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Effectiveness of Strategic Management Practices in Public Universities in Tanzania: A Case Study of the University of Dar es Salaam

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Abstract: *This study evaluates strategic management practices at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Tanzania's oldest and largest public university. Using a quantitative approach, an online survey collected data from academic and administrative staff across various colleges and schools. Findings revealed positive perceptions of strategy clarity and its impact on institutional performance, but concerns emerged regarding the adequacy and alignment of resources with strategic objectives. Transparent resource allocation, stakeholder participation, and strong performance metrics were identified as critical enablers for effective strategy implementation. The research emphasizes the importance of aligning financial, human, and infrastructural resources with the university's strategic plan in order to achieve Tanzania's higher education objectives under Vision 2025 and the Higher Education Policy of 1999. Employing the Resource-Based Theory and Mintzberg's 5Ps framework, the study offers practical recommendations to improve strategic management processes. These include enhancing transparency in resource allocation, conducting regular strategy-performance reviews, and strengthening stakeholder engagement. This work contributes to the discourse on organizational effectiveness and long-term strategic planning within Tanzanian higher education.*

Keywords*: Strategic Management Practices, Resource Alignment, Strategy Implementation, Organizational Effectiveness.*

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1. Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania face mounting challenges in ensuring quality, accessibility, and relevance of tertiary education in an increasingly competitive and resource-constrained environment. For public universities such as the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), success depends on the ability to attract and retain qualified staff, generate impactful research, and enroll students from diverse backgrounds all while maintaining financial sustainability and meeting national development goals.
Tanzania's Higher Education Policy of 1999 and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 both emphasize the importance of higher education in producing graduates with the skills, knowledge, and values needed to drive socio-economic transformation. However, increased enrolments, limited infrastructure, fluctuating funding from the government, and growing demands from the private sector have placed significant pressure on HEIs to operate more strategically. This strain is further addressed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST, 2025), which emphasizes structural modernization and digital governance as mechanisms to cope with resource deficiencies under the new *Education Sector Development Plan 2025/26–2029/30*.

Strategic management defined as the systematic assessment, planning, and execution of organizational strategies is thus increasingly vital for UDSM to maintain academic quality, enhance competitiveness, and contribute meaningfully to national development. It entails anticipating changes in the external environment, aligning internal resources with institutional goals, and ensuring effective leadership to navigate complex challenges.

Despite having successive five-year strategic plans, UDSM has faced persistent challenges such as insufficient funding for capital projects, underutilization of allocated resources, and difficulties in implementing all planned initiatives. These issues raise questions about the effectiveness of strategic management practices and the degree of alignment between the universities' stated goals and the resources made available for their achievement. Recent evaluations across the sector indicate that contemporary HEIs continue to grapple with a profound mismatch between strategic ambition and funding realities (Lymo & Mtebe, 2025).

This study addresses these concerns by investigating how strategic management is practiced at UDSM, examining the clarity of the strategic plan, the alignment of resources with strategic objectives, and the perceived effectiveness of strategy implementation. By applying the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Mintzberg's 5Ps framework, this research contributes empirical evidence and practical recommendations for improving strategic management in Tanzanian HEIs.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Tanzania, including the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), are under pressure to support socio-economic transformation while dealing with growing student enrolments and competitive education markets. To maintain quality and institutional relevance under national frameworks like the Higher Education Policy of 1999 and the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, public universities have widely adopted formal strategic management practices. These structured approaches are intended to help universities identify changes in the external environment, set clear goals, and allocate critical assets systematically.

However, a persistent operational gap remains between strategic planning and actual execution. While public universities like UDSM successfully outline clear five-year strategic goals, they face ongoing implementation challenges, including insufficient funding for capital investments, underutilised resources, and incomplete project rollouts. This problem is worsened by unstable government subventions and a structural mismatch between broad strategic plans and the actual money, human capital, and infrastructure available to departments. Furthermore, although national strategies like the *Education Sector Development Plan 2025/26–2029/30* push for modernization, university resource distribution frameworks often remain top-down, lacking the clear performance links and participatory budgeting needed to build internal trust.

