in aligning resources with strategic objectives and the challenges faced therein underscore the nuanced application of these corporate strategies in an academic setting.

The South African university's context adds a dimension to this global narrative. The themes of "Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development" (Section 5.3.8) and "Institutional Memory and Continuity" (Section 5.3.9) in Chapter 5 reflect a localized interpretation of strategic planning, where historical context and academic-executive dynamics play significant roles. This is in line with the broader question posed in Section 2.2 of Chapter 2 about the efficacy of 'imported' strategies in distinct socio-political contexts like South Africa.

In summary, the findings from Chapter 5 of this study highlight the practical application and challenges of strategic planning in a South African university. These insights, when viewed against the backdrop of the global evolution of strategic planning in higher education, offer a compelling narrative of how theory and practice intersect, diverge, and adapt to local contexts and challenges. The comparison illuminates not only the universality of certain strategic challenges but also the uniqueness of the South African academic environment in addressing these challenges.

Moving to the next section, "Theoretical Framework in Practice," we will align the theoretical concepts from Chapter 2, particularly the Resource-Based View (RBV), with the empirical findings of Chapter 5. This part aims to understand how these theories are reflected in the practical strategies and outcomes observed in the South African university setting.

Next, the focus shifts to "Historical Context and Recent Developments in South African Universities," exploring how the historical evolution of strategic planning in South African universities, as detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4, resonates with the observations from Chapter 5. This section aims to contextualize the empirical findings within the unique historical trajectory of South African higher education.

6.3. Historical context and recent developments in South African universities

In examining the historical context and recent developments in South African universities as detailed in Section 2.4, it becomes evident how these aspects have influenced the themes identified in Chapter 5. This discussion explores the interplay between the historical evolution of strategic planning in South African universities and the themes identified in Chapter 5, such as "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" (Section 5.3.1) and "Institutional Memory and Continuity" (Section 5.3.9), among others.

The apartheid legacy and subsequent transformation efforts in South African universities have directly impacted strategic planning, as detailed in Section 2.4.1. This historical context is reflected in themes like "Cultural and Operational Shifts: Emphasis on Change Management" (Section 5.3.3), where the necessity for transformative changes arises from historical inequities and the need for a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. The shift from reactionary planning to proactive strategic thinking, as critiqued in the literature, is echoed in the "Institutional Preparedness and Adaptability" theme (Section 5.3.5), indicating a move towards more forward-looking strategies in the face of evolving educational and societal challenges.

The influence of global strategic models and the subsequent adaptations made to fit the unique South African context (Section 2.4.2) resonate with the theme of "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" (Section 5.3.1). This theme underscores the importance of aligning strategic plans not only with global standards but also with the university's local mission and vision, reflecting the dual responsibility of being globally competitive while remaining locally relevant. The "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement" theme (Section 5.3.2) also mirrors the need for incorporating diverse local perspectives into strategic planning, addressing the gap between international best practices and local imperatives.

The tensions and conflicts arising from balancing global aspirations with local responsibilities, as discussed in Section 2.4.3, are evident in the "Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development" theme (Section 5.3.8). This theme highlights the challenges in aligning executive decision-making with academic implementation, a reflection of the broader conflict between pursuing international excellence and addressing domestic educational needs. Similarly, the "Performance Management and Impact Assessment" theme (Section 5.3.7) indicates the complexities involved in measuring performance outcomes that satisfy both global benchmarks and local objectives.

The recent developments in South African higher education, particularly post-2010, as described in Section 2.4.4, underscore the evolving nature of strategic planning in universities. This is reflected in the "Communication and Transparency" theme (Section 5.3.6), where the

emphasis on open dialogue and inclusive processes mirrors the shift towards more participatory and stakeholder-driven strategic planning. The "Institutional Memory and Continuity" theme (Section 5.3.9) also aligns with this development, indicating a growing appreciation for the university's historical context in shaping current and future strategies.

In conclusion, the historical context and recent developments in South African universities have significantly shaped the themes of strategic planning identified in Chapter 5. The interplay between historical influences, global-local dynamics, internal tensions, and recent shifts in strategic thinking demonstrates the complex and multi-faceted nature of strategic planning in higher education. Understanding these themes within the unique South African context is crucial for developing effective, relevant, and sustainable strategies that not only advance the universities' global standing but also address local challenges and priorities.

Moving forward, the discussion progresses to "Interplay Between Strategic Planning and Performance," where the insights from Biondi & Russo (2022) on strategic planning and performance integration are examined in the context of the findings from Chapter 5. This section will delve into how strategic planning influences performance in higher education, with a specific focus on the dynamics within South African universities as explored in Section 2.7 of Chapter 2.

6.5. The interplay between strategic planning and performance

The interplay between strategic planning and performance in higher education, particularly in South African universities, is intricately explored by integrating insights from Biondi & Russo's 2022 study, as outlined in Section 2.5, with findings from Chapter 5. This approach is enriched further by focusing on the specific contexts described in Sections 2.5 and 2.7.

Biondi & Russo's study serves as a foundational piece, elucidating the reciprocal relationship between strategic planning and performance management systems in higher education. Their research in Italian universities sheds light on how strategic planning is influenced by and influences performance management systems, a relationship crucial to understanding the dynamics within South African universities. The current study's Chapter 5 findings, particularly themes like "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" (Section 5.3.1) and "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement" (Section 5.3.2), mirror the dynamic nature of strategic planning highlighted by Biondi & Russo.

In the South African context, strategic planning emerges as a pivotal tool for addressing challenges such as funding limitations and societal changes. Chapter 5 indicates a growing recognition in South African universities of the need for flexible and responsive strategic plans, echoing Biondi & Russo's observations about strategic planning's evolving nature in response

to performance management. The "Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development" theme (Section 5.3.8) in Chapter 5, highlighting diverse planning approaches, aligns with Biondi & Russo's findings on varied planning team approaches and their impact on the strategic process.

Biondi & Russo's emphasis on stakeholder integration in the strategic process resonates with the South African higher education sector. Chapter 5 themes suggest a similar acknowledgment of the value of diverse perspectives in strategic planning. This approach enriches the planning process, ensuring the strategies developed are and reflective of the entire university community's needs.

Moreover, the concept of using performance management system feedback to reshape strategic planning, as advocated by Biondi & Russo, finds echoes in the South African context. "Institutional Memory and Continuity in Strategic Planning" (Section 5.3.9) in Chapter 5 underscores the importance of leveraging historical data and experiences in shaping future strategies, mirroring Biondi & Russo's approach of a cyclical, feedback-informed strategic planning process.

The exploration presented in Chapter 5 of the study adds substantial depth to the theoretical underpinnings discussed in Section 2.7, particularly concerning strategic planning in South African universities. This chapter provides a pragmatic perspective, illuminating how universities in South Africa are actively translating strategic planning principles into tangible practices and outcomes.

One of the critical insights from Chapter 5 is the emphasis on the alignment of institutional goals with the operational realities faced by South African universities. This alignment is a delicate balancing act, requiring a synergy between executive leadership and academic input. The findings suggest that successful strategic planning is not just about setting lofty goals but also involves integrating these goals with the day-to-day operations and unique challenges of the university. For instance, the theme of "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" (Section 5.3.1) reveals how universities are attempting to match their strategic objectives with their operational capacities, ensuring that plans are not only aspirational but also feasible and effectively implemented.

