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Strategic Planning and Administrative Effectiveness in Nigerian Federal Universities - A Structured Narrative Literature Review

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ABSTRACT: This review examined the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities. Specifically, it explored the conceptual and empirical foundations of strategic planning, synthesised relevant evidence and identified the institutional, financial, governance and implementation factors influencing its effectiveness. A structured narrative literature review was adopted, drawing on Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and relevant institutional publications, including those of the National Universities Commission (NUC). The search covered publications from 2016 to November 2026, while earlier seminal studies were retained for theoretical and historical relevance. Peer-reviewed journal articles, relevant books and credible institutional reports addressing strategic planning, university administration and

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institutional effectiveness were included, while publications lacking methodological clarity or relevance to the review objectives were excluded. Following title, abstract and full-text screening, 15 studies were retained for thematic analysis. The findings indicate that strategic planning contributes to institutional direction, resource allocation, administrative coordination and performance monitoring, although its effectiveness depends substantially on implementation capacity. Oyedijo (2012) provides important Nigerian evidence linking stronger planning practices with improved resource allocation, revenue generation, priority setting and staff commitment. However, direct empirical evidence establishing this relationship specifically in Nigerian federal universities remains limited. Inadequate funding, weak governance, insufficient administrative capacity, limited stakeholder participation and ineffective monitoring were identified as major implementation constraints. The review recommends strengthening planning structures, financial sustainability, participatory governance, managerial capacity and performance evaluation mechanisms. It concludes that further empirical investigation is necessary to establish how strategic planning dimensions influence administrative effectiveness across Nigerian federal universities.

Keywords: *Strategic planning; administrative effectiveness; federal universities; strategy implementation; institutional governance; Nigeria.*

Introduction

Higher education institutions worldwide are increasingly adopting strategic management as an approach to addressing the complexities of institutional administration and responding to changing educational, economic and social environments. This shift reflects the growing recognition that effective university administration requires deliberate planning, systematic resource allocation and continuous evaluation of institutional performance. Strategic management provides an organisational framework through which institutions align their activities with their mission, vision and core values while responding to internal and external environmental changes. It also establishes a framework for moving institutions from their existing positions towards clearly defined future goals (Alrashdan et al., 2025). Within the university system, strategic planning constitutes a critical component of this process, involving the determination of institutional priorities, the allocation of human and financial resources, and the formulation of strategies for achieving organisational

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objectives. However, its application in higher education requires consideration of the distinctive characteristics of universities, particularly academic freedom, shared governance and the interests of diverse stakeholders (Attah et al., 2026; Ajetomobi et al., 2025).

Strategic planning in universities extends beyond the preparation of formal institutional documents. It involves a systematic process of analysing internal capabilities and external conditions, identifying institutional priorities, establishing achievable objectives and developing appropriate strategies for attaining desired outcomes. The process requires alignment between institutional mission, vision, values and goals, alongside the identification of gaps between existing institutional conditions and anticipated performance levels (Mensah, 2020). Consequently, an effective strategic planning framework should provide clear direction for institutional decision-making, guide resource utilisation, strengthen organisational coordination and establish measurable performance targets. Its effectiveness, however, depends substantially on the extent to which formulated strategies are translated into practical administrative actions and supported by appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The Nigerian university system provides an important context for examining the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness. The expansion of university education has increased the responsibilities of institutional administrators, particularly in the areas of financial management, personnel administration, infrastructure development, academic coordination and institutional accountability. An earlier account of the Nigerian university system reported 96 universities, comprising 27 federal, 35 state and 34 privately owned institutions (System, 2012). Although this figure reflects the situation reported at the time and should not be interpreted as the current number of universities, it illustrates the historical expansion of the sector. This expansion has occurred alongside persistent institutional challenges, including inadequate funding, poor conditions of service, brain drain and deteriorating infrastructure (System, 2012). Other studies have similarly identified inadequate access to university education, infrastructural deficiencies, insufficient funding and threats to institutional autonomy as major concerns affecting the performance of Nigerian universities (Anyanwu & Ewhe, 2020).

