

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Strategic Planning in Dental Education: A Case Study Adopting the Issue-Based Planning Model and SWOT Analysis Framework

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study describes a faculty development initiative through implementing the Issue-Based Strategic Planning Model and SWOT Analysis Framework to establish a sustainable strategic direction and strengthen faculty governance.

Methods: A qualitative case study design was adopted, involving document reviews, stakeholder consultations, and anonymous surveys. The strategic planning process engaged faculty leadership and academic staff using a bidirectional approach, top-down and bottom-up. It involved six key steps: initial preparation, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, identification of strategic issues, reassessment of mission and vision, development of action plans, and execution with monitoring. Data sources included document reviews, management meetings, anonymous surveys, and thematic analysis of responses.

Results: The strategic planning process fostered unified understanding and engagement across departments. Twelve innovative ideas were consolidated into four strategic pillars guiding institutional transformation. The SWOT analysis identified key strengths (e.g., qualified faculty, accredited curriculum), weaknesses (e.g., lack of curriculum mapping, limited research funding), opportunities (e.g., international collaboration, faculty training), and threats (e.g., financial constraints, outdated research infrastructure). Four strategic goals were formulated: enhancing teaching and learning, promoting research, strengthening administration, and expanding clinical and community services. Implementation led to increased research output, coordinated international programs, and improved alignment of departmental Key Performance Indicators with institutional objectives.

Conclusion: Adopting structured strategic planning models enabled the faculty to align institutional goals with broader educational priorities while reinforcing academic values. This case demonstrates that strategic planning is essential for fostering institutional resilience and continuous improvement in dental education, ensuring long-term relevance, sustainability, and impact.

1 | Introduction

Strategic planning has emerged as a key component of effective educational management in recent years, especially in higher education institutions (HEIs) that seek to improve educational outcomes and institutional reputation [1]. Due to the

complex dynamics of HEIs and the ever-changing external environment, robust strategic approaches are necessary. In the context of higher education, strategic planning is an essential component of both academic and non-academic success, as it creates an atmosphere that supports ongoing institutional development and advancement [2]. It serves as a guiding

framework that not only charts the course towards educational excellence but also ensures the alignment of institutional objectives with broader developmental goals. Through strategic planning, institutions can provide a blueprint to develop and refine their educational offerings and administrative services, ensuring they meet the quality demanded by all stakeholders, including students, faculty members, non-academic staff, and the community at large [3]. Moreover, strategic planning facilitates the identification of critical priorities, the effective use of resources, and the development of a cooperative atmosphere where academic and non-academic personnel work towards common goals [4, 5].

Established in 2006, the Kulliyyah (Faculty) of Dentistry, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), is one of the dental schools in the nation that offers both undergraduate and postgraduate dental programmes, which are integrated with Islamic values. Nonetheless, it has faced considerable challenges with leadership stability and strategy continuity, largely due to existing institutional policies. With top management positions, including the Dean and Deputy Deans, which typically change every 2 years, there has been a noticeable deviation from a common set of goals and a fragmented approach to leadership. This frequent change not only destabilises the faculty's strategic direction but also impacts the productivity of both staff and students [6]. The lack of continuity in leadership minimises the faculty's ability to implement long-term improvements and to build on past successes [7], thereby affecting its reputation and the quality of education it provides. Moreover, despite its 15-year history, the faculty has not adopted a formalised strategic planning model. This absence of a structured strategic framework has often led to ad-hoc measures and reactive management practices that are unable to address the root causes of issues or to leverage potential opportunities effectively. The need for a robust strategic planning model in the Kulliyyah of Dentistry IIUM is therefore evident, with the potential to enhance governance, clarify the faculty's vision and mission, and improve overall institutional resilience.