Moreover, Chapter 5 highlights the significance of inclusivity in the strategic planning process. The findings underscore that for strategic plans to be effective and, they must involve a diverse range of stakeholders from within the university community. This need for inclusivity extends beyond mere participation; it involves active collaboration and contribution from various university departments, including both executive and academic units. Such collaboration is critical in ensuring that the strategies developed are well-rounded, address multiple perspectives, and are more likely to gain widespread acceptance and commitment across the university.

Adaptability emerges as another key theme from Chapter 5. In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, characterized by technological advancements, changing student demographics, and fluctuating funding models, South African universities are recognizing the need for strategic plans to be flexible and responsive. This adaptability allows universities to adjust their strategies in response to new challenges and opportunities, ensuring their continued relevance and effectiveness.

Furthermore, the insights from Chapter 5 align with the overarching theme of strategic planning in Section 2.7. This section emphasizes strategic planning as an essential tool for navigating the unique challenges faced by South African higher education institutions. The practical examples and findings from Chapter 5 serve to illustrate how strategic planning is being employed to address these challenges, offering a blueprint for other universities facing similar issues.

In conclusion, the intricate interplay between strategic planning and performance within South African universities is both multifaceted and dynamic, a theme that resonates strongly through the combined analysis of Biondi & Russo's insights, the empirical findings from Chapter 5, and the discussions in Sections 2.5 and 2.7. This exploration provides a rich understanding of the practical application of strategic planning in these universities, highlighting the critical importance of aligning institutional goals with the realities of university operations.

The study emphasizes the need for inclusivity and collaboration in the development of strategic plans, underscoring the value of incorporating diverse perspectives to ensure strategies are well-rounded and widely accepted. Adaptability is identified as a key necessity, allowing universities to remain agile and responsive in an ever-changing educational landscape, marked by technological advancements, shifts in student demographics, and evolving funding models.

These insights collectively illuminate the current state of strategic planning in South African higher education institutions, underlining the significance of strategic planning as an essential tool in navigating unique challenges. This in-depth analysis not only sheds light on the areas where strategic planning is successfully influencing performance outcomes but also identifies areas requiring improvement and further research.

By bridging theoretical concepts with practical findings, this study contributes significantly to the discourse on strategic planning in higher education. It offers a framework for understanding how strategic planning can be effectively harnessed to drive performance outcomes, focusing on the mechanisms that underpin this relationship. The integration of these diverse insights provides a nuanced perspective, essential for educational leaders and policymakers in shaping the future of strategic planning in South African universities and beyond.

Next, the analysis shifts to explore "Strategic Planning's Role in South African Universities," diving into the nuances of how strategic planning shapes university performance and the consequences of inadequate planning, as discussed in Section 2.6. This segment will interweave the theoretical perspectives with the empirical evidence from Chapter 5, focusing on the distinct challenges and dynamics of strategic planning within the South African higher education context.

6.6. Strategic planning's role in South African universities

In the subsection, the aim is for the analysis to bridge the theoretical perspectives with the empirical findings. This discussion particularly illuminates how strategic planning within South African universities influences performance and examines the implications of insufficient planning in this context.

The insights from Chapter 2, specifically Bosire (2017) and Mensah (2020) provide a foundational understanding of the importance of strategic planning in dynamic environments, which is particularly pertinent in the South African higher education landscape. Bosire's study, while highlighting the value of strategic planning in reinforcing performance, leaves room for a deeper exploration of its direct linkage to performance outcomes in South African universities. The current research seeks to fill this gap by examining how strategic planning at the university studied aligns with and impacts performance outcomes. This involves a critical look at themes such as "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" (Section 5.3.1) and "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement" (Section 5.3.2), which underscore the importance of aligning university activities with its strategic goals and involving diverse stakeholders in the planning process.

Mensah's emphasis on strategic planning as a transformative tool for quality improvement in HEIs is reflected in the themes from Chapter 5. The role of environmental scans and stakeholder engagement, as highlighted in the "Communication and Transparency" (Section 5.3.6) and "Performance Management and Impact Assessment" (Section 5.3.7) themes, echo Mensah's findings. These aspects of strategic planning are essential for understanding how they translate into improved performance outcomes within the South African context.

The unique socio-political and educational landscape of South Africa, as discussed by Hadji & Osunkunle (2020), adds complexity to the adoption of strategic planning models. The emulation of corporate models in South African universities raises questions about their alignment with educational mandates, a concern that resonates with the "Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development" (Section 5.3.8) theme. This theme highlights the

tensions and potential misalignments that can arise when adopting corporate strategies in an academic setting.

Leadership, as discussed by Seale & Cross (2015), emerges as a critical element in the effective realization of strategic planning. The prevalence of interim leadership roles and the high turnover in leadership positions, as noted in the "Performance Management and Impact Assessment" theme, underscore the importance of stable, informed leadership for strategic planning success.

The financial challenges faced by South African universities, as highlighted by Swartz et al. (2019), play a significant role in strategic planning. The research explores how these challenges are reflected in the "Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation" (Section 5.3.4) theme, examining the consequences of poor or absent strategic planning in the face of financial pressures.

In conclusion, this section underscores the critical role of strategic planning in South African universities, highlighting the need for tailored approaches that consider the unique socio-political and educational context of South Africa. The findings from Chapter 5, when viewed through the lens of the literature in Chapter 2, provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between strategic planning and performance in South African higher education institutions. This discussion not only enriches the existing body of knowledge but also offers practical implications for enhancing strategic planning processes to improve performance outcomes in this unique context.

6.7. Broadening the scope of inclusivity in strategy development

The theme of "Broadening the Scope of Inclusivity in Strategy Development" in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4.9) of this study is crucially aligned with the literature cited in Chapter 2 and reflects an emerging necessity for a more inclusive strategic planning process in South African universities. This theme highlights the importance of involving a diverse array of stakeholders to ensure the development of broad and effective strategies that resonate with the entire university community.

From the insights gathered through interviews, it's clear that true inclusivity in strategic planning goes beyond formalities. Interviewee 3, as the director of community engagement, emphasized the need for stakeholder engagement that transcends mere procedural inclusion. This perspective resonates with the discussions in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3), particularly the Institutional Theory, which suggests that organizations, including universities, are shaped by both internal and external influences. This theory aligns with the emphasis on diverse stakeholder participation, asserting the significant impact of both internal and external constituencies on strategic decisions.

The lack of genuine staff engagement in strategic planning, as noted by Interviewee 7, points to a disconnect between the university's strategic direction and the needs and perceptions of its academic staff. This observation aligns with the findings in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5), which underscores the role of stakeholder engagement in strategic planning within higher education. The insights from Chapter 5 serve to confirm this theory, illustrating how diverse stakeholder participation enriches the strategic planning process.

Interviewee 8's emphasis on a bottom-up approach to strategy development is particularly critical. This viewpoint is supported by the literature in Chapter 2, which highlights the importance of adaptable and responsive strategic planning, as discussed in the Contingency Theory (Section 2.3.2). The empirical findings from Chapter 5 suggest that the involvement of individuals engaged in day-to-day operations contributes to the development of realistic and relevant strategic goals.

