

Strategic Management Practice in Higher Education Institutions: A Systematic Literature Review of Trends

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Abstract

This study aims to systematically review and synthesize research on strategic management practices in higher education from 2010 to 2025. The global higher education sector has undergone rapid transformation, driven by advancements in digital technologies, increasing institutional flexibility, intensified competition, evolving business models, paradigm shifts in teaching and learning, broader access and diversification, and heightened governance complexities. These changes underscore the growing need for strategic approaches that enable higher education institutions to remain resilient, innovative, and responsive within an increasingly dynamic environment. Following the PRISMA 2020 framework, total of 62 peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink were selected for analysis. Thematic coding using NVivo were employed to identify prevailing research patterns. The findings reveal five dominant themes in strategic management within higher education institutions: (1) strategic leadership, (2) governance and accountability, (3) performance measurement, (4) digital transformation, and (5) institutional sustainability. Building on these insights, this study proposes a conceptual model that highlights the roles of strategic leadership and governance in enhancing institutional performance and sustainability through digital transformation. Future research directions and managerial implications are also discussed to strengthen the effectiveness of strategic management within higher education institutions.

Keyword: Higher Education Institutions, Strategic Management, Governance, Leadership, Digital Transformation, Systematic Literature Review.

1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a central role in national innovation systems and the advancement of knowledge-based economies. As competition and digital transformation intensify, universities are increasingly required to operate strategically by aligning academic excellence with institutional performance and global relevance. However, existing studies continue to reveal persistent gaps between strategic planning and implementation within HEIs, particularly in the areas of leadership, governance, and performance measurement (Bryson & George, 2024). Therefore, this study systematically maps and analyzes recent research trends in the strategic management of HEIs to identify theoretical developments, empirical gaps, and emerging issues.

Strategic management in higher education institutions (HEIs) has become an essential component of institutional governance amid increasing complexity and rapidly evolving global educational landscapes. Strategic planning plays a pivotal role in enabling HEIs to navigate

multifaceted challenges, including technological advancements, shifting student expectations, and socio-economic changes. It provides a structured approach for defining institutional vision, mission, objectives, and resource allocation aligned with long-term goals, thereby offering a roadmap to respond effectively to both internal and external pressures (Khalilov, 2024)). This strategic capacity allows HEIs to sustain academic excellence, promote sustainable development, and strengthen institutional resilience within an increasingly competitive environment.

Beyond internal governance, HEIs play a significant role in driving societal and economic transformation through education, research, and innovation. As central actors in economic transition and social development, they influence cultural and global communities and serve as agents of change within and beyond their regions. To fulfill this role effectively, HEIs must embed strategic approaches into institutional processes to remain adaptive and responsive to rapid globalization, the demands of the knowledge economy, and ongoing geopolitical shifts (Khachatryan, 2023). Such strategic integration is essential for HEIs seeking to retain talent, foster innovation, and sustain competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic higher education landscape.

Strategic management is fundamentally crucial for higher education institutions (HEIs) as they navigate an increasingly complex and competitive educational landscape. It acts as a key driver for enhancing institutional performance by enabling organizations to adapt effectively to evolving internal and external environments. The success of HEIs is largely determined by their ability to establish clear strategic goals, allocate resources appropriately, and foster continuous improvement in educational quality and administrative efficiency. Prior research has emphasized that the alignment of strategic planning with resource allocation strengthens adaptability and supports long-term institutional performance (Garad et al., 2022). For example, in Iraq, integrating external auditing with quality management models such as Malcolm Baldrige has been shown to improve transparency and accountability, thereby exerting a positive and direct influence on university performance outcomes. This evidence reinforces the pivotal role of strategic governance mechanisms in enhancing HEI effectiveness (Al-Laban & Dhibi, 2024).

Contemporary strategic management in higher education institutions (HEIs) employs a variety of models and frameworks to address the multifaceted challenges facing the sector. One prominent approach is the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) frameworks, such as the Malcolm Baldrige model, which provides a comprehensive structure for performance evaluation and continuous improvement through key criteria including leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, and process management. This model has demonstrated significant potential in enhancing transparency, institutional accountability, and alignment with strategic objectives (Al-Laban & Dhibi, 2024). In parallel, there is a growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and other advanced technologies into strategic leadership and operational processes within HEIs. AI applications are transforming administrative tasks, academic delivery, and strategic decision-making by enabling data-driven interventions, personalized learning pathways, and optimized resource allocation (Khairullah et al., 2025). Furthermore, the strategic management agenda increasingly emphasizes sustainability through the incorporation of social responsibility values and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Embedding empathy, solidarity, and respect for

human dignity into governance strategies underscores the expanding role of HEIs in addressing societal challenges and fostering inclusive and sustainable educational environments (Gallardo-Vázquez, 2025).

