

Analysing Vision Mission & Strategic Planning At Higher Education: A Case Study of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Universities

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Abstract



Universities tend to develop vision and mission statements and they are not sure how they will be put to practice in strategic planning, particularly in developing areas such as KP universities. In this study, the aim is to investigate the importance of vision and mission statements as well as their relationship with strategic planning in university. Document analysis was used as a qualitative method of discussing the vision statements, mission statements, and strategic plans of the chosen KP universities. The research discovered that the majority of universities orient in the academic excellence area yet less on social roles. There is poor implementation and evaluation of the strategic plans and there is poor alignment of the vision, mission and strategy. There is a disconnect between planning and practice as the study reveals. Increasing alignment and implementation can assist in the performance and accomplishment of goals by universities in the long term.

Keywords: Vision statement, Mission Statement, Strategic Planning, Higher Education, KP Universities

Introduction

Institutions of higher education (HEIs) are the key actors in the formation of knowledge economies, social development, and systems of innovation in the world. When the modern educational world is growing more competitive and global, it is believed that besides offering quality education, universities must exhibit evident organizational purpose, responsibility and sustainability. In this context, vision and mission statements, the effective strategic planning has become the key tools that help in the development and performance of institutions in a better way. These aspects can be used to help universities set their purpose and define their future wishes, and bring their resources and activity into alignment with the larger educational and societal objectives.

The vision and the mission statements are said to be the basis of organizational identity. A vision statement explains what an institution should be in future whereas a mission statement gives the current purpose and the main activity of an institution. As it has been reiterated by scholars, effective vision and mission statements also offer guidance, as well as motivation to stakeholders, and a decision-making model (Morphew and Hartley, 2006; Özdem, 2011). These statements are especially significant when it comes to higher education where universities exist under complex environments where they interact with several stakeholders, such as the students, faculty, government agencies, and the society in general. Research studies have revealed that university institutions, in which vision and mission statements are well defined and effectively communicated, has a strong position to attain strategic alignment and institute effectiveness (Olusola et al., 2022; Sakellarios and Gann, 2024).

Their effectiveness is however not ensured by the fact that there are vision and mission statements. Studies show that quite a number of universities develop such statements as a symbolic or rhetoric expediency, but not as actionable ones (Ahmad and Masroor, 2020; Afzal, 2024). This can be observed in certain instances where there is no balance between the stated goals and the real practice within the institution and therefore their influence on performance and decision-making is limited. This disengagement between formulation and implementation, points towards the necessity of a further insight into the working of the vision and mission statements in the broader context of strategic planning.

Instead, strategic planning is a process that systematizes the process of priorities, resources allocation and sets institutions quantifiable goals that could help them to accomplish the vision and mission of the institution. It helps universities to effectively address an internal and external environment of change, like technological change, financial constraints, and growing competition

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(Akyel et al., 2012; Mohamed and Ammar, 2024). Successful strategic planning entails not just identification of the long-term goals but also maintaining review and changes. It has also been shown that strategic planning has a positive impact on organizational performance, institutional accountability, and competitive advantage within the higher education sector (Immordino et al., 2016; Gede and Huluka, 2023; Mainardes et al., 2011).

Even though strategic planning is imperative in higher education, it has a number of challenges. These are low stakeholder engagement, absence of effective implementation plans and inadequate coordination between the institutional objectives and operations (Ahmad et al., 2024; Ali, 2025). Moreover, most institutions fail to integrate their vision and mission statements in the strategic planning process thus creating fragmented or poor strategies. The problem is especially acute in the developing world that still has the developing systems of higher education that are short of resources.

The past few years have seen an increased academic focus on the topic of analyzing the connection between vision, mission, and strategic planning in universities. Research has examined the role of these factors in institutional success, survival and achievement of international objectives like the Sustainable Development Goals (Armas & Jugo, 2024). Nevertheless, there is still a major research gap in the knowledge of how these two concepts are put practically into practice and how they relate to one another in particular regional context e.g. extending to universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). Although they were studied to evaluate mission and vision statements on a national or global scale, there is also a lack of empirical studies that did in-depth case research to understand how missions and vision statements influence strategic planning processes in the individual institutions.