The concept of full inclusivity, advocated by Interviewee 11, underlines the importance of a strategic planning process where all divisions are consulted and actively contribute. This concept echoes the discussions in Chapter 2, specifically the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Section 2.3.1), which emphasizes the leveraging of internal resources and capabilities for strategic success.

Furthermore, Interviewee 12's recommendation for a collaborative approach in strategy formulation, involving stakeholders both within and outside the university, aligns with the global trends and practices in strategic planning discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2). This approach is crucial for ensuring a multifaceted and practical approach to strategic planning.

Lastly, Interviewee 13's call for greater involvement of operational perspectives in strategy development and the need for transparent communication and genuine stakeholder engagement resonate with the literature emphasizing stakeholder engagement and transparent communication in strategic planning (Chapter 2, Sections 2.5 and 2.7).

In conclusion, the theme of "Broadening the Scope of Inclusivity in Strategy Development" emphasizes the critical need for a more inclusive and participatory approach in strategic planning at South African universities. By embracing this approach, the university can develop strategies that are not only comprehensive but also resonate with the diverse needs and aspirations of its entire community. This approach is vital for fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the strategic direction, ultimately enhancing the university's performance outcomes. This theme resonates deeply with the theoretical underpinnings discussed in Chapter 2, offering insights into the practical application and challenges of strategic planning in the context of South African universities.

Moving forward, the next section, "Comparative Analysis and Theoretical Reflections," will juxtapose the ten key themes from Chapter 5 against the literature from Chapter 2, evaluating how the findings align or differ from existing theories.

6.8. Comparative analysis and theoretical reflections

In this section I scrutinize the ten key themes identified in Chapter 5, juxtaposing them against the theoretical insights and literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This section seeks to uncover how the empirical findings from this study either corroborate, contradict, or broaden the existing academic theories and perspectives in strategic planning within higher education.

6.8.1. Strategic alignment and accountability

The first theme, "Strategic Alignment and Accountability," as explored in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.1), finds a strong theoretical echo in the Resource-Based View (RBV) outlined in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.1). The RBV theory underscores the importance of an organisation's internal resources and capabilities in determining its performance, a concept that closely aligns with the theme's focus on aligning strategic planning with the university's broader vision and mission. This congruence highlights the RBV's relevance and applicability in the context of higher education strategy, particularly within South African universities.

Chapter 5 delves into the variability in role clarity and engagement in strategic planning processes at a South African university. It identifies challenges in seamlessly integrating strategic planning into daily operations, revealing a gap between strategic objectives and their practical implementation. This observation is in harmony with the discussions in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2), which stress the necessity of aligning strategic planning with the overarching institutional vision and mission. In the evolving environment of higher education, it is crucial for strategic approaches to be adaptable while remaining firmly grounded in clear and consistent organizational goals.

Reflecting on these observations, the empirical insights from Chapter 5 reinforce the theoretical foundations of the Resource-Based View (RBV) presented in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.1). The RBV emphasizes the significance of leveraging internal resources and capabilities to boost organizational performance. The evidence of effective accountability mechanisms and role clarity within the university context demonstrates the RBV's practical application. By effectively harnessing and aligning their internal capabilities with strategic objectives, universities can strengthen their strategic planning processes, thereby enhancing overall performance and achieving their strategic goals.

6.8.2. Inclusivity and stakeholder engagement

The theme of "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement," as explored in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.2), harmonizes well with the Institutional Theory presented in Chapter 2 (Section

2.3). This theory, which emphasizes the influence of external pressures and societal norms on strategic decisions, aligns with the theme's emphasis on the critical role of diverse stakeholder participation and the impact of both internal and external constituencies. This alignment underscores the relevance of the Institutional Theory in understanding the multifaceted external influences that shape strategic planning in South African universities.

Chapter 5's insights into the importance of inclusive stakeholder participation in the strategy development process find a strong resonance with the emphasis on diverse stakeholder engagement in the literature, particularly as highlighted by Biondi & Russo (2022) in Section 2.5 of Chapter 2. This thematic alignment reinforces the understanding that effective strategic planning in higher education necessitates a collaborative approach, involving a wide array of stakeholders to ensure a and holistic planning process.

Furthermore, the empirical findings from Chapter 5 illustrate the importance of inclusivity and engagement in ensuring that strategic plans are in line with the university's broader goals, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7). The involvement of various stakeholders enriches the strategic planning process, ensuring that multiple perspectives are considered. This inclusive approach fosters a more effective and robust strategic planning process, leading to strategies that are not only but also closely aligned with the university's overarching objectives and mission.

6.8.3. Cultural and operational shifts

The "Cultural and Operational Shifts" theme, as explored in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.3), finds a significant parallel with the Contingency Theory presented in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.2). This theory underscores the critical need for strategic planning to align internal and external organizational factors, which is closely echoed in the theme's focus on the necessity of change management and operational adaptability. This connection highlights the importance of harmonizing internal assets with the external environment, a principle that holds particular relevance in the dynamic and complex context of South African higher education.

The identification of the need for change management in response to resistance to change and toxic work environments, as delineated in Chapter 5, aligns seamlessly with the challenges in implementing strategic planning, especially concerning cultural and operational shifts within the university. These insights are found in Sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 of Chapter 2. This alignment between the empirical findings and theoretical discussions reveals a clear intersection, emphasizing the practical implications and realities of strategic planning in the university setting.

The findings from Chapter 5 not only resonate with but also reinforce the literature's emphasis on the necessity of effective change management in strategic planning. This

perspective is elaborated upon in Section 2.7.3 of Chapter 2. Furthermore, the need for cultural and operational shifts, as identified in the empirical data, strongly supports the Contingency Theory's principles. This theory emphasizes the importance of adapting strategies to suit both internal and external conditions, highlighting the need for universities to navigate these challenges strategically. By doing so, universities can ensure that their strategic plans are responsive to their unique contexts and reflective of the multifaceted environments in which they operate.

6.8.4. Strategic planning and resource allocation

The theme of "Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation" (Chapter 5, Section 5.3.4) notably aligns with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1, of the study. This theory emphasizes the critical importance of internal resources and capabilities in shaping an organization's performance, a perspective that is vividly illustrated by the chapter's focus on aligning financial, human, and infrastructural resources with strategic objectives.

The insights from Chapter 5 highlight the significant gaps and challenges faced in effectively synchronizing strategic objectives with the actual deployment of resources within a South African university setting. This observation underscores the criticality of resource allocation in strategic planning, a key tenet of the RBV theory. The RBV posits that strategic advantage and effective performance management are contingent upon the optimal utilization of available resources, a principle that is tangibly evidenced in the empirical findings of Chapter 5.

These findings effectively expand upon the theoretical framework of the RBV, as they present practical challenges encountered in the context of resource allocation within a university. This not only confirms the relevance of the RBV theory in the domain of higher education but also highlights its practical applicability, particularly in the dynamic and resource-sensitive environment of South African universities. The empirical evidence underscores the necessity for strategic planning to go beyond mere goal setting. It emphasizes the need for an approach where resources are not only identified but are also aligned and adequately allocated to achieve the set strategic objectives, ensuring effective and impactful outcomes.