Despite significant advancements, existing research on strategic management in higher education continues to exhibit several limitations and fragmented approaches. Many studies remain narrowly focused on specific elements such as financial management, technological adoption, or quality assurance without sufficiently integrating these components into comprehensive strategic frameworks. As a result, multidimensional investigations that simultaneously examine strategic planning, financial stewardship, and technological capacity are still scarce, thereby limiting understanding of their synergistic effects on institutional performance (Garad et al., 2022). Moreover, much of the literature focuses predominantly on either public or private institutions, with limited comparative analyses across sectors or diverse regional contexts. This lack of broader representation constrains the generalizability of findings and hinders the development of universally applicable strategic management models (Khaw & Teoh, 2023); (Mai, 2025). These gaps underscore the need for more holistic and integrative research methodologies that recognize the interconnectedness of strategic domains in HEIs while accounting for varying institutional characteristics and governance structures.

Global environmental changes, advances in digital technology, and increasing demands for public accountability have positioned higher education institutions (HEIs) within a complex and highly competitive knowledge-based economy. Universities function not only as providers of education and research but also as strategic institutions that drive innovation, strengthen national competitiveness, and support sustainable development. However, many HEIs continue to experience a persistent gap between strategic planning and implementation, particularly in the areas of governance, leadership, institutional performance, and adaptation to digital transformation. Therefore, a systematic review of strategic management practices in HEIs is essential to better understand research trends, dominant models, and the evolving directions of both theoretical and practical development.

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is especially valuable to fill the prevailing knowledge gap, as it follows a structured, reproducible, and methodical approach (Page et al., 2021) in selecting, appraising, and integrating relevant studies. Unlike narrative literature reviews, an SLR minimizes bias through clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, enabling comparative analyses of studies and identification of methodological and contextual trends. Beyond cataloging limitations in existing research, the SLR approach fosters theoretical development by highlighting consistencies, discrepancies, and gaps, thereby providing a foundation for future study and effective strategic management in higher education institutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Management in HEIs

Strategic management in HEIs encompasses the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of strategies aimed at achieving long-term academic and institutional goals (Dr. Rajiv Kalebar: et al., 2024; Inga et al., 2021) Within the higher education context, strategic initiatives commonly focus on enhancing educational quality, strengthening academic reputation, improving resource efficiency, and increasing international competitiveness.

Strategic management in HEIs encompasses the formulation, including strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and financial sustainability. Aligning institutional resources with external challenges is pivotal (Kalebar: et al., 2024); (Қахқоров & Mukhtarov, 2023). Existing literature emphasizes the role of strategic foresight and innovation in addressing contemporary issues faced by educational institutions (Aliyev et al., 2025; Марухленко et al., 2025). Fardows et al. emphasize the effectiveness of endowment fund management in enhancing educational quality by addressing identified challenges (Fardows et al., 2023). Furthermore, quality assurance frameworks are critical in fostering institutional improvement and maintaining competitive advantage in the education sector (Lysokon et al., 2024; Reddy & V, 2024).

2.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The core premise of Resource-Based View (RBV) is that organizational advantage arises from unique internal capabilities. In the context of HEIs, intellectual capital, faculty quality, and institutional culture serve as critical strategic resources that drive sustainable competitive advantage. A major premise of the resource-based theory is that competitive advantage is a function of the resources and capabilities of the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984; Conner, 1991; Peteraf, 1993). J. Barney et al., (2001) has listed four attributes of resources that can give rise to a firm's competitive advantage: value, rarity, imperfect imitability, and lack of substitutability. Valuable resources help a firm exploit opportunities and/or avoid threats in the environment.

2.3 Institutional Theory

Posits that organizations are not merely economic entities but are also social constructs that operate within a framework of cultural and normative influences. Organizations adopt certain practices and structures not solely out of economic necessity but to gain legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders (Shaheen et al., 2021). This legitimacy often facilitates access to resources and stabilizes the organizational environment (Khattak & Shah, 2020). Institutional layering and path dependency are core elements of this theory, indicating that organizations are influenced by historical contexts and prevailing societal norms, thus affecting their operational decisions (Hassan et al., 2021). For instance, studies indicate that external environmental pressures significantly impact organizational behavior, often through mimicry of successful peers to enhance legitimacy (Shaheen et al., 2021).