This gap creates a distinct knowledge deficiency in contemporary educational governance literature. While existing studies explore macro-level higher education policies, limited empirical research addresses the micro-level structural pathways through which resource alignment affects everyday operational efficiency and institutional performance within individual public universities. Without empirical evidence explaining how strategy-to-resource gaps occur, public universities cannot build long-term capabilities or safeguard institutional sustainability. This study directly addresses this gap by examining how strategic management practices, resource alignment, and institutional transparency interact at the University of Dar es Salaam.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 General objective of the study

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of strategic management practices at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) in order to determine how resource alignment and institutional governance influence organizational performance within Tanzanian public higher education institutions.

1.2.2 Specific objectives of the study

To achieve the general objective, the study addresses the following four specific objectives:

1. To assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the University of Dar es Salaam's strategic plan among both academic and administrative staff.
2. To examine the extent of alignment between the university's financial, human, and infrastructural resources and its stated strategic objectives.
3. To determine the impact of implemented strategic plans on the university's operational efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction.
4. To identify the primary institutional barriers and enablers that affect the sustainable execution of strategic initiatives at the university.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

To move beyond purely descriptive accounts of university planning, this study grounds its analysis in two complementary theoretical perspectives: the **Resource-Based Theory (RBT)** and **Mintzberg's 5Ps Framework**.

Resource-Based Theory (RBT): Originally formulated by Barney (1991), RBT posits that an organisation's sustainable competitive advantage depends on resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). In public higher education, UDSM's primary strategic assets include highly qualified academic staff, specialised research infrastructure, strong alumni networks, and institutional prestige. However, under institutional applications of RBT, the capacity to transform these assets into institutional effectiveness is constrained by external environment factors such as fluctuating government subventions and rigid administrative systems. Scholars argue that strategic value creation fails if internal asset management is disconnected from operational planning (Swai & Ndibalema, 2025). Therefore, RBT provides a lens to evaluate how the internal resource environment limits or enhances UDSM's strategic outcomes.

Mintzberg's 5Ps Framework: Mintzberg (1987) conceptualises strategy through five distinct lenses: *Plan* (intended direction), *Ploy* (manoeuvres to outwit competitors), *Pattern* (consistent behavioural streams), *Position* (locating the firm in the environment), and *Perspective* (shared institutional culture). For public HEIs, strategy operates predominantly as a *Plan* through formal five-year blueprints and as a *Perspective* through long-standing values of academic freedom and societal service. This framework helps identify internal structural misalignments when the formal *Plan* fails to translate into a daily *Pattern* of resource distribution across academic and administrative departments.

2.1.1 Conceptualising Strategic Management in Higher Education

Strategic management in public higher education encompasses the systematic analysis, formulation, allocation, and monitoring of institutional goals to maintain quality and social relevance amidst shifting political and economic pressures (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015; Streiss, 2019). The international consensus underscores that e-governance maturity, resource diversification, and transparent accountability loops are the bedrock of modern public values in tertiary education. In Tanzania, the *Higher Education Policy of 1999* mandates public universities to adopt robust strategic plans to handle the dual challenges of expanding enrolments and limited operational budgets. Recently, the *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology* (MoEST, 2025) reinforced this mandate through the *Education Sector Development Plan 2025/26–2029/30*, pushing for institutional modernisation, transparent performance-linked resource systems, and digital governance to address persistent funding deficits.

2.1.2 Empirical Synthesis of Strategic Clarity and Capacity Gaps

Scholarly literature demonstrates a recurring operational gap between strategy clarity and actual organizational capacity within public HEIs. Empirical assessments by Lymo and Mtebe (2025) note that while public university staff generally exhibit high comprehension of institutional vision and mission statements, the actual implementation of planned capital projects remains severely hindered by irregular funding and top-down budgetary approaches.
This capacity mismatch is further documented by Mohamed (2023), who established that financial and infrastructural resource constraints serve as the primary bottleneck limiting strategy execution in public universities across Tanzania. These empirical insights reveal that strategy clarity without a corresponding, transparent resource allocation structure leads to partial or delayed project rollout, leaving institutions structurally ill-equipped to meet long-term strategic targets.