The gap has created the necessity of an exclusive study that does not only examine the content of the vision and mission statements but also studies the effects and the manner in which vision and mission statements are incorporated in strategic planning practices. This relationship is important to understand so as to enhance the effectiveness of the institutions and are able to attain their long-term aspirations in the ever changing environment.

Consequently, the current study seeks to examine KP universities vision and mission statements and strategic planning activities. In particular, it aims at analyzing the importance of the vision and mission statements, understanding the concept and practice of strategic planning in the higher education setting, as well as elaborating a full variety of how these factors mingle to influence the development of the institution. Through the achievement of these goals, the study seeks to provide responses to some of the research questions that are core elements to the study about the role and significance of vision and mission statement, the nature of strategic planning, and how overall the notions of symbolic and mission statement can be undone within higher education establishments.

This study is important as it can be applied to the theory and practice. On academic front, it is a contribution to the literature in that it presents a contextual analysis of vision, mission, and strategic planning in KP universities. In practice, it can inform the policymakers, the university leaders, and the educational planners on how they can create and apply effective strategies that fit the institutional objectives. Finally, the study is aimed at advancing the knowledge on strategic management within learning institutions and contribute to the building of more coherent and efficient institutional designs.

Research Objectives

This study is also defined to bring about an understandable and concise impression of the vision, missions and strategic planning as it relates to higher education institutions. The study specifically aims:

1. To analyze the importance of the vision and mission statements within the institutions of higher learning, especially in setting the direction of an institution, creating a sense of identity, and enhancing successful decision-making procedures (Morphew and Hartley, 2006; Özdem, 2011) .
2. In order to understand the principle of strategic planning in higher education, its processes, significance, and the performance enhancement and attainments of the institutional objectives (Akyel et al., 2012; Mohamed and Ammar, 2024) .
3. To build a complete picture of interconnection between vision and mission and strategic planning and how all these factors combine to contribute towards institutional growth and long term sustainability in universities (Mainardes et al., 2011; Gede and Huluka, 2023) .

These are the aims that would inform the research in addressing both theoretical and practical sides of strategic management within institutions of higher learning.

Research Questions

The research questions that are used to guide the study are as follows:

1. Why does it matter in a higher learning institution to have a vision and mission statement?
2. What is the understanding of strategic planning in the framework of higher learning institutions?
3. What is the whole idea of the vision, mission and strategic planning and how can these aspects be comprehended in higher learning institutions?

Literature Review

1. Conceptual Foundations of Vision and Mission in Higher Education

One of the concepts in the management of the higher education institutions (HEIs) is vision and mission statements. A vision statement explains what a university desires to make of itself in the future whereas a mission statement tells us of the purpose and activities the university conducts at present. These theories are based on strategic management theory, where companies identify themselves and their course of action to remain competitive (Kotler and Murphy, 1981). These statements are particularly significant in the higher education sector since most of the stakeholders in higher education institutions are students, governments, and society.

According to scholars like Morphew and Hartley (2006) and Ozdem (2011), the mission and vision statements can be used in the university to reflect values, priorities, and long-term goals. Their study indicates that these statements are not merely metaphorical, but they can be useful in decision-making and planning. Nevertheless, their success will be determined by the clarity in which they were written and the efficacy with which they were applied in practice. This opinion is also supported by European studies. Indicatively, identity and strategy are interdependent in the case of mission statements used by German universities to position in their competitive markets of education in which the study by Leiber (2016) reveals.