2.4 Balanced Scorecard

Serves as a strategic management framework that translates an organization's mission and vision into operational objectives across four perspectives: Financial, Customer, Internal Processes, and Learning & Growth. This methodology allows organizations to measure performance beyond traditional financial metrics, emphasizing the importance of strategic alignment and operational efficiency (Nagy, 2025). A systematic approach to performance measurement can lead to improved decision-making processes, as organizations are guided by a well-defined set of objectives that encompass both leading and lagging indicators (Nagy, 2025). By integrating diverse metrics into a cohesive strategy, the BSC enables organizations to maintain a balanced view of their performance, ensuring that financial outcomes are not pursued at the expense of customer satisfaction or employee engagement (Gohar & Khan, 2021).

2.5 Strategic Leadership Theory

Focuses on the role of leaders in influencing organizational direction and effectiveness through their strategic decisions. Effective strategic leaders possess capabilities that facilitate resource acquisition and allocation, thereby enhancing firm efficiency and adaptability (Khattak & Shah, 2020). Research highlights that strategic leadership involves navigating complex environmental challenges, fostering innovation, and motivating employees to align with organizational goals. This includes establishing a clear vision and encouraging a culture of continuous improvement, which is vital for sustaining a competitive advantage (Bourbon, 2021). Organizations led by visionary leaders tend to demonstrate greater resilience to external shocks and changes, showing that leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational strategies in the face of evolving market dynamics (Vöneki, 2020).

In summary, the synthesis of Institutional Theory, the Balanced Scorecard, and Strategic Leadership Theory illustrates a comprehensive approach to understanding and managing contemporary organizations. Each of these frameworks contributes valuable insights into how organizations can navigate complexities, establish performance measures beyond traditional metrics, and leverage strategic leadership to drive sustainable success. Future studies could further explore the interplay among these theories, particularly in relation to emerging challenges such as technological advancements and shifting socio-economic landscapes.

3. Material and Method

This study adhered to the protocols outlined in the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 (Page et al., 2021), which provide a systematic and transparent approach to the processes of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The PRISMA framework enhances transparency and reproducibility in systematic literature reviews, regardless of whether a meta-analysis is conducted. The use of the PRISMA checklist and flow diagram was instrumental in ensuring that the review process remained well-structured, rigorous, and methodologically robust.

A systematic search was conducted in October 2025 across five major electronic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, covering publications from 2010 to 2025. The following search terms were used in various combinations: (“Higher Education Institutions” OR “Universities”) AND (“Strategic Management” OR “Strategic Planning” OR “Strategy Implementation”) AND (“Performance” OR “Governance” OR “Leadership” OR “Digital Transformation”). The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English that focused on strategic management within HEIs. Only articles published between January 2010 and January 2025 were included.

Studies identified through the search strategy were downloaded and imported into Mendeley Desktop. Duplicates were removed before title and abstract screening for eligibility. To be included in the review, studies had to meet the following criteria (Table 1). The sample comprised non-academic sources (conference, thesis, and reports), Articles not explicit related to strategy or HEIs.

Table 1
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

No	Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
1	Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles published in academic databases (e.g., Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Emerald, and Web of Science)	Non-academic sources such as conference proceedings, theses/dissertations, reports, blogs, or non-reviewed materials
2	Publication Language	English	Non-English
3	Publication Period	2010-2025	Articles published before 2020 or lacking contemporary relevance
4	Content Focus	Strategic management, governance, leadership, performance	Pedagogy or curriculum focus
5	Context	Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	Non-HEIs organizations

3.1 Design Study

The design is qualitative, descriptive, and integrative, aiming to synthesize global trends and evolution in strategic management practice within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) over 2010 to 2025. Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following PRISMA 2020: explicit search strategy, predefined inclusion or exclusion criteria, duplicate screening, quality appraisal, and thematic synthesis. PRISMA 2020 provides the checklist and flow diagram template used in this study.

3.2 Data Analysis

Following (Page et al., 2021), we conducted a systematic literature review through several steps to locate and analyze information. First, we familiarized ourselves with the data by carefully reading each article to understand its objectives. We then reviewed titles and abstracts, categorizing them according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 2). Extracted data included Author, year of the research, methodological approach, research design, and research findings (Table 3).

Table 2.

Coding for Data Extraction

No	Author(s) & Year	Title of Study	Country / Region	Research Design / Method	Theoretical Framework	Focus of Strategic Practice	Key Findings / Contribution	Future Research Direction	Coding Theme Category
1	Fumasoli & Huisman (2023)	Strategic Management in Higher Education Institutions	Europe (Netherlands)	Qualitative multiple case study	Institutional Theory	Governance and strategy formulation	Identifies hybrid governance models in European HEIs	Apply framework to developing countries	Governance & Leadership
2	Nickel (2021)	Strategic Planning Tools in Universities	Germany	Conceptual / comparative	Strategic Management Theory	Planning process and tool adoption	Emphasizes adaptation of corporate tools in HEIs	Empirical test of tool effectiveness	Strategic Planning Tools
3	Sun et al. (2023)	Research Management in Higher Education: A Systematic Review	China	Systematic Review	Resource-Based View	Research management strategies	Trends toward performance-based funding	Explore balanced metrics	Performance Measurement
4	Habibi (2020)	Manajemen Strategi Perguruan Tinggi di Indonesia	Indonesia	Qualitative descriptive	Balanced Scorecard	Strategic implementation in Islamic HEIs	Strategic alignment improves institutional performance	Multi-institution comparative study	Strategy Implementation