For the Kulliyyah of Dentistry IIUM, developing a shared vision through strategic planning is essential. Crafting this shared vision serves to unify the efforts of all staff members towards the dual objectives of academic excellence and ethical integrity. In addition, it is critical to harmonize the operations of various departments within the faculty. This alignment ensures that departments work synergistically, significantly enhancing the overall educational experience for students by fostering a cohesive and collaborative academic environment. This strategic approach not only streamlines departmental interactions but also reinforces the faculty's commitment to integrating Islamic principles with professional dental training. This is done through '*Ihsan*' (an Islamic principle meaning '*excellence in service delivered with sincerity, integrity, and accountability*') and a strong sense of social responsibility and accountability. Therefore, this case study aimed to report the adoption of the Issue-Based Strategic Planning Model in conjunction with the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis Framework as a strategic planning tool at the Kulliyyah of Dentistry IIUM. These models were

selected for their comprehensive nature and their proven effectiveness in other institutions or organisations. The Issue-Based or Goal-based Planning Model helps in identifying and systematically addressing key strategic issues, facilitating detailed task management and resource allocation [8]. The SWOT Analysis Framework aids in providing a holistic view of both internal capabilities and external environments [9, 10]. Collectively, these frameworks support the development of a coherent strategic plan that aligns with the faculty's Islamic values and its commitment to dental education excellence.

2 | Methods

2.1 | Ethical Approval

As this study is a descriptive case study primarily utilising secondary data and institutional documents, it did not involve human participants or identifiable personal information. Therefore, ethical approval was deemed unnecessary and was exempted for this study.

2.2 | Research Design

This is a qualitative case study detailing the strategic planning process at the Kulliyyah of Dentistry, IIUM, utilising the Issue-Based Strategic Planning Model and the SWOT Analysis Framework. The Issue-Based Strategic Planning Model, characterised by its sequential focus on identifying key issues, developing targeted action plans, implementing strategic initiatives, and ongoing monitoring and revision, served as the guiding framework for the faculty's strategic planning process. This qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth investigation of institutional practices, stakeholder perspectives, and document analyses to evaluate the effectiveness and application of strategic planning tools. A bidirectional strategic planning method was employed, combining top-down and bottom-up approaches. This process engaged the faculty's senior leadership, including the Dean, Deputy Deans, and Heads of Departments and Units, while incorporating input from various levels within the institution to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the faculty's goals and operational realities (Figure 1).

2.2.1 | Step 1: Initial Assessment and Preparation

The strategic planning process began with a briefing facilitated by an external local expert from the same university, a hospital-based quality assurance specialist, who shared insights and experiences from organisational strategic planning practices within the healthcare sector. This briefing aimed to inspire and educate the faculty's top management on effective planning strategies. Following this, the Dean and Deputy Deans organised a brainstorming session with the faculty's senior administrative officer to revisit and refine the faculty's vision and mission, ensuring that long-term goals and core values aligned with the broader strategic direction. The session was internally guided by the Dean, with support from the Deputy Deans, and used a combination of anonymised idea