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These challenges place considerable demands on university administrators, whose responsibilities extend beyond routine institutional operations to include the effective coordination of limited resources, implementation of institutional policies and attainment of organisational objectives. Funding constraints, in particular, have significant implications for administrative decision-making and institutional performance. Nigerian universities depend substantially on government financing, with federal and state governments providing financial support to institutions under their respective jurisdictions (Edith, 2018). However, dependence on government subventions exposes universities to fiscal uncertainties and fluctuations in public revenue, which can undermine the consistency of institutional operations and the implementation of development programmes (Nnadozie et al., 2023). These financial difficulties are compounded by governance challenges, including weaknesses in institutional accountability and the limited capacity of some university governing councils to ensure effective oversight of management activities (Nnadozie et al., 2023). Such conditions reinforce the need for strategic planning as an instrument for establishing institutional priorities, improving resource allocation, strengthening accountability and promoting administrative effectiveness.

Administrative effectiveness in this context concerns the capacity of university management to achieve institutional objectives through the efficient coordination of human, financial, material and organisational resources. It encompasses the quality of administrative decision-making, personnel management, financial control, institutional coordination, policy implementation and performance monitoring. The achievement of these administrative outcomes requires more than the existence of institutional policies or strategic documents. It depends on the ability of university administrators to translate institutional priorities into operational activities, allocate available resources appropriately, monitor implementation and take corrective action when performance falls below established expectations. Strategic planning therefore has potential relevance to administrative effectiveness because it provides a structured basis for institutional direction, resource management and performance assessment.

The recognition of strategic planning as an important instrument for improving university administration has also informed policy initiatives in Nigeria. Following concerns raised in

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a World Bank report on the Nigerian university system, the Federal Government, through the National Universities Commission (NUC), encouraged universities and related institutions to adopt strategic planning as a means of improving institutional efficiency and effectiveness (Olu, 2009). The NUC's quality assurance framework also encouraged institutions to assess their existing conditions against desired institutional outcomes through gap analysis, thereby supporting continuous improvement in university education (Megbo & Iroegbu, 2015). This policy direction underscores the importance attached to strategic planning in strengthening institutional performance. Its institutional application is also reflected in the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan of Nasarawa State University, Keffi, which identifies quality assurance and academic excellence among its six strategic pillars (Attah et al., 2026). These developments demonstrate the institutional recognition of strategic planning as a framework for guiding university development and improving organisational performance.

Despite this recognition, the implementation of strategic plans remains a major concern within higher education institutions, particularly in developing countries. The formulation of strategic plans does not automatically translate into improved administrative performance. Effective implementation requires adequate financial and human resources, relevant managerial expertise, institutional commitment, stakeholder participation and organisational readiness to embrace change. Mensah (2020) identifies resource constraints, inadequate expertise, weak commitment and resistance to change as significant challenges affecting strategic planning and implementation in developing-country higher education institutions. These challenges suggest that the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness depends considerably on the institutional conditions under which planning decisions are formulated and implemented.

Evidence from other African university systems further illustrates these implementation difficulties. In Ghanaian public universities, Ofori and Atiogbe (2012) observe that some employees perceive strategic planning as primarily the responsibility of top management, thereby limiting broader institutional ownership and stakeholder commitment. Similarly, Mofolo and Novukela (2024) identify poor employee work culture, inadequate consideration of staff contributions by institutional leaders and the absence of effective appraisal systems as obstacles to strategic planning implementation. Their findings also

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draw attention to weaknesses in the practical mechanisms required to translate institutional policies into measurable outcomes. In a related discussion of strategic planning implementation in African higher education, Mubanga and Lesa (2024) identify the challenges confronting institutions in developing African countries, while Mofolo and Novukela (2024) emphasise the difficulties associated with inadequate implementation tools and the failure to translate policy intentions into practical institutional activities. These findings suggest that strategic planning can have limited administrative value where institutional structures, employee participation and performance monitoring mechanisms are inadequate.

Similar implementation concerns are evident within the Nigerian public sector. Although ministries, departments and agencies have formal strategic plans and organisational structures, weaknesses persist in environmental scanning, performance monitoring and interdepartmental collaboration (Akuku, 2025). These challenges are relevant to university administration because institutional effectiveness requires coordination among administrative units, consistent evaluation of organisational performance and the integration of strategic priorities into routine management processes. Where these mechanisms are weak, strategic plans may remain largely formal documents without producing the intended improvements in institutional administration.