5	Kamal & Salleh (2019)	Strategic Leadership in Malaysian Universities	Malaysia	Survey-based quantitative	Strategic Leadership Theory	Leadership competencies in HEIs	Leadership competencies positively correlate with strategic success	Extend to public/private comparison	Leadership & Culture
6	Guerrero et al. (2020)	Entrepreneurial Universities: A Global Perspective	Global (Multi-region)	Bibliometric & review	Entrepreneurial University Model	Entrepreneurship and innovation strategies	Identifies four phases of entrepreneurial evolution	Integrate entrepreneurship and digital strategy	Academic Entrepreneurship
7	Post-COVID Digital Strategy (2021)	Digital Transformation in HEIs	UK & ASEAN	Mixed-method	Dynamic Capabilities Theory	Digital strategy and resilience	COVID-19 accelerates strategic digitalization	Longitudinal impact assessment	Digital Transformation

Table 3
Tren Across Time Periods

Period	Themes Code	Research Design	Focus Research
2010-2014	T1, T2	Conceptual and Explanatory	Focus on stretegic awareness and governance models,
2015-2019	T1, T3, T4	Expansion and Diversification	Growth in entrepreneurship ranking management and performance metrics
2020-2025	T2, T5, T6, T7	Transformation and Integration	Digital strategy, resilience, leadership agility, and sustainability integration

4. Result

The result of the included studies are summarized below, detailing authorship, year of publication, methodology, major findings, and research design. The initial systematic search identified 1.245 articles. Following a rigorous screening process, 64 articles met all criteria. The selection process is illustrated in Fig.1 following PRISMA guidelines.