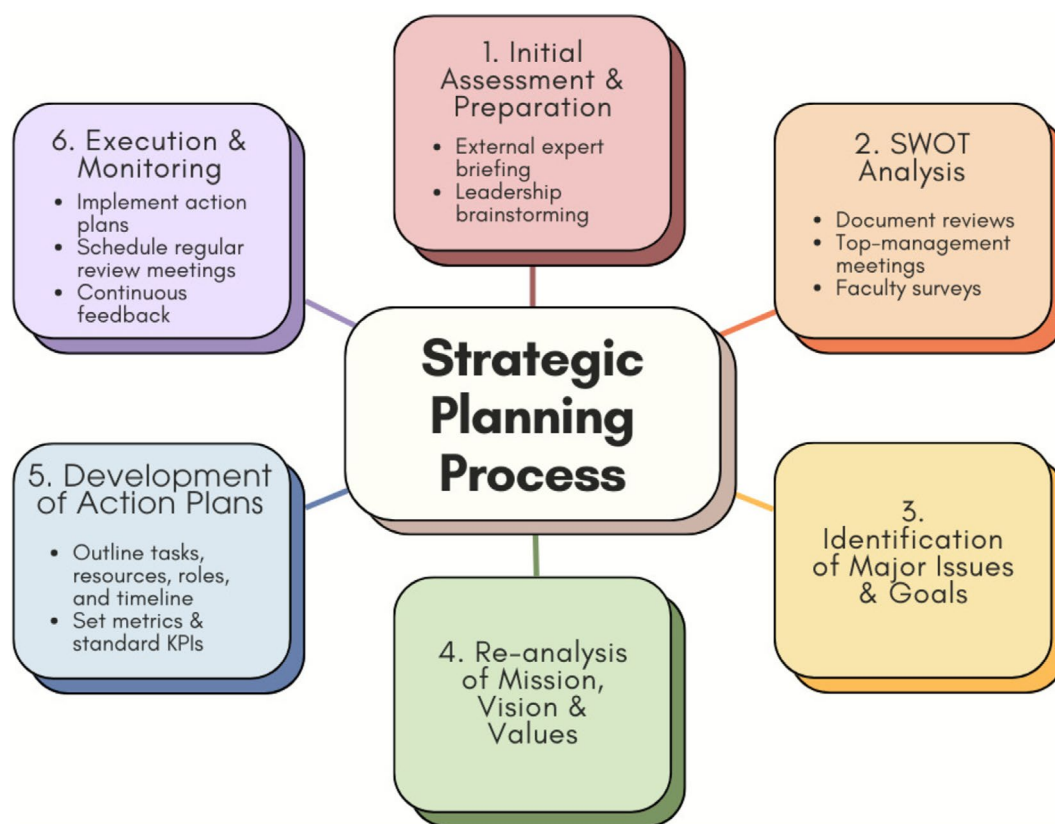


FIGURE 1 | The institutional strategic planning process.

generation and structured group dialogue to address potentially sensitive issues in a constructive manner.

2.2.2 | Step 2: Performing SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis was performed to evaluate the faculty's internal strengths and weaknesses, alongside external opportunities and threats. This foundational analysis informed the strategic direction by identifying factors impacting the faculty. The SWOT analysis was carried out through: (1) Document reviews, whereby existing documents, including the faculty's existing vision and missions, previous strategic plans, and annual performance reports were reviewed; (2) Top-management faculty meetings, in which several sessions were held with faculty leaders, administrators, and heads of each department to gather insights on the future directions of the faculty; and (3) Open-ended short-answer surveys were anonymously distributed to all faculty members to share their perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the dental faculty. Moreover, secondary data from archived documents were analysed to capture input from a broader stakeholder report, including alumni and external partners. Thematic analysis was applied to interpret the qualitative data gathered from open-ended survey responses.

2.2.3 | Step 3: Identification of Major Issues and Goals

Insights derived from the SWOT analysis led to the identification of key strategic issues. These issues represented significant

challenges and opportunities requiring attention to advance the faculty's mission, vision, and goals.

2.2.4 | Step 4: Re-Analysis of the Mission, Vision, and Values

Following the identification of major strategic issues, faculty leadership convened meetings to reassess and refine the faculty's mission, vision, and core values. This step ensured that the strategic goals aligned with the overarching mission of the university and addressed the evolving needs of dental education. The sessions focused on cultivating a forward-looking, inclusive, and community-oriented identity for the dental faculty.

2.2.5 | Step 5: Development of Action Plans

Action plans were crafted for each identified strategic goal, outlining the steps required, necessary resources, assigned responsibilities, and timelines. Performance metrics were established to monitor progress. Additionally, targeted discussions addressed departmental and individual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to align them with strategic goals. This involved reviewing the previous year's KPIs and updating them to reflect current needs and priorities, which apply to both clinical and non-clinical departments. A standardised KPI template was created for departments to outline their goals under pre-defined categories, ensuring consistency across the faculty.

2.2.6 | Step 6: Execution and Monitoring of the Action Plan

The final phase involved implementing the strategic action plans and establishing monitoring mechanisms to track progress. Regular review meetings were scheduled to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives and ensure alignment with strategic objectives. This iterative process allowed for continuous improvement and adaptation.

3 | Results

3.1 | Initial Assessment and Preparation

The initial briefing by the external expert marked a significant turning point in fostering a shared understanding of the strategic planning process. With 95% of the faculty's leadership in attendance, the session effectively highlighted the importance of structured strategic planning and set a clear direction for the next phases. Participant feedback revealed a stronger awareness of the need for long-term planning, with 28 out of 51 respondents (55%) expressing greater confidence in the faculty's strategic direction. A subsequent brainstorming session, attended by the entire senior management team, resulted in the development of 12 initial ideas to refine the faculty's vision and mission statements. These included:

- i. Integrating Islamic values into dental education
- ii. Strengthening the research culture with clear publication targets
- iii. Establishing formal research clusters to foster interdisciplinary collaboration
- iv. Expanding community outreach initiatives
- v. Enhancing partnerships with industry and external stakeholders
- vi. Introducing capacity-building programmes for early-career faculty.
- vii. Conducting comprehensive curriculum mapping.
- viii. Updating teaching methodologies to reflect modern student-centered practices
- ix. Increasing faculty development in leadership and management
- x. Improving administrative structures for greater efficiency
- xi. Investing in digital platforms and educational technologies
- xii. Expanding international collaborations to enhance institutional visibility

