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IMPROVING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THROUGH STRATEGIC PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the paper was to provide an overview of strategic planning and how a Strategic Plan (SP) can be developed and implemented effectively in Higher Education Institution (HEIs) in developing countries for continuous quality improvement. Related literature was reviewed and analysed using the narrative synthesis approach. It was established from the review that a SP serves as a framework for determining the quality path a HEI should chart to achieve its desired future. Advantages of strategic planning include; providing opportunity for relevant constituencies to participate in institutional governance, synchronising plans towards achieving institutional goals; prioritising for efficient allocation of resources, and engaging stakeholders for collective ownership of institutional agenda. SPs are developed based on internal and external environmental scan for institutional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and aligned with institutional mission, vision, values, and goals. Issues for consideration in strategic planning may include academic (teaching, research, and extension) matters, institutional governance, finance, infrastructure, Information and Communication Technology, human resource, institutional advancement and internationalisation. Challenges in planning and implementation of SPs in HEIs in developing countries include resource constraints, inadequate expertise and commitment, as well as resistance to change. For effective implementation of a SP, there should be an implementation plan that details who should do what at what time and with which resources. Successful strategic planning and implementation of the Plan depend on commitment of and collaboration among qualified planners, implementers, monitors, evaluators and other relevant stakeholders.

Contribution/ Originality: The objective of the paper was to provide an overview of strategic planning and how a Strategic Plan (SP) can be developed and implemented effectively in Higher Education Institution (HEIs) in developing countries for continuous quality improvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Continuous improvement is an important principle in managing quality in higher education as it empowers the institutions to be competitive in the global market. Higher Education Institutions (HEI) need to make strategic decisions in their management systems and allocate scarce resources efficiently (Benjamin & Carroll, 1998) for best institutional quality outcomes in order to have a competitive edge in the global market. For the HEIs to be able to achieve the desired level of quality that will make them competitive, they need to strategise to orientate their services towards the changing needs of their customers, clients, stakeholders or constituencies. One of the best

ways to ensure this is through the development and implementation of Strategic Plans (SPs) that respond to the global market demands. Strategic planning has, therefore, been acknowledged and largely embraced as a decision-making tool in HEIs worldwide (Hassanien, 2017) for continuous quality improvement.

However, whereas virtually all the HEIs in developed countries have SPs with some even making them (them plans) available on their websites (Hayward, 2006; Hughes & White, 2005), strategic planning is largely a recent phenomenon in HEIs in many developing countries. It is argued (Dooris, 2003; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996) that, while most HEIs institutions in developed countries have been able to transform themselves through strategic planning, many of such institutions in the developing countries have been struggling in that regard, or have not attempted it at all, due partly to their inability to understand, design and implement SPs. It is further argued (Allen, 2003; Hinton, 2012; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996) that although some of the HEIs in developing countries have followed the paths of their counterparts in the advanced countries by developing SPs, a number of others, particularly the emerging private ones, have not, due to inexperience. What some of the HEIs in developing countries have traditionally been doing is just developing policies, regulation, and other structures to guide them in running the institutions but a number of them are not conversant with the development and implementation of formal SPs.

Strategic Plans have been extensively discussed in literature (Albrechts & Balducci, 2013; Andrews, Boyne, Law, & Walker, 2009; George & Desmidt, 2014; Mintzberg, 1994) yet little is known about the factors that lead to strategic planning and implementation in some HEIs in developing countries. Hinton (2012) for instance, observes that *"a wide variety of individuals have misconstrued the role of strategic planning in the academy. A great number of individuals are unaware of the necessary components of a strategic plan and what are required to implement and sustain such a plan. Some of the misinformed are consultants in occupations that serve the post-secondary community, and others are members of college or university."* Nataraja and Bright (2018) continue that some HEIs claim to have prioritised strategic planning yet effective implementation of the SP has been lacking as they often struggle with the development of good a SP, let alone its implementation. This background suggests that, there is a need for a clearer overview of strategic planning and implementation because despite the abundance of literature on the subject matter, there is little erudition about it in some HEIs in the developing counties. Questions of pertinence to be answered based on this background are: What is a SP? Why do HEIs need to have SPs? How can a SP be developed and implemented effectively? The objective of this paper, therefore, is to provide an overview of strategic planning to help understand the concept, its relevance and how a SP can be developed and implemented in the HEI environmental context, with particular reference to the developing countries.

2. METHODS

The paper used the narrative review approach. This is an approach to literature review that uses mainly qualitative interpretation of prior knowledge (Sylvester, Tate, & Johnstone, 2013). In other words, it seeks to synthesise existing information on a particular topic through summaries of accumulated literature to demonstrate the value of a particular point of view (Sylvester et al., 2013). The main purpose of a narrative review is to provide a comprehensive background information for understanding current knowledge with respect to a given subject matter, and highlight other relevant areas of significance for further research (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008; Darlow & Wen, 2015).