2.1.3 The Nexus of Resource Alignment and Institutional Effectiveness

Sustainable institutional effectiveness in higher education relies heavily on the close alignment between broad strategic plans and specific operational funding matrices. Research in East African universities emphasizes that maintaining regional competitiveness requires synthesizing institutional goals with reliable, diversified funding streams to guarantee long-term institutional sustainability (Mussa, 2026).
When funding allocation lacks transparency or fails to include academic department stakeholders, severe friction develops between top-down administrative demands and the teaching and research realities of the faculty (Mnyanyi & Mbwette, 2021; Mushi, 2018). The literature calls for a shift toward participatory budgeting and performance-based internal resource models to bridge the historical gap between strategic ambition and daily operational execution.

2.1.4 Identification of the Research Gap

Despite expanding literature on public higher education policy in sub-Saharan Africa, three critical research gaps remain unaddressed:

- Existing studies evaluate national macro-level policies but lack empirical micro-level analysis showing how district and institutional strategic management structures influence daily operational efficiency within individual universities.

- There is a lack of rigorous, localized research explaining the structural mechanisms causing severe discrepancies between academic staff and administrative staff perceptions of resource adequacy.
- Few studies integrate traditional strategic management theories (such as RBT and Mintzberg) with contemporary Tanzanian public sector reforms, specifically regarding the *MoEST (2025)* blueprints.

2.2 Theoretical Review

The analysis of strategic management practices and resource alignment within public higher education institutions requires a robust theoretical grounding to move beyond superficial descriptions of administrative tasks. This study is anchored in two complementary theoretical frameworks: the **Resource-Based Theory (RBT)** and **Mintzberg's 5Ps Framework**. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens to evaluate how internal asset dynamics and diverse strategic perspectives interact to shape institutional effectiveness.

2.2.1 Resource-Based Theory (RBT)

Originally developed in corporate strategic management literature by Barney (1991), the Resource-Based Theory (RBT) posits that an organisation's sustainable competitive advantage and performance differences depend on its control of unique resource bundles. For an asset to deliver long-term value, it must meet four distinct criteria: it must be valuable (exploits opportunities), rare (controlled by few), inimitable (difficult to copy), and non-substitutable (lacks strategic equivalents).

When applied to public higher education institutions like the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), the university's primary assets extend beyond physical infrastructure to encompass its highly qualified academic staff, specialised research capacities, established alumni networks, and historical institutional prestige. Within public sector management literature, scholars have expanded RBT to show that holding valuable assets is insufficient on its own; the institution must possess the organizational capability to deploy and align these resources with its long-term goals (Swai & Ndibalema, 2025).

Unlike private corporations, public universities in Tanzania operate within a highly constrained and tightly regulated fiscal environment. Their primary resource base is heavily dependent on government subventions, volatile international donor grants, and internally generated revenue from tuition fees. Fluctuations and delays in these funding streams often disrupt the acquisition and upkeep of critical strategic assets, such as modern engineering laboratories, comprehensive digital research databases, and competitive salary packages required to retain top-tier academic personnel (Mohamed, 2023). Therefore, RBT serves as a vital analytical tool for this study, helping to diagnose how the adequacy, quality, and internal distribution of UDSM's strategic assets affect its broader institutional performance.

2.2.2 Mintzberg's 5Ps Framework

To capture the complex administrative realities of a public university, this study also employs Mintzberg's (1987) 5Ps Framework, which conceptualises strategy through five interrelated perspectives: *Plan*, *Ploy*, *Pattern*, *Position*, and *Perspective*.

Plan: Strategy operates as a consciously intended course of action, which at UDSM is formalized through successive five-year institutional strategic blueprints that outline explicit growth targets, performance indicators, and structural expansions.

Ploy: Involves specific tactical manoeuvres, such as introducing niche postgraduate programmes or setting up multidisciplinary research clusters to capture international grants ahead of regional competitors.

Pattern: Focuses on consistency in action, examining whether the university's daily resource allocations and actual administrative behaviours match its official declarations over time.

Position: Locates the institution within its wider environment, specifically looking at how UDSM balances its role as Tanzania's premier public university with its ambition to remain a competitive higher education hub in East Africa alongside institutions like Makerere University and the University of Nairobi.

Perspective: Examines the deeply ingrained institutional culture and shared mindset of the university community, which values academic freedom, intellectual excellence, and public service.