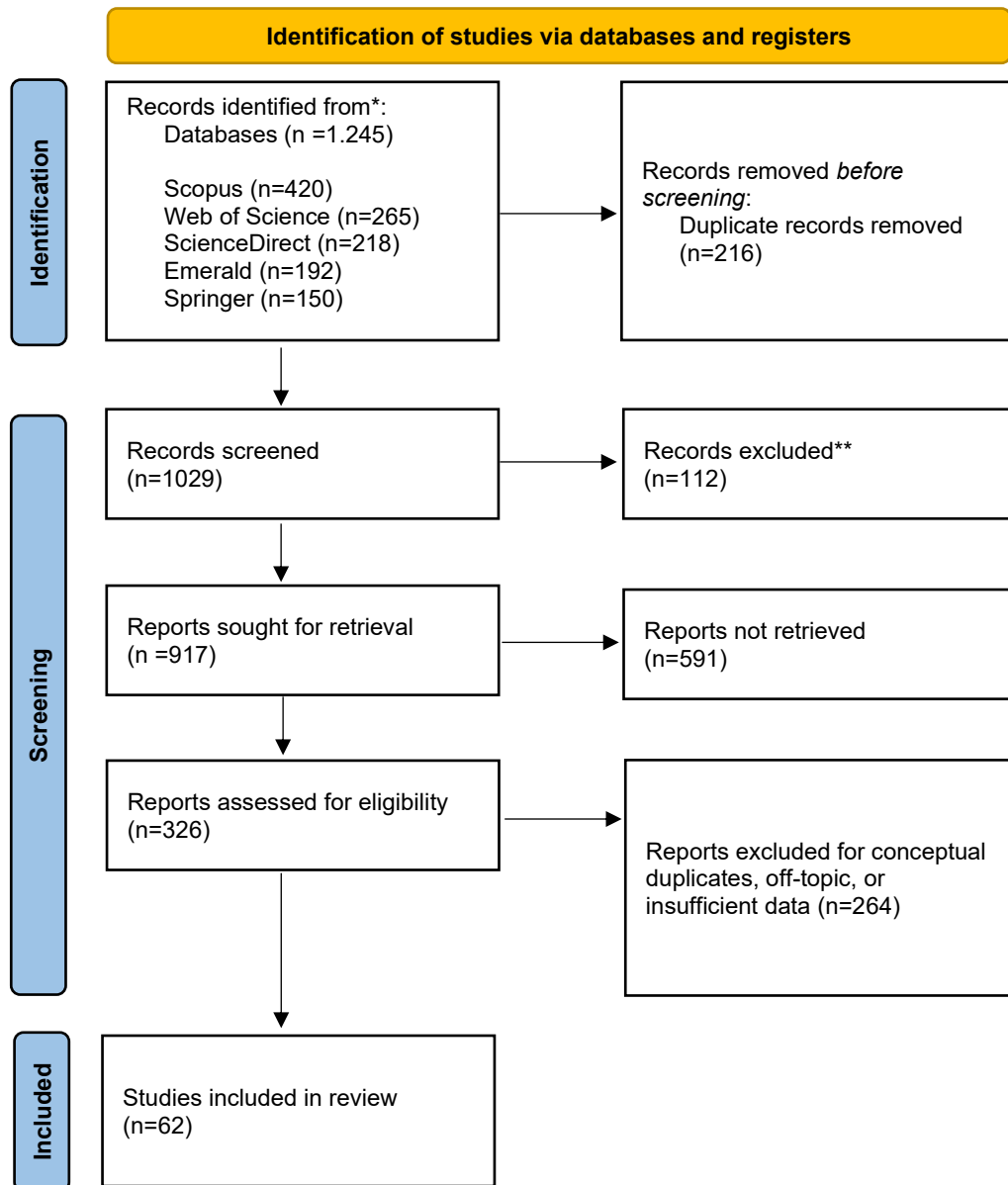


Figure 1. Flow Diagram of Systematic Review Process Based on PRISMA

Table 4

Summary of Quality Assessment for The Research

No	Author	Year	Title Research	Major findings	Methodology	Research Design
1	Tatiana Fumasoli	2023	Strategic management in higher education: Conceptual insights, lessons learned, emerging challenges	Governance shifts toward hybrid managerial models in HEIs; need integrative frameworks.	Qualitative synthesis / editorial	Multi-case / conceptual
2	Y. Soegoto, H. Prabowo, A.N. Hidayanto et al.	2023	Digital Transformation in Higher Education (rep)	COVID-19 accelerated HE digital strategy adoption; readiness & governance determine success.	Systematic literature review / empirical descriptive analysis	SLR + cross-institutional descriptive case examples
3	Sun, Z. et al.	2023	A systematic review of research management in higher education	Performance metrics and funding incentives dominate research management strategies; need balanced metrics.	Systematic literature review / bibliometric analysis	SLR with coding & thematic synthesis
4	Rebecca O'Flaherty et al.	2022	Digital readiness and strategy in higher education post-COVID	Readiness varies; leadership, funding and faculty development predict success.	Survey + interviews (mixed methods)	Cross-institutional mixed-methods study
5	Huisman J. & Fumasoli team	2022	Strategic foresight methods for higher education long-term planning	Foresight and scenario planning strengthen long-term strategy; requires capabilities.	Delphi, mixed methods, comparative cases	Multi-case comparative with Delphi foresight
6	Neil Selwyn	2021	Education and Technology: Key Issues and Debates	Technology adoption is socially and politically embedded; strategic digital initiatives often overlook equity.	Critical literature review	Theoretical/critical synthesis
7	Prabowo & Soegoto	2021	COVID-19 and acceleration of digital strategy in Indonesian HEIs	COVID-19 catalyzed digital adoption; institutional readiness varied and governance/funding predicted success.	Mixed-method (surveys + case interviews)	Cross-institutional mixed-method study
8	Maribel Guerrero	2020	Entrepreneurial university ecosystems and graduates' career patterns: Do incubators and entrepreneurship education programmes matter?	Incubators and entrepreneurship education positively influence graduates' entrepreneurial outcomes; ecosystem components matter.	Empirical quantitative analysis + mixed-case evidence	Mixed-methods; comparative across institutions/regions
9	Maribel Guerrero, David Urbano, Eduardo Gajón	2020	Entrepreneurial university ecosystems and graduates' career patterns	Incubators and entrepreneurship education positively influence entrepreneurial outcomes.	Empirical quantitative analysis	Mixed-methods; comparative across institutions/regions

