

QATAR UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS  
CRAFTING A STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT FOR QATAR UNIVERSITY'S COLLEGE OF  
MEDICINE: PROCESS AND OUTCOMES  
BY  
LAMA WALID ELOWZEH

A Project Submitted to  
the College of Business and Economics  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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## COMMITTEE PAGE

The members of the Committee approve the project of  
Lama Walid Elowzeh defended on December 19, 2023.

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Prof. Said Elbanna  
Thesis/Dissertation Supervisor

---

Dr. Abdellatef Anouze  
Committee Member

---

Prof. Bana Abuzayed  
Committee Member

Approved:

---

Dr. Rana Sobh, Dean, College of Business and Economics

## ABSTRACT

ELOWZEH, LAMA. W., Masters: January: 2024, Master of Business Administration

Title: Crafting a strategic blueprint for Qatar University's College of Medicine: Process and Outcomes

Supervisor of project: Said, M, Elbanna

This study focuses on observing the strategic planning process within Qatar University's College of Medicine, offering a comprehensive analysis of both successes and shortcomings in achieving strategic objectives. The study provides an in-depth narrative of the college's strategic planning journey and addresses a notable gap in existing literature. Specifically, it underscores the lack of research on strategic planning in higher education institutions, especially in the realms of medical education and Arab countries. This study serves as the inaugural exploration of strategic planning practices within higher education institutions in Qatar, contributing to the literature.

The study introduces and achieves four primary objectives: offering insights into the strategic planning process, constructing a narrative of the college's journey, presenting a roadmap action plan, and providing recommendations for an informed and effective strategic planning approach in the future. This qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews to investigate the formulation of the first-ever strategic plan within a newly established medical college. The findings yield recommendations crucial in a competitive educational landscape, highlighting operational strengths and areas for improvement. Challenges within policy documentation, infrastructure, and monitoring systems are identified, with specific attention to issues such as transparency, supervision of clinical-year students, facility development, and changes in management.

Recommendations extend to leadership members of educational institutions, emphasizing transparency, the establishment of a taskforce for plan monitoring, the importance of student exchange programs, and the significance of successful leadership transitions. The study concludes by discussing limitations and proposing potential guidelines for future research endeavors.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Strategic planning, Strategic planning Process, Qatar University, College of Medicine

## DEDICATION

*I wish to express my heartfelt dedication of this work to my family, including my husband, children and my brother Tariq, acknowledging their support, encouragement, and patience throughout this significant journey.*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Qatar has emerged in recent years as a shining example of a nation committed to progress and development, with a special emphasis on human capital and education. This dedication is highlighted by the formation of Qatar University College of Medicine in 2014, a watershed moment in the country's journey toward achieving its goals of human development and healthcare excellence. Qatar's strong emphasis on human development stems from its national visions, most notably the Qatar National Vision 2030. The framework is committed to providing a sustainable and prosperous future for its people. It recognizes that a well-educated and skilled workforce is crucial for success, especially in healthcare. To achieve this vision, a national medical college has been established, which reflects the nation's ambition and its dedication to preparing the next generation of medical professionals. These medical professionals will play a vital role in evolving Qatar's healthcare standards, ensuring the well-being of its society, and contributing to the nation's strategic goals. This chapter sets the foundation for a detailed examination of the importance of the College of Medicine in Qatar's efforts towards human development and progress in higher education. Additionally, it will focus on higher education and the procedures associated with strategic planning.

### **1.1 Objective of the Study**

This study provides four objectives; first, it provides a thorough understanding of the College of Medicine's inaugural strategic planning process. This includes a thorough examination how they developed and implemented their strategic plan. Second, this study attempts to provide an informed narrative of the College of Medicine's strategic planning journey, highlighting noteworthy milestones and areas of why objectives were not fully accomplished by conducting thorough evaluation. Third, it proposes initiatives and procedures through the creation of a roadmap action plan, serving as the foundational framework for the

forthcoming strategic plan of the college. Fourth, the study provides useful insights, challenges and recommendations allowing for a more informed and effective strategic planning approach in the future.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The study has practical implications because it provides an in-depth examination of the strategic planning process at Qatar University's College of Medicine. The primary motivation behind this research is to investigate the process through which a recently established medical college formulates its inaugural strategic plan. The study focuses on investigating into the intricacies of how the institution, in its early stages, develops and implements a comprehensive strategy to guide its growth and development. By examining the various components and decision-making factors involved in this strategic planning endeavor, the study seeks to provide insights into the unique challenges and considerations faced by a newly established medical college as it charts its course for the future.

## **1.3 Research Scope and Gap**

Within this study, a notable research gap emerges, emphasizing a distinct absence of studies that investigate into the realm of strategic planning within higher education institutions. This gap is particularly noticeable when considering the field of medical education and the broader context of Arab countries. The lack of existing literature on this subject underscores a critical need for comprehensive investigations. The unique contribution of this study lies in its status as the inaugural exploration of strategic planning practices within the state of Qatar. By recognizing and addressing this research gap, the research endeavors to provide in-depth insights into the dynamics of strategic planning in medical education, thus laying the foundation for future scholarly endeavors. This undertaking is not merely an academic pursuit but also a step towards fostering advancements in the strategic planning landscape within the

College of Medicine and, by extension, contributing to the broader discourse on higher education practices in the Arab context.

#### **1.4 Strategic Planning**

Every organization, whether a business or institution, should have a well-defined strategic plan to guide its actions and decisions. A strategic plan is an essential requirement for any organization, regardless of its type, whether it is a commercial firm or an educational institution in the field of education. A strategic plan serves as a road map for a business, allowing it to set clear objectives, make well-informed choices, and chart its way to future success (J. Pour, K. Zadeh, & A. Zadeh, 2018). It serves as a framework for decision-making, resource allocation, and achievement of goals, ensuring that the organization is working effectively in alignment with its mission and vision. In essence, regardless of the type of business, a strategic plan is a crucial instrument for long-term viability and successful leadership.

Mensah (2020) conducted a research study that highlighted the fundamental nature of strategic planning in the context of quality management within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It acts as a unifying force within these institutions, bringing together disparate stakeholders and aligning their efforts toward a shared goal. This alignment is critical for HEIs because it allows them to change their operational strategies and policies to meet the ever-changing quality education criteria.

Drawing from the findings of a 2013 survey on strategic planning, Hu, Liu, Chen & Qin, (2018) study has conducted a comparative analysis concerning the diversification within the landscape of Chinese higher education. According to the findings, the majority of the questioned Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) value strategic planning and use it as a useful tool for resource acquisition and integration. However, differences in the formulation,

objectives, substance, and evaluation of strategic plans were noted across HEIs of diverse levels and classifications. These distinctions reasonably reflect the varying requirements and interests of various HEIs.

### **1.5 Qatar: Education and Human Development**

The State of Qatar has placed significant emphasis on human development, displaying through a range of strategies and visions, notably the well-known "Qatar National Vision 2030" and various additional strategic initiatives. Qatar's National Vision sets a target for the year 2030, aspiring to transform the nation into an advanced society capable of sustaining progress and ensuring a high quality of life for its residents. The National Vision serves as the roadmap for Qatar, outlining its overarching objectives and creating a structure within which national strategies and action plans can be formulated (GCO, 2023). This vision serves as the nation's guiding framework, creating long-term goals and aspirations. It provides a strategic framework for developing comprehensive national strategies and particular implementation plans. These strategies and programs are intended to bring the vision to reality by addressing issues such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic diversification. Scharfenort (2012) describes how Qatar National Vision 2030 outlines the country's long-term goals, offering a roadmap for national strategy implementation.

The education sector holds an essential role in Qatar's journey towards its development goals. The importance of education as a main driver of societal growth is emphasized in the nation's long-standing constitution. Aligned with this commitment, the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV2030) aims to promote the capabilities of Qatari citizens by establishing an excellent educational system and offering exceptional opportunities for top-quality education and training. Minister of Education and Higher Education HE Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi emphasized that education is a crucial component of Qatar National Vision 2030, dedicated to constructing a diverse knowledge-based economy and delivering a bright future

to citizens through the development of an excellent educational system with exceptional opportunities and top-notch training (Qatar-tribune, 2023).

Qatar's economic and societal progress is essentially linked to its most valuable resource: its people. Within the framework of Qatar National Vision 2030, human development contains the establishment of a comprehensive and contemporary healthcare infrastructure accessible to all. It also involves an educational system that matches the most demanding global standards, equipping Qatari students to confront global challenges and progress into future innovators, entrepreneurs, artists, and professionals (PSA, 2023).

To align with Qatar National Vision 2030, visionary leadership, thorough planning by experts, all reinforced by a strong national desire for a national medical college and a pressing need for highly skilled Qatari medical practitioners. A sense of national pride and enthusiasm has fueled this journey. The ambition to build a national medical college intended to meet the distinctive requirements and aspirations of Qatar has been a significant driving force. This college's mission is to not only meet the demand for medical education, but also to produce highly competent Qatari physicians who can make significant contributions to the nation's healthcare sector and beyond.

### **1.6 College of Medicine at Qatar University**

Emerging from the aspiration to create a Qatar-based national medical college that can effectively compete in the region, this endeavor reflects the country's commitment to advancing medical education and healthcare standards. It represents a commitment to developing excellence and innovation in the field of medicine, ultimately contributing to the region's medical scene. College of Medicine (CMED), part of Qatar University Health cluster colleges (QU-Health), was established in October 2014 following an Emiri directive. Founded in 2014 as Qatar's inaugural national medical institution, the Qatar University College of Medicine is



dedicated to nurturing the future leaders in medical and health-related disciplines. Its mission is to equip individuals who will play a pivotal role in enhancing Qatar's healthcare capabilities and ensuring the well-being of its society (QU, 2015).

In September 2015, CMED launched its six-year undergraduate program leading to a Doctor of Medicine (MD) degree. The program primarily admitted Qatari high-school graduates but was also open to students from both Qatar and abroad. It adopted an innovative and integrated curriculum centered on competency-based outcomes, student engagement, and community orientation. The news of the inception of Qatar's inaugural national medical college institution brought tremendous excitement to the community and all those involved. College of Medicine was designed with the purpose of increasing the number of doctors produced within the country, in addition to increasing the overall experience of enrolled students in using the latest technologies, which includes automated neurosurgery, robotics and other mechanics-related operations. Siyal et al. (2019) emphasized that the usage of technology in medicine has significantly contributed to precision in the field of medicine and surgery which has overall improved the conditions of the health sector while contributing to increased life expectancy. During its initial years of operation, CMED achieved significant milestones, which included the recruitment of highly esteemed faculty members, the enrollment of top high-school students in the country, the establishment of strong partnerships with national and international entities, and the establishment of the groundwork for a prominent research program.

Concurrently, the approval of QU Health as a cluster organization for health education at Qatar University in 2016 laid the groundwork for enhanced integration of health-related programs and the generation of synergies among the member colleges. This collaborative effort has already yielded notable accomplishments, such as the introduction of a shared first-year program and the launch of a joint PhD program in the autumn of 2018. Together with the other member colleges, College of Medicine is committed to further fostering integration to support

academic and research excellence in health professional education. The College of Medicine tailored a distinct program that increased the acceptability and training of new doctors to redefine health standards within the country. The curriculum embraced problem-based learning (PBL) to foster active learning and critical thinking among students. Rim and Shin (2021) determined that simulators in PBL programs have readily improved the quality of graduates in medicine while they are also able to retain concepts as they are allowed to implement them in virtual situations. De Gagne et al. (2019) determined that the major limitation in the medicine curriculum design was the lack of retention of concepts that led to a sufficient gap between practice and theories for students. Therefore, PBL programs were designed to facilitate students who were eager to learn and apply those concepts. Clinical exposure, tailored elective studies, and research opportunities were integral to the College of Medicine program. Strategic partnerships were formed with Qatar's Hamad Medical Corporation, Primary Health Care Corporation, and international academic institutions. The program was structured into three phases: Pre-medical Phase I (1 year), Pre-clerkship Phase II (2½ years), and Clerkship Phase II (2½ years). Since its foundation, the College has witnessed increasing student admissions, with a significant portion being Qatari nationals, and has produced successful batches of graduates each year.

## **1.7 Thesis Overview**

In addition to the introduction, this thesis encompasses the following chapters:

**Chapter 2**, which focuses on the literature review, the fundamental principles of strategic planning will be thoroughly examined. This chapter will look at the complete process of strategic planning, from conception to implementation and evaluation. The literature will then investigate strategic planning within higher education institutions, with a particular emphasis on its application to medical education. This in-depth investigation seeks to provide

a full understanding of strategic planning processes and their applications in these educational contexts and in Arab countries, shining light on their importance and effectiveness.

**Chapter 3** focuses on the methods and techniques used in this study for data collection. It provides an explanation of the research methodologies chosen and the specific methods employed for data collection. This section serves as the study's empirical research base. The techniques and data collection procedures will be developed to fully understand how this research was conducted and how the data was obtained, setting the foundation for the dissertation's succeeding analytical phases.

**Chapter 4** will analyze the research findings through an in-depth examination of the information acquired during the interview procedure. The study's findings will be thoroughly examined and reported in this part. This section plays a key role in the research because it highlights the implications and conclusions reached from the empirical data, ultimately contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research issue and its deeper importance.

**Chapter 5** will address the implications of strategic planning at the College of Medicine and the steps taken during its establishment. This empirical study provides a comprehensive illustration of the results and challenges faced by the college as they implemented their strategy. It explores how the team addressed these issues while crafting a new strategic plan. In this chapter, we thoroughly discuss the practical implications of the strategic planning process, analyzing the findings and offering insights into the approaches used to overcome obstacles, ultimately influencing the formation of a new strategic plan for the College of Medicine.

The following section in the literature review represents several steps in strategic planning. First, the strategic plan definition and development and then the implementation and evaluation aspects are discussed. The existing body of evidence on the benefits of strategic planning in higher education is then evaluated. In the last section, the literature presents

evidence discussing the transformative role of effective strategic planning in the medical education realm in addition to strategic planning in Arab countries.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores the significance of strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation process and in higher education, focusing on both general higher education and medical education. It also investigates the context of strategic planning in Arab countries.

The literature on strategic planning is rich and diverse, reflecting a multitude of viewpoints and definitions, each contributing to a deeper understanding of this essential aspect of organizational management. This variety underlines the adaptability of strategic planning to the unique needs and circumstances of different organizations. Grant (2003) study encompasses a detailed exploration of the historical progression of strategic planning. It originates with the earlier era of "long-term planning," when organizations focused on long-term objectives. It then dives into the transition to the more contemporary practices of strategic management.

Strategic planning, often shortened as SP, stands as one of the dominant management methodologies employed by modern organizations. This approach is renowned for its widespread use and maintains a consistent position within the top five most favored managerial methodologies on a global scale (George, Walker & Monster, 2019). It is considered highly valuable in the business world due to its ability to align organizational objectives with available resources, external conditions, and competitive landscapes. Gilley & Maycunich (1998) defined strategic planning in which it is a methodical approach used by organizations to envision their future direction. It involves the formulation of a clear vision, which serves as a guiding image of what the organization aims to achieve in the long term. Additionally, it involves creating a mission statement that briefly conveys the organization's purpose and objectives. Alongside these, strategic planning involves the development of a set of core values and guiding principles that define the organization's ethical and operational foundations.

Maleka (2014) explored into the persistent inquiry of what defines an effective and efficient strategy, a matter that has attracted the interest of management scholars for an extended period. Various schools of thought offer distinct viewpoints on the essential elements of a good strategy. Some advocates emphasize the significance of having a clear and inspiring vision that provides direction and purpose for the organization. Others argue that focusing on core competencies and strengths is crucial for success, as it allows organizations to leverage their distinct advantages. Kvint (2009) outlines strategy as a method for identifying, creating, and promoting a policy that guarantees a continuing prosperity when consistently pursued. As per the insights of DuPont-Morales and Harris (1994), strategic planning plays an essential role in driving an organization's vision and mission forward. This force is achieved through the establishment of clear goals, priorities, and objectives that are translated into specific initiatives.

Al Ghamdi (2005) argues that in today's dynamic business environment, strategic management has shifted from being an optional choice to a persuasive necessity. Organizations are increasingly compelled to embrace strategic management as they confront tough challenges. He also emphasized that when organizations engage in strategic planning, they are taking thoughtful and forward-thinking actions to anticipate and shape their future. This proactive position empowers them to be better prepared and equipped to handle emerging events and challenges. In contrast, organizations that rely solely on reactive strategies may find themselves caught off guard by unexpected developments, potentially leading to a less favorable position.