In a public university setting, structural friction often arises when strategy as a formal *Plan* fails to translate into a consistent *Pattern* of daily resource allocation across various academic and administrative units. Public institutions frequently experience a disconnect where top-down administrative blueprints are decoupled from the operational routines and cultural expectations of the faculty (Mnyanyi & Mbwette, 2021). By using Mintzberg's framework alongside RBT, this study can look past the mere existence of UDSM's strategic documents to evaluate whether these plans are genuinely integrated into the university's operational patterns, institutional culture, and regional positioning.

2.3. Empirical Review

2.3.1 Global Context of Strategic Management in Higher Education

Globally, the landscape of public higher education has undergone radical shifts, forcing institutions to transition from traditional collegiate administrative styles to formal corporate strategic planning models to secure public value and long-term viability (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015; Streiss, 2019). Studies assessing advanced e-governance maturity and institutional development in Europe and Asia reveal that strategic success relies heavily on institutional transparency, open performance indicators, and user-centered architectures (OECD, 2023; United Nations, 2024). However, empirical literature from various public institutions highlights a persistent organizational friction where broad strategic documents become detached from daily operational routines. When central university administrations adopt top-down planning methods without actively engaging department-level faculty, it creates a severe decoupling effect where the formal strategic plan exists only on paper while departments continue using historical, manual allocation practices.

2.3.2 Regional and Sub-Saharan African Perspectives

Across sub-Saharan Africa, public universities face a difficult operational environment marked by rapidly expanding student enrolments, rising operational costs, and declining or unpredictable state funding support. Regional policy blueprints, such as the African Union Digital Transformation Strategy (2020–2030), emphasize that higher education institutions must embrace structural modernization and rigorous internal asset management to remain competitive. Empirical evaluations of leading East African public universities, including Makerere University and the University of Nairobi, indicate that achieving regional positioning and research excellence requires a conscious synthesis of the institutional vision with stable, diversified revenue models (Mussa, 2026). The regional literature shows that universities that successfully diversify their funding sources through international research grants, consultancy wings, and active alumni funds demonstrate a much stronger capacity to maintain modern laboratory infrastructure and limit the negative impacts of unexpected state budget cuts.

2.3.3 Empirical Appraisals within the Tanzanian Context

Within Tanzania, the *Higher Education Policy of 1999* and the *Tanzania Development Vision 2025* legally mandate public higher education institutions to institutionalize strategic planning systems to improve quality, efficiency, and social relevance. Recently, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology reinforced these structural requirements by launching the *Education Sector Development Plan 2025/26–2029/30*, which pushes for performance-linked funding models and modern digital governance platforms to fix historical resource misalignments across the public sector. Despite these clear guidelines, empirical research within Tanzanian public universities shows a significant gap between strategy formulation and actual field-level execution. An empirical assessment by Lymo and Mtebe (2025) across local institutions revealed that while university staff generally report a high understanding and support of their institution's mission statements, the actual implementation of capital improvement projects is routinely delayed by slow budget approvals and central administration bottlenecks. This capacity gap is further supported by Mohamed (2023), whose quantitative analysis of public university structures concluded that severe financial and infrastructural deficits serve as the primary bottleneck limiting the execution of planned strategic initiatives. Furthermore, when internal resource distribution lacks transparency, deep-seated perceptual divides emerge between academic faculty and administrative professional services regarding asset fairness and funding adequacy (Mnyanyi & Mbwette, 2021; Mushi, 2018). Existing studies look closely at national policy trends but often overlook the micro-level internal processes through which budget decisions, department-level participation, and performance metrics interact to shape everyday institutional effectiveness within a single university. This study directly addresses this empirical knowledge gap by analyzing the strategic management practices and resource alignment pathways at the University of Dar es Salaam.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Philosophy

This study adopted a descriptive, cross-sectional research design employing a quantitative approach to evaluate the effectiveness of strategic management practices at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). A quantitative design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the collection of measurable, numerical data from a structured sample, facilitating objective statistical testing of hypotheses regarding resource alignment and institutional performance.

The study was grounded in the positivist research philosophy. Positivism aligns with the research aim to capture empirical, factual observations of staff perceptions and to process these findings through rigorous statistical lenses rather than subjective interpretations. This philosophical stance ensures high objectivity, reliability, and replicability of the analytical outcomes.