					+ mixed-case evidence	
10	Bezanilla M.	2020	Developing the entrepreneurial university: comparative pathways	Multiple pathways exist; national systems and policy shape entrepreneurial transitions.	Comparative case studies	Cross-national comparative qualitative
11	Urbano, Guerrero & Gajón	2020	Measuring entrepreneurial impact in university ecosystems	Indicators for entrepreneurial impact must capture outputs, outcomes and processes.	Bibliometric + empirical survey/case	Mixed-method comparative design
12	Zyadin, A.	2020	Digital pedagogy policies and institutional strategy in HE	Clear policy frameworks and faculty development are crucial for successful digital strategy.	Policy review + institutional case studies	Qualitative comparative case study
13	Habibi S.	2020	Manajemen Strategi Perguruan Tinggi di Indonesia	Strategic alignment improves institutional performance in Indonesian HEIs; but single-case limits generalizability.	Qualitative descriptive case study	Single-case qualitative
14	Mikael Klofsten	2019	University entrepreneurship and regional development	University incubators and entrepreneurship support mechanisms catalyze regional innovation.	Empirical case studies + quantitative indicators	Mixed-method comparative case design
15	Ranga, M.	2019	Cross-sector partnerships as strategic instruments for HEIs	Partnerships with industry/public sector extend HEI strategic reach and resource base.	Case studies and network mapping	Comparative mixed-method
16	Jamie Ahmad	2020	Financing higher education and strategic responses in developing regions	Funding reforms and performance metrics strongly influence institutional strategy; developing regions show diverse adaptive strategies.	Mixed-method policy evaluation and cross-national data analysis	Comparative policy and empirical evaluation
17	David J. Teece	2018	Business models and dynamic capabilities (applied)	Dynamic capabilities explain how organizations reconfigure resources to respond to digital disruption.	Theoretical development with illustrative cases	Conceptual framework + comparative case evidence
18	Sholomo Mizrahi	2020	Policy guidance on funding reforms and performance accountability in HE	Shift towards performance funding and accountability in many systems; implications for strategy.	Policy review, cross-country data synthesis	Macro-level comparative policy analysis

19	Tamtik, M.	2018	Faculty-level leadership, KPIs and strategic outcomes	Faculty leadership mediates the relationship between institutional strategy and performance metrics.	Survey + semi-structured interviews	Mixed-method cross-institutional study
20	Klofsten, M.	2018	University incubators and innovation policy: comparative studies	Incubation mechanisms and targeted support increase spin-off creation and regional impact.	Empirical comparative case studies + quantitative indicators	Mixed-method comparative design
21	Klofsten, M. & Fayolle, A.	2018	Incubators, entrepreneurship education and strategic university roles	Effective incubator models and curriculum alignment increase startup rates and regional innovation impact.	Mixed-method evaluation of incubator programs + longitudinal follow-ups	Program evaluation with comparative case design
22	Ward	2018	Higher Education Institutional Strategies: Policy Guidance and International Comparisons	Trends toward performance-based funding, internationalization strategies, and emphasis on institutional accountability.	Policy synthesis, cross-country data aggregation	Macro-policy comparative analysis
23	Gibb, A.	2017	Entrepreneurship education and institutional strategy	Entrepreneurship education supports regional engagement when embedded in institutional strategy.	Program evaluation and comparative case study	Mixed methods
24	Sultana, R.G.	2017	Gender and leadership in university strategic management	Gendered dynamics influence leadership trajectories and strategic decision-making.	Qualitative interviews, thematic analysis	Case study / cross-institutional qualitative
25	Huisman, J.	2017	Strategic capacity and governance models in HE	Institutions with higher strategic capacity implement strategy more effectively.	Survey + case studies	Mixed-method comparative
26	Simon Marginson	2016	Global Cooperation and National Competition in the World-Class University Sector	Global market forces and national policies interact to produce stratification and competition among HEIs.	Policy analysis, conceptual synthesis	Comparative policy/analytical study
27	Pinheiro, R.	2016	Institutional autonomy and strategy deployment in Europe	Autonomy variations drive differences in strategic choice and implementation capacity across Europe.	Qualitative interviews, policy-document analysis	Comparative cross-country case study