6.8.5. Institutional preparedness and adaptability

The theme of "Institutional Preparedness and Adaptability" in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.5) closely corresponds with the historical context of strategic planning in South African universities, as detailed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4). This theme emphasizes the crucial need for universities to be agile and responsive to the ever-evolving educational and societal

landscapes, mirroring the historical challenges and transformations that South African universities have encountered in their strategic planning journey.

Within Chapter 5, "Institutional Preparedness and Adaptability" is portrayed as the university's capacity to effectively anticipate and respond to emerging challenges, aligning strategic planning with both current and future operational needs. This aspect is particularly salient in an environment marked by rapid academic changes, technological advancements, and socio-economic shifts, necessitating a strategic approach that is both flexible and forward-looking.

In Chapter 2, the emphasis on adaptability in strategic planning is further explored through the lens of the Contingency Theory (Section 2.3.2), coupled with insights on the role of strategic planning in navigating change (Section 2.7). The Contingency Theory underscores the critical need for organizations, including universities, to tailor their strategies in response to varying internal and external circumstances. This theoretical perspective is substantiated by the empirical findings in Chapter 5, which highlight how South African universities must adopt a dynamic and adaptable approach in their strategic planning to effectively meet the shifting demands and challenges of the higher education sector.

Thus, the insights from Chapter 5 not only resonate with the historical challenges outlined in Chapter 2 but also reinforce the importance of adaptability and preparedness as key elements in strategic planning. These findings underscore the necessity for South African universities to remain flexible and proactive in their strategic approaches, ensuring their readiness to embrace and navigate the complexities of the contemporary educational landscape.

6.8.6. Communication and transparency

The theme "Communication and Transparency" in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.6) aligns seamlessly with the discussions surrounding strategic planning and performance integration, specifically highlighted in the work of Biondi & Russo (2022) as referenced in Chapter 2 (Section 2.5). This theme underscores the pivotal role of clear and transparent communication in the strategic planning process, emphasizing its importance in the effective integration of strategic planning and performance management systems within universities.

In Chapter 5, "Communication and Transparency" are portrayed as essential elements for the success of strategic planning initiatives. The emphasis is on the need for open and transparent communication channels, ensuring that all stakeholders are not only kept informed but are actively engaged and aligned with the university's strategic direction. This approach is critical for fostering a sense of ownership and participation among all parties involved in the strategic planning process.

The relevance of this theme is echoed in Chapter 2, where the literature underscores the crucial role of stakeholder engagement and transparent communication in strategic planning (Sections 2.5 and 2.7). The theoretical frameworks discussed highlight that for strategic planning to be effective in the context of higher education, it must involve clear communication and inclusive practices. This ensures that the strategic vision is not only understood across the university but also resonates with the diverse perspectives and needs of its stakeholders.

The empirical findings from Chapter 5 serve to reinforce the theoretical assertions made in Chapter 2, illustrating how robust communication and transparency are fundamental to the successful implementation and execution of strategic plans within a university setting. The insights demonstrate that effective communication and transparency are not merely theoretical ideals but practical necessities that significantly contribute to the smooth and effective operation of strategic planning processes in higher education institutions.

6.8.7. Performance management and impact assessment

In Chapter 5, the theme "Performance Management and Impact Assessment" (Section 5.3.7) directly correlates with the exploration of strategic planning's role in enhancing institutional performance within South African universities, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.6). This theme emphasizes the critical importance of aligning individual and departmental accountability with strategic objectives, a key factor in translating strategic plans into measurable performance outcomes.

This alignment, as highlighted in Chapter 5, is essential for the effective execution and monitoring of strategic initiatives. It brings into focus how strategic goals, when properly integrated with performance metrics and accountability mechanisms, can lead to significant improvements in organizational performance. This insight is crucial, especially in the context of South African universities, where strategic planning must lead to tangible outcomes and impact.

In Chapter 2, especially in Section 2.5, the literature underscores the integral role of performance management systems within the broader framework of strategic planning. It asserts that these systems are essential for evaluating the effectiveness and impact of strategic initiatives. The discussions suggest that a well-designed performance management system is not just an adjunct to strategic planning but a central component that ensures the realization and success of strategic goals.

Comparatively, the findings from Chapter 5 offer practical insights into the implementation and integration of performance management systems within the unique setting of South African universities. This empirical evidence corroborates the theoretical

perspectives presented in Chapter 2, demonstrating the practical application of these concepts in a real-world setting. It highlights the necessity of having robust and well-integrated performance management systems to ensure that strategic planning efforts are not only well-conceived but also effectively realized and evaluated.

This correlation between the empirical findings in Chapter 5 and the theoretical discussions in Chapter 2 elucidates the importance of performance management in the strategic planning process, especially in the dynamic and challenging environment of South African higher education. It underscores the need for strategic plans to be closely monitored and assessed to ensure their effectiveness and to facilitate continuous improvement in institutional performance.

6.8.8. Executive and academic division in strategy development

In the study, the theme "Executive and Academic Division in Strategy Development," as delineated in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.8), resonates with the discussions in Chapter 2 (Section 2.4) about the internal dynamics and challenges in strategic planning within South African universities. This theme particularly sheds light on the internal conflicts that arise due to differing global aspirations and local responsibilities, underscoring the intricate complexities faced in strategic planning within the higher education sector in South Africa.

Chapter 5 delves into the intricate dynamics of the interaction between executive management and academia in the formulation and execution of strategic plans. It underscores the complex task of ensuring a collaborative and unified approach in strategy development within the university context. This aspect is critical, given the diverse interests and perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process.

Meanwhile, Chapter 2, particularly in Section 2.7, emphasizes the need for collaborative approaches in strategic planning. The literature underscores the importance of incorporating diverse viewpoints, including those from both executive and academic realms, into the strategic planning process. This collaborative approach is deemed essential for creating effective and holistic strategies in higher education.

The comparative analysis between Chapters 5 and 2 highlights the practical challenges and the essential need for collaboration between executive management and academic staff in strategic planning. The theme from Chapter 5 aligns with the theoretical discussions in Chapter 2, emphasizing the significance of an inclusive and participatory approach in strategic planning. This approach ensures that the strategic objectives of the university are not only ambitious but also realistic and achievable, considering the various viewpoints and interests within the institution.

In summary, this theme brings to the forefront the crucial role of effective collaboration and integration of diverse perspectives in the strategic planning process. It illustrates the practical implications of ensuring that both executive and academic divisions contribute meaningfully to the development of strategic plans, thereby aligning the university's strategic goals with its capabilities and context. This alignment is vital for the successful implementation and achievement of strategic objectives in the unique setting of South African higher education institutions.

6.8.9. Institutional memory and continuity in strategic planning

The theme "Institutional Memory and Continuity in Strategic Planning," highlighted in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.9) of the study, intricately aligns with the discussion on the indirect influence of strategic planning on organizational performance found in Chapter 2 (Section 2.7). This theme underscores the vital role of historical insights and experiences in shaping current and future strategic directions. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring that strategic initiatives are not only forward-looking but also deeply rooted in the institution's past, effectively leveraging its legacy and historical context.