In spite of its significance, there is high criticism in literature. It is claimed that the mission and vision statements are usually too abstract by many researchers. According to Ahmad and Masroor (2020), the propensity toward the same tendencies in universities decreases originality and utility. In the same manner, Sakellarios and Gann (2024) believe that not all statements are practical as they are more rhetorical. Similar concerns are also presented by European research. As Giusepponi and Tavoletti (2018) noted, the goals in Italian universities tend to be wide and ambiguous, and they are hard to be measured in terms of their performance. This implies that the use of vision and mission statements is extensive; however, their effectiveness is determined by the quality of the vision and mission statements, as well as their implementation.

2. Strategic Planning in Higher Learning Institutions.

Strategic planning involves universities identifying their purpose, resource allocation and plan execution in order to reach their vision and mission. This is a business management concept which found extensive application in higher education since the late 20th century (Kotler and Murphy, 1981). Strategic planning assists universities to counter such challenges as globalization, the change in technology, and financial pressure.

Studies indicate that strategic planning enhances accountability with respect to performance of institutions. According to Akyel et al. (2012), it is a systematic approach by which vision, mission, and operational goals are linked. Likewise, in their study, Immordino et al. (2016) discovered that universities with successful strategic planning systems achieve better in the field of governance and results. Other recent research efforts, including that by Mohamed and Ammar (2024), mention that innovation and long-term sustainability are also supported by strategic planning.

This provides valuable comparisons given in European universities. According to Taylor and Miroiu (2002), the government policies and quality assurance systems have a strong influence in strategic planning in Europe. Machado and Taylor (2010) also established that European institutions usually have problems with strategic planning because of the conventional governing frameworks and opposition to change. Even later research indicates improvement, however. García-Aracil et al. (2023) discovered that the Spanish universities gradually incorporate social responsibility and sustainability as strategic plans.

Although these developments occur, there are still a number of challenges. Some of the problems identified by Ahmad et al. (2024) and Ali (2025) are the absence of stakeholder involvement and poor implementation. On the same note, as Zechlin (2010) notes, the European universities usually have trouble bridging the gap between strategic plans and day-to-day activities. It can be seen that strategic planning is a well-received idea but its success relies on its adequate implementation and constant monitoring.

3. Vision, Mission and Strategic Planning Integration.

Correlation between vision and mission and strategic planning is one of the focus areas of the literature. All these elements do not exist in isolation, but they interact with each other to determine the development of institutions. Strategic planning transforms vision and mission into action whereas they provide direction (Mainardes et al., 2011).

Research indicates that when these factors are well aligned the performance is better. Gede and Huluka (2023) discovered that those universities that are well aligned are more effective in the organization. On the same note, Khalilov (2025) underscores that the conduct of strategic planning needs to be explicitly instituted on the foundations of institutional vision and mission in an attempt to foster coherence. The essence of this holistic approach is also supported by Sethi et al. (2023) who claim that successful universities keep aligning their goals to their planning process.

This integration is further revealed in the European research. According to Fantauzzi et al. (2021), sustainability goals are becoming a part of strategic plans by many Italian universities, which connect their mission statements with them. According to Morphew and Fumasoli (2018), in their strategic directions, Northern European universities trade many identities, including research excellence and social responsibility. This reveals that the process of integration is not easy as universities have to deal with competing interests.

Nevertheless, weak integration can also be evidenced. According to Ahmad and Masroor (2020), most institutions do not link their mission statements and the real strategies. Likewise, Inga et al. (2021) believe that strategic planning is a part of administration, more often than it is an institutional procedure. Such a disconnection between theory and practice is still a significant issue in developing and developed settings.

4. Comparative Perspective: KP Universities vs European Universities

Comparative analysis on KP university and European institutions shows that there are similarities and differences. Vision and mission statements are popular as institutional identity definition instruments in both settings. Nevertheless, they are applied and effective differently.

Research on KP university demonstrates that in many hospitals, mission and vision statements have generic objectives, including quality education and research (Afzal, 2024). Although these goals are critical, they are not always clearly told to be aligned to actions that are strategic. This can be compared to the African and Asian experiences whereby institutions experience difficulties converting the vision into the practice (Olusola et al., 2022).