28	Sanyal, B.	2016	National innovation systems and strategic alignment in HE	HEIs align strategies with national innovation imperatives to access resources and policy support.	Policy analysis, case studies	Comparative policy-case design
29	Sanyal, B. & Johnstone, D.	2016	Public policy, finance reform and strategic priorities in developing-country HEIs	Financial reforms and policy incentives reshape institutional strategies but can increase stratification and access issues.	Policy review, cross-country quantitative indicators	Macro-level comparative policy analysis
30	Ellen Hazelkorn	2015	Rankings and the Reshaping of Higher Education: The Battle for World-Class Excellence (2nd ed.)	Rankings influence HEI strategic priorities and resource allocation.	Documentary analysis, international survey & interviews	Comparative cross-national qualitative synthesis
31	Deem, R.	2015	Managerialism and academic autonomy: Tensions in higher education	Managerial reforms reduce academic autonomy and re-shape professional identities, affecting strategy uptake.	Qualitative interviews, document analysis	Multi-case qualitative study
32	Laredo, P.	2015	Knowledge transfer and research-policy alignment	Policy instruments and institutional strategies shape knowledge transfer effectiveness.	Policy analysis + case evidence	Comparative policy-case design
33	Laredo & Mustar	2015	Research policy alignment and strategic positioning of universities	Alignment between research policy and institutional strategy is essential for sustained research performance.	Policy review + empirical illustrations	Comparative case analysis
34	Laredo, P. & Mustar, P.	2015	Strategic alignment of research policy and university positioning	Alignment between national research policy and institutional strategy enhances research performance.	Policy-document analysis + case illustrations	Comparative policy-case design
35	Henry Etzkowitz	2014	The Entrepreneurial University Wave	Triple Helix interactions foster regional innovation via HEIs.	Conceptual + case evidence	Longitudinal/case comparisons
36	Marina Ranga & Henry Etzkowitz	2014	Triple Helix Systems: An Analytical Framework for Innovation Policy and Practice in the Knowledge Society	Triple Helix dynamics shape strategic priorities of HEIs in regional innovation systems.	Network analysis, case comparisons	Empirical network + comparative case design
37	Chunyan Zhou	2014	Four dimensions to observe a Triple Helix: cored model and differentiation	Triple Helix frameworks help analyze university-industry-government relations.	Theoretical / empirical modeling	Network / comparative analysis
38	Ranga, M. & Etzkowitz, H.	2014	Triple Helix systems and HEI strategic roles in innovation	Triple Helix dynamics shape strategic priorities of HEIs in regional innovation systems.	Network analysis, case comparisons	Empirical network + comparative case design

39	Bercovitz, J.	2014	Organizational structures and commercialization outcomes	Structural arrangements impact research commercialization performance.	Quantitative network analysis + case studies	Mixed-method empirical design
40	Enders, J. & Westerheijden, D.	2014	Performance-based funding and research strategy	Performance funding reshapes institutional strategic priorities and research behaviour.	Policy analysis, quantitative evaluation	Comparative policy evaluation
41	Bercovitz, J. & Feldman, M.	2014	Organizational structures, absorptive capacity, and commercialization outcomes in universities	Organizational design and absorptive capacity influence commercialization success and spin-off performance.	Quantitative analysis of university data + qualitative case follow-ups	Mixed-method comparative empirical study
42	Marginson, S. & Considine, M.	2014	Marketization, public policy and strategic behavior in universities	Market logics reshape university strategic priorities, influencing equity and mission outcomes.	Policy analysis, case examples	Comparative analytical study
43	Jamil Salmi	2013	The Road to Academic Excellence: The Making of World-Class Research Universities	Pathways to world-class status require aligned governance, funding reforms, and talent policies.	Comparative case studies	Multiple-case comparative; policy analysis
44	Salter & Martin	2013	University–industry interaction and knowledge transfer	Policy incentives mediate knowledge transfer effectiveness; structural supports critical.	Empirical case studies and policy analysis	Comparative case study
45	Harman G.	2013	Governance reform and national policy interplay in Asia-Pacific HE	National policy exerts strong influence on institutional strategic choices.	Comparative policy case studies	Cross-country comparative qualitative design
46	Harman, G. & Meek, V.	2013	Higher education governance in Asia: reforms, policy, and strategy	Policy reforms in Asia have accelerated strategic governance changes, but capacity gaps hinder full implementation.	Comparative interviews, policy analysis	Cross-country comparative qualitative design
47	Loet Leydesdorff	2012	Triple Helix & knowledge-based economy analyses	Network structures matter for strategic outcomes in regional innovation.	Bibliometric, network analysis	Empirical network analysis + comparative cases
48	Loet Leydesdorff (rep)	2012	Triple Helix & knowledge-based economy analyses	Triple Helix explains university-industry-government dynamics.	Bibliometric & theoretical	Network analysis
49	Graham Gibbs	2012	Linking teaching quality metrics to institutional strategy	Overreliance on simple KPIs can distort teaching quality; alignment required.	Program evaluation / mixed data analysis	Case evaluation with mixed indicators