According to Bryson et al. (2009) argument, they indicated that most supporters of strategic planning have consistently held the perspective that it serves as a knowledge-building process, primarily aimed at encouraging strategic thinking, action, and learning. This, in turn, leads to enhanced decision-making capabilities and improved organizational performance.

Strategic goals serve as a well-defined purpose for the organization, offering a point of reference for assessing and showcasing institutional progress and achievements. These goals effectively transform the organization's and its departments' vision, mission, and values into actual, measurable outcomes (Nauffal & Nasser, 2012). Strategic planning entails making decisions on problems that are important to the organization. It involves everyone who is dedicated to the organization's mission, which directs the goals, objectives, and strategies that an institution plans to accomplish in the short or long term. (Allison & Kaye, 2011).

## **2.1 Development of Strategic Plan**

Strategic plan could be defined as the steps designed considering the organizational goals rather than department or division-specific goals (Sundnes, 2014). According to Harvard Business School Online (2023), a strategic plan is an ongoing organizational process that involves using existing knowledge to document the company's intended direction. A well-developed strategic plan clarifies the strategic priorities, helps in effective resource utilization, aligns the individual employees' and shareholders' goals with broader organizational goals, and ensures that the organizational goals are supported with sound reasoning (Harvard Business School Online, 2023). A strategic plan can also be defined as the art of formulating and implementing business strategies and analyzing their influence on organizational objectives (CFI, 2023). Based on these definitions, the current study defines the strategic plan as a process that aligns the priorities and resources across the organization to support decision-making at the strategic level. Strategic plans help organizations create a sustainable competitive advantage and deliver superior performance by making more well-informed choices (Bryson et al., 2018).

Although the strategic planning process depends on the underlying context, the importance of strategic plan development is universal and involves some key steps that are

followed across the organizations. According to Morciano et al. (2020), strategic plan development is a well-established practice to shape research agendas on the international stage. Based on the review of strategic plans developed by 11 public funders in nine developed world countries, the study concluded that a strategic plan is a legal requirement in most cases, and strategic plan development requires the active involvement of both- internal and external stakeholders (Morciano et al. 2020). Winston (2014) stressed the importance of strategic alignment between business strategies and organizational objectives while developing strategic plans. A clear alignment enables organizations to use their strategic plan as a tool to achieve competitive advantage through quick adaptation (Winston, 2014).

Demir (2017) described the important steps in the strategic planning process, including- analysis of the current situation, mission and policies, vision, strategic goals and objectives, activities and methods, tracking/monitoring, and analysis/evaluation. The situational analysis focuses on answering the ‘where the business is currently is?’ ‘The mission, vision, and strategic goals’ collectively answer ‘Where does the business want to reach?’ Activities and methods outline ‘how the business can reach there?’ Finally, the tracking and analysis answers ‘How business can track success?’ (Demir, 2017). The overall strategic planning process is summarized in below figure:



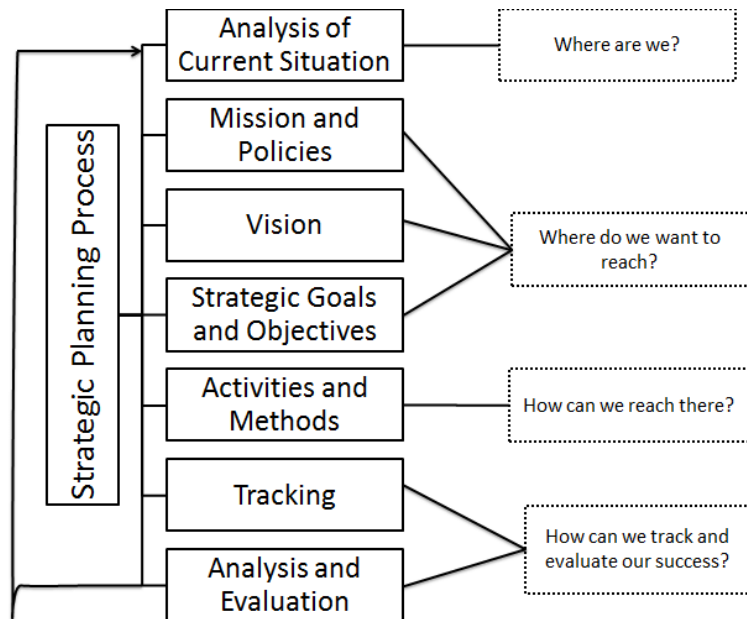


FIGURE 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

**Source:** Demir (2017)

Taking a real-world example of how the strategic planning process is carried out in educational settings, the following diagram shows the strategic plan development process followed by Southern Crescent Technical College in 2020:



FIGURE 2: STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS EXAMPLE

**Source:** Southern Crescent Technical College (2020)

The strategic plan development process took almost one year. At the start, the strategic planners collected the latest data to capture the market trends and presented the findings to the top management. Senior management then met key personnel. Focus group discussions with key stakeholders were arranged to understand their priorities, and finally, the state board approved the implementation of the strategic plan. This example highlights that strategic plan development requires the collection of extensive data and involves an active collaboration with all key stakeholders to develop well-informed strategies (Southern Crescent Technical College, 2020). Fathi and Wilson (2009) have identified steps in institutional strategic planning as follows:

**1- Mission, vision, and values**

The initial step in preparing for the future is to define the mission and vision of the university. These aspects of the institutional purpose should possess clear parameters, as subsequent planning steps would lack accuracy without them (Fathi & Wilson, 2009).

## **2- SWOT and five forces**

Conducting an assessment of both internal and external operating environments represents the subsequent crucial phase. The predominant analytical tools currently utilized for this purpose include the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, along with the Five Forces Model. (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008).

## **3- Gap analysis**

Gap analysis is defined as the difference between the institution's present results and the expected and intended outcomes. (Thompson, Strickland & Gamble, 2008).

## **4- Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is also mentioned in the management literature as a strategy for comparing one institution to another. Benchmarking can be used to compare "best practices" and university evaluations and rankings side by side.

## **5- Priorities and programming**

According to Thompson, Strickland & Gamble (2008) Every three years, institutions should re-evaluate their strategic plans and make any revisions or mid-course corrections necessary to keep the university or college on pace to meet corporate goals. All of these things individually and collectively make up the mixture of activities that design the course for tomorrow and guide the activities of today.

As mentioned before, strategic plan development is almost mandatory for most of organizations; however, the literature suggests that many organizations fail to successfully implement the strategic plan (George et al., 2019; Rajasekar, 2014; Harvard Business Review, 2022). Next section evaluates the possible reasons behind the strategic plan implementation failure and evaluates the factors needed for successful implementation.

## **2.2 Strategic Plan Implementation**

Effective strategic plan implementation is crucial as it enables the organizations to make more well-informed decisions and tend to outperform the organizations that are not committed to strategic planning and implementation (Rojas-Arce et al. 2012). Meta-analysis by George et al. (2019) on 31 empirical studies confirmed the significant positive effect of strategic plan development and implementation on business performance. However, despite knowing the importance of strategic planning, many organizations fail to pay sufficient attention at the implementation stage. According to Rajasekar (2014), around 50 percent to 80 percent of the strategic plans fail at the implementation stage. Harvard Business Review (2022) also found that approximately 60 percent to 90 percent of strategic plans never fully launch.

Considering these statistics, it is important to explore the reasons behind the strategic plan implementation failure. The literature highlights some common reasons why organizations struggle to implement their strategic plans (Rojas-Arce et al. 2012). For instance, Falqueto et al. (2020) considered a lack of leadership commitment as a core reason for the strategic plan implementation failure. Poor communication is another hurdle to successful implementation, as effective implementation requires strong stakeholder engagement and communication at all levels (Falqueto et al., 2020).

Many organizations lack sufficient resources to implement the plan, while others struggle with internal behavioral resistance to change. Inadequate monitoring of progress and a lack of accountability also lead to many promising strategic plans failing (Lingren, 2023). Maleka (2014) highlights that for a manager, it is vital to understand what makes a strong strategy and how it shapes the future of a team or organization. When creating a strategy, managers are essentially plotting a path for the years ahead. The true value lies in the thoughtful questions and answers generated during the process, as strategy is a high-level plan to attain goals in uncertain conditions. Another study by Teixeira and Carvalho (2018) explored the barriers to strategy implementation and found that around 9 out of 10 companies fail at the strategy implementation phase.

The study highlighted four key barriers to strategy implementation. The first is the vision barrier. According to Teixeira and Carvalho (2018), only 5 percent of the workforce fully understands the strategy, which reflects the lack of effective communication and collaboration during the planning and implementation phases. Moreover, only 25 percent of the managers receive the incentives linked to successful strategy implementation, showing the people barrier. The management barrier is reflected in the fact that 85 percent of executive teams do not spend adequate time (less than an hour per month) discussing the strategy. Lastly, the resource barrier is reflected in the fact that 60 percent of the organizations do not allocate sufficient budget for strategy implementation (Teixeira & Carvalho, 2018). These research findings are summarized in the following figure:



FIGURE 3: BARRIERS TO STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

**Source:** Teixeira & Carvalho (2018)

Although the literature reports a high strategy implementation failure rate, but mostly, the reported evidence is mostly fragile and fragmented, indicating the need for more context-specific research to explore the strategic planning and implementation aspects in a particular context (Teixeira & Carvalho, 2018). Review of the literature highlights some studies that explored the determinants of strategy plan implementation. For instance, Elbanna and Fadol (2016) conducted a case study on the UAE to explore the implementation of strategic plans in emerging economies. Based on a survey of 67 organizations, the study found strategic management as a central practice and noticed the widespread use of balanced scorecards to measure and manage the progress to achieve strategic objectives across varied perspectives (Elbanna & Fadol, 2016).

Another research by Elbanna (2009) explored the determinants of strategic planning effectiveness. Interestingly, Elbanna (2009) found that, unlike developed economies, the effective

implementation of a strategic plan does not depend on management participation but is primarily determined by corporate control, company size, and strategic planning practice. Irungu and Mutie (2014) surveyed 69 Kenyan church commissioners and found that implementation effectiveness depends on multifaceted factors, including- top leadership support, organizational culture, a proactive attitude towards technology adoption, active involvement of stakeholders at the planning stage, a sense of ownership among all stakeholders, and possession of unique resources (Irungu & Mutie, 2014).

A related study by Onyango (2015) explored the determinants of strategy implementation in Kenyan public universities. Based on a survey with 205 respondents in Kenyan Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, the study found that other than stakeholder involvement at the planning phase, staff empowerment, fair resource allocation, and hiring communication experts are needed for successful strategy implementation in Kenyan academic institutions. Omuse et al. (2018) conducted research on Kenyan public education institutions. Based on a survey of 13 Kenyan universities, Omuse et al. (2018) found technology-driven innovation, effective communication channels, financial support, and strong leadership as key factors that enhance the effectiveness of strategic planning implementation. Recent research by Mukabi (2022) surveyed 401 Kenyan secondary schools and found that strategy implementation failure occurs for various reasons, including- untrained school managers, inadequate stakeholder involvement, resource constraints, and ineffective leadership style that does not match the firms' strategic priorities.

Overall, the literature review highlighted various factors that influence the strategy implementation, including- top leadership commitment, effective communication, adequate financial and human resources, stakeholder involvement, organizational culture, a proactive

attitude towards technology, and an appropriate leadership style that is linked with strategic priorities. The literature findings are summed up in the following diagram:

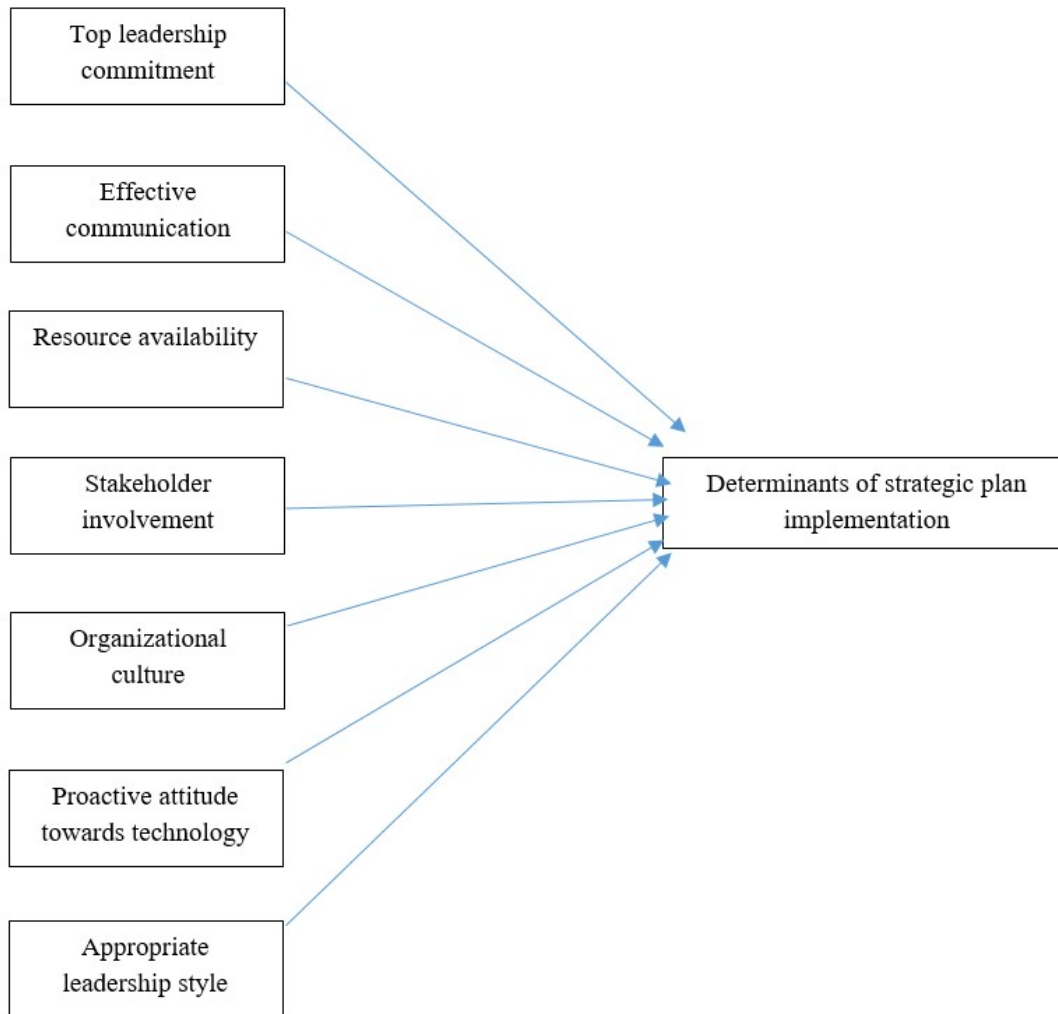


FIGURE 4: SELF-DRAWN (MAPPING VARIABLES) BASED ON OVERALL ANALYSIS

After getting a general understanding of factors that determine strategic plan implementation effectiveness, the next section now discusses the strategic planning dynamics in the higher education context.



### **2.3 Strategic Plan Evaluation**

Strategy evaluation is a critical process within organizations that involves assessing the effectiveness of the strategies in place. This evaluation can be approached in different ways. In some cases, organizations may choose to handle it as a high-level task. They might engage external consultants to provide an objective assessment of their strategies. However, more commonly, strategy evaluation is an integrated part of an organization's regular activities, entailing ongoing assessments to ensure that the strategies are on track. Organizations that can critically reflect on their strategies, identify strengths and weaknesses, and adapt as necessary are more likely to achieve better performance. In essence, the capacity to engage in self-appraisal and the ability to learn and adapt are key factors in successful strategy evaluation and, by extension, achieving strategic success (Rumelt, 1998).

The term "evaluation" is undergoing a change in its primary definition. Wilson (1997) suggests that evaluation now integrally includes a monitoring process, with assessments typically taking place during the middle and end stages of the implementation process. In the context of higher education, the implementation phase of planning certainly demands monitoring to ensure it can effectively address the expected challenges and opposition within colleges and universities (Chance & Williams, 2009). Assessing strategic planning to promote economic growth acts as a link between the business and nonprofit sectors (Piorun, 2011). Researchers now employ various evaluation techniques, encompassing both conventional financial metrics commonly used in the business world and innovative approaches that scale the plan's impact on the local community, which is an integral component of the evaluation process.