European universities, on the contrary, have more policy-oriented strategies. In the case of European institutions, García-Aracil et al. (2023) revealed that the strategies are aligned (between the country and the international frameworks) including the Bologna Process and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Tamassy et al. (2025) also reveal that the European universities have measurable goals and performance indicators in their strategic plans.

The other essential difference is the governance. In European universities, there is a tendency of running of regulated systems where accountability and frequent review are involved (Capano, 2010). This stimulates the enhanced integration of vision, mission and strategy. At KP universities, this may be negated by the lack of how to implement it well due to limited resources and poor governance structures (Ali, 2025).

Even though these issues are different, common challenges are encountered in both contexts. They are the lack of stakeholder involvement, inadequate communication, and the inability to measure the outcomes. This indicates that the enhancement of the integration between vision, mission, and strategic planning is not only a national problem, but a problem all over the globe.

5. Emerging Trends, Debates, and Research Gaps

There are several significant trends to the field that are pointed to in the literature. The growing interest of sustainability and social responsibility is one of the key trends. Armas and Jugo (2024) and Pactwa et al. (2024) reveal that colleges are progressing their mission and vision with the

internationally applicable objectives like the SDGs. This trend is particularly particularly robust within its European institutions where sustainability can be seen to be usually a component of strategic planning.

The adoption of strategic management with the use of data and indicators of performance is another direction. Analytics is being used by the modern universities to track the progress and enhance decision-making. The change is indicative of a trend towards Evidence Based Management within higher education.

The literature has also debates going on. Among the major controversies is whether mission and vision statements are really helpful or mere symbolic. Whereas certain researchers claim that they lead to institutional achievement (Morphew and Hartley, 2006), some researchers think that most are neglected in real life (Sakellarios and Gann, 2024). The other argument faces the amount of centralization in strategy planning. European universities tend to adhere to top-down processes, whereas others are in favor of more participatory processes.

Regardless of the increasing researchers numbers, some gaps exist. To start with, little research has been done on how practical vision and mission statement can be applied to a particular regional context, i.e. KP universities. The available studies are more content-analytic as opposed to passive application. Second, comparative studies that involve comparison of the difference between developing and developed regions are not available. Third, the ways stakeholders (students and faculty) are involved in strategic planning processes are not explored by numerous studies.

All these gaps are significant to theory and practice. The case study, stakeholder and use of novel tools in strategic management should be used to research in future.

To conclude, the literature demonstrates that vision, mission and strategic planning are important elements of higher education management. They assist universities to know who they are, what they want to achieve and adapt to the changing environments. These concepts are acceptable but need to be properly designed, aligned and implemented.

European universities which have undertaken comparative studies bring out the relevance of systematic planning, policy coordination and responsibility. Meanwhile, there are issues that are universal, like poor integration and absence of stakeholder engagement. Another significant pattern is the emphasis on sustainability and decision-making grounded on data, which is reported in the literature as well.

Nevertheless, there are considerable research gaps especially on how these factors interact in a given area such as the KP universities. This paper seeks to fill such gaps by presenting an in-depth examination on vision, mission, and strategic planning and adding to both scholarly and practice enhancement in higher education.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

The research design applies to a qualitative research design, which considers the secondary data analysis. The qualitative approach is suitable since the research targets to comprehend the sense, content, and associations of vision, mission, and strategic planning in the institutions of higher learning as opposed to quantifying the variables.

This paper is an analytical study, and it is a document analysis study, meaning that it involves the study of already existing institutional documents of vision statements, mission statements and strategic plans. The process of document analysis is a highly prevalent one in the educational research field because this systematic interpretation of written texts can enable the researcher to extract the primary themes and trends (Morgan, 2022; Warshaw and Upton, 2018).

2. Data Sources (Population and Sampling)

2.1 Population

The study population will comprise universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan.