The existing literature therefore establishes the importance of strategic planning in institutional development while drawing attention to the challenges that constrain its implementation. However, the extent to which strategic planning translates into administrative effectiveness within Nigerian federal universities requires further systematic examination. Existing Nigerian studies have largely focused on strategic planning practices across the university system (Oyedijo, 2012) or have examined particular institutional and state-level experiences (Oyeniran et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies examining implementation challenges have drawn substantially on experiences from other African countries, including Ghana, South Africa and Zambia. Although these studies provide useful evidence, their findings cannot automatically be generalised to Nigerian federal universities, given differences in institutional governance, funding arrangements, administrative structures and regulatory environments.

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More importantly, there is a need to bring together the conceptual foundations of strategic planning, empirical evidence of its relationship with administrative effectiveness and the institutional conditions that influence its implementation. This is particularly important for Nigerian federal universities, which operate within a distinct administrative and regulatory environment characterised by federal government funding arrangements, NUC oversight and university-specific governance structures. Examining these dimensions together will provide a clearer understanding of whether, how and under what institutional conditions strategic planning contributes to administrative effectiveness.

Against this background, this review examines the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities. Specifically, it seeks to examine the conceptual and empirical foundations of strategic planning and its relationship with administrative effectiveness, synthesise empirical evidence on the influence of strategic planning practices on administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities, and identify the institutional, financial, governance and implementation factors that facilitate or constrain this relationship. The review is expected to provide a consolidated evidence base for understanding the administrative implications of strategic planning and inform institutional policy, management practices and future research on improving the effectiveness of Nigerian federal universities.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian federal universities operate under persistent administrative challenges, including inadequate funding, infrastructural deficiencies, staffing constraints, political interference and governance weaknesses. These challenges place considerable pressure on university administrators to allocate scarce resources effectively, coordinate institutional activities, implement policies and achieve organisational objectives. Although strategic planning provides a framework for setting institutional priorities, allocating resources and monitoring performance, its formulation does not necessarily translate into effective administrative outcomes.

Existing Nigerian studies provide relevant but fragmented evidence. Onyekachi and John (2023) identified funding inadequacies, infrastructural deficits, staffing shortages and weak administrative capacity as major constraints to university administration, but did not

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empirically examine their relationship with strategic planning. Habeeb and Eyupoglu (2024) established positive relationships between strategic planning and organisational performance in Nigerian state universities; however, their study did not address administrative effectiveness in federal universities. Similarly, Olawuyi and Kwashabawa (2025) examined quality control strategies and administrative effectiveness in North-West Nigerian federal universities but did not comprehensively investigate strategic planning as an integrated management process. Ogbeche et al. (2021) also established the contribution of strategic planning and staff management to postgraduate programme effectiveness in two public universities, although their outcome variable was programme effectiveness rather than overall administrative effectiveness.

Consequently, the existing literature provides insufficient integrated empirical evidence on how the major dimensions of strategic planning, particularly environmental analysis, objective formulation, resource allocation and strategy implementation, collectively influence administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities. Differences in institutional ownership, geographical coverage, research variables and outcome measures further limit the generalisability of existing findings to the federal university system. This creates a need for a systematic examination of the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness, focusing on its implications for administrative decision-making, personnel management, financial administration, organisational coordination and policy implementation. Addressing this gap will provide evidence on the extent to which strategic planning contributes to administrative effectiveness and the institutional conditions that facilitate or constrain its implementation.

Review Objectives

The review seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the conceptual and empirical foundations of strategic planning and its relationship with administrative effectiveness in higher education institutions.
2. To synthesise empirical evidence on the influence of strategic planning practices on administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities.

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3. To identify the institutional, financial, governance and implementation factors that facilitate or constrain the contribution of strategic planning to administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities.