3.2 Target Population, Sampling Framework, and Sample Size

The target population for this research encompassed all active academic faculty (including professors, associate professors, senior lecturers, and lecturers) and administrative professional services managers across UDSM's constituent colleges, schools, and operational units. Given the expansive and decentralized nature of the university's structure which spans the Main Campus in Dar es Salaam alongside the Mbeya and Mkwawa constituent colleges a census sampling approach was initially deployed via institutional email channels to maximize outreach and ensure that diverse departmental viewpoints were adequately captured.

Due to logistical limitations and electronic response constraints during the data collection window, the final sample size consisted of 61 staff members who fully completed the online instruments. The final sample comprised 33% Associate Professors, 26% Senior Lecturers, 16% Administrative Managers, 13% Full Professors, and 12% Lecturers, providing a comprehensive cross-section of institutional leadership.

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Primary data were gathered using a highly structured electronic questionnaire distributed via official university email networks. The questionnaire was developed based on established strategic management scales and adapted to fit the Tanzanian higher education context.

It utilized 5-point Likert scales (where 1 represented 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 represented 'Strongly Agree') to measure four key variables:

- Clarity and comprehensibility of the university's five-year strategic plan.
- Perceived adequacy and alignment of financial, human, and infrastructural resources.
- The impact of strategic initiatives on institutional operational efficiency.
- Perceived levels of stakeholder satisfaction and organizational transparency.

Prior to full deployment, a pilot test was conducted with five staff members from different academic units. Feedback from this pilot led to minor phrasing refinements to eliminate ambiguity and ensure instrument validity.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Once data collection was complete, the raw data were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 21). Descriptive statistics specifically mean scores and standard deviations were computed to summarize sample demographics and overall agreement baselines for the Likert scale items.

To explore differences between groups, inferential statistics were applied. Specifically, an independent samples t-test was conducted to statistically compare differences in resource alignment perceptions between academic faculty and administrative professional services staff. The significance threshold was set at a standard $p < 0.05$ to determine statistical relevance.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Formal ethical clearance for this study was granted by the University of Dar es Salaam Directorate of Research. Participation in the online survey was entirely voluntary, and all respondents provided informed consent before accessing the questionnaire items.

To maintain strict confidentiality and participant anonymity, no personal identifiers, institutional payroll numbers, or specific department names were captured within the dataset. All research outcomes were processed and presented in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual staff members.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate and Sample Demographics

The electronic survey achieved a final usable sample of 61 respondents, representing a 47% response rate from the institutional outreach. This rate is considered highly acceptable for online organizational surveys within higher education settings. The demographic distribution shows a mature and highly experienced workforce:

- **Gender:** Male respondents constituted 56%, while female respondents accounted for 44%.
- **Age Profile:** The sample was heavily weighted toward senior cohorts, with 41% aged 45–54 years, 34% aged 55–64 years, 18% aged 35–44 years, 5% over 65 years, and only 2% aged 25–34 years.
- **Employment Rank:** Associate Professors formed the largest segment at 33%, followed by Senior Lecturers (26%), Managers and Administrative Staff (16%), Full Professors (13%), and Lecturers (12%).

This demographic profile indicates that the data reflects viewpoints from senior academic and administrative leaders who possess deep institutional memory and are directly involved in the formulation and implementation of strategic initiatives at UDSM.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Strategic Clarity and Resource Alignment

To evaluate staff perceptions of strategic management, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each Likert-scale item. The results indicate a clear conceptual divide between strategy formulation and operational implementation.

Staff expressed strong agreement regarding the clarity and strategic value of the university's plans. The statement *"The University's strategy is clear and easy to understand"* achieved the highest baseline (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.74), closely followed by *"The University's strategy has a substantial impact on goal setting"* (Mean = 4.03, SD = 0.66). These high mean scores demonstrate that UDSM's central administration successfully designs and communicates its long-term direction, satisfying the *Plan* component of Mintzberg's 5Ps framework. Furthermore, respondents noted that the strategic plan enhanced stakeholder relations, with the item *"The University's strategy improves client (student/stakeholder) satisfaction"* scoring a high baseline (Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.91).