50	Marginson, S.	2012	Marketization and stratification in global higher education	Market forces and national policy cause stratification; competition influences strategic choices and equity outcomes.	Policy analysis, secondary data review	Comparative cross-national study
51	Scott, P.	2012	Mission drift under commercialization pressures	Commercialization and market pressures can lead to mission drift and internal tensions.	Theoretical review + case illustrations	Conceptual analysis with case examples
52	Clark, B.R.	2012	Internal policy levers for strategic transformation in universities	Internal governance levers enable entrepreneurial transitions while risking mission tensions.	Historical institutional analysis + comparative case studies	Conceptual-historical with comparative cases
53	Gumport, P.J.	2012	Organizational change and strategic choice in higher education	Institutional histories, governance traditions, and stakeholder pressures shape strategic choices and change trajectories.	Qualitative case studies, archival analysis	Longitudinal qualitative comparative
54	Enders J.	2011	Strategic research management and international competition among HEIs	Institutional strategies for research competition include concentration of resources and strategic hiring.	Policy analysis and institutional cases	Comparative case approach
55	Christensen	2011	Disruptive innovation lens applied to higher education	Digital disruption can reshape business models for HEIs; incumbents face adaptive pressures.	Theoretical application with case illustrations	Conceptual + illustrative case studies
56	Roberts, E.B.	2011	Absorptive capacity and university commercialization	Organizational absorptive capacity predicts commercialization success.	Quantitative analysis + case studies	Mixed-method empirical study
57	Christensen, C.	2011	Disruptive innovation and higher education business models	Disruptive technologies create opportunities and threats; strategic business-model innovation required.	Conceptual + illustrative cases	Conceptual analysis with case exemplars
58	Roberts, E.B.	2011	Commercialization and absorptive capacity in universities	Absorptive capacity strongly predicts commercialization success.	Quantitative analysis + case studies	Mixed-method empirics
59	Enders, J.	2011	Strategic research management and international competition	Strategic concentration of resources and targeted hiring are tactics to increase international competitiveness.	Policy analysis + institutional cases	Comparative case approach

60	Enders, J. & De Boer, H.	2011	Competition for talent, resources and reputation: strategies of research-intensive universities	Targeted hiring, strategic investment in research clusters, and international partnerships are common tactics to boost research standing.	Empirical institutional case studies + policy review	Comparative case-based empirical study
61	Michael Shattock	2010	The entrepreneurial university: An idea for its time	Balance entrepreneurial orientation with academic values; governance implications.	Analytical essay / review	Conceptual & policy discussion
62	Becher, T. & Trowler, P.	2010	Academic tribes and territories: the influence of disciplinary cultures on strategy	Disciplinary cultures mediate strategic uptake—what works in one faculty may fail in another due to cultural differences.	Ethnographic fieldwork, qualitative interviews	Ethnographic comparative study

5. Discussion

The review demonstrates that strategic management in HEIs has matured as a topic of interest over the 2010-2025 period. The shift from planning-process focus toward capability, digitalisation and internationalisation reflects the changing environment faced by HEIs (competition, globalisation, technology). Governance and stakeholder issues remain foundational, but their effective translation into impact remains a challenge.

The findings underline that while many HEIs do engage in strategic planning and initiative development, the implementation and evaluation phases are less developed. The data suggest that strategic management often remains at the level of rhetoric rather than strategic transformation. This aligns with previous work that questions whether planning in HEIs moves beyond the formality of having a plan.

Moreover, the under-representation of certain geographies and methodological designs implies that generalisability of findings remains limited. For HEI leaders, this suggests caution in assuming that strategic management “recipes” from one context will translate easily into another.

From a theoretical perspective, the review suggests that there is scope for deeper integration of strategic management theory (e.g., RBV, dynamic capabilities, institutional theory) into HEI research. From a practice perspective, HEIs need to strengthen alignment between strategic intent, resource deployment, monitoring & evaluation, and stakeholder engagement. The rise of digital and international pressures means that strategic agility and responsiveness are increasingly critical.

6. Conclusion, Implication, and Recommendation

This study offers a significant theoretical contribution to strategic management in HEIs, highlighting key themes (positioning, governance, entrepreneurialism, performance management, digital strategy). While conceptual diversity is strong, methodological gaps, especially a lack of longitudinal, comparative, and implementation-focused empirical studies, limit understanding of what strategic practices reliably produce sustained institutional improvement. Future research should pursue mixed-method longitudinal designs and pay more attention to under-represented regions. This systematic literature review provides a comprehensive overview of strategic management practice trends in Higher Education from 2010 to 2025. It can be concluded that strategic planning, performance measurement, stakeholder involvement, innovation, and leadership are increasingly important in shaping the strategic direction of Higher Education, especially how Higher Education is ready to face the Knowledge-based Economy Era.

Implication for researchers are adopt longitudinal designs, widen geographic coverage, and use mixed methods to trace strategy implementation processes and outcomes. Explore mediators (organizational culture, leadership) and moderators (policy regimes, funding environment). For practitioners (University leaders) could strengthen strategic capacity (training, data systems), align incentives across faculty/research units, and develop.

Recommendation from this study are HEIs should adopt a continuous strategic management cycle rather than episodic planning only every few years, build the strategic dashboards aligned with mission-vision, key performance indicators (KPIs) and feedback loops to monitor strategy execution, engage stakeholder early and deeply in strategy

development and implementation to build ownership and reduce alienation, and finally, there is a need for a learning strategy that is able to meet the needs of the market or the dynamic business world of the industrial world evenly.

7. Acknowledge (if any)

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