The current review followed a six-step approach namely, formulating the tropic, formulating the objective and research questions, searching available literature using keywords and phrases, screening for inclusion; extracting and analysing relevant information, and writing the report. Literature from electronic databases, mainly Crossref, Scopus, and Google Scholar, as well as grey literature were used. The search was conducted using the following terms and phrases: strategic planning, quality management, quality improvement, and implementation of strategic plan in HEIs. The search produced 914 potential materials .but through screening using a predefined exclusion and inclusion criteria, 33 documents were finally reviewed. The criteria were language,

relevance, credibility, currency and intelligibility (Mensah & Graham, 2019). As far as language was concerned, the search considered only materials in English because that was the only universally recognised language the researcher and the assistant were conversant with. Relevance meant that the material must have contributed or be contributing substantially to the ESM discourse as gleaned from the cogency of the augments being advanced by the material in question. Intelligibility meant that the document must be orderly, clear and articulate in terms of presentation of relevant material. Currency meant that the material must be influential in the debate on strategic planning and implementation in organisations, with particular emphasis on HEIs as evident, for example, from citations in reputable journal articles and other credible documents.

Two people, the principal researcher and a hired research assistant, conducted the search from August 12, 2019 to December 28, 2019. The two persons examined each of the identified articles independently to determine its eligibility as per the approach detailed above. In order not to miss some potentially relevant literature, reference lists of retrieved documents were scanned for materials relevant to the topic under study. After the initial screening based on abstracts, the selected documents were read to determine which ones were eligible for inclusion. The duplicates were eliminated. Age of the material was not an exclusion criterion since even old documents could be relevant and useful.

The extracted pieces of information were collated, organized, summarised, compared and synthesised. Literature is replete with a number of suggested approaches for synthesizing qualitative data or information, including grounded theory, narrative analysis and meta-ethnography (Templier & Paré, 2015; Thomas & Harden, 2008). This study used the qualitative synthesis approach. That is, for each thematic area, the central arguments in the literature were repeatedly summarised until a concise piece was obtained, ensuring that no pertinent information was missed (Mensah & Graham, 2019). All processes, including issues of inclusion and exclusion as well as analysis were discussed to reach an agreement. Analyses were done thematically (based on key issues) and interpreted qualitatively using narrative interpretations and syntheses.

3. KEY ISSUES FROM THE RESULTS OF THE REVIEW

Based on the lessons learnt from the review, the results (key issues) are presented thematically under the following sub-headings: quality management in HEIs, the concept of strategic planning, the need for strategic planning, developing a strategic plan, implementing a strategic plan, and challenges in strategic planning and implementation. Following these presentations are the conclusion and limitations of the paper.

3.1. Quality Management in HEIs

Though the relevance of quality in any field of human endeavour is not disputed, there is little consensus, if any at all, with regard to its definition because quality is a dynamic, multidimensional and perspective-driven concept. Scholars, researchers, academics, and quality management practitioners have used several descriptions for quality by way of attempting to define it. Most of such definitions relate to; degree of excellence, conformance to requirements, totality of characteristics which act to satisfy a need, fitness for use, fitness for purpose, freedom from defects and delighting customers (Harvey & Green, 1993; Jawad, Jamshaid, & Wahab, 2015; Weeks-Kaye, 2004; Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007). Although quality has been variously defined, a substantial number of scholars seem to agree that quality connotes "fitness for purpose" – meeting or conforming to generally accepted standards (Williams & Cappuccini-Ansfield, 2007).

Quality management is the act of overseeing all activities and tasks needed to maintain a desired level of excellence, leading to acceptance of the product or service by the customers (Jawad et al., 2015). Ensuring this in the HEIs calls for quality planning, quality control, quality assurance, and continuous quality improvement (Bayraktar, Tatoglu, & Zaim, 2008; Hassanien, 2017; Ursin, Huusko, Aittola, Kiviniemi, & Muhonen, 2008). The all-encompassing approach to making this happen is referred to as Total Quality Management (TQM). This approach

involves all relevant stakeholders and processes in order to ensure effectiveness and success. In general, quality management focuses on attainment of long-term goals through the implementation of well-thought-out short and medium-term initiatives. Quality management in the HEI system in general, and especially in in developing countries is complex because it touches on virtually all facets of the system (Hayward, 2006). Therefore, quality management should be strategically planned if it is to achieve its aim of continuous improvement, hence, the concept of strategic planning.

3.2. The Concept of Strategic Planning

Obviously, strategic planning is composed of two words —'strategy' and 'planning' each of which and can also be seen as a concept in one way or the other. Strategy is about making unique decisions and taking action to achieve a particular goal. Corrall (1996) refers to 'strategy' as the direction, which brings an advantage or a success through configuration of resources to fulfill stakeholder expectations. Planning, on the other hand, according to De Andreis (2019) refers to the process of thinking and preparing a sequence of action steps to achieve a specific goal. It is anticipatory decision-making, involving a process of deciding what to do, why it should be done, how to do it and when to do it before action is required (Chakraborty, Kaza, Knaap, & Deal, 2011; Elbanna, Andrews, & Pollanen, 2016).

Various views have been expressed about the meaning of strategic planning. For instance, Steiner (1977) sees strategic planning as a managerial process of developing and maintaining a viable fit between the institution's objectives and resources, and its changing environment. Liedtka (1998) as cited in Kefa (2014) defines strategic planning as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation is, what it does, and why it does it. Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1997) perceive strategic planning as a formal process designed to help an organisation to identify and maintain optimal alignment with the most important elements of its environment". Strategic planning, in the view of Corrall (1996) is essentially about deciding and refining institutional objectives and working to translate them into actions and outcomes in order to gain competitive advantage. Porter (1998) as well as Johnson and Scholes (1999) reinforces Corrall's view by adding that strategic planning requires insight and foresight to interpret past events and present trends to determine future directions.