However, perceptions shifted significantly when evaluating resource capacity and operational alignment. The item *"There is alignment of resources to the overall strategy"* scored a lower mean of 3.41 (SD = 0.96). This capacity gap became even more pronounced regarding funding adequacy, with the statement *"The University provides adequate resources to ensure alignment"* returning the lowest score in the study (Mean = 3.15, SD = 0.98). Staff also expressed moderate views on whether available resources enhanced long-term capabilities (Mean = 3.56, SD = 1.01) or improved competitive advantage (Mean = 3.30, SD = 1.05).

4.3 Inferential Analysis: Perceptual Divide between Academic and Administrative Staff

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether academic faculty and administrative professional services staff held significantly different views regarding internal resource alignment.

The analysis revealed that academic staff reported a slightly higher mean rating for perceived resource alignment (Mean = 3.9) than administrative staff (Mean = 3.5). However, the t-test yielded a p-value of 0.22. Because the p-value is greater than the standard significance threshold (\(p > 0.05\)), the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant. This structural consensus indicates that the challenges of resource adequacy and strategy alignment are felt equally across both the academic and administrative wings of the university, pointing to systemic rather than department-specific resource bottlenecks.

4.4 Critical Discussion and Theoretical Integration

When analyzed through the **Resource-Based Theory (RBT)**, the results paint a complex picture of UDSM's internal asset environment. RBT states that an institution gains competitive advantage by effectively deploying valuable, rare, and inimitable resources [Swai & Ndibalema, 2025]. UDSM clearly holds these high-value strategic assets, including its premier historical prestige and highly qualified academic staff. However, the low mean score for resource adequacy (Mean = 3.15) shows that the university cannot fully utilize these assets because its core funding remains highly volatile.

This finding aligns with Mohamed (2023), who argued that public universities in Tanzania suffer from severe strategy-to-resource gaps due to irregular government subventions and over-reliance on unstable tuition fees. Without stable funding models, the high-value human capital identified under RBT cannot be paired with modern laboratory infrastructure or digital research databases, limiting the university's regional competitive advantage [Mohamed, 2023].

Evaluated through **Mintzberg's 5Ps Framework**, UDSM exhibits an intentional decoupling between strategy as a *Plan* and strategy as a *Pattern*. The high clarity scores (Mean = 4.05) prove that the five-year strategic *Plan* is well-formulated and understood across campuses. Yet, the lower score for operational efficiency (Mean = 3.79) demonstrates that this intended plan has not fully translated into a consistent daily *Pattern* of resource distribution.

This disconnect reflects broader governance trends across Tanzanian public higher education, where ambitious institutional plans are often compromised by top-down budgeting models that fail to adjust to local department needs [Lymo & Mtebe, 2025]. For UDSM to maintain its *Position* as a leading regional hub in East Africa alongside competitors like the University of Nairobi, its central administration must move past broad planning and embrace the performance-linked funding mechanisms and digital governance systems championed by the recent *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST, 2025)* blueprints.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The Strategic Plan as an Intended Direction

The descriptive findings reveal a clear distinction between the design of institutional strategy and its operational execution within the university. The high agreement scores regarding strategy clarity (Mean = 4.05) and its influence on broader goal setting (Mean = 4.03) demonstrate that the central administration has successfully established a well-defined long-term direction. Analyzed through the lens of Mintzberg's 5Ps Framework, UDSM shows high maturity in strategy as a *Plan*. The institutional vision and goals are not only well-formulated but are also broadly understood across various colleges and schools.

This high level of clarity aligns with regional higher education assessments, which indicate that premier public universities in East Africa generally possess strong technical capacities for developing long-term development blueprints. Furthermore, the positive perception of stakeholder satisfaction (Mean = 3.90) shows that the strategic plan serves as an effective tool for managing external relationships and institutional image, reinforcing the *Perspective* component of Mintzberg's framework by building a shared identity centered on academic quality.

The Strategy-to-Resource Capacity Gap

However, this strategic clarity is undermined by significant resource limitations. The lower mean score for resource alignment (Mean = 3.41) and the low evaluation of funding adequacy (Mean = 3.15) reveal a critical gap between administrative ambition and operational capacity. When evaluated through the Resource-Based Theory (RBT), this disconnect threatens the university's long-term competitive position. According to RBT, sustainable organizational performance depends on the effective deployment of valuable, rare, and inimitable assets. UDSM controls vital strategic assets, such as a highly qualified academic faculty, unique research wings, and substantial regional prestige.