Some of these proposals represented novel directions, such as digital transformation and capacity-building programmes for early-career faculty, while others were refinements of existing foundational themes, such as embedding Islamic values and extending community engagement. Together, these 12 ideas provided a balance of innovation and continuity and were

subsequently consolidated into four strategic pillars (teaching and learning, research and publication, administration, and clinical/community services) that formed the backbone of the faculty's strategic framework.

3.2 | SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis was conducted over 4 weeks, engaging all departments and units within the faculty. Document reviews showed the lack of formal strategic plans in the past, suggesting the need for structured institutional planning. Insights from top management meetings highlighted key strengths, including a well-equipped clinical facility, dedicated faculty, and a distinctive curriculum incorporating Islamic values. However, weaknesses such as inconsistent leadership, limited research funding, and high turnover among senior academic staff were noted. Open-ended surveys collected responses from approximately 70% of faculty members. Through this SWOT analysis, the Kulliyyah of Dentistry at IIUM has gained valuable insights into the internal and external factors that may influence its strategic direction moving forward.

3.3 | Major Issues and Goals

Faculty strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats have been refined through the thematic analysis of qualitative data from various sources. The key findings from each aspect of the analysis are summarised in Table 1. Key strengths identified include high-quality teaching staff with specialised qualifications (specialists or PhD holders), a well-structured curriculum accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, and a vibrant research culture supported by experienced faculty and dedicated research clusters. However, significant weaknesses were noted, such as the lack of curriculum mapping, outdated teaching methodologies, and inadequate administrative staffing. Opportunities for growth encompass enhanced faculty development through workshops and international collaboration, while threats include limited financial resources, competitive pressures from other dental schools, and outdated research infrastructure.

Following the SWOT analysis, six major strategic issues were identified and grouped under the four pillars of the faculty's strategic framework: teaching and learning (academic), research and publication, administration, and clinical services. Prioritisation exercises, conducted through faculty-wide consultations, led to the formation of four primary strategic goals: (1) Strengthen teaching and learning to boost academic excellence, (2) Promote research and increase publication output, (3) Improve administrative efficiency and leadership stability, and (4) Expand clinical services and enhance community engagement.

3.4 | Re-Analysis of the Mission, Vision, and Values

Based on the findings from the SWOT analysis, the faculty's mission, vision, and values were reassessed to ensure alignment. The faculty's core values have been refined to align with the changing

TABLE 1 | SWOT analysis findings.

Strengths		
1.	Educational quality	– High-quality teaching staff – Educators are specialists or PhD holders – Well-designed curriculum – Accreditation by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency
2.	Team dynamics	– Young, skilful, and growing staff – Effective communication
3.	Service scope and diversity	– Offers affordable and accessible dental services – Strong community outreach program
4.	Research excellence	– Experienced lecturers with diverse expertise – Dedicated research steering committee – Kulliyyah's own dental journal – Activation of research clusters
Weaknesses		
1.	Academia-related issues	– Lack curriculum mapping – Lack of advanced teaching methodologies – Inadequate teaching facilities and human resources
2.	Administrative challenges	– Lack of administrative staff – Unclear job scopes – Lack of guidance and mentoring.
3.	Service delivery shortcomings	– Lack of human and financial resources – Insufficient emphasis on community service by educators
4.	Research limitations	– Inadequate research facilities and funding – Lack of publications – Insufficient relevant guidance and mentoring from higher authority
Opportunities		
1.	Faculty development and training	– Training and workshops – Faculty exchanges – Invite visiting scholars
2.	Administrative improvement	– Improving staff personal well-being – Workshops for administrative skills upscaling – Mentoring for new staff
3.	Service expansion	– Improve patient satisfaction – More services to the community
4.	Research collaboration and infrastructure	– Equip with advanced technology – Foster collaboration with other universities – Industries collaboration
Threats		
1.	Human resource and financial constraints	– Shortage of academic and administrative staff – Financial limitations to maintain quality education and services
2.	Staff attitude and work environment	– Lack of empathy among staff – Reluctance to share knowledge – Working in silos – Lack of patience or understanding in communication
3.	External competitive pressures	– Competition from other dental schools – Changes in healthcare policies
4.	Research funding and facilities	– Outdated laboratory facilities – No direction to conduct high-quality research