For a HEI, strategic planning constitutes a process for deciding what the institution, as a corporate whole, must get right in order to thrive now and in the foreseeable future (Andrews, Boyne, Law, & Walker, 2012; Dooris, 2003; Hinton, 2012). Bradley, Hirt, and Smit (2011) as well as Porter. and Lee (2015) opine that HEIs in developing countries should see strategic planning as a systematic process by which they can make decisions about future outcomes, and how the outcomes are to be accomplished and evaluated. A SP consists of (i) management's fundamental assumptions about the economic, technological, and competitive environment (ii) setting of goals and objectives to be achieved, (iii) performance of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis (iv) selecting main and alternative strategies to achieve the goals and objectives; and (v) implementing and monitoring the operational or tactical plans to achieve set goals and objectives (Andrews et al., 2012; Chance, 2010; Hassanien, 2017; Hinton, 2012) Many academics, researchers, and practitioners in the field of strategic planning (Freedman, 2013; Hartley, Alford, & Hughes, 2015) are of the conviction that by defining a collective vision and charting a course aligned with the vision through strategic planning, HEIs can effectively respond to unforeseen challenges in advantageous ways. From this standpoint, it can be argued that, there is a relationship between strategic planning and quality management in the HEI system. Just like an enterprise does in the business environment, a HEI can use strategic planning to predict quality changes in the institutional environment and position the institution to respond to the anticipated changes.

HEIs in developing countries must have hallmarks that differentiate them from other institutions in order to be competitive in the global market. Their ability to have this competitive edge, as Bryson and Bromiley (1993)

have argued, is closely associated with the quality of their products, which should be continuously improved due to the dynamic nature of the concept of quality as occasioned by the changing market demands. This requires that quality management in the HEI setting be planned. Quality planning in this sense, is the task of determining what factors and conditions are important for the purpose ensuring quality improvement in the institution and devising ways and means to meet those conditions (Bell, 2002; Covin, Slevin, & Schultz, 1994). This is the essence of strategic planning for quality improvement for institutional effectiveness in the HEI system. In short strategic planning simply means being proactive rather than reactive in taking wise decisions about the institution's operations, and taking timely actions to implement the decisions in the interest of the institution in order to succeed as an institution.

3.3. The Need for Strategic Planning in HEIs

This section provides justifications for strategic planning in the context of higher education institutions, with particular emphasis on HEIs in developing countries. One key justification for strategic planning in HEIs in developing countries is that those institutions have limited financial resources to operate, therefore, they need to allocate the resources efficiently. Prioritisation through strategic planning enables the institution to have clearly defined institutional direction, focusing on impactful areas based on their mandate, mission and vision. This leads to efficient utilisation of scarce resources for institutional effectiveness since by so doing resources will be allocated to where they would best serve the interest of the institution. Benjamin and Carroll (1998) for instance opine that HEI are obliged to 'pursue greater mission differentiation to streamline their services in order to better respond to the changing needs of their constituencies'. This view-point is reinforced by Obanya (2002) argument that strategic planning in HEIs allows the institutions to determine the strategically important areas for which resources are needed.

Strategic planning could help HEIs in developing countries to analyse the current conditions and situations of the institutions to enable them forecast the future. This is done by examining the institutions' internal and external environment to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. By so doing, HEIs in developing countries could build on their strengths, take advantage of the opportunities available to them, work on the weaknesses and eliminate or minimise the effects of the threats. Strategic planning could minimise risks as it provides information to assess risk and devise strategies to minimise them and pursue results-oriented opportunities (Johnson & Scholes, 1999; Karr & Kelley, 1996; Percoco, 2016). With strategic planning, chances of making needless mistakes and choosing wrong lines of action could be reduced although they may not be completely avoided or overcome.

HEIs in developing countries need to develop SPs because some governments, donors or development partners, and funders may demand a formal SP before approving funding or grant for development projects (Nataraja & Bright, 2018). Besides, Strategic Planning can provide opportunities for collaborations with other HEIs and partnership with industries and employers for mutual benefits. That is, by developing the SP and making it available to development partners, those that share the visionary plans of the institution could fund some of the activities outlined in the plan or collaborate with the institution to undertake some activities and projects earmarked to be undertaken. Additionally, as noted by Srinivasa, Kumar, and Aithal (2015) SPs not only guide institutional activities towards institutional goals but also unify institutional efforts towards the institutional goals. It guides the institutions to undertake planned activities, thus helping them (the institutions) to become what they want to become within a given period. In other words, since SPs focus on specific goals, they make it clear and possible for the institutions to know the path they should chart to achieve the future they want.

Strategic planning provides the opportunity to involve stakeholders in the running of the institution. Stakeholders need to be involved in pursuing the strategic choices made and the strategic action taken during the strategic planning process. Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) describe stakeholders as 'the determinants and

determiners of the progress of the institution' They argue further that 'as determinants, stakeholders are those whose concerns determine what is desirable; and as determiners, they are the ones whose judgements and perceptions serve as the eventual indicators of success'. Luxton (2005) also stated that strategic planning, if well done, could increase institutional ability to respond appropriately to challenges and also provide guidelines for accountability, as well as reporting systems for continuous quality improvement.

SPs could be useful documentary tools for institutional assessment for accreditation purposes. Institutional accreditation bodies may require evidence showing that all institutional engagements using institutional resources support the institution's mandate, mission, vision and goals (Auld, 2010; Luxton, 2005). In this regard, accrediting commissions or bodies may ask the institution to show documentary proof regarding how its (the institution's) mission is being achieved through effective use of its resources, especially where the institution is government-owned. Institutions that have developed good strategic plans can easily pass these accreditation tests, which will enhance their credibility, public image and reputation. Alessandri (2007) cited in Nataraja and Bright (2018) argues that the identity of an institution is its "strategically planned and purposeful presentation of itself in order to gain a positive corporate image in the minds of the public".