Chance & Williams (2009) indicate that self-assessment techniques are tools that prompt individuals or organizations to reflect on their position, strengths, and weaknesses. By conducting effective self-assessment, they can better understand their position and chart a path that aligns with their long-term goals and objectives. This process allows them to make deliberate choices that are consistent with their vision for the future, fostering a sense of purpose and identity. While Goodwin & Wright (2001) stated that strategy evaluation is a critical stage in the strategic management process, as it involves assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of a strategy once it has been implemented. This evaluation process is essential not only for understanding how well a strategy is performing but also for identifying areas of improvement and potential modifications.

Rumelt (1979) highlights the critical nature of strategy evaluation and the need for a meticulous and rigorous approach. Strategies often involve multiple components and considerations, and even if most aspects seem promising, a single major flaw can jeopardize the entire strategy's success. As a result, he suggests that evaluating a strategy should be similar to testing a hypothesis in scientific research. It involves systematically scrutinizing each element of the strategy, looking for weaknesses or vulnerabilities that, if unaddressed, could lead to undesirable outcomes.

A later study conducted by Rumelt (1998), indicates that many executives view strategy evaluation through a somewhat simplified lens. They tend to focus on tangible outcomes and key performance indicators to measure the success of a strategy. In essence, they look at factors like growth in market share, revenue, and profitability to determine the effectiveness of their strategic decisions. Acur, & Englyst (2006) discussed a different approach to strategy assessment by combining three different methods: the goal-centric approach, the comparative approach, and the

improvement approach. This combination creates a comprehensive framework for reflecting on the process of formulating a strategy. Each of these three approaches offers a unique perspective on strategy development and evaluation.

Gupta (2008) referred to the fact that premier institutions are engaged in providing outstanding products to patients and other stakeholders. The purpose of the author's research on the topic was to understand the concept of excellence through the product offered and to identify effective approaches to creating a model, that is, to take the product to the next level. The clinics' managers pinpoint areas where they thrive. Allison and Kaye (2011) report when weaknesses are detected, the institution must use its strengths to overcome them. This predicament frequently arises when there is an opportunity to grow. However, the owners and managers must use creative solutions to everyday difficulties. Again, the scorecard is an excellent tool for identifying the organization's true shortcomings. A comparison of goals and performance is an excellent technique to detect flaws; healthcare organizations that are unable to meet specified goals on a consistent basis require considerable restructuring. (White & Griffith, 2010).

## **2.4 Strategic Planning in Higher Education**

The effectiveness of strategic planning in higher education is debated in the literature. The proponents emphasize its positive association with the institutions' performance (Owolabi and Makinde, 2012; Kolade et al., 2018; Yigit et al., 2003; Al-Omari and Salameh, 2009), while critics argue over strategic planning's rigidity and alignment issues (Hall and Lulich, 2021; Ozdem, 2011; Hinton, 2012; Dooris et al. 2004). This section presents both sides of the debate to understand the value of strategic planning for higher education institutions.

Taking an example from empirical literature, Owolabi and Makinde (2012) conducted research on Babcock University and focused on examining the effect of strategic planning on firm performance in higher education. Based on a survey with 287 employees, Owolabi and Makinde (2012) found a significant positive relationship between strategic planning and firm performance. The study proposed the following strategic planning framework in the higher education context:

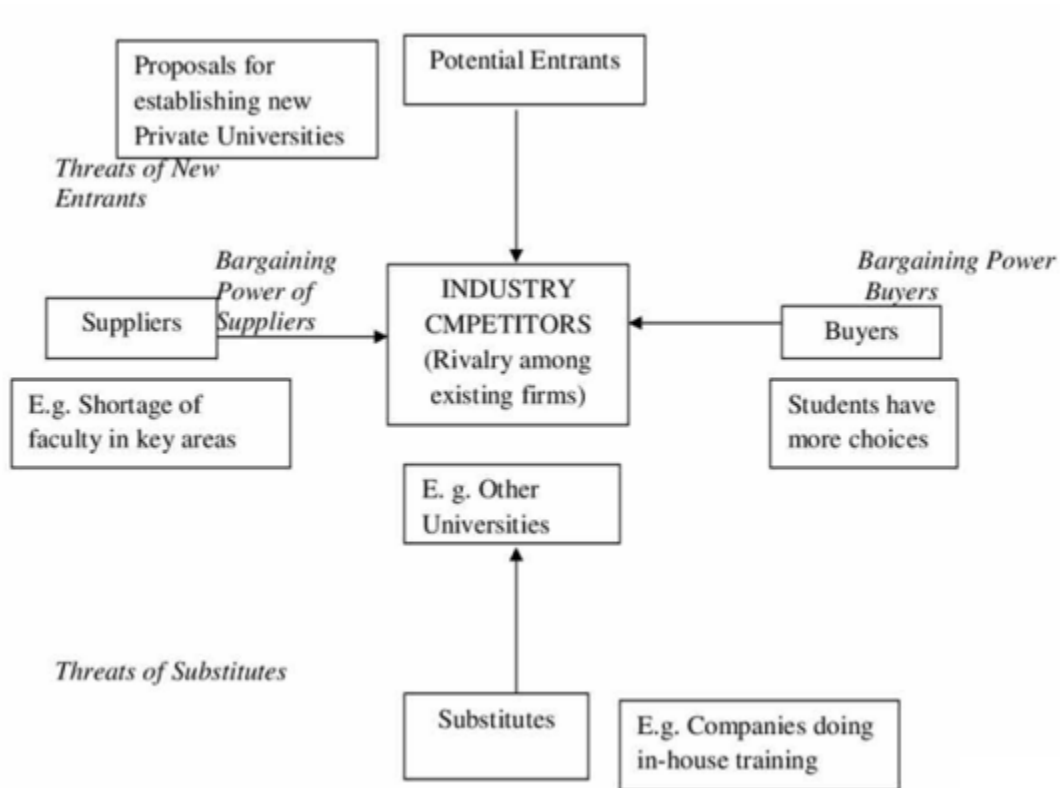


FIGURE 5: STRATEGIC PLANNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

**Source:** Owolabi and Makinde (2012)

Effective strategic planning enhances the higher education institutions' competitive positioning in the market. Owolabi and Makinde's (2012) findings gained validation from Kolade et al. (2018), who conducted research on the Nigerian university. Alike Owolabi and Makinde (2012), Kolade et al. (2018) also found a strong positive correlation between strategic planning

and universities' performance, highlighting the need to invest time and resources in strategic planning to achieve the performance objectives in the higher education industry. Owolabi and Makinde (2012) and Kolade et al. (2018) - both focused on overall strategic planning and management concepts while analyzing its performance-related effectiveness. Previous research by Yigit et al. (2003) specifically focused on the importance of the SWOT framework (a strategic planning tool) and found that the effective utilization of this tool can bring significant enhancement to engineering education in Kuwaiti universities.

Al-Omari and Salameh (2009) explored the strategic planning effectiveness in Jordanian universities from academic administrators and faculty members' perspectives. Based on a survey with 338 faculty members and 183 academic administrators, Al-Omari and Salameh (2009) found that strategic planning effectiveness largely depends on the depth of strategy implementation. Support from both faculty and administration is crucial to achieving desired outcomes. The study also highlighted the need for better knowledge dissemination and improved collaboration to make strategic planning successful in the context of post-secondary education reforms in Jordan. However, in partial disagreement with Al-Omani and Salameh (2009), Hall and Lulich (2021) contended that while universities focus on transformation, entrepreneurship, and innovation in their strategic plans, the strategic plan document usually does not fully convey a bold vision for restructuring to support disruptive innovation. Rather, these documents (strategic plans) just encourage incremental change through technology adoption while maintaining the traditional organizational structure. Therefore, the strategic plans may not always be effective in driving actual innovation (Hall & Lulich, 2021).

Ozdem's (2011) study provides validation for Hall and Lulich's (2021) arguments. By analyzing the strategic plans, vision, and mission statements of 72 public universities, Ozdem (2011) found a common theme in the published vision and mission statements. Mostly, the universities emphasized their research functions and their commitment to offer education to a qualified workforce. A crucial aspect that was missing in the strategic plans was originality. The strategic plans were standardized and lacked motivation, credibility, and action (Ozdem, 2011).

Many universities failed to reflect the regional context in their mission statements. Moreover, visions were mostly focused on improving the current state rather than enhancing the future state. All these factors limit the effectiveness of strategic plans and limit their use in driving innovation in times of uncertainty (Ozdem, 2011). However, Akyel et al. (2012) somehow disagreed with Hall and Lulich (2021) and Ozdem (2011) by finding out that strategic plans offer valuable guidance in times of uncertainty. Akyel et al. (2012) conducted qualitative case study research to explore the significance of strategic planning in higher education, taking Sakarya University as a case example. The case study findings revealed that strategic planning has gained paramount importance in higher education, particularly in response to the changing educational landscape. Effective strategic planning improves efficiency, quality, and responsiveness to changing societal demands (Akyel et al. 2012).

Taking the developing countries' perspective, Ofori and Atiogbe (2012) validated Akyel et al.'s (2012) findings by conducting research in three public Ghanaian universities. The findings revealed that the form, sophistication, and nature of information and communication technology use determined the ability to effectively implement strategic plans in two universities. In the third university, the staff members considered strategic planning as a key responsibility of top

management, and therefore, little commitment and ownership were demonstrated by academics and other key stakeholders (Ofori & Atiogbe, 2012).

Taking some real examples of universities that benefited from strategic planning, Arif and Hegazy (2020) conducted case study research on Jouf University and found that the university places a strong emphasis on strategic planning and implementation. It has a well-defined strategic plan that aligns with the national development goals. Both- teachers and admin staff have shared perceptions of strategic planning importance (Arif & Hegazy, 2020). Effective strategic planning has played an important role in improving decision-making, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and driving the university's growth and success (Arif & Hegazy, 2020). Immordino et al. (2016) present another example of a state university that benefited from effective strategic planning by disseminating organizational information and encouraging the stakeholders' participation in the achievement of organizational goals. However, the strategic planning effectiveness relied on the regular monitoring and tracking of the progress after implementation (Immordino et al. 2016).

Sirat's (2010) research into the Malaysian higher education industry highlighted some challenges that are specific to the higher education industry. Sirat (2010) commented that universities struggle with the complex interplay between state-centric and neo-liberal models while developing strategic plans. It reflects their struggle to balance the desire for autonomy (as reflected in international strategic management models) with the economic and political uncertainties that limit autonomy (Sirat, 2010). These findings highlight the need to understand the intricate dynamics that higher education institutions face while developing and implementing strategic plans and striving for autonomy in specific national contexts.

The above findings largely discuss the effectiveness of strategic plans in the higher education context. However, there is some criticism of the application of strategic planning in higher education institutions. For instance, Dooris et al. (2004) asserted that although strategic planning offers a comprehensive approach encompassing governance, budgeting, and a wide array of strategic considerations, and when effectively executed, it advances the institution's vision. However, on the other side, some critics consider strategic planning a mere management fad and criticize the rigidity of the approach that separates planning from execution (Gordon & Fischer, 2015).

Hinton (2012) agreed by contending that traditional strategic planning is overly mechanical, as it oversimplifies the external environment, and is therefore not adequate to capture to nuances of a dynamic environment. Academic institutions have deeply ingrained cultures, and implementing a strategic plan could lead to pushback and resistance from staff and faculty when it conflicts with cultural values (Dooris et al., 2004). In some cases, the strategic planning process is bogged down by extensive paperwork, consuming valuable resources that could be spent on actual plan implementation. Misalignment of strategic plans with the institutional vision is another reason that critics present while discussing the relevance of strategic plans in the higher education context (Dooris et al. 2004).

There is a gap in the literature on the importance of institutions having a defined strategic goal. Without a clear emphasis on what the business is attempting to achieve in light of a clearly articulated goal and vision, executives are compelled to make decisions about the future based only on precedent, which may hinder efforts at culture management. Sustainable natural resource management, adequate provision for an aging population, accommodating new generations of



college-educated, middle-class working adults, and establishing a new set of ethical standards in the face of emerging digital technologies and a global economy are among the new societal challenges of the twenty-first century. (Murphy, 2002). These challenges impact higher education significantly, as society expects these institutions to take a leading role in tackling these issues. The response from higher education institutions should align with core areas of emphasis, as highlighted by Murphy (2002). This involves ensuring that graduates possess the skills required to be valuable contributors in the evolving digital and global economies.

Despite this criticism, strategic planning is still popular in higher education institutions, and a flexible, detailed, and well-aligned strategic plan can guide the universities navigate through the complex external environmental challenges. The research identified limited studies on strategic planning in higher education within Arab countries, with a specific limitation of research focused on Qatar. This gap in the existing literature is the focal point that the current study plans to address and contribute to by exploring strategic planning practices in the context of higher education in Qatar. Next section discusses the strategic planning aspects in the context of medical education.

## **2.5 Strategic Planning in Medical Education**

Strategic planning in medical education involves systematic processes to address the challenges and opportunities in the healthcare learning environment (Gordon et al. 2000). When effectively implemented, strategic plans optimize clinical teaching, equip healthcare learners with the necessary skills, and enhance the efficiency of the healthcare education system by accelerating innovation and technology adoption (Gordon et al., 2000; Schwartzstein et al., 2008). Gordon et al. (2000) discussed the importance of strategic planning in medical education. By applying the SWOT framework in the medical education context, Gordon et al. (2000) identified four key issues

that medical education institutions must consider to keep pace with change: educational institutions should make sure that the clinical teachers fully understand the learning process, learners are equipped with the necessary skills, learning resources are optimized, and information technology is effectively leveraged to drive efficiency.

Schwartzstein et al. (2008) presented another example showing how strategic planning brings improvement to clinical education. Based on a comprehensive self-study, Schwartzstein et al. (2008) studied how strategic planning was used as a tool to address the erosion of clinical training. Effective strategic planning improved the inter-departmental programs, enhanced financial transparency, motivated the faculty, and accelerated innovation. The case study findings show how strategic planning can be used as a transformative tool to bring excellence to medical education. Hamdy and Anderson (2006) present another example showing the value of strategic planning in medical education. Hamdy and Anderson (2006) analyzed the strategic planning effectiveness in the College of Medicine and medical sciences at Arabian Gulf University. The visionary leadership, strategic alliance, and proactive attitude towards adopting innovative educational approaches enabled the AGU to take the lead in medical education in the Gulf region.

The case study highlights how strategic planning enabled the AGU to develop a clear vision, collaborate with regional and international partners, and adopt supportive leadership to develop and advance medical education programs in inter-governmental and multi-cultural contexts (like the Gulf region).

Deas et al. (2012) explored how the Medical University of South Carolina benefited by implementing the strategic plan. The university's strategic plan integrated the college's strategic vision, which resulted in a significant increase in the underrepresented in-medicine students and

faculty in leadership positions. The study underscored that a strategic plan, backed by the stakeholders' commitment, can address the disparities and contribute to a more diverse and inclusive medical workforce. Nurakynova (2018) conducted research on medical education institutions in Kazakhstan and concluded that strategic planning has the potential to help medical universities align with international best governance practices. Considering the evolving situation, traditional governance models are losing their effectiveness in achieving the desired objectives. It makes strategic planning a valuable tool to adapt to the changing environment. In agreement with Nurakynova (2018), studies like Deas et al. (2012) and Levinson and Axler (2007) also considered strategic planning an effective way for medical colleges and universities to improve their prestige, gain global recognition, and strengthen their competitive positioning in the realms of research and education. Bin Abdulrahman & Saleh (2015) conducted a comprehensive study on the establishment of a new medical college in Saudi Arabia. This study represents a unique endeavor in the Kingdom, providing valuable insights. Key findings include the importance of thorough planning, adherence to timelines, iterative testing, engagement of the community, prospective students, and faculty, and resource allocation. They emphasized that the new medical college should directly address the healthcare needs of the community and region, increase the supply of qualified, compassionate physicians committed to local practice, and elevate the academic standing of its affiliated university.

The study discovered limited research on strategic planning in medical education across Arab countries, particularly with a notable absence of studies concentrated on Qatar. This identified gap in the available literature is the central focus that the current research aims to bridge and enhance by delving into the strategic planning practices specific to medical education in Qatar.