2.2 Sampling Technique

The universities selected using a purposive sampling technique are those that have the necessary documents. The universities, which are included are only those which have:

- Vision and mission statements posted.
- Available strategic plans or official reports.

This strategy can assure that the sources of data chosen are well applicable to the research purposes.

3. Data Collection Method

The study relies entirely on secondary data, collected from:

- Official university websites
- Published strategic plans
- Institutional reports and policy documents

No primary data (such as interviews or surveys) are used in this study.

The collected documents include:

- Vision statements
- Mission statements
- Strategic planning documents

These sources provide reliable and authentic information about institutional goals and strategies.

4. Data Analysis Technique

The data are analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

This method involves:

- Carefully reading the documents
- Identifying key words, themes, and concepts
- Categorizing information related to vision, mission, and strategic planning
- Examining the alignment and relationships between these elements

This type of content analysis would be applied to secondary textual data and is typical of research conducted in higher education to reference institutional documents (Gläser-Zikuda et al., 2020; Duriau et al., 2007).

Findings

This section describes the findings of the research using the discussion of the documents performed on various universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The qualitative content analysis was considered in the study; it implies that the researcher has to read vision statements, mission statements, and strategic plans attentively to identify common ideas and patterns.

Firstly, it is revealed by the analysis of vision statements that the majority of universities are aiming at becoming best in terms of education and research. The desires of many universities are to attain the academic excellence, enhance the research and innovation and have international recognition. Leadership development and social responsibility also are noted in some universities but they are less frequent. This indicates that most universities are focused on expanding academically and competing internationally though less on their involvement in society.

Second, the mission statements are predominantly centred on the teaching and learning. The need to offer quality education to students is emphasized in almost all universities. Most are also implemented with research work and skill building implying that they require students to be ready to face the challenges in the real life. Nevertheless, there are still less universities that explicitly state community service and values of ethics, and that is why these aspects are not firmly driven in their missions.

Third, reviewing strategic planning documents, it was determined that the majority of the universities possess general goals and objectives. Nevertheless, several of them fail to provide clear explanations as to how these objectives would be realized. Few universities contained explicit implementation plans, monitoring systems or methods of evaluation. This implies that although universities have plans, they usually do not have the right systems to measure their progressness and achievement.

The conformity of the vision, mission and strategy is another significant discovery. There are universities that demonstrate a high level of association between these aspects, in that, their plans are well founded on their vision and mission. Nevertheless, majority of the universities aligns moderately with a few having weak relationships. This implies that a high number of institutions are not entirely aligning their long-term objectives with what they actually plan and do.

Lastly, the research established that in most instances, the vision and mission statements are treated as graceful or symbolic statements and not practical. This implies that they are prepared and presented but not completely utilized in strategic planning and decision making. They are effectively used in only a couple of universities to drive their strategies and actions.

In general, the evidence indicates that universities in KP have the conception of the role of the vision, mission, and strategic planning. There is however a difference between what they claim or what they actually do. To become better, the universities should consider refining their vision and mission in a better way by linking them to the clear strategies, the appropriate implementation, and the frequent assessment.

Discussion

In this research, it was proposed to know the importance of vision, mission, and strategic planning in the universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) through the analysis of the institutional documentation. It has been found that the universities acknowledge the relevance of these elements, yet there are multiple gaps in their application in reality.

The first is that the study concluded that in most universities, academic excellence, research, and worldwide prestige are mentioned in the vision statements in a clear way. This conclusion is followed by earlier research of Morphew and Hartley (2006) and since the adoption of the vision statements assists in defining the future of the institutions (Ozdem, 2011). The outcomes also indicate however that other areas such as social responsibility and community development are not much stressed. This is a bit contrasting to recent researches like Armas and Jugo (2024) which emphasize the increment in the significance of sustainability and social objectives in universities. This implies that KP universities continue to concentrate on conventional academic objectives as opposed to larger broader roles in society.