Rowley et al. (1997) advance an argument which highlights and justifies the need for strategic planning by HEIs in developing countries. The argument is that HEIs have to make strategic decisions to accomplish their vision by aligning resources to support the vision. What this means is that institutional resources should be used for worthwhile ventures and this can happen best with strategic planning by the institutions. Chance (2010) continues that SP compels the Institutions to institute a process of "thorough self-examination, by discovering opportunities and determining niches that fit their unique capacities. It is gathered from this that by using futuristic thinking guided by strategic planning, HEIs in developing countries can become "true learning centres of continuous quality improvement", that is, hubs for acquisition and diffusion of quality theoretical knowledge for improving practice.

Strategic planning makes HEIs proactive in shaping their own future.   In the HEI system, strategic planning leads to making smart choices (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994) that best respond to issues bordering on the dynamic quality management concept. In this respect, the commitment of the stakeholders needs to be secured to implement activities that actually result in continuous quality improvement. Strategic planning sharpens the focus of an institution because it presents a road map for institutional action based on current happenings in the education terrain and also provide benchmarks by which achievements of the institution can be measured (Bradley et al., 2011; Nataraja & Bright, 2018). This is in consonance with Liedtka (1998) submission that strategic planning stimulates institutional leadership and management to think ahead (being proactive and forward-looking), while compelling the institution to direct its policies towards its strategic focus. Additionally, strategic planning leads to better coordination of institutional engagements for continuous improvement. Lerner (1999) as cited in Nataraja and Bright (2018) as well as Bryson, Edwards, and Van Slyke (2018) summarises the benefits of strategic planning to HEIs as paraphrased below:

- Creates a framework for determining the direction the institution should take to achieve its desired future.
- Allows all institutional constituencies to participate and work together, synchronising their plans towards accomplishing institutional goals.
- Stimulates stakeholders to create innovative models for achieving competitive advantage.
- Aligns the institution with its mandate, vision, mission, strategic direction.
- Allows the institution to set priorities, targeting strategic areas of developmental significance for efficient allocation of resources.
- Engages stakeholders in policy dialogue to ensure their collective ownership of institutional development endeavours.

Similarly, Corrall (1996) in summarising the relevance of SPs in the HEI setting states that SPs help to: "*clarify institutional purpose and objectives; establish corporate directions and priorities; assess environmental drivers and constraints; identify critical issues and pressures; determine resource allocation and utilization; improve internal coherence and coordination; and inform operational decisions and actions*". In contrast, other scholars have argued that reasons that justify the need for SPs in HEIs in developing countries include competitive labour market (Boyne & Gould-Williams, 2003) driven by globalisation, a decline in government funding of tertiary institutions (Patton, 2010) changing student demographics (Bryson, Berry, & Yang, 2010) and a need to compete with the emerging models of higher education while keeping the essence of a traditional comprehensive higher education (Ferlie & Ongaro, 2015). This should serve as a constant reminder to the HEIs in developing countries that in the world of globalisation, HEIs that are able to develop and implement comprehensive SPs are the ones that able to deal with competitive forces of the global market. This is because planning enables them to anticipate challenges and address them before they become worse or get out of hand, therefore, it is important to have a defined game-plan for taking on the competition (Thompson, Strickland, & Gabble, 2013).

3.4. Developing Strategic Plans for Higher Education Institution in Developing Countries

One of the difficult tasks confronting many HEIs in developing countries is the development and implementation of SPs. Although aspects of strategic planning may be common to all HEIs, the principles and processes of its development need to be carefully tailored to suit the institutional environment when applied by HEI in developing countries (De Andreis, 2019). This is because the Planners have to take into account the peculiar circumstances of the institution in regard to its environment and the future it wants.

Normally, the first thing to do towards developing a SP is to set up a SP Committee and charge it with the responsibility of developing it. The scope of responsibilities of the Committee should be clearly spelt out to the Committee Members in the form of Terms of Reference. In order to bring broad-based and diverse insights to bear on the deliberations of the Committee, the Committee should be composed of representatives from all major stakeholder groups or units of the institution (Hinton, 2012; Weeks-Kaye, 2004).

The Committee could be an adhoc or a standing one. While an adhoc SP committee is disbanded after the plan has been developed (Adams, 1991; Allen, 2003) the standing committee continues to work after the development of the Plan by being involved in the implementation of the SP. One main benefit of an adhoc SP committee is that it creates room for other people to come on board, thus, offering opportunities for fresh ideas. Appointees can be replaced as and when necessary. Such rotational dynamics allow new people to learn from their participation in committee activities, while the replaced members take their knowledge back with them to their mother departments/units for sharing with other staff. It is argued that, this type of participatory learning increases the ability of the entire institution not only to appreciate but also to understand how the strategic planning and implementation processes work to support quality improvement across the entire institution. Leslie and Fretwell (1996); Welsh, Nunez, and Petrosko (2005) Proponents of the standing committee, on the other hand, argue that it provides the opportunity to draw on accumulated experience of the members to improve (on) the quality of work of the SP committee. The basis of this argument is that, not everyone appointed to a planning committee may be familiar with strategic planning to enable them do good job straightaway (Corrall, 1996; Kennie, 2002). Therefore, as it takes time to develop an experienced planning committee, if the committee is only constituted to craft the plan without participating in its implementation, all the hard-acquired knowledge and experience will be lost or missed (Hassanien, 2017; Hinton, 2012). The inherent strategic thinking dynamics in this regard account for why it is imperative to draw stakeholders from the various functional areas of the institution to constitute the SP Committee