In Chapter 2, particularly Section 2.4, the discussion pivots around the criticality of incorporating the university's historical background into strategic planning. The literature suggests that a deep understanding and integration of an institution's past experiences and achievements can significantly enhance the relevance and effectiveness of strategic initiatives. This perspective asserts that institutional memory serves as a guiding force, offering valuable lessons and insights that can inform and refine contemporary strategic decision-making.

When examining these themes side by side, it becomes evident that the practical implementation of leveraging institutional memory in strategic planning, as illustrated in Chapter 5, resonates with, and enriches the theoretical foundations laid out in Chapter 2. This comparative analysis highlights the profound impact of historical context on strategic planning. It illustrates that integrating historical perspectives into the strategic planning process is not merely about preserving the past but about harnessing the institution's legacy to inform and shape its future trajectory.

In essence, this theme from Chapter 5 complements and deepens the discussions from Chapter 2, showcasing how the strategic planning process in South African universities can benefit from a nuanced understanding of their historical journey. By doing so, universities can craft strategies that are both visionary and contextually grounded, ensuring continuity and alignment with their long-term objectives and heritage. This approach helps in creating a

strategic roadmap that is both reflective of the institution's past achievements and attuned to its future aspirations and challenges.

6.8.10. Broadening the scope of inclusivity in strategy development

The exploration of the theme "Broadening the Scope of Inclusivity in Strategy Development," as gleaned from the empirical findings of Chapter 5, offers a profound understanding when placed against the backdrop of the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2. This theme underscores the importance of inclusivity in strategic planning within higher education, particularly within the unique context of South African universities. The insights gleaned provide a nuanced perspective on how these empirical findings interact with established academic theories.

In the realm of strategic planning, the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, as outlined in Section 2.3.1 of Chapter 2, posits the criticality of leveraging internal resources and capabilities for strategic success. The empirical findings from Chapter 5 echo this sentiment, showcasing a strong emphasis on broad inclusivity in strategy development. This approach not only corroborates the RBV theory's emphasis but also illustrates its practical application in a university setting, where leveraging diverse internal resources and competencies becomes crucial for effective strategic planning.

Similarly, the Institutional Theory, discussed in Chapter 2, suggests that organizations, including educational institutions, are significantly influenced by external environmental factors. This theoretical stance finds resonance in the empirical observations from Chapter 5, where the inclusion of external stakeholder perspectives and societal norms is underscored. The empirical data bolster the Institutional Theory's proposition by highlighting the critical role of stakeholder engagement and the need for strategic plans to be adaptable to external expectations and pressures.

Additionally, the Contingency Theory, referenced in Section 2.3.2 of Chapter 2, stresses the importance of adapting strategies to align with both internal and external conditions. The empirical findings from Chapter 5 reinforce this theory, particularly through the advocacy of a bottom-up approach and the integration of operational perspectives in strategy development. This alignment illustrates the significance of tailoring strategic planning processes to the specific context and conditions prevalent in the university environment.

While the empirical findings from Chapter 5 do not explicitly contradict any major theoretical insights from Chapter 2, they do bring to light the complexities and practical challenges in implementing these theories within the South African higher education context. This aspect suggests that while the theories provide a robust framework, their application in a

real-world setting like South African universities may encounter unique challenges that were not fully addressed in theoretical discussions.

Furthermore, the empirical data from Chapter 5 expand upon the existing theoretical discussions. For instance, the findings provide a more detailed understanding of the practical challenges involved in implementing inclusive strategic planning within a university setting. This expansion enriches the theoretical discourse by offering practical insights into achieving inclusivity in strategic planning, considering the diverse needs and perspectives of various university constituents.

Moreover, the emphasis on broad stakeholder participation and aligning strategic planning with dynamic societal and educational needs reflects the evolving nature of higher education. This insight broadens the scope of literature on strategic planning in higher education, demonstrating the critical role of inclusivity and stakeholder engagement in adapting to these changes.

Lastly, the findings from Chapter 5 suggest that inclusivity in strategic planning leads to enhanced governance and decision-making within the university. This observation aligns with the theoretical frameworks but also contributes additional depth, showing how inclusivity not only resonates with strategic planning theories but also plays a pivotal role in effective governance and decision-making within higher education institutions.

In summary, the "Broadening the Scope of Inclusivity in Strategy Development" theme predominantly corroborates and enriches the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2. It highlights the criticality of inclusivity in strategic planning, emphasizing its role in enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of strategic initiatives in higher education institutions, particularly within the context of South African universities.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis between Chapters 2 and 5 of this study has revealed a deep and harmonious interplay between theoretical constructs and their practical applications in strategic planning within South African higher education institutions. The detailed examination of the 10 themes from Chapter 5 does more than just corroborate the theoretical discussions of Chapter 2; it enriches them with practical insights and real-world challenges, offering a holistic view of strategic planning in this unique educational context.

This scholarly exploration has accentuated the complexities and nuances inherent in strategic planning within the dynamic milieu of South African higher education. Each theme discussed, from strategic alignment and accountability to the nuanced integration of institutional memory in strategic planning, underscores the essential roles of alignment, inclusivity, adaptability, and responsiveness. These themes are pivotal in crafting effective strategic plans that are sensitive to both internal capabilities and external influences, while

also being attuned to the historical legacies and contemporary challenges faced by universities.

One theme, in particular, "Broadening the Scope of Inclusivity in Strategy Development," exemplifies the criticality of inclusivity in strategic planning. It corroborates and significantly enriches the theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2, underscoring the role of inclusivity in enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of strategic initiatives. This theme highlights the importance of involving a diverse array of stakeholders, ensuring that strategic planning is not only comprehensive but also resonates with the diverse needs and aspirations of the entire university community. Such an approach is vital for fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the strategic direction, ultimately enhancing the university's performance outcomes.

Furthermore, this comparative analysis contributes significantly to the broader discourse on strategic planning and performance outcomes in higher education. It provides valuable perspectives and insights that validate existing theoretical frameworks and expand upon them by highlighting the practical realities encountered in implementing strategic plans within South African universities. This synthesis of theory and practice offers a richer and more nuanced understanding of strategic planning in higher education, especially within the dynamic and complex context of South African universities.

Ultimately, the study bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, offering insightful directions for future research in this field. The themes explored present a cohesive narrative, demonstrating the intricate relationship between empirical findings and theoretical concepts in strategic planning. This analysis stands as a testament to the critical importance of strategic planning in higher education and its profound impact on institutional performance, particularly in the South African context.

Transitioning from the analysis in Chapter 6, Chapter 7 will present the main conclusions, distil recommendations, acknowledge the study's limitations, and suggest avenues for future research, thereby encapsulating the research's overall contributions and implications.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Chapter 7 synthesizes the main conclusions from the research, emphasizing the study's theoretical contributions and practical implications. It includes recommendations for management and other stakeholders, outlines the limitations of the research, and suggests future research directions in strategic planning and performance within higher education, specifically in the South African context.

7.1. Principal theoretical conclusions

The research's principal conclusions are anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, particularly relevant in the higher education sector where strategic planning is a critical resource and capability influencing a university's trajectory. This theory, originating from Penrose (1959), Wernerfelt (1984), and Barney (1991), stresses the significance of internal resources and capabilities in organisational performance.