Review of the Related Literature

Construct One: Conceptual and Empirical Foundations of Strategic Planning and Administrative Effectiveness

Theoretical anchor: Strategic Management Theory and David's planning perspective

Strategic Management Theory explains institutional outcomes through deliberate managerial decisions involving strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Fred R. David's model identifies these three interrelated stages, with formulation representing the strategic planning process (Shujahat et al., 2017). Formulation involves defining institutional vision and mission, analysing internal and external environments, setting long-term objectives and selecting appropriate strategies.

Implementation translates formulated strategies into action through annual objectives, policies, employee motivation, budgeting and resource allocation (Cabello & Acevedo, 2025; Andoh et al., 2024). Evaluation involves measuring performance, identifying deviations and taking corrective action (Shujahat et al., 2017).

The theory is particularly relevant because administrative effectiveness depends substantially on how successfully institutional plans are implemented. Developing strategies may be easier than executing them, especially where operational and human resource constraints exist (Ropianto et al., 2017). Its application in higher education demonstrates its usefulness for institutional development planning, although some applications rely primarily on documentary evidence rather than direct empirical testing (Cabello & Acevedo, 2025; Tharaba et al., 2025).

Administrative effectiveness as the outcome construct

Strategic management provides a framework for aligning institutional activities with organisational values and adapting to changing environments (Alrashdan et al., 2025). In universities, strategic planning establishes institutional direction and guides the allocation

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of human and financial resources while accommodating academic freedom, shared governance and stakeholder interests (Attah et al., 2026).

Administrative effectiveness refers to the capacity of university management to translate institutional objectives into coordinated decisions, efficient resource utilisation and monitored administrative activities. In Nigerian universities, relevant indicators include priority setting, fund allocation, external funding acquisition, internal revenue generation, innovation and staff commitment (Oyedijo, 2012). Other studies associate effective resource allocation, clear institutional missions and performance evaluation with improved administrative efficiency and institutional development (Abdi & Mohamud, 2025). Environmental scanning also supports effective institutional planning (Andoh et al., 2024).

Empirical foundations in higher education

Empirical evidence generally indicates a positive relationship between strategic planning and institutional performance, although implementation influences the strength of this relationship. Studies in Kenyan accredited universities established significant relationships between strategic planning and institutional growth and ranking, with strategy implementation serving as a mediator (Kabui, 2018, 2020). Similarly, Abdi and Mohamud (2025) found that strategic formulation and implementation substantially influenced performance in Somali private universities, although evaluation and control also contributed.

These findings suggest that strategic planning contributes to institutional effectiveness when formulated strategies are translated into practical administrative activities. Implementation therefore represents an important link between planning intentions and institutional outcomes.

Construct Two: Empirical Evidence in Nigerian Federal Universities

The policy-created demand and the shape of the evidence base

Strategic planning has received institutional recognition in Nigeria through government and National Universities Commission (NUC) initiatives aimed at improving university efficiency and effectiveness (Olu, 2009; Megbo & Iroegbu, 2015). However, empirical evidence examining its contribution to administrative effectiveness remains limited.

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Oyedijo (2012) provides important Nigerian evidence through a multiple-informant survey of 46 federal and state universities. The study examined institutional vision and mission, environmental analysis, long-term objectives, action plans and planning structures. Findings indicated that universities adopting stronger strategic planning practices performed better in priority setting, resource allocation, revenue generation, innovation and staff commitment.

Subsequent studies have focused largely on state universities. Oyeniran et al. (2024) reported a strong positive relationship between strategic planning and university performance in Kwara State ($\beta = 0.892$, $t = 23.489$, $p < 0.05$). Habeeb and Eyüpoğlu (2024) similarly established positive relationships between strategic planning, transformational leadership and organisational performance across 48 Nigerian state universities. Nevertheless, these findings do not sufficiently establish the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness specifically within federal universities, which operate under distinct funding, governance and regulatory arrangements (Parker & Kaifala, 2023).

Contradictory findings

Four issues emerge from the reviewed evidence.

First, studies report strong relationships between strategic planning and institutional performance, but implementation remains problematic. Atem and Maforche (2025) reported a substantial predicted influence of strategic plans on institutional sustainability in Cameroon, yet 75.3% of surveyed lecturers indicated inadequate implementation. This suggests that planning potential does not automatically translate into institutional results.