SP provides the overall development direction the institution intends to take, guided by its mission, vision, values and goals. Therefore, all these must be defined within the framework of the institution's philosophy. Since

strategic planning is anchored on the mission and vision statements, in developing SPs for HEIs the institutional mission and vision should be clearly stated. The institutional mission statement should capture why the institution exists and what its operations are intended to achieve (Srinivasa et al., 2015). The mission statement of the HEI can include an explanation of what the institution stands for and what it intends its students or products to become. Following the mission statement is the vision of the institution, which is the institution's explicit description of what it intends to become within a given time-frame. The vision statement defines the institution's strategic position in the future and this must bear a relationship with the mission statement. The mission and vision statements provide the two polar ends of an analytical view of the institution within which the strategic plan is situated (Elbanna et al., 2016). It must be understood that while the mission and vision represent the current and envisioned states of the institution respectively, the SP is used to bridge the gap between the two (Robinson, 2005).

In developing a SP, the institution should also provide its core value statements, explaining what the institution stands for and the ways in which it intends to conduct its activities to achieve its mission and vision (Steiner, 1977). The core values statements should reflect what the institution believes are important in the execution of its mandate, mission and vision, all of which should be in conformity with societal values since the institution is ultimately obliged to serve the supreme interest of the wider society. The institution should also state the strategic goals and objectives. In doing so the institution should note that the goals and objectives have different connotations and meanings (Cook, Harrison, Zhang, Puron-Cid, & Gil-Garcia, 2015). While goals are the long term aims the HEI endeavours to achieve, objectives are the specific milestones which the institution plans to achieve in a short period (Nataraja & Bright, 2018; Steiner, 1977). The objectives must be precise, measurable, time-bound actions that assist in the achievement of goal(s). While objectives are means to an end, goals are seen as the end results (Lerner, 1999; Luxton, 2005; Robinson, 2005). Apart from providing the time-frame within which the entire SP and each activity entailed in it should be achieved, the SP should also provide the framework for budget and resource allocation (Dooris, 2003). In doing all these, it must be ensured that the mission, vision, core values, goals and objectives of the SP are aligned with each other and are mutually supportive.

Hughes and White (2005) have asserted that strategic planning requires some fundamental activities and processes, prominent among which are 'discovering institutional strengths and weaknesses, discerning potential threats and opportunities, and seeing how the institution can best respond to them." Karr and Kelley (1996) put the same issue differently by stating that strategic planning in the HEI system is a process of realistic scanning of its internal and external environments and aligning the institution to these. These views suggest that while there could be other ways of crafting a SP, it is important for the HEIs to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in order to identify factors that may affect the desired future outcomes of the institution's operations. Although various model exist for developing SPs, the SWOT approach is recommended by this paper because it allows for the identification of the institution's distinctive competencies and key success factors, which are crucial in assessing the strategic position of the institution (Thompson & Strickland, 2003). Quality management for continuous improvement requires that, having obtained information from the environmental scan, the institution matches its strengths to the opportunities identified, in order to be able to address its weaknesses, as well as threats to quality management. In other words, as already noted, the SWOT analyses help to build on the institution's strengths, minimize the weaknesses, take advantage of the opportunities, and deal with the threats. This is made possible because the SWOT analysis establishes the gap between the institution's current position, and its desired future and allows for the design of appropriate strategies and allocation of resources to close the gap thereof (Hughes & White, 2005; Kefa, 2014).

Having done the above, the framework of the Plan can be developed. The Planning Committee needs to spell out the key thrusts of the SP. For each key thrust, the actions, and activities to be undertaken to achieve set goal and objective should be outlined. The key actions normally relate to the objectives, while the activities refer to what should be done to achieve the objectives. The SP should assign responsibilities for the various actions or activities

to be carried out. The key responsible person for all these is the institutional head (the holder of the Plan) but he/she cannot do it all by himself/herself, therefore,   primary and secondary implementers need to be appointed to help undertake the activities. Using a university as an example of HEIs, the holder could be the Vice-Chancellor, the primary implementer of an action or activity at the College or Faculty level could be the Provost of College or Dean of Faculty, while the secondary implementer at the Departmental/Unit level could be the   Heads of Department/Unit depending on the terminologies or nomenclature used by the various institutions. It should be noted that the SP should cover academic, administrative and support services. The SP should also outline the key performance indicators for specific activities, as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (See UCC (2018)).

Furthermore, benchmarks could be set for the Plan. Benchmarking is the systematic process of measuring and comparing the institution's operations, practices, and performance against other institutions' standards (Bryson et al., 2010). In strategic planning, benchmarking is used to guide the management processes of the institution in terms of best practices (Lerner, 1999). Therefore, the HEIs in developing countries could have   benchmarks as a reference point for setting their own goals and targets against which the institutions'   performance with respect to the planning and implementation of the Plan can be measured.