landscape of dental education and healthcare, particularly through the adoption of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework mandated under the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) Act 2007 and consistent with the Malaysian National Education Philosophy (NEP). This alignment ensures that graduates are equipped not only with professional knowledge and clinical skills but also with strong character, personality development, and shared values. By fostering unity in diversity within the community, these values promote ethical, patient-centred care, collaborative interdisciplinary practice, and social responsibility, which can prepare graduates to contribute meaningfully to oral health both locally and globally. Integrity, inclusivity, and lifelong learning have been recognised as the foundational pillars shaping the faculty's operations and educational strategies. These values highlight the significance of cultivating an equitable learning environment, encouraging continuous professional growth, and upholding integrity in both academic and clinical settings. By integrating these values into its guiding principles, the faculty reaffirms its commitment to producing well-rounded and ethical dental professionals.

3.5 | Development of Action Plans

The action plan under the strategic priority of 'Quality Education' focuses on enhancing the education system by prioritising accessibility and equity. This involves updating curricula to reflect modern dental practices and ensuring that all students have equal learning opportunities within an inclusive academic environment. For 'Strategic Industrial Partnership', the plan emphasises improving dental education through active collaboration with various agencies. This includes strengthening cross-sector partnerships, fostering public-private initiatives, and promoting cooperation between agencies in education and research. Such partnerships are essential to keeping the faculty aligned with advancements in the dental field and industry trends.

In the area of 'Community Empowerment', the faculty is committed to increasing awareness and launching initiatives that empower local communities. A key aspect of this plan is improving communication skills among dental professionals and fostering supportive environments through agency collaborations. This will create opportunities for community-based learning and public health outreach. The 'Advance Research, Development & Innovation' priority aims to cultivate a culture of research and innovation within the institution. The plan encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and mentorship programs to guide early-career researchers. These initiatives are designed to push the research agenda forward, ensuring faculty members receive the support and resources needed to thrive in their fields.

To maintain 'Quality Assurance', the faculty is dedicated to producing safe and competent dental professionals by continuously assessing and improving the quality of dental education and care. This includes implementing rigorous quality control measures across academic and clinical practices. Lastly, the 'Digital Transformation' plan leverages cutting-edge dental technology to develop comprehensive, high-tech teaching and learning systems. This involves upgrading digital platforms, integrating advanced tools into the curriculum, and ensuring students and faculty are equipped to adapt to emerging technologies in dental education and practice. By aligning these strategic action plans (Figure 2) with the broader goals of the faculty, the faculty is positioned for long-term growth, academic excellence, and continued leadership in dental education and research.

Of the six departments comprising 14 units, 12 units (86%) submitted revised KPI templates, reflecting broad engagement and commitment to the new strategic framework. These updated templates were carefully crafted to align with the faculty's strategic priorities and establish a unified structure of performance