Research Question 1 (RQ1) focused on how university managers in a South African context perceive the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes. The findings align with the RBV theory, emphasizing the role of effectively managing internal resources such as academic expertise and institutional culture in enhancing performance.

Research Question 2 (RQ2) explored the narratives around the mechanisms that link strategic planning and performance outcomes. The insights gathered support the RBV theory's perspective that strategic utilization of internal resources leads to specific performance outcomes.

The themes from Chapter 5, such as "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" and "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement," illustrate the practical application of the RBV theory. Management perspectives and stakeholder experiences are seen as valuable internal resources contributing significantly to the strategic planning process.

Challenges like resistance to change, bureaucratic frameworks, resource limitations, and stakeholder engagement issues, though not directly contradicting the RBV theory, point to practical difficulties in applying theoretical concepts in a real-world context. These challenges, as discussed by Bryson (2017) and George et al. (2019), highlight the importance of understanding and addressing obstacles to effective strategic planning.

In conclusion, while the study affirms the applicability of the RBV theory in a higher education context, it also brings to light the complexities and challenges involved in its practical implementation. Recognizing and overcoming these barriers is crucial for enhancing strategic planning processes and achieving performance outcomes in higher education institutions.

7.2. Conclusions for research question 1

In addressing Research Question 1 (RQ1) within the context of South African universities, the study draws upon the interplay of theoretical insights from Chapter 2 with empirical findings, culminating in comprehensive conclusions:

The study affirms the significant role of strategic planning in enhancing university performance. This finding is consistent with Bryson (2017) and George et al. (2019), who emphasize strategic planning's pivotal role in guiding organizational performance. The study's findings reveal a similar sentiment among South African university managers, who perceive strategic planning as integral to improving performance outcomes.

The study echoes the principles of the RBV theory, as laid out by Penrose (1959), Wernerfelt (1984), and Barney (1991). It underscores the importance of internal resources and capabilities in enhancing organizational performance. In South African universities, strategic planning is seen as a key resource that leverages internal strengths, such as academic expertise and institutional culture, to enhance performance, resonating with the RBV's emphasis on internal capabilities as a driver of performance.

The study's findings highlight the necessity of adapting global strategic planning models to local contexts. This concept, explored by Jalal and Murray (2019) and Majee (2020), is evident in the strategic planning approaches of South African universities, where managers balance global benchmarks with local imperatives, impacting performance outcomes.

The study aligns with Aleixo et al. (2018) and Jooste & Hagenmeier (2022) in identifying challenges in strategic planning implementation, such as resistance to change and bureaucratic frameworks. These challenges, acknowledged by university managers in South Africa, emphasize the need to address these barriers to enhance strategic planning and performance outcomes.

The findings demonstrate a shift from theoretical planning models to actionable strategies in higher education. This evolution, initially rooted in military and business sectors as discussed by Simeone (2020) and Drucker (1994), is reflected in South African universities' focus on "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" and "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement," resonating with the insights of Jalal & Murray (2019) and Kostyukevich (2022).

The study's findings mirror the historical evolution of strategic planning in South African universities, influenced by apartheid and transformation efforts. The shift to proactive strategies is aligned with critiques by Wolf & Floyd (2017) and Swartz et al. (2019), suggesting a response to evolving educational demands and socio-economic pressures.

The study validates the insights from Biondi & Russo (2022) regarding the reciprocal relationship between strategic planning and performance management systems. The themes

of "Strategic Alignment and Accountability" and "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement" in South African universities exemplify this relationship.

The study supports the views of Bosire (2017) and Mensah (2020) on strategic planning's role in enhancing institutional performance. The importance of stakeholder engagement and alignment of strategic plans with operational capacities aligns with these theoretical underpinnings.

The emphasis on inclusivity in strategic planning aligns with the Institutional Theory and RBV. Diverse stakeholder participation and leveraging internal resources for strategic success corroborate these theoretical frameworks.

The comparative analysis of themes from the study with literature reinforces the applicability of the RBV, Institutional Theory, and Contingency Theory in the South African university context. The practical insights enrich the theoretical discourse on strategic planning's role in enhancing performance outcomes.

In summary, the conclusions drawn from RQ1 underscore the practical application of theoretical concepts in strategic planning within South African universities. The conclusions validate the significance of leveraging internal resources and capabilities and adapting to specific contextual challenges, thereby enriching the existing literature on strategic planning and performance in higher education.

7.3. Conclusions for research question 2

For research question 2 (RQ2), which delves into the narratives and mechanisms linking strategic planning and performance outcomes in South African universities, the conclusions drawn from these narratives in relation to the literature cited in Chapter 2 are multifaceted and deeply informative.

The narratives shared by university managers reflect the evolution and application of strategic planning in higher education. This evolution, as highlighted by Simeone (2020) and Drucker (1994), showcases a transition from traditional theoretical models to actionable, context-specific strategies. The global trends in strategic planning, particularly the emphasis on strategic alignment, foresight, and objective setting, as noted by Jalal & Murray (2019) and Kostyukevich (2022), resonate strongly in the stories shared by the managers. These narratives underline the significant impact of strategic planning in enhancing performance outcomes within the higher education sector.

Furthermore, the historical context and recent developments in South African universities, as discussed by Wolf & Floyd (2017) and Swartz et al. (2019), are vividly reflected in the managers' stories. They articulate a clear shift from reactionary to proactive and forward-

looking strategies, acknowledging the need for adaptability to the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the South African higher education landscape.

The interplay between strategic planning and performance, a key focus of Biondi & Russo (2022), is evident in the narratives. University managers share stories that demonstrate a dynamic, reciprocal relationship where strategic planning both influences and is influenced by performance outcomes. This interconnectedness underscores the importance of a cyclical and integrated approach to strategic planning and performance management in higher education.

In discussing strategic planning's role in South African universities, the insights from Bosire (2017) and Mensah (2020) are echoed in the managers' narratives. They emphasize the alignment of strategic plans with operational capacities and the necessity of involving diverse stakeholders in the planning process. These stories affirm the transformative power of strategic planning in enhancing performance outcomes in South African universities.

The emphasis on broadening the scope of inclusivity in strategy development aligns with the Institutional Theory and Resource-Based View (RBV). Managers highlight how engaging both internal and external stakeholders enriches the strategic planning process, making it more responsive to the diverse needs and challenges within the university context. This approach corroborates the theoretical underpinnings of inclusivity as a mechanism that drives effective strategic planning.

Finally, the comparative analysis and theoretical reflections provided by the managers offer practical perspectives on the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter 2. Their stories illustrate the relevance and applicability of the RBV, Institutional Theory, and Contingency Theory within the unique context of South African universities. This analysis showcases how strategic planning, influenced by a combination of internal and external factors, directly impacts performance outcomes.

In summary, the narratives from university managers for RQ2 offer profound insights into the mechanisms that link strategic planning and performance outcomes in South African universities. These narratives not only validate the theoretical frameworks but also enrich our understanding of how these theories are practically applied. They highlight the importance of strategic alignment, inclusivity, and adaptability as key mechanisms driving the relationship between strategic planning and performance in the distinctive context of South African higher education.