In regard to the core issues to be included in the SP apart from the above stated ones, the Planners must note that the core functions of the institution are teaching, research, and community engagement, therefore academic, administrative and support services should be geared towards these. Issues for consideration in strategic planning in HEIs may include academic (teaching, research, and extension) matters, institutional governance, finance, physical infrastructure, Information and Communication Technology, human resource, institutional advancement and internationalisation. Based on the institution-wide SP, the various Colleges, Faculties, Departments and Sections of the institution should also develop their unit level strategic plans. This implies that the institution-wide SP must be comprehensive and robust enough to accommodate the departmental plans and policies. In other words, the departmental SPs should be designed based on the institutional SP to ensure synergy among the goals and objectives so that achievement of the various units' goals and objectives will invariably lead to the achievement of the institutional goals and objectives. It must be ensured that, there are linkage among all plans of the institution from the various sub-units. Above all, it should be ensured that the planning processes are linked and the components of the SP are aligned to make them supportive of one another. That is why all unit level SPs must emanate from and be guided by the parent SP (the institutional SP) to ensure synchronisation of efforts at continuous quality improvement at the institutional level.

The plan should indicate the reporting lines for the implementation of the Strategic Plan. In this regard, the bottom-up approach is recommended.   That is, the unit heads should report to the Heads of Department, who in turn report to the Deans, then to the Provost and from the Provosts to the Institutional Head (holder) who is the Head of Management of the University. Similar reporting structures in the administrative line should be followed. However, it is often the case that, a SP Implementation Committee is appointed to co-ordinate the implementation of the Plan. In that case, all the Colleges, Faculties, Schools, Departments, Directorates, Sections and Units submit their Progress Reports to the Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee or any entity appointed for implementation of the SP collates reports from the various Colleges, Faculties, Departments, Sections and Units of the institution and presents a composite report to the institutional management for decision making. The Planners could also make use of the Balance Scorecard which is normally applied in the business enterprise. A Balanced Scorecard is a strategy performance management tool − a semi-standard structured report that can be used by the institutional managers to keep track of the execution of activities by the staff within their control and to monitor the consequences arising from these actions (Atkinson, 2006; Niven, 2002; Northcott & Taulapapa, 2012). Furthermore, Ioppolo, Saija, and Salomone (2012) have maintained that ' the Balanced Score Card is basically a performance management report used by a management team, and typically this team is focused on managing the

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implementation of strategic operational activities'. The Balance Scorecard could serve as a form of monitoring and evaluation mechanism for implementing the SP.

3.5. Implementing Strategic Plans on HEOs in Developing Counties

Once the SP is successfully developed, the institution must actively work to implement it, bearing in mind that successful implementation of the plan hinges heavily on the institution's ability to turn strategic thoughts and decisions into operational actions (Brown, Potoski, & Slyke, 2016). Views on SP implementation in HEIs are varied and diverse but there are commonalities among them. Generally, implementing a strategic plan involves executing the proposed activities or initiatives in the Plan, monitoring, reporting and communicating progress, as well as reviewing and evaluating the implementation as and when necessary. HEIs in developing countries could use various mechanisms to oversee the implementation of the initiatives proposed in the SP in order to ensure continuous quality improvement. The institution could have an Implementation Committee to assist with implementation. The institutions may also delegate the responsibility of implementing the plan to mid-level managers, or the Committee that designed the plan could be tasked to oversee its implementation (Hinton, 2012). This reinforces the assertion by Adams (1991), Corrall (1996) and Allen (2003) that the Planning Committee could be an adhoc or a standing one.

Effective SP implementation requires the development of an Implementation Plan (IP) by the SP Implementation Committee to serve as a guide. The IP should take into consideration the resources that will be needed to execute the plan by ensuring that the activities outlined in the SP are carried out as scheduled to generate the desired output and outcomes. It is worthy to note that 'resource' here is defined broadly to include: people, time, space, technology and funds, as well as any other material that will facilitate the implementation of the plan (Barney, 1991; Pidcock, 2001). The IP should have metrics to monitor progress made on achieving the strategic initiatives. The IP should be clear and directive. It should take note of timelines indicated in the SP for each action as well as measures to assess and evaluate the actions. The IP should also be flexible enough to allow for revision as and when necessary in order for the institution to be able to respond to changing local and global circumstances (Boyne & Gould-Williams, 2003).

Furthermore, for effective implementation, the implementation processes need to be monitored and evaluated to ensure that they are compatible with internal and external realities and the objectives of the SP (Bryson, Crosby, & Bryson, 2009). Monitoring and Evaluation may involve several activities, but generally, the following steps are required: (i) defining parameters to be measured, (ii) defining target values and indicators for those parameters (iii) performing measurements (iv) comparing measured results to the pre-defined standards (v) making changes and adjustments where necessary (Hinton, 2012; Thompson et al., 2013). The implementation results should be compared with the objectives set. Thompson et al. (2013) add that if the results and objectives differ, a further analysis is required to find out the reasons for the gap so that appropriate actions can be taken to address the challenges responsible for the existence the of gap.

The SP Implementation Committees should develop a system for reporting and accountability. In this connection, the Committees should, at specific intervals, request all units or departments in the institutions to submit progress report, detailing both in quantitative and qualitative terms, what has been achieved, what remains to be achieved, reasons for inability to undertake activities that were supposed to have been undertaken in their respective departments/sections/units (Bryson et al., 2009; Dooris, 2003). These reports should be collated for institutional management's decision-making. Cook et al. (2015) add that the Head of the Institution should facilitate a review and analysis of the Units' periodic progress reports, and develop from same, a composite Strategic Plan Progress Report that reflects the progress across all the divisions/units. In short, periodic evaluations of the SP are essential in assessing the success of the implementation process. In this regard, it is

important to measure performance, at least annually (but preferably more often), so that any deviation could be detected in time and dealt with promptly (Hinton, 2012; Rowley et al., 1997).