Yet, the empirical evidence demonstrates that the university cannot fully utilize these intellectual assets because its core funding remains volatile and constrained. This resource bottleneck directly reflects the empirical conclusions of Mohamed (2023), who established that public higher education institutions in Tanzania face structural challenges due to fluctuating government subventions and over-reliance on tuition fees. Without stable funding models, the high-value human capital identified under RBT cannot be properly paired with modern laboratory infrastructure or digital research systems, thereby limiting UDSM's capacity to build long-term capabilities.

Perceptual Consensus and Structural Disconnects

The inferential analysis provides further insight into these institutional challenges. The independent samples t-test, which compared resource alignment perceptions between academic faculty (Mean = 3.9) and administrative staff (Mean = 3.5), returned a statistically non-significant result ($p = 0.22$). This lack of statistical significance indicates that the tension between strategy formulation and resource provision is a systemic issue felt equally across both the academic and administrative wings of the institution. It points to a top-down budgeting model that fails to align with localized department realities, a challenge that echoes broader trends in Tanzanian higher education governance where broad strategic goals are frequently decoupled from daily funding distributions.

This structural mismatch prevents strategy from transitioning from an intended *Plan* into a consistent daily *Pattern* of action. For UDSM to secure its regional *Position* alongside competitors like the University of Nairobi, its management must address these strategy-to-resource gaps by adopting the performance-linked funding mechanisms and digital governance systems championed by the recent *Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST, 2025)* blueprints.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that strategic management at the University of Dar es Salaam functions effectively during the formulation stage but faces structural bottlenecks during operational execution. The empirical evidence confirms that the university possesses a clear, well-communicated, and broadly understood strategic plan that positively influences institutional goal setting and external stakeholder relations. Both academic and administrative staff show high conceptual support for the university's long-term vision. However, a significant gap exists between strategic planning and actual resource allocation, with staff expressing serious concerns over the adequacy and direct alignment of financial, human, and infrastructural resources. The lack of statistical difference between academic and administrative perceptions indicates that this resource bottleneck is a systemic issue affecting the entire institution rather than individual departments.

When evaluated against strategic management theories, the university successfully maintains high-value intellectual assets and premier regional prestige. Yet, its inability to secure stable, long-term funding prevents it from turning these assets into strong operational capabilities. The intended strategic plan has not fully translated into a consistent daily pattern of resource distribution because institutional budgeting frameworks remain top-down and disconnected from department needs. Ultimately, for the university to maintain its position as a leading public higher education hub in East Africa, strategic management must move past clear planning. The central administration must focus on establishing transparent resource allocation, participatory monitoring loops, and performance-linked internal funding systems to guarantee long-term institutional effectiveness.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings of this study, several targeted, evidence-based recommendations are proposed to bridge the gap between strategic vision and operational capacity within the university.

1. The central administration must institutionalise a transparent, criteria-based resource allocation framework that is openly communicated to all colleges, schools, and departments. This process should include faculty deans, directors, and representatives from staff unions in the budgeting cycles to build internal trust, eliminate perceptions of bias, and ensure that funds are directed toward core strategic priorities rather than lower-impact projects.
2. The university management must establish mandatory biannual strategy implementation reviews that measure progress against explicit key performance indicators outlined in the strategic plan. These reviews should be presented directly at Senate and Council meetings to enforce high-level administrative accountability, allowing the institution to provide targeted support to struggling departments and adjust strategic goals as resource realities shift.
3. Given the persistent government funding constraints, the university must adopt a model of strategic prioritisation by directing its limited capital explicitly toward high-impact projects that align with national development goals. This includes focusing investments on technology-enhanced learning environments, research capacity building, and high-demand academic programmes that directly boost regional competitiveness.
4. The university must actively expand its internal revenue mobilisation efforts to reduce its historical over-reliance on unpredictable government subventions and tuition fees. The Directorate of Research and Innovation should take a leading role in developing grant proposal support services, helping academic staff secure international research grants, expanding consultancy wings, and strengthening industry partnerships and alumni fundraising channels. Finally, the institution should introduce a performance-linked internal funding mechanism where a portion of the subsequent budget cycle allocations for colleges and departments is tied to demonstrated success in achieving strategic targets, thereby incentivising measurable outputs in research publications, graduate employability, and operational efficiency.

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