Second, the results indicate that mission statements are mostly dedicated to the teaching, learning and research. This coincides with the literature because universities have always considered education and knowledge generation to be their primary roles (Kotler and Murphy, 1981). Simultaneously, the narrow specification of the types of ethical values, as well as community service, confirms the thesis of Ahmad and Masroor (2020), who have discovered that most of the mission statements are broad and do not fully represent all the duties of the universities.

Third, the research gathered that strategic planning is present in the majority of universities, but it is not developed comprehensively. Most institutions have objectives, yet they do not have elaborated implementation strategies, surveillance structures and performance appraisal procedures. The result is in line with those by Akyel et al. (2012) and Immordino et al. (2016), who added that strategic planning should be based on objectives and constant appraisal. The deficiency of these attributes in KP universities indicates that planning remains incomplete and is not always quite practical.

The other notable conclusion is that there is a weak to moderate agreement between strategic planning, vision, and mission. This is in line with the findings of other research by Mainardes et al. (2011) and Gede and Huluka (2023) which indicate positive results by aligning with strong performance. A small number of universities have good alignment in this study with the majority having partial affiliations. This implies that a large number of the universities are not aligning their long-term objectives with real strategies.

The research also established that, a significant number of vision and mission statements are employed symbolically instead of practically. This proves the apprehensions expressed by Sakellarios and Gann (2024) who said that these statements are usually composed in a formal manner, yet they are not utilized in making decisions. Such is an existing gap between theory and practice in the management in higher education.

This paper can help expand the current understanding of the vision, mission, and strategic planning in KP universities by offering a context-based insight into this subject. It gives credibility to the fact that these factors cannot always be successfully applied in practice despite their factual significance. Another contribution of the study to the argument on disconnectivity between symbolic and functional use of mission and vision statements is also provided.

The implications are significant to university administrators and policymakers in real life. Universities should:

- Enhance vision, mission and strategy alignment.
- Establish effective implementation and assessment.
- Incorporate social responsibility and ethical values in their institutional objectives.
- Employ vision and mission statements as an effective decision-making tool.

In such a way, universities will be able to enhance their functionality and reach their long-term objectives.

There are certain limitations of this study. To start with it is solely founded on second hand information (document), thus, does not incorporate the perceptions of such stake holders like students, faculty or administrators. Second, the research is limited to university in KP only and therefore the results might not be generalized to other areas. Third, document analysis displays what is written but does not necessarily represent what occurs in practice.

This study can be enhanced by research in the future in several ways:

- Conduct interviews or surveys to understand stakeholder perspectives
- Compare KP universities with other regions or countries
- Study how strategic plans are implemented in real situations
- Explore the role of technology and data in strategic planning

Through such studies, a more detailed and comprehensive picture of strategic management in higher education will emerge.

The paper reveals that although KP universities realize the significance of strategic planning, vision and mission, there is an evident gap between planning and delivering the results. The universities can be made more effective and sustainable by strengthening their alignment, enhancing execution, and emphasizing on larger institutional roles.

Recommendations

This research shows a dire need between the development and execution of vision, mission and strategic planning in higher education institutions, especially KP universities. Although these elements are acknowledged to be important in institutions, there is still limited application of these components in practice, it is usually symbolic and poorly aligned. On the basis of these findings, policymakers, practitioners (university administrators), and future researchers are offered the following recommendations to enhance their strengths in institutional effectiveness, strategic coherence, and long-term sustainability.

The policy makers ought to focus on coming up with regulation systems that create coherence and responsibility in strategic planning among higher learning institutions. This study reveals that the implementation and evaluation processes are not clear in many institutions and this undermines the strategic outcomes. Higher education commissions and governments must enforce that not only should the universities post the vision and mission statements but also illustrate how they are put in action through quantifiable strategic goals, key performance indicators (KPIs) and periodic reviews. To encourage universities to prioritize the strategic planning process, alternative ways to incentivize universities to focus on higher achievements can be proposed in performance-based funding models.