## **2.6 Strategic Planning in Arab Countries**

In the contemporary business landscape, characterized by intense competition and dynamic changes, the demand for strategic planning has escalated significantly. This trend is evident not solely in Western nations but is also pervasive across diverse countries globally. The widespread adoption of strategic planning is a global phenomenon that transcends geographical boundaries. A research undertaken by Khan & Buarki (1992) in Bahrain, encompassing 47 firms, demonstrated that the predominant tools utilized in strategic planning included financial analysis and SWOT analysis. Subsequently, gap and SPACE analysis were also commonly employed. They have added that the gap between strategic management theory and practice is attributed to a lack of familiarity with tools and techniques, hindering line managers from fully utilizing them. This limited usage stems from their insufficient working knowledge of available tools and challenges in evaluating associated costs and benefits. Similarly, the research conducted by Aldehayyat and Anchor (2008) in Jordan emphasizes a significant observation concerning the misalignment between managers' awareness and the practical implementation of strategy tools. The acknowledgment of these tools by managers signifies potential untapped benefits. The recommendation for specialized training is reasonable, as it addresses the identified gap and provides a practical solution for improving strategic management practices within the organizations.

A study by Elbanna (2010) representing one of the initial investigations into strategic planning practices in the Arab region, furnishes a comprehensive profile of organizations operating in the UAE. The findings indicate that, overall, there are limited substantial distinctions between public and private entities, as well as between small and large organizations. Furthermore, the research identifies a positive correlation between managerial levels and the extent of involvement in the strategic planning process. However, organizations sampled exhibit minimal reliance on

external consultants during the strategic planning phase. The absence of external management consultants is deemed a notable weakness that compromises the efficacy of the strategic planning process. This underscores a potential area for improvement in enhancing the strategic planning practices within the studied organizations.

A later study by Elbanna (2013) concluded the effective utilization of strategic management processes in UAE public organizations, emphasizing their positive orientation toward classical strategic management practices. The identified factors contributing to this success highlight the importance of resource availability and supportive leadership. This positive state of strategic management bodes well for the continued growth and development of strategic practices in the context of UAE public organizations.

Hussaini (2019) study empirically examines the impact of strategic planning components in business management on financial practices in Kuwait. The study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted impact of strategic planning elements on various aspects of business performance. The positive correlation between a meaningful business mission and external project financing, as well as the safeguarding of business assets through mission-aligned planning, underscores the strategic importance of clarity and purpose. In addition, the positive role of team collaboration in shaping financial budgets aligns with the recognized benefits of collective decision-making.

A study carried out in Qatar by Al-Hashimi et al (2022) involving 38 institutions within the public sector underscores the crucial role of well-designed and efficient implementation procedures in positively influencing the outcomes of strategic decisions. The findings also offer empirical support for the significance of enhancing implementation processes to elevate the quality

of strategic decision-making . The research conducted in Qatar highlights that organizations could enhance the effectiveness of their strategic decision-making by focusing on the development and refinement of robust implementation processes.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is primarily qualitative in nature and focuses on conducting interviews with faculty members at the College of Medicine. The primary data collection method is semi-structured interviews, designed to extract rich insights and plots from faculty members who play an essential role in the academic sector of the College. The interviews will be conducted using several questions divided into three sections, allowing participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and reflections on the College's strategic planning processes. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study will dig deeply into the subjective experiences and perceptions of faculty members. Their insights will not only provide an understanding of the strategic planning at the College but also offer practical recommendations for optimizing strategic planning processes in the context of healthcare education.

### **3.1 Research Design and Approach**

Research design serves as the roadmap for researchers, guiding them on how to approach data collection to achieve their research goals in a valid and efficient manner. The essence of research design lies in its ability to bridge the gap between a research problem or question and the data required for analysis, and the blueprint outlines how data will be gathered, organized, and analyzed. This structured approach ensures that the research is conducted systematically and consistently, reducing the chances of bias or error (Asenahabi, 2019). A well-crafted research design minimizes costs by streamlining the data collection process. It helps researchers make informed decisions about the most efficient methods, tools, and techniques to employ.

In this research, the primary focus is on examining the formation of the first-ever strategic plan within a newly established medical institution. The purpose is to gain insights into how this institution navigated the complex process of strategic planning from inception to execution. This

involves a detailed investigation of the steps taken, decisions made, and factors considered during the formulation of their strategic plan. To achieve this, the research employs a single case study approach, which involves a deep dive into a specific organization or institution. By choosing a single case, the study can thoroughly explore the unique circumstances, challenges, and strategies employed by this particular medical institution. Descriptive research methods will be utilized to provide a comprehensive and detailed explanation of the strategic planning process.

The discourse concerning case studies and the comparative advantages of qualitative and quantitative research methods has been a topic of discussion across various academic fields (Brown, 2008). In the realm of sociology, Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) regarded case studies as an immensely valuable and significant approach for the analysis of social phenomena. The use of case studies as a primary research method has frequently faced criticism for producing findings that may not be as broadly applicable as those obtained through large-scale quantitative methods (Tsang, 2014). This criticism highlights the trade-off between the depth of understanding gained through case studies and the ability to make sweeping generalizations that quantitative methods might offer. As with any qualitative research, scholars employing the qualitative description approach must maintain a strong focus on ensuring the study's reliability and credibility. They should also offer readers reflective insights into how they meticulously managed their research approach and methodology (Turale, 2020). This transparency serves to boost the credibility and dependability of research outcomes, a crucial aspect given the subjective nature of qualitative research.

Selecting the most appropriate approach to answer specific research questions is crucial for obtaining meaningful and insightful results. In this case study, interviews have been identified as the optimal method in addition to collecting several documents from CMED leadership to help



with the analysis. Interviews involve interacting with participants in a manner allowing for an exploration of their viewpoints, experiences and insights. The incorporation of research into intervention studies has garnered attention across various academic fields. By integrating research into intervention studies researchers can develop comprehensive and contextually relevant interventions that had better align with the needs and preferences of the target population. Pathak, Jena, and Kalra (2013) highlighted that qualitative research complements quantitative methods by providing a deeper understanding of the "how" and "why" behind the data, shedding light on the human experiences and social dynamics that quantitative data alone cannot fully capture.

### **3.2 Data Collection**

It is critical to distinguish between primary and secondary data in research and data analysis. Primary data is information gathered directly for a study investigation. Data gathered by researchers using procedures comparable to surveys, interviews, experiments, or observations. This type of data is suited to the needs of the investigation. When addressing specific research topics, it is frequently regarded as the most dependable source (Rabianski, 2003). Secondary data refers to the information that was initially collected by individuals or organizations for their own purposes. While this data may not have been gathered specifically for the research project it can still provide insights.

Secondary data is particularly beneficial when conducting analysis such as market research as it takes into account a range of real estate factors (Rabianski, 2003). While primary data is collected specifically for a research study, secondary data is pre-existing information obtained from multiple published sources. Both data sets have distinct advantages and applications in real estate analysis and research.

In pursuit of a comprehensive understanding of the college's strategic planning procedure, the research investigation initiated with a series of interviews. These interviews involved engaging with several members from College of Medicine. These individuals encompass the college's leadership team along with other faculty members. It is noteworthy that the leadership team have played integral roles in the inception and formulation of the college's strategic plan since its inception. Through these interviews, the researcher focuses to uncover not only the practical aspects of strategic planning but also the decision-making, challenges, and considerations that have informed the development of the college's strategic roadmap from its inception. The purpose of these interviews was to gather insights, opinions, and information directly from these key stakeholders. This qualitative data collection method allows for a deeper understanding of the strategic planning process, as it provides the opportunity for participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and knowledge. The interviews would have enabled the researchers to explore issues, challenges, successes, and areas for improvement in the research or case study within the organization or context being studied (Njie &Asimiran, 2014). Overall, conducting interviews with key members involved in strategic planning is a valuable data collection approach, as it provides firsthand information and allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the strategic planning process.

To start the research and gain a deeper understanding of the college's strategic planning process, a series of well-thought-out questions were addressed to the participants. Each interview session had a duration of approximately 20 to 30 minutes. During this time, series of questions were addressed to the participants. These questions were carefully designed to cover various aspects related to the strategic planning process. The questions most likely covered both historical

or past strategic planning attempts as well as continuing or present ones. The interview was divided into three distinct sections as following.:

- 1- Exploring the Strategic Planning Journey of the College
- 2- Exploring Critical Aspects of the Strategic Planning Process
- 3- Exploring the New Strategic Plan

In the first section, the focus was on exploring into the early stages and the practical aspects that played a crucial role in the creation of the initial college strategic plan. This part aimed to uncover the foundational steps that set the strategic planning process in motion. It involved inquiries about the key decisions and considerations that contributed to the development of the first plan. Moving on to the second section, the interview shifted its attention to the challenges encountered during the implementation of the aforementioned strategic plan. This section try to find the obstacles, setbacks, and hurdles that emerged while translating the strategic vision into action. By exploring these challenges, the interview aimed to gain insights into the practical difficulties that arise in the execution of a strategic plan.

The third and final section of the interview centered on the ongoing process of formulating a new strategic plan for the college. Here, the interview focused on understanding the steps, methodologies, and objectives involved in the development of this new plan. In addition, to gain insights into the forward-looking objectives and aspirations that the college aims to realize through the implementation of the new strategic plan. Overall, this structured interview approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the college's strategic planning journey, encompassing its inception, implementation challenges, and future aspirations. Each section provided valuable insights into different phases of the strategic planning process. These conversations explored deep

into these aspects, offering a broad outlook on the strategic planning procedure as viewed from multiple angles within the college's leadership team. The samples of interview data is illustrated in the following Table 1.

No. of interviews	Duration	Department
Interview 1	20 min	Dean office- Basic Medical Science
Interview 2	20 min	Academic Affairs office
Interview 3	21 min	Population Medicine
Interview 4	18 min	Clinical Education
Interview 5	25 min	Pre- Clinical Education
Interview 6	30 min	Basic Medical Science
Interview 7	24 min	Academic Affairs office
Interview 8	22 min	Academic Affair office

TABLE 1. INTERVIEWS DATA

### 3.3 Ethical Reflection

Prior to distributing the consent form and conducting interviews with the participants, an ethical approval application request was initially sent to for the review of Qatar University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval request included all the information and consent forms required for this study. Accordingly, the interview questions used in this study were granted ethical approval number QU-IRB 1977-EA/23. To comply with ethical considerations, several steps were taken as following:

- Initially, participants received an overview of the nature and concept of the study.
- Two consent forms were provided, one addressing general information about the study and the other seeking permission for audio recording.
- The discussions were accurately examined and scripted to prevent the dissemination of any misleading information

### **3.4 Consent**

To participate in this research, participants were required to provide voluntary consent. Before conducting interviews, two consent letters were given to all participants, ensuring they were well-informed about the study procedures and structure. They had the opportunity to confirm their understanding and were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any point without facing consequences. Additionally, participants were given the option to grant permission for audio recording of the interview or to take notes instead.

All interviews were conducted with an assurance of anonymity. The researcher clearly assured participants that their names would not be disclosed in the paper. Instead, references would be made to the duration of the interview and the department to protect their confidentiality. This commitment aimed to create a secure environment for open and honest communication and discussion during the interviews.

### **3.5 Confidentiality**

Participants were informed that the information gathered during the interviews would be used solely for the purposes of this study. All collected data and information has been securely kept and archived in a location accessible only to the researcher. This safety measure assures secrecy and restricted access to research data, protecting participants' privacy and conforming to ethical standards.

## CHAPTER 4: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

In the empirical case study, the primary objective is to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of the findings related to the strategic planning processes within the College of Medicine. This includes an in-depth exploration of not only the initial strategic planning endeavors but also the processes currently underway as the College creates new strategic plan. The study investigates into the various aspects of strategic planning, encompassing the development, execution, evaluation and impact of these plans.

### **4.1 The development of Strategic Plan (2019-2022)**

In their pursuit of formulating an effective strategic plan, the recently established college sought to enrich their strategic planning knowledge. To achieve this, they embarked on a collaborative journey with the Office of Strategy Planning at Qatar University in year 2017/2018. This endeavor was marked by a series of in-depth workshops and extensive meetings, all centered on formulating a strategic plan of College of Medicine. The college actively engaged with the Qatar University strategy team, eagerly participating in numerous workshops organized by them. This collaborative initiative evolved through several well-defined phases, facilitating the extraction of crucial insights and knowledge. Consequently, these interactions enabled the college to pinpoint and establish the fundamental elements that would shape their strategic plan. The guidance and expertise derived from this collaborative exchange empowered the college to craft a strategic plan tailored to its unique requirements and aspirations, drawing inspiration from Qatar University's strategic team experience in the field. Tapinos, Dyson & Meadows (2005) defined strategic planning as a multifaceted process involving several well-thought-out steps. Its primary objective is to create a portfolio of strategies that are harmonious with the organization's overarching goals, ultimately guiding the organization toward its intended direction

In the pursuit of developing their strategic plan, the college actively participated in a series of comprehensive workshops facilitated by the Qatar University's Office of Strategy Planning. These workshops effectively guided the college in the process of creating their strategic plan, providing detailed insights on the essential components required to formulate a strategic plan from its foundational stages. Throughout this collaborative endeavor, the college meticulously identified key strategic focal points. They assessed their existing assets, articulated their expectations, and outlined their plans for the future, ensuring alignment with key performance indicators (KPIs). The resulting strategic plan, while not built entirely from scratch, underwent a formalization process to enhance its structure and effectiveness. Moreover, it was emphasized that the strategic plan of the College of Medicine should align with Qatar University's overarching strategic plan, rather than exist as an isolated entity.

The process of aligning the college's strategic plan with that of Qatar University posed a significant challenge. This alignment necessitated the incorporation of numerous elements mandated by Qatar University into the college's strategic plan. During this endeavor, the responsibility for communication and coordination fell to a designated focal point within the college, responsible for engaging with various departments within the institution. Furthermore, this role extended to liaising with external stakeholders, including entities like Hamad Medical Corporation, the wider healthcare facility network, and the Primary Health Care Center. The primary objective was to bridge any existing gaps and ensure a seamless alignment with the overarching vision and mission of Qatar University. This aspect of alignment with Qatar University was notably intricate and presented a significant challenge. Subsequently, when the formalization and unification of the strategic plan of the Health Cluster took place, it appeared to

be a comparatively more manageable task in contrast to the prior alignment efforts with Qatar University.

During the development phase, it became evident that the strategic plan highlighted tasks and objectives that were either unachievable or not directly applicable within the context of Qatar. In the initial stages, the College of Medicine, at its launch, aimed to align itself with benchmarks from other institutions. However, the practical implementation of these benchmarked processes revealed their lack of relevance or misalignment with the college's actual needs and expectations. To address this misalignment, a stage of modification and adaptation emerged. This stage allowed the necessary adjustments to tailor the strategic plan to the unique context of the College of Medicine. It involved making significant modifications to ensure alignment with the college's specific resources, stakeholders, and the distinct environment of Qatar, including its integration with Qatar University. These modifications were subsequently implemented to ensure that the strategic plan remained in sync with the college's actual requirements and circumstances.

In the course of discussions, one faculty member emphasized the critical initial step for the college, which entailed the formal definition of its vision and mission. This procedure involved the clear definition of the college's goals and intended accomplishments (mission), alongside the envisioning of its aspiration to attain recognition as a prominent and leading medical institution within the regional domain (vision). This strategic act of defining the mission and vision laid the solid groundwork upon which the college's strategic plan could be built. It provided a clear sense of purpose and direction for the institution as it embarked on its strategic planning journey.

Allison and Kaye (2011) highlighted that before diving into an environmental assessment analysis, leaders' managers and supporting staff must acquire information on historical



performance and current actions. An assessment of the environment (internal and external) can determine areas of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. To initiate the formulation of the college's strategic plan, a SWOT analysis was conducted under the supervision of the dean's office and his team, led this work. Based on the successful initial phase of establishment for College of Medicine and QU Health, the CMED Strategy for the period 2019-2022 has been developed as an integral component of Qatar University's overarching strategic plan. This strategic framework serves as the foundation for an ongoing process of strategic planning and monitoring within the College. The formulation of the CMED Strategy for 2019-2022 was built upon the achievements and insights gained over the preceding three years. It also takes into account a thorough analysis of the strategic context, considering its alignment with the broader QU Strategy and the Qatar National Vision 2030. The development of the CMED Strategy followed a participatory approach, involving faculty and staff members. In pursuit of a comprehensive strategic planning process, the College of Medicine adopted a well-structured methodology that combined both bottom-up and top-down approaches. This approach was meticulously designed to involve faculty and staff members at all levels, ensuring a broad spectrum of perspectives and expertise.