7.4. Conclusions on propositions

The conclusions drawn from the findings of this study in relation to the proposed propositions are as follows:

Proposition 1 (P1): Effective Strategic Planning and Performance Outcomes in South African Universities

- The findings from the interviews at University X confirm that effective strategic planning is pivotal in shaping performance outcomes. The emphasis on strategic alignment and accountability, as well as resource alignment with strategic objectives, resonates with the literature by Bryson & George (2020) and Dibrell et al. (2014). This alignment ensures that strategic initiatives are in harmony with the university's broader vision and mission, thereby enhancing institutional performance.

Proposition 2 (P2): Varied Perceptions Based on Roles and Responsibilities

- The diversity of stakeholder perspectives based on their roles and responsibilities within the university is evident from the interviews. The range of views from academic heads, managerial support staff, and other roles at different tenures within the university reveals varied perceptions of the influence of strategic planning on performance outcomes. This aligns with the insights from Aleixo et al. (2018) and Jooste & Hagenmeier (2022), acknowledging the impact of diverse stakeholder perspectives on strategic planning outcomes.

Proposition 3 (P3): Narratives Revealing Mechanisms Linking Strategic Planning and Performance

- The narratives and stories shared by university stakeholders reveal a range of mechanisms underlying the relationship between strategic planning and performance outcomes. Themes such as "Inclusivity and Stakeholder Engagement," "Communication and Transparency," and "Performance Management and Impact Assessment" illustrate the multifaceted nature of this relationship in the South African university context.

Proposition 4 (P4): Challenges Hindering Strategic Planning Effectiveness

- The study's findings corroborate the proposition that challenges such as resistance to change, entrenched bureaucratic frameworks, resource limitations, and insufficient stakeholder engagement hinder the effectiveness of strategic planning in South African universities. This reflects the challenges outlined by Bryson (2017) and George et al. (2019). These barriers, as evidenced in the themes of "Cultural and Operational Shifts" and "Strategic Planning and Resource Allocation," can lead to suboptimal performance outcomes if not adequately addressed.

In conclusion, the propositions set forth at the beginning of the study are substantiated by the empirical findings from the semi-structured interviews with management personnel. The study highlights the importance of effective strategic planning and the need to understand and address the various challenges and dynamics that influence its success. The inclusion of diverse stakeholder perspectives, the alignment of strategic objectives with institutional goals, and the management of cultural and operational shifts are key factors that play a significant role in shaping the performance outcomes of South African universities. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of strategic planning in higher education and its implications for institutional performance.

7.5. Contribution of the study

This study significantly contributes to the body of knowledge on strategic planning in higher education, with a particular focus on South African universities. It provides detailed empirical insights into the strategic planning process within a unique context at University X (UNIVERSITY X). UNIVERSITY X's distinct location and demographic composition offer a rich case study that blends global higher education trends with local socio-economic and cultural dynamics, providing a unique perspective on strategic planning.

The study's engagement with a broad range of university management personnel allows for a comprehensive capture of diverse perspectives on strategic planning. This diversity underscores the importance of inclusive and comprehensive strategic planning processes that consider varied experiences and insights across different roles and levels within the university. Such an approach is crucial for developing strategies that are both representative and effective.

Further, the study deepens our understanding of the mechanisms that link strategic planning and performance outcomes in higher education. Themes such as strategic alignment, stakeholder engagement, and performance management reveal the complex interplay between planning, execution, and outcomes. This insight is invaluable for understanding how strategic decisions translate into tangible results.

The research also identifies and addresses critical challenges and barriers to effective strategic planning, including resistance to change, bureaucratic hurdles, and resource constraints. This aspect is particularly significant for universities looking to refine their strategic planning processes and overcome prevalent obstacles.

By juxtaposing the narratives from UNIVERSITY X with existing literature, the study bridges theoretical concepts with practical findings. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of how theoretical models of strategic planning are applied in real-world settings, particularly within the South African context.

The study also delves into the impact of institutional memory and the necessity for cultural and operational shifts, contributing to our understanding of how historical contexts and internal dynamics influence strategic planning and implementation. Recognizing these factors is crucial for developing strategies that are not only effective but also sustainable and responsive to institutional history and culture.

Moreover, the study enhances the literature on strategic planning in higher education by providing a contemporary analysis that incorporates recent developments and challenges specific to South African universities. This contribution is timely and relevant, considering the evolving landscape of higher education.

The insights offered by this study are valuable for policymakers and practitioners in higher education. Highlighting the importance of adaptable, inclusive, and participatory strategic planning approaches, the study informs the development of policies and practices that can enhance institutional performance and responsiveness.

Lastly, this research lays a foundation for future studies. Offering a detailed case study, it sets a benchmark for comparative analysis in similar contexts and opens avenues for further exploration into the dynamics of strategic planning in other higher education institutions, both within South Africa and globally.

In summary, this study's contribution is in its analysis of strategic planning in a specific South African university context. It offers valuable insights into the challenges, dynamics, and impacts of strategic planning processes in higher education, thereby enhancing the understanding of strategic planning's role in improving performance outcomes. This research addresses both theoretical and practical aspects of strategic management in the higher education sector, making it a significant addition to the field.

7.6. Limitations of the research study

In exploring the relationship between strategic planning and organizational performance in South African universities, particularly at University X (UNIVERSITY X), the study faced several inherent limitations that are crucial to consider when interpreting its findings. One of the primary limitations was the relatively small sample size, comprising 14 participants. While the study endeavoured to ensure participant diversity across various roles, departments, and university levels, this limited sample might not fully capture the broader perspectives present within the university management community. This aspect raises concerns about the comprehensiveness of the study and the generalizability of its findings.

Furthermore, the study's focus on South African universities, specifically UNIVERSITY X, means that its findings are highly contextual and may not be directly applicable to other higher education contexts or global settings. This geographical and institutional specificity

limits the extent to which the study's insights can be extrapolated to different environments, suggesting that the conclusions drawn are most relevant within the specific context of South African higher education.

Another significant limitation arises from the nature of qualitative research itself, which is inherently subjective. Despite rigorous methodologies such as member-checking and collaboration with an experienced co-coder to bolster objectivity, the potential for personal biases of the researcher and coders to influence the data analysis and interpretation cannot be entirely eliminated. This subjectivity is a critical factor to consider, as it might subtly shape the study's conclusions.

The study was also constrained by time, operating within a set timeframe that potentially curtailed the scope of data collection and analysis. While the use of data saturation directed the sample size, ensuring coverage of the research questions until no new themes were identified, a more extended data collection period might have yielded additional insights or different perspectives.

Compounding these challenges was the necessity to adjust the data collection method partway through the study. Due to some participants' discomfort with audio recording, the study had to switch from audio-recorded interviews to manual notetaking. This change, while respecting participant comfort and ethical considerations, introduced variation in data format and may have affected the uniformity and depth of data captured, potentially influencing the study's analysis process.

These limitations are integral to understanding the scope and applicability of the study's findings. They highlight the need for a cautious interpretation of the conclusions and recommendations, considering both the contextual nature of the study and the inherent constraints of its methodology.

7.7. Recommendations

This study conducted at University X in South Africa provides insightful recommendations for university management and stakeholders involved in strategic planning and performance management within higher education institutions. The aim is to bolster the efficacy of strategic planning processes and ensure they align effectively with performance outcomes.