Besides, the policymakers ought to promote the incorporation of societal priorities like sustainability, community interactions, and moral responsibility into the institutional structures. The research observed that there was minimal attention to these elements, although the focus of the world-wide trends is framing HEIs in terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The policies must then be that universities be compelled to have a clear inclusion of social impact measures in their strategic plans. Training on strategic management and national policy on strategic management can also be implemented to help institute develop a better or effective evidence-based planning system.

University leaders need to work on changing the vision and mission statements into dynamic statements directed at making decisions. It is evident that in most instances these statements are symbolic but not functional as depicted in the study. The administrators ought to assure that any plan, budgetary and academic plans are clearly connected with institutional vision and mission. This can be realized whereby such things are integrated within the annual planning, departmental goals, and performance appraisals.

Moreover, the institutions have to come up with clear implementation road maps in their strategic plans. This involves setting time frames, responsibility, resource allocation and setting the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In the absence of these elements, strategic plans are useless. Higher Education should embrace the practice of the data-driven management, implementing the dashboards and analytics to monitor the progression and implement alterations in strategies in real time.

The other essential modification is better stakeholder participation. Cases of insufficient engagement of both the faculty and students and external stakeholders in strategic processes are

identified in the study. Approaches that encourage participation in the planning process should be embraced in the universities, which involve consultations, workshops and feedback systems, to ensure that the solutions are feasible, inclusive, and popular. This enhances implementation and also enhances institutional implementation as well as accountability.

The weakness of the study is that there is a weak to moderate level of congruency between the vision, mission, and strategic planning. The organizations are advised to pursue a top-down and bottom-up integration strategy, in which the strategic goals are retrieved directly off the vision and mission, and the information about how operations make the strategy evolve comes from the bottom. Strategy maps and balanced scorecards are some of the tools that can be used to translate the abstract goals into action plans.

The vision and mission statements ought also to be specific, distinctive and measurable as opposed to generic statements of vision and mission of the universities. Most of the institutions are now employing undefined language, making them limited in their usage. A revision of these statements to institutional strengths, regional needs and future aspirations will help in increasing clarity and strategic focus. They should undergo regular reviews (e.g. every 3-5 years) to remain relevant in the current changing educational environment.

It is found that universities focus on academic excellence largely and on less on social responsibility and involvement with the community. Organisations need to extend their strategic agendas to social impact, innovation system, and trade cooperation. This can be accomplishment based on community based research, service learning, and collaboration with local and international companies.

Moreover, universities must implement values and leadership growth in the mission statements as well as their strategies. This will make sure that the graduates are not only qualified, but also social responsible. The introduction of these aspects in curriculum, research programs and institutional policies will make universities respond to the current demands of higher education.

Further studies are needed to shift the analysis of documents to the empirical research of the implementation practices. The paper is not comprehensive since it utilizes secondary data and that the views of stakeholders are not provided. Administrators, faculty, and students should be interviewed, surveyed and case studies carried by the researchers to learn how strategic plans are implemented in the practice.

The comparative studies are also required in order to investigate disparities between the developing and developed areas especially in areas of governance, resource allocation, and influence of policies. This type of research is able to determine best practices that can be adopted in diverse settings. Also, one of the areas of future research should be the role of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and data analytics in improving strategic planning and institutional performance.

The other valuable research agenda is the longitudinal effects of strategic planning, which evaluates how the correlation between the vision, missions, and the strategy affects institutional success over the long run. This would offer better support to the efficiency of integrated strategic management practices.

The paper has numerous gaps which should be explored deeper. It is necessary to explore implementation of strategic plans in departments and operations and the hindrances to implementation. The stakeholder awareness and engagement should be also a subject of the research, seeing whether students and faculty are aware of the institutional strategies and are involved in them.

In addition, little focus has been placed in measuring vision and mission statements effectiveness. Future research must come up with frameworks and measures to indicate their actual influence to making of decisions and performance. Lastly, one of the aspects that may be part of the future research is how sustainability and global priorities (e.g., SDGs) can be incorporated into the university strategies.