To gain a deeper insight into their initial strategy, the CMED management team conducted a thorough review of strategic plans implemented by other medical colleges both regionally and globally. This step was pivotal in establishing a benchmark for shaping their own strategic roadmap. Allisn and Kaye (2011) added that once background data is gathered, the next step would be to compare against a benchmark. By examining the strategies employed by similar institutions, CMED sought valuable insights and best practices to inform the development of their own strategic plan. This benchmarking process allowed them to draw from successful experiences and adapt

strategies that would be most relevant and effective in their unique context. It exemplifies their commitment to a well-informed and strategic approach to planning for the future.

The process initiated with a SWOT analysis workshop held in January 2018. This workshop was a pivotal moment in the strategic planning journey as it aimed to systematically identify the institution's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. In the business world, a frequent first step in strategic planning is to categorize internal and external factors. This process can be rapidly assembled and gains value from diverse perspectives, serving as an effective brainstorming tool (Helms & Nixon, 2010).

By analyzing these factors, CMED sought to gain a holistic understanding of its current state and the challenges it faced. This analysis served as a foundational step in defining the strategic challenges that would later be addressed in the strategic plan. Following the SWOT analysis, the CMED leadership team engaged in a top-down approach. In this phase, they thoroughly reviewed and discussed the outcomes of the workshop. This top-down approach was essential in translating the insights from the workshop into actionable strategic goals. Consequently, four high-level strategic goals, termed Key Performance Areas, were established. These encompassed critical domains, including student success, research initiatives, community outreach endeavors, and the overarching pursuit of institutional excellence. To further refine and operationalize these high-level strategic goals, CMED undertook a series of interviews and workshops with department heads. This iterative process, conducted between August and October 2018, was instrumental in translating the broad strategic objectives into actionable plans at the departmental level. It involved in-depth discussions and consensus building to ensure that each department's unique context and capabilities were considered in the formulation of strategic objectives and the development of action plans. In essence, this multifaceted approach to strategic planning, encompassing both

bottom-up and top-down perspectives, coupled with the involvement of various stakeholders, underscored CMED's commitment to a thorough and inclusive strategic planning process. It laid the groundwork for the subsequent implementation of the strategic plan, aligning the institution's goals and actions toward a more vibrant and impactful future. This plan was intentionally crafted to synchronize with the timeline of the college's inaugural graduating class in 2021.

#### **4.2 Implementation of the Strategic Plan (2019-2022)**

College of Medicine have concentrated on two main goals regarding implementing their strategic plan. The main areas of priority were teaching and research, managed primarily by the Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. These areas were prioritized for two key reasons. First, teaching is crucial for producing healthcare practitioners to meet Qatar's future healthcare workforce needs. Second, research is integral to the university's ranking, as it plays a vital role in determining university standings. Therefore, these were the two primary areas of focus for the college.

One of the fundamental objectives of the college has been to achieve accreditation right from its inception. Accreditation has consistently been a pivotal part of CMED plan. Throughout the college's journey, they have conducted several program evaluations aimed at assessing the implementation of their MD program. These evaluations have served as opportunities to make curriculum and assessment modifications as needed. There are primarily three key components of the evaluation process. First, the program evaluation. Second, CMED compiled a self-evaluation report, which is integral in the process. In addition to these evaluations, CMED continuously assess their courses and units to ensure their overall performance as a college is on track.

In terms of student outreach and recruitment, the college actively engaged with schools by conducting multiple school visits, including visits from schools with a science-oriented focus. There was also a reciprocal arrangement where schools visited the college. During these particular visits, a faculty member was tasked with providing information to the visiting students, with the goal of dragging their interest in the College of Medicine and explaining the programs they offer. The objective of these efforts extended beyond mere recruitment; it also aimed to retain students within the College of Medicine.

The mentorship program played a significant role in this regard. Through one-on-one interactions with students, mentors addressed students' concerns and uncertainties, fostering a sense of belonging and providing guidance. While academic advisors were available to assist students, the mentorship program offered an additional layer of support, contributing to student retention and reducing the likelihood of students transferring to other colleges. Importantly, this support was not limited to the first year but extended to students in other academic years as well.

The mentorship program at the College of Medicine is a comprehensive initiative involving all faculty members. In this program, each faculty member is assigned a group of 6 to 7 students, fostering close and personalized relationships. Faculty members are actively encouraged to initiate communication with their assigned students, engaging in discussions and providing essential guidance. This proactive approach serves a dual purpose; firstly, it aligns with the college's strategic goal of enhancing student performance. By offering tailored support, students are better equipped to excel academically and achieve their potential.

Moreover, the mentorship program contributes to the college's broader strategic objective of promoting student well-being. It is recognized that student well-being is a critical component

of their academic success and overall college experience. Hamilton et al (2019) stated that mentees acquired a more practical understanding of the work environment and potential career paths, along with crucial psychosocial support from their mentors. To further strengthen this aspect, the Health Cluster took an innovative step by appointing a well-being specialist several years ago. This specialist offers valuable consultation services to all five colleges within the Health Cluster, facilitating the advancement of well-being goals throughout the academic community. This strategic approach underscores the college's commitment to nurturing not only the academic development but also the holistic well-being of its students.

In pursuit of its strategic goals and objectives, the College of Medicine has established a series of significant agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with key stakeholders in Qatar. These vital partnerships encompass organizations such as Hamad Medical Corporation, Primary Healthcare Center, Sidra Hospital, Al Ahli Hospital, Aspetar, among others. These collaborative agreements play a pivotal role in enhancing the college's capacity to facilitate communication and outreach to further enrich the training experiences of its students during the clinical phase. Through these agreements, the college has achieved greater access and exposure to a diverse array of healthcare institutions. This, in turn, provides an invaluable opportunity for students to gain firsthand experience and knowledge within authentic healthcare settings. The partnerships underscore the college's commitment to not only academic excellence but also to the practical and real-world aspects of medical education. This holistic approach ensures that students are well-prepared for their future roles as healthcare professionals, aligning perfectly with the college's strategic objectives. These agreements have also played a pivotal role in compensating for the absence of an on-campus university hospital or college-associated medical facilities. In the context of this absence, these partnerships have proven to be instrumental. They provide students

with the vital exposure to real-world healthcare institutions, bridging the gap and serving as a practical extension of the college's academic environment.

The College aims to establish effective procedures for recognizing students' research potential and offering them suitable guidance and mentorship to engage in impactful, pioneering research in the field of medical and health sciences. This is intended to assist students in enhancing their research skills and acquiring valuable experiences that can shape their future growth. To implement these objectives, the college was committed to taking specific actions. Firstly, there was a focus on expanding the physical infrastructure to accommodate medical sciences teaching laboratory classes as part of the core curriculum. This expansion was crucial to facilitate an enriching learning experience. Additionally, the College planned to increase its workforce by recruiting additional research assistants and staff with a strong focus on laboratory methods. These professionals played a vital role in delivering practical skills and training to students, enabling the integration of research projects into the core curriculum. These measures aligned with the College's dedication to fostering a research-oriented educational environment.

#### **4.3 Evaluation of Strategic Plan (2019-2022)**

The results of the evaluation of the strategic plan based on Demir's framework is as follows:-

- **Analysis of the current situation**

The processes of evaluation, assessment, measurement, and validation play a crucial role in the dynamic nature of institutional planning (Tromp and Ruben, 2004). Strategic planning often involves values, vision, and mission statements, which are essential outcomes of strategic management. However, many educational leaders and practitioners are skeptical about their development and effectiveness. In institutional change strategies, they may struggle to understand

how these statements can actually drive progress, question their potential to bring stakeholders together, and resist their creation (Calder, 2014).

According to feedback from participants, the College of Medicine has effectively accomplished the majority of its objectives outlined in the 2019-2022 strategic plan. This success is evidenced by research outcomes and the performance of students, who have garnered positive reviews during their residency programs. Graduates from the College of Medicine are reportedly excelling in comparison to international peers, displaying a high level of competence and outperforming their counterparts.

The College recently underwent an accreditation process crucial for enhancing its international reputation and fostering growth. In October 2023, an accreditation team conducted a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of the College, with accreditation anticipated to be granted in early 2024. As part of the accreditation preparations, the College meticulously compiled an assessment report covering all aspects. This evaluation served as a benchmark to identify the institution's strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The insights gleaned from this assessment report have laid the groundwork for the initiation and development of the new strategic plan.

The 2019-2022 strategic plan has reached its conclusion, and the College is presently in the initial phases of formulating a new strategic plan set to commence in 2024. The development process is underway, and more in-depth insights into the ongoing discussions will be provided in Chapter Five.

- **Mission and policies**

The mission of CMED has been stated as below (QU, 2023).

- “To graduate physicians and future leaders for the Qatar healthcare sector who are competent, caring, compassionate and motivated with a strong sense of responsibility towards the health of the community”.
- “To foster excellence in education, research, creativity and innovation, and to contribute to finding solutions for the health needs of the country and the region”.
- “To advance the health of the nation by supporting the national health strategy and by adding strength to the existing healthcare system through integration and synergy”.
- “To build a culture of diversity that sustains an environment which attracts, nurtures and retains the highest quality students, faculty, staff and administration in the Qatar context”.

The first two points of the mentioned mission statement make it evident that CMED has a clear objective of producing capable and accountable physicians with a solid foundation that enables them to pursue various medical specialties. The third and fourth points of the mission statement are focused on social responsibility, aiming to produce physicians who are effectively prepared to address the healthcare requirements of the community, contribute to the development of Qatar's healthcare sector, offer solutions to the healthcare needs of the nation and the surrounding regions through research engagement, and ultimately enhance the overall well-being of the population. In higher education, mission statements convey the organization's central purpose rather than the means by which it accomplishes it. In order for an institution to be successful, its mission needs to achieve results for its customers (Calder, 2014).

Overall, these mission statements demonstrate a holistic approach to medical education, research, and community engagement. They highlight the college's dedication to producing competent and compassionate healthcare professionals, advancing knowledge and innovation, aligning with national health priorities, and nurturing a diverse and inclusive academic community.



- **Vision**

The vision of CMED has been stated as below (QU, 2023).

“To be a leading College of Medicine and College of choice for top students and local and international academics, a driving force for innovation across the national healthcare sector addressing core national challenges, and a secure source of high quality, trusted physicians for Qatar”.

This vision statement outlines the aspirations of the College of Medicine to excel in various areas. Firstly, it aims to establish itself as a leading institution in the field of medicine, setting high standards of excellence. Secondly, the vision emphasizes the goal of becoming the preferred choice for exceptional students and academics, both locally and internationally. Thirdly, the college aims to drive innovation within the national healthcare sector, actively addressing critical challenges that the country faces. Lastly, it highlights the importance of producing high-quality physicians who are trusted by the community and can contribute significantly to the healthcare needs of Qatar. A vision provides clear guidance by setting a direction and identifying a destination. It acts as a guiding star, illuminating the way as we navigate through the uncertain and unknown waters of the future (Wilson, 1992).

- **Strategic goals**

The College has established four primary strategic goals that align with the University's Key Performance Areas, which have been customized by the College leadership team to cater to the unique aspects of medical education and research. The four main goals will persist in the upcoming strategic plan, but certain objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will undergo modifications throughout the planning process. This adjustment aims to align the

strategic objectives more effectively with the evolving needs and aspirations of the College. The refinement process involves a careful review and adaptation of specific targets and indicators to ensure their continued relevance and contribution to the College's overarching mission and vision.

- **Strategic Goal 1:**

*Maximize student success in becoming competent physicians and future leaders by providing high quality education and training.*

QU Health, including College of Medicine, is preparing for an expected increase in student numbers and significant transformations in healthcare-related programs. These changes aim to equip graduates with the skills required by Qatar's evolving healthcare sector. To navigate these transitions successfully, CMED is implementing several strategies. Firstly, to address these changes, CMED has designed a multifaceted approach. This includes providing tailored professionalism training to instill essential skills in students and offering academic support services to assist them in their academic journey. Additionally, mentoring programs are being established to provide guidance and support. CMED is also collaborating with faculty members to enhance the curriculum through active and online learning, further emphasizing research-based education. In collaboration with QU Health and the QU Foundation Program, CMED is dedicated to enhancing the 'Common First Year Experience.' This program brings together students from all five colleges under QU Health, enabling increased collaboration and facilitating the possibility for students to transfer between colleges. Additionally, there is a plan to introduce a tailored support initiative for Foundation students, specifically tailored to those pursuing healthcare-related studies.

- **Strategic Goal 2:**

*Address contemporary healthcare challenges and advance knowledge through quality research.*

Qatar University is progressively intensifying its commitment to scientific research, with the College of Medicine fully dedicated to aligning with the university's objective of advancing excellence in research. While the initial phase of the College's establishment primarily focused on ensuring the readiness of its educational programs, there is now a strategic shift towards bolstering research infrastructure, a pivotal aspect of the institution's overall growth. Qatar University is in the process of amplifying its investment in scientific research, recognizing its vital role in achieving academic excellence. Within this broader context, the College of Medicine is wholeheartedly supporting the university's drive to foster research excellence. In the initial stages, the College's primary concern was to ensure the efficient operation of its educational programs. However, as part of its ongoing organizational development, there is now a deliberate shift in focus towards strengthening research infrastructure. This transformation reflects the College's commitment to becoming a hub of knowledge creation and dissemination, contributing not only to Qatar's healthcare sector but also to the global body of medical and scientific knowledge.

- **Strategic Goal 3:**

*Integrate CMED with the wider community within QU and externally.*

As a national institution dedicated to healthcare education in Qatar, it is imperative for CMED to maintain strong ties with the local community. This entails not only advocating for the significance of health professional education but also actively addressing the healthcare requirements of the public. A bi-directional flow of communication forms the bedrock of this symbiotic relationship. CMED's role extends beyond academia; it also serves as a vital contributor to the overall health and well-being of the community it serves. This collaborative connection necessitates open channels of communication that facilitate the exchange of ideas, concerns, and

insights between the college and the broader society. This strategic goal encompasses three distinct objectives, each of which pertains to aspects of networking, marketing activities, and educational programs. As a relatively new institution, CMED possesses a significant advantage in its capacity to cultivate an expansive and enduring network of partners in the domains of medical education and research. CMED remains committed to forging and nurturing extensive partnerships with institutions not only within the university but also across regional and global organizations in its early stages, the College aimed for rapid development of strategic partnerships to raise public awareness and foster collaboration in the realms of medical education and research. To uphold the quality of these collaborations, CMED has shifted its focus towards implementing systematic processes for monitoring and assessing existing partnerships. As of the Academic Year 2017/2018, CMED has introduced a standardized procedure for developing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and a shared archiving system to enhance its organizational efficiency.

Starting from 2015, the College has effectively established six domestic and twelve global Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with prominent entities engaged in medical education and research. The aim is to sustain this momentum and further broaden the existing network. In the current situation, CMED lacks a centralized standard evaluation process to guarantee the continuous vitality of its collaborations. Since the true benefits of partnerships emerge through ongoing cooperation, the aim is to prioritize investments in partnerships that foster active engagement, ultimately resulting in the initiation of joint projects and initiatives, rather than allowing them to remain dormant. CMED's commitment to engaging the wider community is evident in its multifaceted approach. By emphasizing the importance of public awareness and promotion of medical education and research, CMED recognizes the vital role that community support plays in its mission. The inclusion of various outreach activities, such as open days, school

visits, and social media campaigns, demonstrates a proactive effort to connect with the public. The mention of specific activities like Instagram campaigns for breast cancer awareness, the celebration of academic achievements through the Dean's list, and events like the white coat ceremony and organ and blood donation drives highlights CMED's diverse engagement strategies. These activities not only contribute to community outreach but also serve as avenues for involving students and faculty in meaningful social causes.

- **Strategic Goal 4:**

*Drive institutional excellence by pursuing an excellent governance structure; staff and faculty satisfaction and professional development; a positive environment; and building and maintaining an optimal quality assurance system.*

In the pursuit of its mission, CMED recognizes the vital significance of allocating resources effectively and sufficiently. This extends to administrative support and ensuring access to high-quality facilities and infrastructure. To further enhance service delivery, CMED is committed to fostering a service-oriented culture characterized by transparency, open communication, and continuous staff training. As the College continues to grow, it remains dedicated to expanding and improving its facilities. In the long term, CMED aspires to contribute conceptually to the development of a dedicated Health Campus situated to the north of the University Campus. This includes active participation in the design project for the future CMED building and the rebranding of all buildings related to QU Health. Simultaneously, CMED places great importance on fostering a healthy and supportive work environment for its staff members. A healthy workplace encompasses factors such as ergonomically designed furniture and the promotion of a collaborative culture that mitigates potential adverse outcomes like stress, anxiety, depression, or burnout.