University management is encouraged to foster a culture of collaboration and inclusivity in strategic planning. Engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, from academic and support staff to students, is essential for formulating comprehensive and representative strategies. Such collaboration not only broadens the scope of strategic planning but also

enhances the likelihood of successful implementation due to increased buy-in across the university community.

Clear and transparent communication about strategic plans and initiatives is vital. University management should regularly update and involve the university community through open forums and feedback channels. This transparency is key to aligning the community with strategic goals, reducing resistance to change, and fostering a shared sense of purpose and commitment.

Adapting to the dynamic landscape of higher education requires robust change management strategies. Universities should prepare for and effectively respond to both internal and external changes, building an organization that is both adaptive and resilient to the sector's complexities and challenges.

Aligning resources such as finances, human capital, and infrastructure with strategic objectives is crucial. Management should ensure that budgeting and resource allocation are intricately linked to strategic planning, facilitating efficient and effective achievement of strategic goals.

Developing and implementing comprehensive performance management systems is essential. These systems should include clear metrics and accountability mechanisms to assess the success of strategic initiatives and guide future planning efforts. Leveraging the rich historical context and experiences of the university can provide valuable insights into both current and future strategic planning. Learning from past successes and failures enhances decision-making and strategic direction.

Addressing cultural and operational challenges is fundamental. Recognizing and tackling issues like resistance to change and toxic work environments is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of strategic planning and its implementation. Promoting leadership development and stability is essential for consistent strategic direction and execution. The university should focus on developing leadership capabilities and ensuring stable leadership structures to effectively guide strategic planning and management.

Conducting regular strategy reviews and updates is necessary due to the rapidly evolving higher education landscape. Regular reviews ensure that strategies remain relevant, responsive to changes, and aligned with the university's long-term vision and goals. Encouraging research and learning in strategic planning and performance management can provide fresh insights and innovative approaches. This can be achieved through partnerships with other institutions, participation in academic forums, and engagement with current research in the field. By adopting these recommendations, university management and stakeholders can significantly improve the effectiveness of their strategic planning processes, better align them with performance outcomes, and adeptly navigate the complexities of the higher education environment.

7.8. Future Studies

The study on strategic planning and performance management in South African universities, particularly focusing on University X, lays the groundwork for further research in several critical areas. Here are some suggestions for future research, drawing on the gaps and challenges identified in the literature review:

Comparative Studies Across Different Institutional Contexts: Future research could expand beyond South African universities to include a comparative analysis with institutions in other regions or countries. This would help in understanding the universality and specificity of strategic planning practices and their impact on performance outcomes in different socio-political and educational contexts.

Longitudinal Studies on Strategic Planning Implementation: There is a need for longitudinal studies that track the implementation and impact of strategic planning over time. Such studies can provide deeper insights into how strategic initiatives evolve, their long-term effects on institutional performance, and the sustainability of their outcomes.

Exploring the Role of Technology in Strategic Planning: With the increasing influence of digitalization and technology in higher education, future research could explore how technological advancements are shaping strategic planning processes and performance management systems in universities.

Investigating the Impact of Globalization: Research could focus on how global trends and international benchmarks influence strategic planning in South African universities. This would include studying the integration of global standards and practices in local strategic planning and its implications for performance outcomes.

Diversity and Inclusivity in Strategic Planning: Future studies could delve deeper into the role of diversity and inclusivity in strategic planning processes. Research can focus on how different stakeholder perspectives, including those from marginalized and underrepresented groups, are incorporated into strategic planning and decision-making.

Impact of Organizational Culture on Strategic Planning: Further research is needed to explore the influence of organizational culture on the effectiveness of strategic planning. This includes understanding how cultural aspects like resistance to change, leadership styles, and internal communication impact the strategic planning process and its outcomes.

The Interplay of Strategic Planning and Financial Management: Investigating the relationship between strategic planning and financial management, including budget allocation, resource utilization, and financial sustainability, can provide valuable insights for university administrators and policymakers.

Exploring the Efficacy of Different Theoretical Frameworks: While the Resource-Based View (RBV) was the chosen framework for this study, future research could explore the

applicability and efficacy of other theoretical models like Institutional Theory or Contingency Theory in the context of strategic planning in higher education.

Assessing the Impact of Governance Structures: Examining how different governance structures and models in universities influence the strategic planning process and its effectiveness can be a valuable area of research.

Role of External Stakeholders in Strategic Planning: Future studies could investigate the role and influence of external stakeholders, such as government bodies, industry partners, and alumni, in the strategic planning process of universities.

By addressing these areas, future research can build on the findings of this study, contributing further to the body of knowledge in strategic planning and performance management in higher education, both within the South African context and globally.

7.9. Concluding remarks

In summarizing Chapter 7 of this study, it is evident that the research provides an insightful examination of strategic planning within South African universities, particularly through the lens of the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. The study underscores the pivotal role of strategic planning as a key driver of organisational performance, emphasizing the necessity of aligning internal resources and capabilities with strategic objectives. The exploration of how university managers perceive and implement strategic planning illuminates the complexities and challenges unique to the South African higher education context. This research has not only validated theoretical models like the RBV, Institutional Theory, and Contingency Theory but also demonstrated their practical applicability in enhancing university performance.

Furthermore, the study's conclusions offer a tapestry of insights drawn from the lived experiences of university managers. These narratives shed light on the dynamic interplay between strategic planning and performance outcomes, highlighting the need for inclusivity, adaptability, and strategic alignment. The research contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge, providing valuable recommendations for university management and stakeholders to optimize strategic planning processes. These recommendations, rooted in the study's empirical findings, aim to address the challenges identified, such as resistance to change and bureaucratic hurdles, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and impact of strategic planning in higher education. As the study concludes, it paves the way for future research, suggesting areas for further exploration and setting a foundation for comparative studies, longitudinal analyses, and the integration of technological advancements in strategic planning within the higher education sector.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Interview Schedule: Linking strategic planning and performance in a university in South Africa

Introduction:

- Welcome and introduction
- Explanation of the study's purpose
- Confidentiality assurance
- Verbal consent confirmation

Section 1: Understanding the Respondent's Role

1. Can you please explain your role within the university, and your involvement in the strategic planning process?

Section 2: Strategic Planning at the University

2. Can you describe the process of strategic planning at this university?
3. How does this process align with the overall vision and mission of the university?

Section 3: Performance and Strategic Planning

4. In your opinion, how does strategic planning influence the performance outcomes of this university?
5. Could you provide examples of how strategic planning has affected the university's performance?

Section 4: Challenges and Barriers

6. Can you elaborate on the challenges and barriers faced during the strategic planning process in this university?
7. How do these challenges affect the implementation of strategic plans and the overall performance of the university?

Section 5: Lack of Strategic Planning

8. In your view, what might be the potential consequences of inadequate or ineffective strategic planning at this university?
9. Can you provide instances, if any, where a lack of strategic planning has negatively impacted the performance of the university?

Section 6: Wrap up and Closure

10. Do you have any recommendations for improving the strategic planning process at this university to enhance performance?
11. Is there anything else you would like to share about strategic planning and performance at this university?
12. Thank you for your time and valuable insights.