Second, studies identify different mediating factors. Kenyan research emphasises strategy implementation (Kabui, 2018, 2020), whereas Nigerian state-university evidence identifies transformational leadership (Habeeb & Eyüpoğlu, 2024). Both factors may influence the translation of plans into outcomes.

Third, the relative contribution of planning stages differs across studies. Abdi and Mohamud (2025) emphasise formulation and implementation, while Fitri et al. (2020) associate implementation difficulties with inadequate leadership understanding and human

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resource capacity. Akuku (2025) similarly identifies weaknesses in environmental scanning, performance monitoring and interdepartmental collaboration in Nigerian public institutions.

Fourth, the existence of strategic plans does not guarantee their effective application. Attah et al. (2026) identify a policy-practice gap arising from inadequate technical tools and institutional commitment. Thus, evaluating planning effectiveness requires examining implementation and monitoring rather than the mere availability of strategic documents.

Methodological limitations

The reviewed studies reveal several methodological limitations. First, reliance on cross-sectional designs limits understanding of changes in planning and institutional performance over time (Kabui, 2018; Tega & Hod, 2021). Second, some studies employ limited measurement items that may not adequately capture the multiple dimensions of strategic planning (Tega & Hod, 2021). Third, dependence on self-reported data creates potential informant bias, although Oyedijo (2012) adopted a multiple-informant approach.

Fourth, the evidence is concentrated in state universities, while some system-wide studies do not distinguish federal from state institutions. Fifth, variations in sample sizes and response rates affect the representativeness of findings (Attah et al., 2026; Kabui, 2018). Finally, some Nigerian reviews rely on secondary evidence, while certain institutional applications are based exclusively on documentary analysis (Jacob & Ndubuisi, 2020; Tharaba et al., 2025).

These limitations, together with variations in institutional performance measures, restrict the extent to which existing findings explain the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities.

Construct Three: Institutional, Financial, Governance and Implementation Factors

Financial factors

Inadequate and unpredictable funding constrains strategic planning in Nigerian universities. Heavy dependence on government subventions, irregular internally generated revenue and weak endowment structures undermine the continuity of institutional development programmes (Oliva et al., 2025; Edith, 2018; Nnadozie et al., 2023). Funding

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uncertainty also disrupts planning cycles and limits long-term investments (Attah et al., 2026).

Jacob and Ndubuisi (2020) identify inadequate funding among the major obstacles to strategic plan implementation in Nigerian higher education. Such constraints contribute to plan-budget misalignment, particularly because effective planning should improve resource allocation and revenue generation (Oyedijo, 2012).

Governance factors

Governance arrangements influence institutional autonomy and the implementation of strategic plans. Government interference, political considerations and weaknesses in institutional leadership can undermine planning continuity (Imakpokpomwan & Alonge, 2025; Parker & Kaifala, 2023). Poor relationships between planners and implementers, weak administrative capacity and limited stakeholder participation further constrain implementation (Jacob & Ndubuisi, 2020; Ofori & Atiogbe, 2012).

Inadequate staff appraisal systems and managerial incompetence also weaken institutional accountability and the translation of strategic objectives into administrative outcomes (Mofolo & Novukela, 2024; Oliva et al., 2025).

Institutional and implementation factors

Implementation challenges remain central to the effectiveness of strategic planning. Fitri et al. (2020) associate implementation failure with inadequate leadership understanding, insufficient human resource capacity and the treatment of strategic plans as accreditation requirements rather than operational management instruments.

Other constraints include weak monitoring and evaluation, inadequate political commitment and insufficient implementation tools (Atem & Maforche, 2025; Jacob & Ndubuisi, 2020; Mubanga & Lesa, 2024). These findings demonstrate that institutional capacity and implementation mechanisms determine whether strategic plans produce meaningful administrative outcomes.

Facilitating factors

Effective strategic planning requires clearly defined responsibilities, adequate resources, administrative support and stakeholder participation (Pereira et al., 2023). Environmental

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scanning supports institutional responsiveness, while staff commitment and participatory planning strengthen implementation (Andoh et al., 2024; Oyedijo, 2012; Kabui, 2020).

Similarly, leadership development, effective resource allocation and participatory governance are important for sustainable institutional improvement (Atem & Maforche, 2025).