College of Medicine has directed its efforts towards achieving specific objectives, and two notable areas of focus include the enhancement of the faculty onboarding process and the promotion of regular gatherings among faculty and staff members. Over recent years, significant progress has been made in both of these domains. The college has diligently worked on improving the onboarding process and welcome package for new faculty members, striving to provide a comprehensive and engaging orientation experience. Moreover, there has been a concerted effort to facilitate regular gatherings among faculty and staff, creating opportunities for informal information exchange and strengthening the bonds within the academic community.

A noteworthy development in these areas is the introduction of a dedicated orientation program, meticulously planned and organized by the health cluster. This program extends its benefits to all new faculty members across the five colleges, exemplifying the college's commitment to ensuring that new faculty members are equipped with a robust and supportive introduction to their roles and responsibilities. It also underscores the importance of fostering cohesion and teamwork among faculty and staff, promoting a collaborative and productive working environment.

Given its status as a problem-based medical school, faculty training in the intricacies of Problem-Based Learning (PBL) and other facets of medical education is indispensable. This training is crucial to guarantee that the teaching methodologies align with cutting-edge principles and remain consistent with the latest advancements in medical education research. Liu et al. (2020) analyzed that mistakes in the field of medicine are highly sensitive and fatal; therefore, the usage of PBL programs can readily marginalize errors associated with practical implementation while incorporating correction from the very start of the process. In essence, faculty training plays a pivotal role in maintaining instructional methods that reflect state-of-the-

art concepts and contemporary trends in medical education. It ensures that the educational approaches employed are not only effective but also in harmony with the evolving landscape of medical pedagogy.

- **Activities and methods**

### **Marketing Initiatives:**

College of Medicine has successfully implemented a strategic marketing plan to elevate its reputation and visibility as the sole national medical college in the country. Through this well-executed plan, the college has effectively enhanced its standing and prominence within the medical education landscape. The College's administrative team has developed outreach strategies for each academic year, attracting the interest of high school students and promoting the college. CMED has implemented a strategy where representatives from the student affairs office visit high schools to promote the college and provide information about the program, requirements, and necessary details. This initiative aims to raise awareness among high school students about the college and its offerings. During these visits, students are informed about the college's programs, admission requirements, and other relevant information to help them make informed decisions about their educational path. Furthermore, the college has proactively utilized the media reach program to actively establish its brand in the realm of medical education. This has been achieved through various channels, including television and social media platforms. Through these mediums, the college has taken deliberate steps to promote its identity and presence, ensuring that its message reaches a wider audience and strengthens its reputation in the field of medical education. As a result, the College has successfully marketed its offerings, highlighting its unique learning opportunities and educational approaches to prospective students interested in pursuing a career in medicine. The marketing content has been carefully crafted to leverage the College of Medicine's

brand image and emphasize its commitment to providing a supportive and enriching learning environment. Furthermore, faculty members actively participated in a variety of research projects and published articles in prestigious journals, thereby contributing to the enhancement of the college's reputation. Their involvement in such scholarly activities has significantly boosted the standing and recognition of the college.

### **Research and development:**

Medical students are participating in basic science hypothesis-driven research projects with hands-on experience under direct faculty supervision. These opportunities are offered through research elective courses, UREP (Undergraduate Research Experience Program) grants, and QU student research grants that support students' enrollment in original and advanced research. QU through the research support office provides financial support or grants to students and faculty carrying research. CMED also encourages its students to attend and present their research projects in local and external conferences. Moreover, QU offers publication rewards to the students who work on a research project that is published.

The current CMED faculty have functional experimental research laboratories that support graduate and undergraduate research projects with access to needed core facilities and equipment. CMED benefits greatly from the numerous research centers located in QU. For example, the Laboratory Animal Research Center (LARC) is an unconventional animal facility with small animal imaging core, diagnostic, cell culture and research labs. LARC is an internationally accredited center that provides medical student with excellent animal-based research models and high-quality infrastructure. The Biomedical research center is another facility that allows medical students to participate in collaborative research work with various esteemed establishments located



nationally. Other research facilities are accessible to CMED students and faculty and can be found on the QU Research centers webpage.

### **Informational Technology:**

Information technology has significantly transformed patient management and data analysis in medical research. One emerging field at the intersection of medicine and technology is Artificial Intelligence in Medicine. Approximately two years ago, a comprehensive core curriculum on AI in Medicine was developed and has since been fully implemented starting from the 2021/2022 academic year. To further enhance the curriculum and prepare future healthcare professionals with essential knowledge and skills in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), an elective course titled AI in Medicine was also created. This course aims to equip health professional students with the necessary tools and interdisciplinary research capabilities, fostering collaboration with students from computer sciences and engineering. The complete implementation of this elective course is scheduled to commence in the spring of 2023. Furthermore, QU Library provides a traditional and virtual environment to support users in their search for information whether for educational, research or patient care services. The user-friendly web page and online access to visual tutorials, guides, and instructions are readily available for teachers and students on the library website. Turnitin (Plagiarism prevention system) can be accessible to students to check their reports before submitting them for grading.

### **Financial Resources:**

Being a governmental university, the university's financial resources are allocated and controlled by the ministry of finance. As such, the university abides to the decisions, regulations and rules issued by the Ministry. The budget process plays a crucial role in planning and managing

the financial resources necessary for the University's programs. Prior to each fiscal year, budgets are prepared and integrated into the University's financial system. These budgets encompass both operational and capital aspects, ensuring that the impact of capital activities is reflected in the operating budget. The budget request is subject to approval by the Board of Regents or their representative, the Executive Committee, before formal discussions and negotiations with external funding agencies.

The dean of CMED is responsible for developing budget proposals as part of the annual budget development process. Department heads and research unit leaders have a key role in understanding the major budget components. Faculty and staff members with decision-making authority are delegated the responsibility of managing budget details. Departments and research units are accountable for accurately budgeting revenues and expenses across their activities. The allocation of resources is carefully planned to address the rapidly developing medical and health sciences needs of the college. There is a clear and well-defined organizational structure in the college under the leadership of a management team that consists of faculty members and representatives of external stakeholders. The management team has autonomy on budget preparation and disbursement of funds for educational activities. There is a need for an efficient system that encourages feedback for members of the management team by faculty members and administrative staff.

### **Human Resources Management:**

CMED has a recruitment committee responsible for overseeing the selection and hiring process of new faculty members. The committee adheres to CMED's policies regarding the appointment and recruitment of both full-time and part-time faculty. The dean and department

heads determine the need for academic staff, including basic scientists and clinicians. Once a position is advertised, the recruitment committee chair reviews the applications and forwards those that meet the acceptable academic standards to the relevant department heads and senior faculty members in the respective field. Shortlisted candidates are then interviewed. During the interview process, each committee member completes a 'Faculty evaluation form'. Following the interviews, the average scores of each candidate are calculated, ranked, documented on special forms signed by all committee members, and the candidate with the highest score is typically selected.

CMED prioritizes the professional growth of its academic staff to enhance the educational experience for students. The college actively supports and promotes the development of faculty members, aligning with its academic practices. To facilitate this, comprehensive PBL training sessions are conducted for new academic staff, ensuring their familiarity and competence in the PBL teaching program. Workshops on question design and mentorship programs are organized to further enhance faculty skills. Continuous updates and adherence to college requirements are emphasized to maintain faculty's academic development. Additionally, engagement in scholarship activities is expected from all CMED academic staff, fostering up-to-date knowledge and expertise in their respective fields. The college encourages staff to participate in staff development and training opportunities provided by the university.

- **Tracking**

The college did not have a systematic mechanism for monitoring and evaluating key performance indicators (KPIs) outlined in the strategic plan for 2019–2022. Instead, reliance was placed on outcome-based assessments, encompassing metrics such as the number of publications, grant applications, and student-related statistics like attrition, admission, and transfer rates.

Significantly, some of the participants expressed concern about the lack of a transparent approach for tracking the goals and objectives indicated in their strategic plan. They emphasized the need of tackling this specific issue in the preparation of the future strategic strategy. The participants stressed the significance of developing a clear and accountable method for monitoring and evaluating progress toward the strategic plan's goals and objectives. This identified concern highlights the participants' knowledge of the need for an expanded strategic planning framework that includes rigorous tracking and assessment methods to enable the successful implementation and realization of their organizational objectives. According to Fathi and Wilson (2009), educational leaders should be open to embracing innovative risks, especially in the evolving academic landscape that is reshaping post-secondary education. Within this transformed environment, the skill of effectively utilizing rubrics to assess strategic plans will be a fundamental competence for successful colleges and universities.

An annual meeting known as the "wrap-up meeting" convened all college members at the close of the academic year (typically in May or June). During this session, department heads presented updates and results from their respective departments, highlighting achievements, challenges, and risks encountered throughout the year. The collaborative presentations and discussions during this yearly meeting served as an evaluation, providing insights into the alignment of college activities with the strategic plan and offering a platform to address challenges and adjust course as needed.

Furthermore, throughout the discussions and interviews, an emphasis was placed on the imperative need to circulate the strategic plan comprehensively among all members of the college. The consensus highlighted the importance of ensuring that every member is well-informed about the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and understands the specific objectives and measurements

associated with each goal. This shared understanding is considered crucial for fostering a sense of collective ownership and commitment to the strategic plan.

- **Analysis and evaluation**

The comprehensive strategic plan was not subject to continuous monitoring; rather, it involved the monitoring of specific components or objectives. For instance, in the domain of research, the college focus was on key performance indicators, specifically, the quantity of publications and the acquisition of both internal and external grants. Notably, the volume of grants secured has experienced substantial growth since the college's inception. Similarly, the number of publications serves as another essential metric for evaluation. In 2015, the college initiated its journey with a mere eight publications, but in the most recent assessment, conducted last year, the college recorded a significant increase, with 331 publications.

In the context of teaching and curriculum assessment, CMED primary evaluation method is based on the examination of courses and individual units. The performance metrics encompass a variety of factors, including the quality of administration, teaching, and the effectiveness of communication during unit implementation. Assessment involves tracking the progress and achievements of the students, which serves as a crucial key performance indicator (KPI). This involves assessing attrition rates and pass rates from one academic year to the next. Notably, this approach has yielded significant reductions in the number of student expulsions. By implementing a rigorous filter in year two, the college created a robust system where students who progress beyond year two are highly likely to complete their studies successfully.

These KPIs are pivotal in gauging the teaching and curriculum outcomes. As for student success, one important measure was the performance in international exams, specifically the IFOM

basic science and IFOM clinical science exams. The IFOM (International Foundations of Medicine) exams are a series of assessments that evaluate the foundational knowledge and skills of medical students, often taken as a part of medical education. Passing the IFOM exams is a prerequisite to ensure that students are eligible to progress to the subsequent phase following their graduation and to qualify for participation in the residency program.

These exams serve as an international benchmark for assessing students' medical knowledge. The results of these IFOM exams are periodically shared during college management meetings. This practice allows for an ongoing analysis of students' performance over the years. These exam results hold significant importance as they serve as a critical source of key findings for the college. They provide valuable insights into whether the college's initiatives and guidance have effectively enhanced student performance or if there is a need for further improvements. Monitoring these results helps the college gauge the impact of its educational programs and tailor its strategies to better meet its strategic goals, particularly in terms of elevating students' academic achievements and medical proficiency. These exams served as benchmarks to compare CMED students' performance with that of international graduates. Consistently, CMED students excelled in these exams, surpassing the performance of their international counterparts as stated by CMED management team.

Programs that promote wellbeing at the workplace have proven the potential to benefit the employees as well as the employing organizations by attracting and retaining motivated staff, reducing absenteeism, improving employee morale, and reducing organizational conflict. CMED understands the importance of wellbeing and the prevention of adverse events, including for example stress and anxiety, depression, or burnout. The Academic Year 2018/2019 has been declared the “year of wellbeing”, with the objective to initiate a sustainable culture of wellbeing,

which in the long-term leads to tangible outcomes. Workplace wellbeing programs have demonstrated their potential to yield benefits for both employees and the organizations that employ them. These advantages encompass the attraction and retention of motivated staff, a reduction in absenteeism, an enhancement of employee morale, and the mitigation of organizational conflicts. The College of Medicine (CMED) recognizes the significance of prioritizing wellbeing and the prevention of adverse events such as stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout.

In 2018, CMED took a proactive step by establishing a dedicated Wellbeing Committee. This committee was tasked with defining a clear mandate aimed at promoting wellbeing and ensuring accountability for achieving the established targets. A key aspect of evaluating the success of these wellbeing initiatives involved tracking the number of initiatives introduced and measuring the satisfaction levels of both staff and faculty. Almost all the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the strategic plan were assessed primarily through their outcomes and results, without the presence of an annual monitoring system or a dedicated task force responsible for KPI measurement. College of Medicine has implemented various policies, but these policies are not consolidated into a single official document. Instead, they need to be gathered from multiple sources, including the College website and other documents.

### **SWOT Analysis**

The results of the evaluation of the strategic plan based on SWOT analysis framework is as follows:-

Following a thorough examination of the strategic planning process for the College of Medicine (2019-2022), a SWOT analysis was conducted to assess the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In preparation for the SWOT analysis, the researcher

systematically conducted assessments both internally and externally for the college. Weaknesses were discerned through in-depth discussions with participants, who pinpointed specific areas requiring improvement. Strengths were unveiled by researching the college's various initiatives and activities that actively contributed to their accomplishments. This comprehensive data collection process involved scrutinizing the previous strategic plan document, as provided by the college, along with the self-evaluation report they shared.

Opportunities and threats were identified through a thorough analysis of the regional environment and culture, coupled with an examination of potential competitors. This encompassing approach allowed the research to holistically understand the internal dynamics of the college and its external context. The information gathered through these assessments serves as a foundation for the subsequent SWOT analysis, providing a nuanced understanding of the college's internal capabilities and external factors that can affect its strategic positioning. This comprehensive analysis aims to provide insights into the internal and external factors influencing the College's strategic position. The examination of strengths and weaknesses focuses on internal aspects, such as organizational capabilities and challenges, while opportunities and threats consider external factors that could influence the College's strategic direction.

**Strengths:**

- **Clearly defined governance structure:** CMED has established a well-structured governance framework that provides a clear hierarchy and delineation of responsibilities, ensuring effective management of the college's educational endeavors.
- **Wellbeing program:** The establishment of the Wellbeing program demonstrates a proactive approach to creating a healthy workplace culture that prioritizes the social,



mental, and physical health of students, faculty, and admin. This program addresses the holistic wellbeing of individuals within CMED, promoting a supportive and conducive environment for learning and work.

- **Strong marketing plan:** The College of Medicine has successfully implemented a strategic marketing plan to enhance its reputation and visibility within the medical education landscape. This has resulted in increased awareness of the college among high school students and the wider community.
- **Research and development opportunities:** CMED offers research opportunities to medical students through research elective courses, grants, and participation in conferences. The availability of functional research laboratories and access to research centers within QU provides students and faculty with the necessary resources for research projects. This emphasis on research enhances the educational experience and contributes to the development of research skills among students.
- **Highly qualified and diverse faculty members:** College of Medicine has strategically hired highly qualified faculty members from diverse international backgrounds. This deliberate recruitment approach has endowed the college with a wealth of knowledge and expertise, fostering a diverse and intellectually rich environment among its faculty members.
- **Autonomy on budget preparations:** The management team holds the authority for budget preparation and allocation of funds for educational activities. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the management team meet to collaboratively determine the requirements for each department and allocate the budget accordingly. This process ensures that each department receives the necessary financial resources to meet its specific needs.

### **Weaknesses:**

- **Classroom Capacity and Infrastructure:** The College faces challenges in accommodating the growing number of students in certain years, particularly regarding large classrooms. The need for adequate infrastructure and facilities should be addressed to ensure a conducive learning environment for all students.
- **Lack of clear comprehensive documentation of policies:** This deficiency creates a challenge for faculty and staff, who rely on easily accessible and consolidated information to understand and comply with the established guidelines. The absence of a comprehensive and centralized repository for policies hinders transparency and consistency in decision-making processes. It also increases the risk of misinterpretation, inconsistencies, and potential conflicts.
- **Absence of a robust monitoring system for strategic plan goals:** College of Medicine faces a challenge in the form of an inadequately developed monitoring system for the continuous oversight and evaluation of its goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The institution currently lacks a structured mechanism to systematically supervise and assess the progress of its strategic objectives. This weakness underscores the importance of implementing an effective monitoring framework to ensure the successful execution and achievement of the College's strategic goals and KPIs.