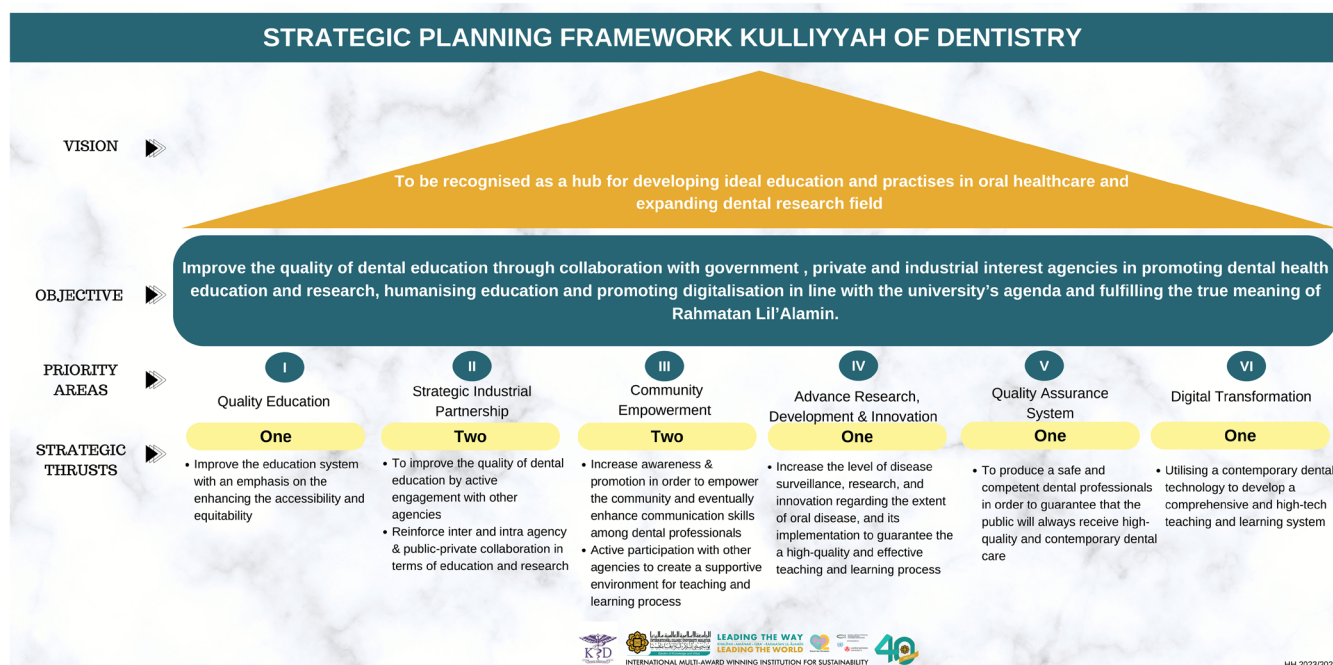


FIGURE 2 | Strategic Planning Framework of the Kulliyah of Dentistry IIUM (adapted from: <https://kulliyah.iium.edu.my/kod/2024/02/05/kulliyah-strategic-planning/>).

metrics. The standardised KPI templates introduced specific and measurable benchmarks to assess progress across various areas of responsibility. This not only improved transparency but also gave faculty members a clearer understanding of performance targets and opportunities for growth. Ultimately, these implementations are expected to streamline performance evaluations, support relevant professional development initiatives, and advance the faculty's excellence in dental education, research, and community engagement.

3.6 | Execution and Monitoring of the Action Plan

Regular progress review meetings were introduced with department or unit heads. Early progress reports showed positive results, including a rise of approximately 36% in faculty research publication outputs within the first 6 months of implementation. This was accompanied by an increase of about 15% in grant applications and a 20% rise in manuscript submissions to peer-reviewed journals, reflecting broader faculty engagement with research initiatives. In addition, the faculty successfully coordinated international initiatives such as the International Dental Research Program, co-organised with the International Association for Dental Students. Monitoring mechanisms included regular performance reviews and feedback loops across departments, allowing for ongoing improvements. Adjustments were made as necessary to ensure the strategic plan adapted to emerging challenges and opportunities. By the end of the first year post-implementation, most initiatives had been launched or were underway, demonstrating strong engagement and dedication throughout the faculty.

4 | Discussion

The implementation of the Issue-Based Strategic Planning Model and SWOT Analysis Framework has yielded encouraging outcomes, highlighting the benefits of structured strategic planning in a higher education context. The results demonstrated not only the feasibility of applying this model in an academic institution but also its capacity to foster institutional clarity, alignment, and progress in various strategic domains. The success of the initial assessment and preparation phase can be largely attributed to the effective engagement of faculty leadership and the structured involvement of an external expert. This external facilitation played a crucial role in reframing the leadership's understanding of strategic planning from an administrative task to a transformative institutional process. External expert judgement is crucial for effective scenario planning, aiding in the early detection of emerging threats and opportunities that internal advice may overlook [11]. Nevertheless, the success of such external contributions depends heavily on the leadership's ability to understand, adopt, and integrate strategic planning frameworks meaningfully. Equally important is securing stakeholder buy-in and ensuring strong leadership commitment, both of which are essential for the effective implementation of strategic planning in health professions education [5].