Synthesis: Interrelationships and Evidence-Based Institutional Interventions

The reviewed literature establishes an interrelationship among strategic planning, administrative effectiveness and institutional conditions. Strategic formulation determines institutional priorities, while implementation translates these priorities into administrative decisions, policies and resource allocation. Evaluation provides the feedback necessary for measuring outcomes and correcting implementation weaknesses. Financial, governance and institutional conditions influence the effectiveness of this process.

The relationship can therefore be summarised as follows:

Strategy formulation → Strategy implementation → Strategy evaluation → Administrative effectiveness

Institutional funding, governance, staff capacity and stakeholder participation influence the implementation process, while monitoring and evaluation support continuous improvement.

Six institutional interventions emerge from the evidence:

Strengthening planning structures requires establishing functional planning and budgeting units with measurable annual objectives aligned with institutional strategic plans (Oyedijo, 2012; Shujahat et al., 2017).

Improving financial sustainability through predictable funding, endowment development and diversified internally generated revenue is essential for financing institutional priorities and sustaining strategic initiatives (Attah et al., 2026; Oliva et al., 2025).

Institutionalising monitoring and evaluation through regular performance assessments and documented corrective actions will strengthen accountability and ensure that

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implementation remains aligned with strategic objectives (Atem & Maforche, 2025; Cabello & Acevedo, 2025).

Promoting stakeholder participation by involving academic and administrative staff in strategy formulation and implementation will enhance institutional ownership and commitment to achieving strategic goals (Kabui, 2020; Ofori & Atiogbe, 2012).

Building administrative capacity through managerial development, staff training and effective performance appraisal systems will address human resource deficiencies and improve the execution of institutional strategies (Fitri et al., 2020; Mofolo & Novukela, 2024).

Strengthening institutional governance requires protecting university autonomy and ensuring that NUC quality assurance evaluates the actual implementation and effectiveness of strategic plans rather than their mere existence (Imakpokpomwan & Alonge, 2025; Megbo & Iroegbu, 2015).

Overall, the evidence suggests that the effectiveness of strategic planning depends substantially on institutional capacity to implement, monitor and evaluate formulated strategies. However, existing Nigerian studies provide fragmented evidence, particularly regarding administrative effectiveness as a distinct outcome in federal universities. A systematic examination of these interrelationships will provide a stronger basis for institutional policy, university management and future research.

Methodology

This review adopted a structured narrative literature review approach to examine strategic planning and administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities. Relevant literature was identified through searches of Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and relevant institutional publications, including those of the National Universities Commission (NUC). Search terms included strategic planning, administrative effectiveness, university management, strategy implementation, resource allocation, institutional governance *and* Nigerian federal universities, using relevant combinations of these terms.

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The search focused primarily on publications from 2016 to 2026, while earlier seminal theoretical and empirical works were retained where necessary. Peer-reviewed journal articles, relevant books and credible institutional reports addressing strategic planning, administrative effectiveness and higher education management were included. Publications lacking clear methodological information, relevant institutional context or substantive connection to the review objectives were excluded.

Literature selection involved screening titles and abstracts for relevance, followed by examination of the full texts of potentially eligible publications. The selected studies were assessed for source credibility, methodological rigour, relevance to Nigerian higher education and their contribution to understanding the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness.

Thematic analysis was employed to organise the evidence into three major themes: the conceptual and empirical foundations of strategic planning and administrative effectiveness; empirical evidence from Nigerian federal universities; and the institutional, financial, governance and implementation factors influencing strategic planning outcomes. Findings were compared across studies to identify recurring patterns, methodological limitations, inconsistencies and gaps requiring further investigation.

Conclusion, Institutional Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

Conclusion

This review examined the conceptual foundations of strategic planning and administrative effectiveness, synthesised empirical evidence from higher education institutions, and identified the institutional conditions influencing their relationship, with particular attention to Nigerian federal universities. The review establishes that strategic planning provides an important framework for institutional direction, resource allocation, administrative coordination and performance monitoring. However, its contribution to administrative effectiveness depends largely on the extent to which formulated strategies are implemented, evaluated and supported by adequate institutional resources and governance structures.