### **Opportunities:**

- **Economic growth and development:** Qatar's economic growth and development can provide opportunities for increased resources and investments in College of Medicine,

allowing for advancements in infrastructure, research capabilities, and faculty development.

- **Cultural exchange and diversity:** Qatar's diverse population and unique cultural context provide opportunities for the College of Medicine to offer programs and initiatives that promote cultural exchange and diversity, enabling students to learn about different healthcare systems and practices.
- **International collaboration and exchange programs:** Establishing international collaboration and exchange programs can foster global exposure for students and faculty. Collaborating with renowned medical institutions in other countries can facilitate student and faculty exchanges, joint research projects, and cross-cultural learning experiences.
- **Research collaborations:** College of Medicine can explore opportunities for research collaborations with other academic institutions, healthcare organizations, and industry partners. Collaborative research projects can lead to scientific breakthroughs, increased funding, and enhance the college's reputation as a center for innovative research.

#### **Threats:**

- **Changes in government regulations:** Changes in healthcare regulations or funding allocations can pose a threat to the college's operations and funding. It is important to monitor and adapt to any changes to minimize disruptions.
- **Brain drain and faculty retention:** College of Medicine may face challenges in retaining top faculty members due to global competition, attractive offers from other institutions, or limited career development opportunities. Brain drain can impact the quality of education, research output, and the overall reputation of the college.

- **Increasing competition from established medical schools:** College of Medicine faces the threat of increasing competition from established medical schools within Qatar and the region. These schools may have well-established reputations, strong faculty, and robust research programs, making it challenging for the College of Medicine to attract top students and faculty.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 will address the implications of strategic planning at the College of Medicine and the steps taken during its establishment. This empirical study offers an intricate portrayal of the outcomes and hurdles faced by the college in the execution of their strategy. It delves into the responses of the team to combat these challenges while formulating the new strategic plan. This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the practical implications arising from the strategic planning process. It discusses the results obtained and offers insights into the strategies employed to surmount obstacles, ultimately shaping the development of a new strategic plan for the College of Medicine.

### **5.1 Discussion**

The results of this study reveal the achievements of the four strategic goals. The study encompassed four primary objectives, with the analysis phase successfully accomplishing the first two objectives. Firstly, it yielded an inclusive comprehension of the College of Medicine's initial strategic planning process, delving into the details of its development and implementation. Secondly, the research aimed to construct an insightful narrative of the College of Medicine's strategic planning journey, emphasizing significant milestones and clarifying areas where objectives faced challenges. This was achieved through a meticulous evaluation of the strategic plan spanning 2019-2022, coupled with a thorough analysis and assessment of the reasons behind objectives that were not fully realized.

Following the analysis, a comprehensive roadmap was formulated guided by interview questions addressing areas for improvement in the upcoming strategic plan. This action plan successfully fulfills the third objective, focusing on initiatives and procedures by creating a roadmap that serves as the foundational framework for the college's forthcoming strategic plan.

The significance of the discussion phase lies in its critical role in identifying challenges and offering recommendations. This is clearly demonstrated by the accomplishment of the fourth objective, wherein the study provides valuable insights, outlines challenges, and presents recommendations. This, in turn, facilitates a more informed and effective approach to strategic planning in the future, enhancing the overall planning process for the college.

The college has notably excelled in two primary areas, surpassing expectations related to their strategic objectives. These standout areas encompass research output and student performance, both of which have received overwhelmingly positive feedback and recognition. In terms of research, the college has consistently demonstrated remarkable productivity, with a substantial increase in publications and grants since its establishment. Likewise, student performance has exceeded anticipated levels, evidenced by higher pass rates and a significant reduction in expulsions.

However, there remain areas in need of improvement, and one of these relates to the limited involvement in exchange programs. To address this shortfall, the college indicated that they should actively pursue enhanced collaboration on exchange programs, benefiting both students and faculty. Encouraging greater diversity through such programs can be a strategic move, as it exposes students to varied perspectives and teaching styles, enriching their educational experiences. Moreover, faculty engagement in exchange programs fosters professional development and networking opportunities, ultimately contributing to the college's academic and research excellence. Expanding these collaborative initiatives in the next strategic plan can be instrumental in achieving a more comprehensive and globally oriented education environment.

In the case of the strategic plan for 2019-2022, the College did not involve stakeholders, faculty, or students in a feedback or review process to collect input and suggestions regarding the plan's performance. To address this gap, a feedback and review process will be introduced for the upcoming strategic plan, set to commence in January 2024. This process will encompass engaging various stakeholders, including faculty and students, to gather valuable insights and recommendations, ensuring a more inclusive and comprehensive evaluation of the plan's effectiveness. This proactive approach aims to foster greater collaboration and transparency in shaping the College's strategic direction.

The strategic plan of the College of Medicine (2019-2022) was assessed utilizing Demir's (2017) framework, revealing a robust alignment with the institution's stated goals. The College successfully achieved key objectives, particularly evident in the high performance of its graduates and positive research outcomes, signaling the effectiveness of its strategic planning process. The imminent accreditation is expected to boost the College's reputation further. The mission and policies of the College clearly resonate with its commitment to graduate competent physicians who are attuned to the healthcare needs of Qatar. The vision to be a leading institution in medical education and innovation reflects a forward-thinking approach that aligns with national healthcare objectives. Strategic goals set by the College are closely aligned with the University's overarching performance areas, emphasizing the College's commitment to adaptability and continuous improvement. The success of these goals is partly attributed to the strategic marketing initiatives and research development programs that have significantly enhanced the College's visibility and academic reputation. A critical review, however, identified the absence of a structured KPI monitoring system, leading to a reliance on outcome-based evaluations. This gap underscores the need for a more systematic approach to tracking progress against strategic objectives. The

College's approach to curricular assessment has demonstrated efficacy, with student performance on international exams serving as a notable indicator of success.

A SWOT analysis conducted as part of the strategic evaluation highlighted the College's well-defined governance structure and proactive wellbeing programs as key strengths. However, it also pointed out infrastructure and policy documentation as areas needing attention. Identified opportunities for growth include leveraging Qatar's economic development and the potential for increased international collaborations. Conversely, the threats of changing regulations and faculty retention must be managed to maintain the College's upward trajectory. The strategic plan's evaluation affirms the College of Medicine's dedication to excellence, though it also emphasizes the importance of continuous monitoring and adaptation to achieve long-term success.



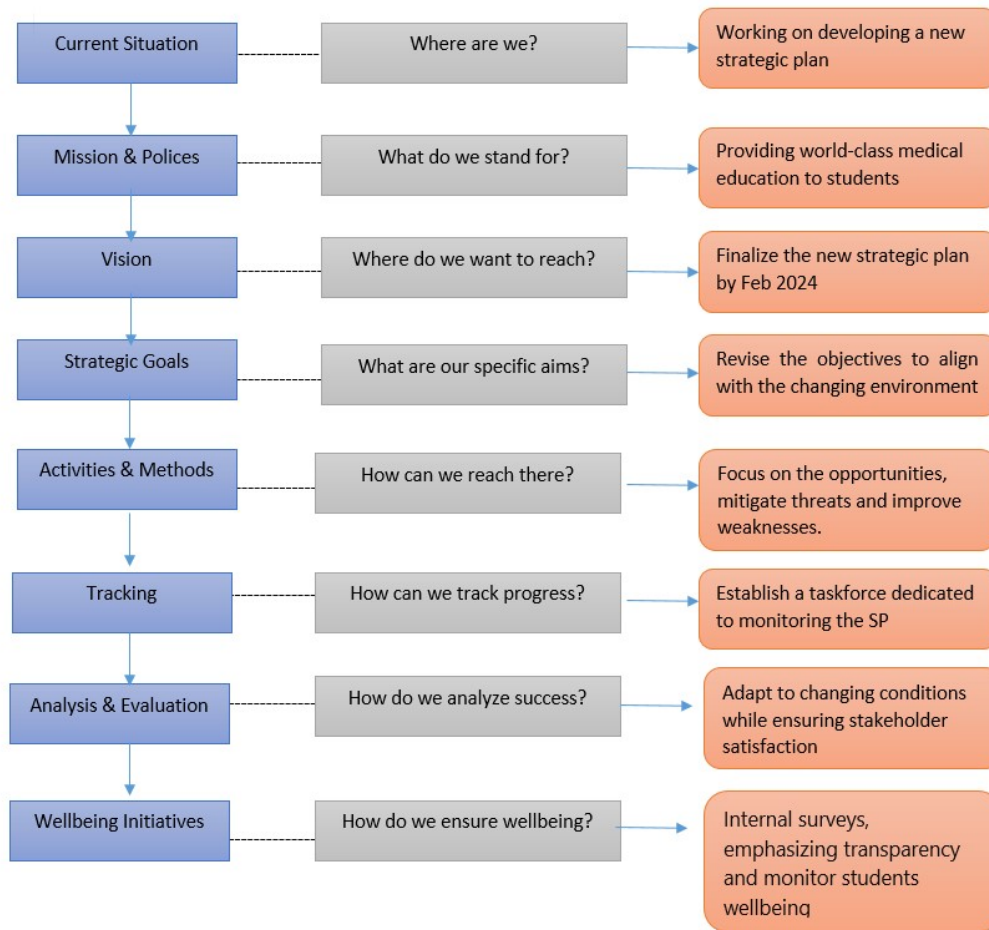


FIGURE 6: ACTION PLAN BASED ON DEMIR'S FRAMEWORK

This action plan outlines the necessary steps and measures to be taken in order to achieve the envisioned strategic vision. It also formulates specific questions designed to ensure adherence to the established roadmap. This approach aims to provide clarity and guidance, allowing for an inclusive understanding of the strategic direction and facilitating the effective execution of the outlined plan. The initial phase involves assessing the current state of the college and its ongoing developmental activities. Currently, the institution is in the process of formulating a new strategic plan. The leadership team has actively engaged in this process, having convened two meetings thus far. These meetings served as forums for in-depth discussions on the college's objectives, enabling the team to establish and outline new objectives and KPIs for future endeavors. When it

comes to the college's mission and objectives, the main goal is to provide an excellent education to its students while presenting itself as a competitive force in the region. To accomplish this purpose, the institution will most likely concentrate on many crucial components. These may include hiring highly qualified professors, applying cutting-edge teaching methods, cultivating a dynamic and inventive learning environment, and investing in resources that improve the entire educational experience. Furthermore, to stay current on global trends and best practices in education, the college may promote collaborations and partnerships with other educational institutions, industry leaders, and research groups.

The college's main objective revolves around the completion of its strategic planning process by February 2024. This historical milestone represents the institution's essential attempt to chart its future path through a thorough and well-defined strategic plan. The vision emphasizes the importance of strategic planning as a guiding framework for the college's future trajectory, goals, and actions. Completing the new strategic plan document by 2024 implies a sense of urgency and purpose in the college's approach to decision-making and organizational development. It demonstrates a dedication to comprehensive analysis, thoughtful deliberation, and inclusive engagement with key stakeholders to ensure that the strategic plan is consistent with the college's mission, values, and overarching goals.

The college has chosen to retain its four main key goals, indicating a dedication to overarching ideas that likely encompass its basic mission and values. However, in light of the ever-changing educational landscape and external forces, the institution has chosen to update its objectives to remain aligned with the evolving environment. This strategic decision represents a dynamic and adaptable goal-setting strategy that recognizes the need for continual assessment and adjustment in response to evolving problems and opportunities. The revision of objectives likely

involves collaborative efforts, with input from key stakeholders such as faculty, administrators, students, and possibly external experts. This inclusive approach ensures that the revised objectives capture a diverse range of perspectives and insights.

The conclusions of the SWOT analysis completed as part of this research are closely tied to the college's ability to meet its objectives. This strategic analysis, which includes the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, is a useful tool for making educated decisions and planning action. To begin, leveraging on opportunities demonstrated in the SWOT analysis is critical to the college's success. Simultaneously, the college must address threats highlighted in the SWOT analysis to safeguard against potential challenges that could impede progress. This might involve implementing risk mitigation strategies, enhancing institutional resilience, and staying vigilant to changes in the external environment. Furthermore, improving weaknesses identified in the SWOT analysis is crucial for sustained success. Whether it be enhancing specific academic programs, investing in faculty development, or upgrading infrastructure, addressing internal weaknesses directly contributes to the institution's overall capacity to meet its objectives.

Recognizing the critical importance of tracking the progress of the strategic plan, the research has identified a notable gap in the existing framework—specifically, the absence of a dedicated task force for this purpose within the college. However, the institution has underscored its intention to resolve this deficiency in the upcoming new strategic plan. The decision to establish a dedicated task force for tracking progress in the new strategic plan reflects the institution's commitment to a more robust and accountable strategic planning process. This initiative aims to address the identified gap, ensuring that the college can effectively monitor and adjust its strategies to meet evolving challenges and opportunities on the path to achieving its goals.

The success of a strategic plan is closely tied to the institution's ability to adapt to evolving circumstances. This involves regularly assessing internal and external environments for shifts in educational trends, technological advancements, and other relevant factors. Regular reviews and updates to the strategic plan based on real-time data and feedback are essential. This ensures that the institution remains agile, proactive, and capable of adjusting its strategies to align with dynamic conditions. The satisfaction of stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and external partners, serves as a crucial indicator of success. It reflects the effectiveness of the strategic plan in meeting the diverse needs and expectations of those invested in the college's success. Surveys, feedback mechanisms, and performance metrics related to stakeholder engagement and satisfaction can be instrumental in evaluating the plan's impact.

The college's active engagement in wellbeing initiatives, particularly through the establishment of a dedicated wellbeing program, reflects a forward-thinking approach to the overall health and satisfaction of both students and staff. Sustaining and enhancing these efforts is not only commendable but also holds significant potential for contributing to the college's growth and success. Studying medicine is naturally demanding, both intellectually and emotionally. Prioritizing students' mental wellbeing is crucial for fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. The college can continue to provide counseling services, mental health resources, and workshops to provide students with coping strategies. A focus on wellbeing adds to a positive institutional culture, making the college an appealing and supportive environment for both students and faculty. This outstanding image can have an impact on enrollment, student retention rates, and the recruitment and retention of high-quality faculty. Additionally, a wellbeing-focused approach aligns with broader trends in education where institutions that prioritize holistic development are

increasingly valued. This can enhance the college's competitive standing in the educational landscape.

Our use of Demir's strategic planning framework enabled a detailed examination of the College's strategic posture and the effectiveness of its planning methodologies. The findings, derived from a blend of situational and SWOT analysis and an evaluation of the 2019-2022 strategic plan, are instrumental in outlining the College's operational strengths and areas of improvement within a rigorous academic context. The results from the case study revealed alignment of the College's operations with its stated mission and strategic objectives particularly highlighted by its achievements in research outputs and student performance metrics. These outcomes affirm the College's commitment to fostering a competent medical workforce, resonant with its overarching mission. However, the analysis also unveiled significant operational challenges. Notably, the lack of comprehensive and consolidated policy documentation emerged as a critical impediment, impairing transparency and consistency in decision-making processes.

The SWOT analysis conducted as part of our study further elaborated on the internal and external factors affecting the College. Strengths such as the College's structured governance and proactive wellbeing initiatives are noteworthy, alongside its strategic marketing insight and research opportunities, in addition to diverse culture among faculty members and autonomy of budget preparations. Conversely, weaknesses including inadequate policy documentation and insufficient mechanisms for monitoring strategic objectives present significant operational challenges. External threats, such as regulatory changes and heightened competition from established medical institutions, also pose potential risks to the College's strategic stability.

The evaluation of the 2019-2022 strategic plan highlighted the College's strategic alignment but also pointed to gaps in the implementation and monitoring processes. The absence of a systematic approach for evaluating key performance indicators (KPIs) suggests a disconnect between strategic planning and operational execution. This gap underlines the necessity for a more structured, outcome-driven approach to effectively track and assess progress against strategic goals.