Apart from the regular periodic reports, there should be a mid-term review and report. In the mid-term, the Institutional Management and Strategic Plan Implementation Committee should discuss the composite report to know what has been achieved and what remains to be achieved in order to determine if there is the need to revise some portions of the SP or the IP (Bell, 2002; Bradley et al., 2011). The result of this review should be communicated within and across the institution to inform all relevant stakeholders about the state of affairs with respect to the implementation. A full cycle evaluation of the SP is conducted at the Plan's end date (Andrews. et al., 2012) by which time the regular monitoring and assessment processes will have produced documented several periodic achievements for reflection. This assessment produces the final accounting of achievement for the life of the SP (Glassman, Rossy, & Winfield, 1997). It is important to document all accomplishments, including ones not originally included in or envisaged by the plan, to inform the development of the next SP.

According to Bell (2002) as cited in Kefa (2014) implementation of a SP cannot succeed without the commitment of the implementers and the stakeholders. Implementation of the SP should, therefore, not be carried out exclusively by experts, but rather as an all-inclusive process in which the implementers and stakeholders are actively involved a collaborative manner (Bryson et al., 2009; Elbanna et al., 2016; Ferlie & Ongaro, 2015). There should be communication and dialogue for promoting understanding and ownership to ensure continuous quality improvement in the institution. Finally, it is important to note that to ensure effective implementation of the SP, the implementation processes need to be coordinated (Reeves, Haanaes, & Sinha, 2015) by the Implementation Committee or any other responsible persons/entity appointed to do that. Zuckerman (2007) states that the Committee members must know, and be able to explain and justify why a process or step must be given priority over another, while Tama (2017) adds that it is vital to make stakeholders understand how the planning and implementation processes work in order to secure their ownership and commitment.

3.6. Challenges in Planning and Implementation of SPs in HEIs in Developing Countries

This section presents a review of the key challenges in developing and implementing SPs in HEIs, with emphasis on developing countries. One of the major barriers to strategic planning and implementation of SPs in HEIs in developing countries is financial constraint. Both the planning and implementation process entail huge cost. Kefa (2014) notes that, in their bid to compete in the global market, HEIs tend to have ambitious SPs which need a lot of financial resources to develop and implement. However, most of the HEIs in developing countries are not financially well endowed to enable them bear the cost of planning let alone the cost of implementing them. To address this challenge, the institutions need to develop realistic SPs instead of over-ambitious ones and also find innovative ways to generate more income in order to be able to fund the planning and implementation of their SPs.

Apart from the SP being resource-intensive, a lack of or inadequate ownership of it, as well as resistance to change by the stakeholders also presents a challenge to effective planning and implementation of SPs in HEIs in developing countries. Rowley, Lujan, and Dolence (1998) point out that inertia, resistance to change, and the need for consensus among stakeholders slow down change processes in the HEIs in the developing countries. They further argue that the strongest resistance often occurs at the implementation stage. In some cases, the key people in the institution may not be involved in the planning processes and so they do not own the Plan, hence, they do not get actively involved in the implementation of the Plan. In other instances, some individuals or group of staff of the institution may simply resist change because the change may not be in their interest or favour if they are implemented (Mintzberg, 1994). In order to avoid these challenges, there is the need for HEIs' Management to encourage active participation of stakeholders at all the stages of the SP. Hiam (1993) is also of the view that the various stakeholders and constituencies must be engaged in dialogues with respect to the planning and implementation processes in order to engender a feeling of ownership of the Plan. This means that, Planners

should, more or less, serve as 'facilitators', and 'catalysts' to guide the planning process by encouraging full participation of the stakeholders (Hax & Majluf, 1996; Percoco, 2016). However, in cases where the challenge is the result of sheer resistance to change, the authorities of the institution must be bold enough to apply a combination of persuasion and force to enable the institution implement the planned change(s).

Hinton (2012) makes a very important point regarding challenges of planning and implementation of SPs in HEIs. Hinton argues that strategic planning is often derived directly from 'corporate futures' research, which is peculiar to business entities. According to Hinton (2012) this often presents a challenge because superimposing corporate practice onto academic institutions may not work well. The reason is that such superimpositions do not take into consideration the unique academic culture of the institution, which may not be wholly compatible with the corporate (business) culture. Differences in the values systems of corporate (business) organisations and collegial (institutional) culture can produce a tension that can become a serious challenge to planning and implementation of SPs in the HEIs in developing countries.

Another challenge of SP implementation is ensuring commitment of the staff of the institution to the Strategic Plan. In the developing countries, it is often the case that people are more interested in pecuniary remuneration than the work they are supposed to do, particularly in the state-owned enterprises and institutions, including the public HEIs. In some cases some individuals or department may be more loyal and committed to their disciplines and departments than to the institution-wide SP (Taylor & Karr, 1999). Meanwhile, commitment, according to (Mintzberg., 1994) is essential because the SP's design and implementation thrive on institution-wide participation, which can only be achieved if people are committed to it. Commitment of institutional staff can be elicited if they are made to believe that their involvement counts, and that they will benefit from the process. As already pointed out commitment of the staff throughout the institution "grows out of a sense of ownership of the SP (Chance, 2010; Mintzberg, 1994) therefore, efforts should be made by the Institutional Management to ensure ownership of the SP. This implies that the Institutional Management must demonstrate ownership and commitment themselves in order to be able to exact same from the other staff.