Regarding the first objective, the review establishes that Strategic Management Theory provides an appropriate foundation for understanding the relationship between strategic

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planning and administrative effectiveness. Its three stages of strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation explain how institutional objectives are translated into administrative decisions and measurable outcomes. Administrative effectiveness is therefore closely associated with the capacity of university management to convert strategic priorities into efficient resource utilisation, personnel management, institutional coordination and policy implementation.

In relation to the second objective, the strongest Nigerian empirical evidence comes from Oyedijo (2012), whose multiple-informant survey of 46 federal and state universities associated stronger strategic planning practices with improved priority setting, fund allocation, revenue generation, innovation and staff commitment. However, the study did not disaggregate federal universities or directly measure administrative effectiveness as a distinct outcome. Other studies provide supporting but indirect evidence. Habeeb and Eyüpoğlu (2024) established positive relationships between strategic planning and organisational performance in state universities, while Olawuyi and Kwashabawa (2025) examined administrative effectiveness in North-West federal universities through quality control strategies rather than strategic planning as an integrated process. Consequently, although the available evidence supports the relevance of strategic planning to institutional effectiveness, its direct contribution to administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities remains insufficiently established.

Regarding the third objective, the review identifies financial sustainability, institutional governance, administrative capacity, stakeholder participation and implementation mechanisms as important conditions influencing strategic planning outcomes. Inadequate funding, weak monitoring systems, limited staff involvement and insufficient managerial capacity can prevent strategic plans from translating into administrative improvements. Conversely, predictable financing, participatory planning, effective leadership and systematic performance evaluation can strengthen implementation and institutional accountability.

Overall, the review concludes that strategic planning has considerable potential to improve administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities, but its success depends on implementation capacity and supportive institutional conditions. The principal research

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concern is therefore not merely whether universities formulate strategic plans, but whether their planning practices produce measurable improvements in administrative performance.

Institutional Recommendations

Based on the reviewed evidence, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Federal universities should establish functional planning and budgeting units with clear annual objectives that are explicitly aligned with institutional strategic plans and regularly monitored.
2. University management, in collaboration with government and funding agencies, should promote predictable funding mechanisms, endowment development and diversified internally generated revenue to sustain strategic priorities.
3. Universities should institutionalise periodic performance reviews that document implementation progress, identify shortfalls and trigger timely corrective actions when targets are not met.
4. Academic and administrative staff should be actively involved in both the formulation and implementation of institutional strategies to strengthen ownership, commitment and accountability.
5. Universities should invest systematically in managerial development, targeted staff training and robust performance appraisal systems to improve the quality of strategy execution.
6. Governing councils and university management should safeguard appropriate institutional autonomy while ensuring that NUC quality assurance processes evaluate actual strategic implementation and outcomes, rather than the mere existence of planning documents.

Limitations of the Review

This review adopted a narrative literature approach and therefore did not provide the exhaustive coverage, formal risk-of-bias assessment or reproducible study-selection procedures associated with systematic reviews. The available Nigerian empirical evidence

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was also limited, with several studies focusing on state universities, selected geographical zones or related institutional outcomes rather than administrative effectiveness in federal universities specifically. Differences in research designs, measurement approaches and institutional contexts further restricted direct comparisons. Consequently, the conclusions indicate patterns in the available literature rather than establishing causal relationships between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness.

Priorities for Future Empirical Research

Future research should prioritise empirical investigations involving Nigerian federal universities across different geopolitical zones to establish the relationship between strategic planning and administrative effectiveness. Particular attention should be given to the individual and combined contributions of environmental analysis, objective formulation, resource allocation and strategy implementation to administrative decision-making, financial management, personnel administration and organisational coordination. Researchers should also investigate the moderating or mediating influence of institutional funding, governance arrangements, leadership capacity and stakeholder participation. Longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches, supported by administrative records and multiple stakeholder perspectives, would provide stronger evidence than cross-sectional self-reported surveys alone.

Ultimately, the review identifies an important empirical gap: although strategic planning is widely recognised as an instrument of institutional improvement, its direct and combined contribution to administrative effectiveness in Nigerian federal universities remains inadequately established. Addressing this gap is essential for developing evidence-based management practices and strengthening the administrative performance of federal universities.

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