The study presents an empirical analysis of the strategic planning process at the College of Medicine identifying key operational strengths and areas for improvement. Addressing challenges in policy documentation, infrastructure, and establishing a robust monitoring system for strategic goals are critical for enhancing the College's strategic efficacy. The insights from this study provide a valuable empirical foundation for higher education institutions seeking to refine their strategic planning processes in an increasingly competitive and dynamic educational landscape.

As a result of the analysis of the strategic plan for 2019-2022, establishing a dedicated team responsible for ongoing goal monitoring and performance assessment is an important learning for the CMED. This team's role is to conduct an annual review of the strategic plan's objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess both the accomplishments and areas where targets were not met. Furthermore, this team should convene at the end of each academic year to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the entire strategic plan. This structured approach ensures a consistent and thorough examination of the plan's progress, enabling timely adjustments and enhancements as needed. The team's involvement is critical for effective goal tracking and overall plan success.

## **5.2 Navigating Challenges in the Strategic Planning Process**

During the conversation about the college's strategic plan, participants outlined a range of challenges they encountered while striving to implement and achieve the plan's objectives. The individuals being interviewed provided details about various difficulties and obstacles they faced when attempting to put the strategic plan into action and make progress toward its stated objectives. Additionally, those challenges were identified based on the analysis conducted during this study, notably the SWOT analysis.

### **5.2.1 Transparency**

During the discussion about the college's strategic plan, a significant concern was brought up regarding whether the college maintains transparency in sharing the plan with all its faculty members and staff. This question sparked a noteworthy observation from three key members who were interviewed. Those key members involved in this concern were members of the college's leadership team. They noticed a key aspect of the strategic plan: it needed to be distributed to all members of the college, including academics and staff. It is worth noting that this dissemination provided a significant challenge to the leadership team. Recognizing the possible challenges connected with successful communication and involvement across varied groups, the leaders acknowledged the need of establishing a shared understanding of the strategic plan among all members of the college. Kaufman (1992) characterized strategic planning as a leadership initiative aimed at engaging all stakeholders in a cohesive plan that guides operational activities.

It was revealed during the interviews that the strategic plan for 2019–2022 was not disseminated or made available to all members of the college. Only the leadership team had access to the strategic plan document and possessed knowledge about its contents. This lack of widespread distribution could potentially hinder the engagement and alignment of all college

members with the strategic objectives and initiatives outlined in the plan. All participants expressed a shared belief that there should be a greater commitment to transparency in disseminating the strategic plan and ensuring its visibility to all members of the college. This concern underscores the importance of open communication and inclusivity within the college community. It suggests that there may be room for improvement in how the strategic plan is shared and communicated to ensure that all stakeholders are well-informed and engaged in the college's strategic initiatives. Enhancing transparency in this regard can foster a sense of ownership and alignment among faculty and staff, ultimately contributing to the successful implementation of the strategic plan.

### **5.2.2 Supervision of students during clinical years**

Students in year five and six are assigned to clinical rotations across various hospitals and health centers in Qatar. Throughout these clinical years, exclusively the physicians at those respective healthcare facilities conduct their evaluations and examinations. Notably, the college lacks direct involvement or authority in overseeing the evaluation and examination processes carried out by the physicians in these settings. This setup poses a challenge as the college has limited control over the assessment procedures administered by external healthcare professionals. As a result, the college lacks complete authority over the curriculum's execution. The challenge became evident to members engaged in the assessment of students, particularly those involved with students in the fifth and sixth years.

To address this issue, there is a need to establish a more collaborative approach, ensuring the college plays an active role in shaping and overseeing the evaluation methods applied during students' clinical rotations. The college is actively pursuing a new approach, which includes involving the appointment of two faculty members – one senior and one junior – who will actively



oversee course management within the clinical phase program and will act as a liaison between teaching hospitals and the College of Medicine aiding academic staff and clinicians in their educational duties. . These faculty members will have full-time positions and are integrated into the newly designed organizational structure. The college anticipate that this measure will mitigate the issue.

### **5.2.3 University Hospital and Space**

The University Hospital and College of Medicine building project, which was originally scheduled to begin in 2019, was delayed due to the global pandemic and budgetary limitations affecting construction projects. As a result, the building phase was delayed, with a recent start date of 2021. Both the college and university projects are expected to take four to five years to complete, with completion dates scheduled for year 2025-2026. External forces forced the postponement, underscoring the significance of adjusting to unforeseen obstacles in large-scale construction projects. This challenge does not solely affect students; rather, it has a widespread effect on all members within the College of Medicine. The shortage of space and the absence of a University hospital appear to employ an influence on various stakeholders, encompassing students, faculty, and staff. All members are compelled to adjust and find accommodations to address and alleviate this complex situation. This challenge requires a collective and adaptive effort from the entire college community to navigate the constraints posed by limited space and the absence of a dedicated university hospital facility.

Possessing a hospital facility would grant control not only over the curriculum's development but also over its implementation during the clerkship phase for students in year five and six. Additionally, CMED confront space constraints, which are critical for both teaching and research endeavors. Fortunately, this concern will be addressed by the construction of a new

building, set to be completed by 2026. Presently, first-year students are accommodated in Pharmacy building, where all lectures take place. In the second phase, a newly established joint room caters to the substantial student population in the second year. If the student's numbers continue to rise, a potential solution is merging other rooms in the building. Nevertheless, the ultimate solution lies in the construction of a dedicated building, which will rectify the spatial limitations.

#### **5.2.4 Change in Management**

One of the main challenges that exerted a considerable influence on the execution of the strategic plan was the change in management. This challenge was tackled by a key participant, the chair of the strategic plan committee, who encountered difficulties assuming leadership responsibilities following various changes in management over the years. Since the inception of the first academic year, the management office of academic affairs has undergone three transitions, with three different individuals taking charge. Furthermore, in 2021, there was a change in the dean's office. This shift in leadership within the academic affairs office was accompanied by similar changes in other departments, leading to modifications in their respective managements since 2015. These successive changes in leadership positions signify a dynamic organizational environment, potentially impacting the continuity and execution of strategic plans. The changes in personnel across multiple departments may introduce varying perspectives, management styles, and priorities, influencing the overall direction and focus of the college. It underscores the importance of managing transitions effectively to maintain organizational stability and ensure the alignment of successive administrations with strategic objectives.

The transition in leadership had impacts on the seamless implementation of the plan, primarily stemming from incomplete handovers and a lack of awareness among faculty members

about the strategic plan during that period. The departure of experienced leaders often results in the depletion of institutional knowledge, including insights into effective strategies, organizational culture, and key relationships (Peet, 2012). The change in management at CMED accompanied in a period of transition where critical institutional knowledge and responsibilities might not have been adequately transferred. This shortfall in the handover process potentially hindered the new leadership's ability to effectively carry forward the strategic initiatives outlined in the plan. Furthermore, a noteworthy aspect of this challenge was the level of awareness among faculty members regarding the strategic plan. It was evident that some faculty members were not fully informed about the plan, which further complicated its implementation. A lack of awareness can lead to misalignment with the plan's objectives and hinder active participation and support from faculty members. In essence, this change in management served as a critical stage in the strategic planning process, highlighting the importance of comprehensive leadership transitions, knowledge transfer, and effective communication to ensure the continued execution of strategic goals, even during periods of organizational change.

### **5.3 Managerial Implications**

Through an in-depth discussion and a comprehensive examination of challenges and outcomes, several key points have been identified as focal areas for recommendations. This implies that the insights gained from the discussion and analysis can guide decision-making and actions. These identified points offer valuable considerations for managers to address and enhance various aspects related to the discussed challenges and outcomes.

#### **5.3.1 Dedicated taskforce for strategic planning**

Okibo & Masika (2014) addressed that effective top-down communication is vital for aligning stakeholders with the strategic plan, while the active involvement of an organization's

human resources is integral to the successful monitoring and implementation of the strategic initiatives. A notable shortage in the execution of the College's strategic plan for 2019-2022 was the absence of a dedicated committee or task force responsible for evaluating and monitoring the progress of goals and objectives. To address this gap, we recommend that a task force be established for the upcoming strategic plan from 2023 onwards. This task force should be tasked with the annual observation and evaluation of objective achievements, providing a systematic and regular review process to ensure strategic goals align with organizational outcomes. This proactive approach aims to enhance accountability and facilitate continuous improvement in goal attainment.

### **5.3.2 Transparency of information**

Auger (2014) viewed transparency as a remedy for organizational ethics gaps, enhances trust and reduces reputational risks. To address the observed challenge of transparency in sharing the college's strategic plan, we recommended that the college leadership establish a comprehensive communication strategy. This strategy should prioritize clear and inclusive dissemination of the strategic plan to all faculty members and staff. Implementation steps may include regular town hall meetings, newsletters, and dedicated online platforms to ensure accessibility and awareness among the college community. The study conducted by Auger (2014) demonstrated the importance of organizational and communication transparency in developing stakeholders' trust and good behavioral intentions, determining businesses' continuous success. Additionally, fostering an open-door policy for discussions and feedback can further enhance transparency. Clear and transparent communication channels facilitate a shared understanding of strategic objectives, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned with the organizational vision (Okibo & Masika, 2014). By proactively addressing this concern, the college can strengthen collaboration, engagement, and

a collective sense of ownership among its stakeholders, facilitating the successful execution of the strategic plan.

### **5.3.3 Shed light on international student exchange programs**

Given the diverse and culturally rich environment at the College of Medicine, there should be a greater emphasis on promoting student exchange programs. We recommend the college to actively establish agreements with international universities to facilitate exchange programs, particularly during the clinical years. According to a study conducted in Sweden by Bohman & Borglin (2014), engaging in student exchange facilitates a transformative experience that goes beyond academic learning, offering valuable opportunities for cultural immersion and fostering a heightened cultural awareness. This initiative aims to provide students with valuable exposure to diverse clinical practices and initiatives conducted abroad, enhancing their overall educational experience

### **5.3.4 Leadership transitions for strategic continuity**

To mitigate the impact of leadership transitions on strategic planning, we recommend establishing a comprehensive and well-documented handover process during changes in management. This includes a detailed transfer of institutional knowledge, strategic objectives, and ongoing initiatives. Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous communication and awareness among faculty members about the strategic plan can enhance their engagement and alignment with the organizational goals. Investing in leadership development programs that emphasize seamless transitions and effective communication strategies will contribute to a more resilient and adaptive strategic planning process, ensuring the sustained success of initiatives even amid changes in leadership.

## 5.4 Limitations

A significant constraint in this research pertains to the transition in management within the College since its establishment in 2015. During this period, a notable number of key personnel at the management level departed from their roles and were succeeded by new members. This change in leadership has resulted in a shortage of certain detailed information critical for the study's comprehensive analysis. This limitation is rooted in the natural turnover of personnel within an academic institution, which can sometimes lead to gaps in institutional memory and impede the retrieval of specific historical details pertaining to the College's strategic planning process.

A deficiency exists in the higher education literature regarding the importance of institutions possessing a well-defined strategic purpose. When organizations lack a concentrated effort on what they aim to accomplish aligned with a clearly articulated mission and vision, leaders are compelled to depend solely on past practices when making decisions about the future. This reliance on precedent may hinder endeavors in effective culture management. Furthermore, the literature review revealed a research gap in strategic planning within Arab countries, particularly in the context of higher education and medical education. Notably, the study identified a specific limitation—the absence of research focused on Qatar. This gap in existing literature serves as a limitation to the current research study, as it underscores the need for further exploration and investigation in the specific context of Qatar, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of strategic planning practices in the region.

An additional constraint of this study is the limited sample size, which reflects the context of being a recently established medical college. The sample comprised eight interviews conducted with college members actively engaged in formulating the inaugural strategic plan. The relatively small sample size is acknowledged as a limitation, primarily stemming from the novelty of the

institution. Given the qualitative nature of this study, which relies on interviews and the researcher's insights, ensuring both validity and reliability posed challenges, particularly since statistical data was not incorporated. The absence of statistical data can be viewed as a limitation in terms of the traditional measures of study robustness. However, it is important to note that qualitative studies often prioritize depth and richness of information over statistical generalizability.

### **5.5 Suggestions for Future Research**

Future studies could explore how having a well-defined strategic focus influences decision-making and shapes organizational culture management. Future research can extend the duration of interviews in future research for comprehensively capturing evolving perspectives and experiences over a prolonged period. This can be achieved by incorporating additional questions or sections into the interview structure. For qualitative studies, there is an opportunity to refine methodologies to enhance validity and reliability, potentially through incorporating additional data sources and employing triangulation methods. For example, combining interviews, surveys, and observational data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. For instance, combining qualitative and quantitative methods in a study to gain a more holistic perspective. As this study is a singular case study focused on a medical school, future research endeavors could broaden their investigative scope to encompass the entire higher education institution. Expanding the research area to involve the institution as a whole would offer a more comprehensive understanding and contribute to a broader knowledge base.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Interview questions

#### Section one:

##### **Exploring the Strategic Planning Journey of the College**

1. What was the process of formulating the college's strategic plan for the years 2019-2022?
2. What were the initial steps that contributed to shaping the strategic plan?
3. What mechanisms are in place for regular monitoring, evaluation, and adjustments of the strategic plan throughout its duration?
4. What role do stakeholders, such as faculty, students, and external partners, play in shaping the strategic planning journey of the college?

#### Section two:

##### **Exploring Critical Aspects of the Strategic Planning Process**

1. Can you describe the challenges encountered during the implementation of the plan?
2. To what extent was the strategic plan familiar to all members of the college?
3. What lessons were learned from the challenges faced during the strategic planning period, and how have they informed the development of the new plan?

#### Section three:

##### **Exploring the New Strategic Plan**

1. What is the process involved in creating the upcoming 2024-2028 strategic plan.
2. What distinguishes the planning process for the new strategy from the previous one in terms of content and methods used for data collection?
3. How will the college involve faculty and staff in the implementation of the new strategic plan, and what mechanisms are in place to sustain their commitment and engagement?

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

### Consent Form

#### Dear Participant:

This Interview questions is an attempt to investigate the process of (**Crafting a Strategic Blueprint for Qatar University's College of Medicine: Process and Outcomes**). The research is designed to address and uncover the underlying strategies, methodologies, and stakeholder involvement that shaped the creation of this blueprint. Furthermore, this study sheds light on the challenges and opportunities that emerged during the strategic planning process. This study contributes to the academic discourse by offering valuable insights and lessons learned that could inform and enhance strategic planning processes in the complex landscape of healthcare education and research. This research study does not entail any potential negative consequences or risks.

Your contribution is a vital component of this research and will be maintained with the utmost confidentiality. This data will solely be utilized for research objectives. Your involvement, naturally, is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study. Should you choose to participate, you will be requested to respond to a series of questions tailored for this study, and your responses will be audio-recorded and stored with the password- protected computer within 2-4 years. This process is expected to require around 20-30 minutes of your valuable time.

We appreciate your time and effort. The Consent form will be emailed to each participant for his or her review and signature before arranging the in-person meeting. After signing the form, you may return it to the investigator via email with any inquires or questions.

If you have any questions about this study and if you would like to have a summary of the results, please feel free to contact us and we will share the finale results with you. Furthermore, the results will be published anonymously.

The Qatar University Institutional Review Board approves this study with the approval number QU-IRB 1977-EA/23. If you have any questions related to ethical compliance of the study, you may contact them at [QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa](mailto:QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa) or at 4403 5307.

QU- IRB and the Ministry of Public health (MOPH) can ass the data (if needed).

Sincerely,

**Lama Walid Elouzeh**

**Email address:** 200654716@qu.edu.qa

**MBA**

**College of Business and Economics (CBE)**

**Qatar University. P.O. Box 2713 Doha, Qatar**

**Phone: +974 66784334**

I have read the above statements and have been fully advised of the procedures to be used in this project. I have been given sufficient opportunity to ask any questions I had concerning the procedures and possible risks involved. I understand the potential risks involved and I assume them voluntarily. I likewise understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without being subjected to reproach.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C: AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT FORM

**AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT FORM**

**CONSENT TO AUDIO-RECORDING**

(Crafting a Strategic Blueprint for Qatar University's College of Medicine: Process and Outcomes).  
(College of Business and Economics)

This study involves the audio recording of your interview with the researcher. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording. Only the research team will be able to listen (view) the recordings.

The recordings will be erased once the research study is finalized. Neither your name nor any other identifying information (such as your voice or picture) will be used in presentations or in written products resulting from the study. |

By signing this form, I am allowing the researcher to audio record as part of this research. I also understand that this consent for recording is effective until the following date: December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_