Overall, the paper has shown that institutions of higher learning appreciate the need to have vision, mission and strategic planning, but their performance is hampered by poor alignment, inadequate implementation processes and symbolic application. Policymakers have to implement accountability and offer strategic directions, whereas leaders of universities have to concentrate on how these factors should be operationalized by having clear plans, involvement of stakeholders, and practices that are founded on facts. Meanwhile, new studies are always encouraged to address the already existing gaps in the literature by discussing practical application and investigating new ways

of handling strategic management. By cementing these domains, universities will be able to perform better in institutional terms (coherence), societal (impact), and long-term (sustainability) terms.

Conclusion

This paper outlined to conduct a research on the role and incorporation of vision, mission, and strategic planning in the higher education institutions (HEIs) with particular emphasis on universities in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The results demonstrate that though these institutions fully realize the significance of strategic management instruments, they still use them in an unevenly distributed manner and in many cases. Mission statements are mainly about teaching and learning whilst vision statements show much in terms of academic excellence, research, and global competitiveness. But both of them also tend to lack in four general aspects like social responsibility, ethical values, and community involvement. More importantly, in many instances, the processes of strategic planning are marked by broadended goals and lack a clear-cut method of implementation, monitoring system or evaluationsyndrome leading to the existence of a significant gap between what the institutions intend and what they actually do.

The research paper will add to the current body of knowledge by providing a context-specific and practice-oriented research on the strategic management in higher education and specifically in a developing regional context where previous researchers have given little focus. As opposed to most of the previous literature targeting mostly the content of vision and mission statement, this study can be seen as emphasizing the lack of linkage between the formulation and implementation and thus, supports the existing academic arguments on the symbolic versus functional status of these components. It also builds up the literature by showing that alignment between vision, mission and strategy as vision as shear destined to be effective in institutes is only partially translated into the reality particularly in environments with limited resources.

Theoretically, the results align with the strategic management models that lay stress on alignment, coherence, and constant review as the main factors affecting the organizational performance. Simultaneously, the study refutes the belief that effective governance is guaranteed by the existence of strategic documents, which supports the significance of implementation and institutional conditions. In practice, the work can give valuable implications to the university administrators by forming the realization that vision and mission statements should be transformed into working tools of implementation in the decision-making process, resource allocation, and performance evaluation. Policy-wise, the results indicate that there is a need to have stricter forms of regulations, accountability, and capacity building programs, which would make strategic planning procedures to have a meaning and measurement.

The study can have a number of limitations despite its contributions. It is solely based on secondary data and document review, which limits the possibility of involving the lived experience, perceptions and involvement of the primary stake holders including the faculty, students and administrators. Also, the narrow scope of the KP universities restricts the ability to generalize the findings to other local or international settings. Moreover, the document-based analysis might not entirely be the image of the actual practices of the institution as it might appear that there might be a gap between what is written and what is practiced.

These shortcomings ought to be overcome in future research by considering mixed methods, such as interviews, surveys and case studies to understand more about the practices and effects of strategic planning in institutions of higher learning. International comparisons between the various regions and regimes of governance would also provide useful information in terms of determining best practices and variation depending on the situation. In addition, the issue of emerging technologies, data analytics and performance measure systems and their roles in improving strategic alignment and institutional effectiveness must be investigated. Further longitudinal studies that assess the long-term effects of aligned strategic frameworks on the performance of institutions would bring greater evidence base to this field.

In summary, the research findings provide emphasis on the need of integrating, operationalizing, and continually evaluating vision, mission, and strategic planning and not just by its existence in higher education. Closing the disparity between institutional practice and strategic intent is one of the key elements that can help universities to become sustainable in their development, competitive, and to serve their societal functions more widely. With the solutions to these challenges,

HEIs are able to shift toward a more coherent, accountable and transformative system of strategic management.

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