Strategic planning and implementation is an onerous task in the HEI developing countries because such institutions are mostly large and typically complex entities (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994). Developing and implementing a SP in a HEI, which is a complex one, involve intricate processes with inherent challenging issues that could constitute a barrier to them (Porter & Lee, 2015). Chance and Williams (2015) mince no words in this regard by opining that implementing change through strategic planning in HEIs in developing countries is difficult due to high levels of unpredictability. The environment for most HEI in developing countries is often volatile and predicable). The challenges may vary overtime, therefore, the institutions need to revise their plans and priorities as the events and circumstances evolve during the life-span of the SP, or abandon what is no longer relevant in their plans and respond to new challenges or pursue emergent opportunities.

In spite of the fact that HEIs abound in talents, some HEIs in the developing countries may lack the specialist expertise to design and implement institutional SP without one form of support or the other from elsewhere. The lack of or inadequate requisite knowledge and experience can lead to SPs that are shoddily crafted or poorly implemented. In this case the SP may be not be implementable or may be skewed to some aspects of the institutional needs to the neglect of others (Albrechts, Balducci, & Hillier, 2016; Nataraja & Bright, 2018). Therefore, in the event of lack of expertise for SP design in the institution, the Institution could hire the services of a consultant with the requisite background to facilitate the process. It is only dedicated planners, whether from internal or external source, that can bring the experience, intuition, and creativity to bear on the successful development and implementation of SP in the HEI in developing countries (Dooris, Kelley, & Trainer, 2002). Finally, institutional strategic planning in the HEIs in developing countries is too often a top-down process and, therefore, garners insufficient participation, awareness, or support from the majority of the stakeholders at the lower levels, particularly from the staff of the institutions at the lower levels (Pidcock, 2001). This challenge could

be avoided by adopting the bottom-up approach to strategic planning, instead of the other way round so as to engender the needed participation and support to ensure effectiveness.

4. CONCLUSION

Strategic Planning is essential for quality management in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as it enables the institutional stakeholders to work towards a common goal, adjusting institutional operations towards the dynamic quality concept. With the rapid changes and stiff competition occurring in the contemporary higher education market, the success of HEIs in developing countries depends mainly on how they are able leverage strategic planning for improving quality management to differentiate and strategically position themselves in the global market. Strategic planning offers hope for survival in such a competitive landscape as it creates a framework for analysing the institution's internal and external environment and devising ways to respond to the changing circumstance. This increases the institutions' ability to respond effectively to the emerging quality management trends, events, challenges, and opportunities, thus helping them to have a measure of control over their desired futures.

Strategic planning is anchored on the vision and mission of the institution and driven by the goals and values of the institution. It is based on the SWOT analysis as informed by institutional internal and external environmental scan. However, as Thompson et al. (2013) have argued, "an institutional strategic plan typically evolves overtime emerging from a blend of (1) proactive deliberate actions on the part of the institutional managers to improve the strategy and, (2) reactive emergent responses to unanticipated developments and fresh market conditions". This should be noted in planning and implementing institutional SPs so that the Plan can accordingly be adjusted towards the dynamic quality concept for continuous improvement. The implementation of the SP should be monitored and evaluated to ensure compatibility with the set goal(s) and objectives, as well as the overall strategic direction of the institution.

While strategic planning in HEIs can be theoretically linear, in practice it is non-linear, implying that although aspects of it may be common to all types of HEIs, its application processes need to be carefully adjusted to suit the institutional environment and circumstances. This also means that, the Planners have to take into consideration the resources available to the institution, as well as the perspectives and needs of the stakeholders of the institution with whom they must co-operate and collaborate to achieve institutional goals and agenda. Challenges of strategic planning and implementation include inadequate financing, low level of commitment or the lack of it, resistance to change and politics that are often common in HEIs in developing countries. However, with dedicated management and leadership supported by committed expert planners, monitors and evaluators, the needed experience, intuition, creativity and participation can be brought to bear to overcome the challenges in order to ensure that the SPs actually drive the quality agenda of HEIs in developing countries. It is recommended that HEIs in developing countries continuously improve quality management through strategic planning to enable them align the institutions with their vision, mission, and goals; set priorities, target strategic areas of relevance for efficient allocation of resources; and encourage participation for collective ownership of the SP. It is further recommended that key issues for consideration in strategic planning by HEIs in the developing countries include academic (teaching, research and extension) matters, governance, finance, physical infrastructure, ICT, human resources, gender inclusivity, internationalisation and advancement. Anything short of this, could lead to SPs that are shoddily crafted, not implementable or poorly implemented, thus, defeating the intended purpose of quality improvement for institutional effectiveness and competitive advantage.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE PAPER

The review used the narrative approach, which has its own inherent limitations. For example, narrative reviews generally are comprehensive and cover a wide range of issues on a given topic, but they do not follow strict rules as

the systematic reviews, which are characterised by much more rigidities. Although frantic efforts were made to cover as much literature as possible, not all literature on the subject matter was covered since the literature search did not use all databases. Besides, only material written in English were considered since that was the only international language that the author was conversant with. Nonetheless, it is comprehensive and analytical enough to give the readers the needed information for understanding, appreciating and applying strategic plans for improving quality management in the HEIs in developing countries, which was the main focus of the paper.

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