The SWOT analysis proved invaluable in surfacing institutional realities that were previously unarticulated. Its structured approach allowed for data triangulation through document

reviews, leadership discussions, and anonymous faculty surveys. The identification of core strengths, such as a qualified teaching staff, an accredited curriculum, and strong community outreach, helped build confidence and a sense of institutional pride. The quality of higher education relies on the development of professionally competent and pedagogically trained teaching staff, where pedagogical competencies significantly influence students' perceptions of their teachers [12]. Dental faculty members, while often clinically experienced, frequently lack formal training in teaching, indicating a need for more structured onboarding and professional development [13]. Structured faculty training has been reported to significantly improve faculty satisfaction and competence in clinical teaching [14]. Conversely, the transparent acknowledgment of weaknesses, such as inadequate teaching methodologies and administrative staffing, reflected a culture of introspection and readiness for reform. These findings echo previous studies highlighting the value of SWOT analysis in promoting self-awareness and planning adaptability in higher education during periods of transformation [9, 15].

Interestingly, the analysis also revealed significant threats such as competition from other dental schools and a lack of updated research infrastructure, demonstrating the importance of external benchmarking. External benchmarking is essential for sustaining competitiveness and driving continuous improvement in quality and institutional performance [16]. It provides a structured approach for universities to compare their standards with peers, allowing dental schools to identify best practices in teaching, research, and administration from leading institutions. This can inform strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing educational quality and research output. While such benchmarking is valuable, it is important to note that reliable comparative data, such as students' enrolment and research productivity across Malaysian dental schools, is limited, as no national standardised reporting framework currently exists. Consequently, competitiveness in the local context is often inferred from institutional reputation, graduate outcomes, and research visibility rather than from direct statistical comparisons. It became evident in the present case study that, although the faculty had strong internal resources, it was not insulated from broader environmental pressures. This recognition prompted the prioritisation of strategic issues into four pillars: teaching and learning, research and publication, administration, and clinical services. The formation of these pillars enabled the faculty to set coherent and actionable goals that were both responsive to existing gaps and aligned with future aspirations.

Comparable initiatives in other institutions reinforce the value of structured strategic planning in health professions education. For example, a qualitative SWOT-based case study in a Malaysian public university highlighted the importance of aligning departmental goals with institutional ambitions in transforming into a regional education hub, emphasising leadership commitment and resource mobilisation [17]. Similarly, the University of North Carolina Adams School of Dentistry employed a three-phase strategic planning framework for inter-professional education, demonstrating how broad stakeholder engagement and clear benchmarking supported curriculum reform [10]. Large-scale curriculum SWOT analyses across North American dental schools have also shown how systematically identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

can inform actionable educational improvements [18]. In comparison, the present case study demonstrates how similar principles were operationalised within the context of an Islamic values-based dental faculty, yielding strategic pillars, measurable KPIs, and early positive outcomes in research and community engagement. This suggests that while institutional contexts differ, SWOT analysis and structured planning provide a flexible yet robust framework for guiding sustainable transformation in health professions education.

A notable strength of the strategic planning process was the reassessment of the faculty's mission, vision, and values. Reassessing the vision, missions, and values of the faculty ensures strategic plan alignment with the institution's core purpose and future aspirations, setting clear, desirable, and engaging directions for students, staff, and faculty [19]. This helped position the faculty as a forward-looking institution while still grounded in ethical principles. This fusion of tradition and progressiveness may serve as a model for other faith-based or values-oriented academic institutions worldwide. The development of action plans for each strategic goal demonstrated operational clarity and resource alignment. For instance, the focus on "Quality Education" and "Digital Transformation" signalled an awareness of evolving pedagogical paradigms, such as technology-enhanced learning and competency-based education [20, 21]. The introduction of standardised KPI templates further institutionalised accountability, enabling departments to monitor and measure progress through consistent performance metrics. This is supported by a previous study that reported that integrating performance management into strategic planning leads to higher transparency and stronger institutional outcomes in universities [4].

The early outcomes of implementation were promising. A rise in faculty research publications suggests that the strategic plan was more than a theoretical exercise; it was a living document guiding meaningful actions. The use of feedback loops and review mechanisms also ensured that strategic goals remained dynamic and could evolve in response to emerging challenges [22]. These outcomes validate the iterative nature of the Issue-Based Planning Model, which emphasizes ongoing evaluation and revision.

Despite these successes, the study had several limitations. While the approach and results provide valuable insights, institutions with different governance structures, cultural contexts, or resource constraints may encounter challenges in replicating the implementation process described in the present study. The qualitative descriptive nature of the case study also does not permit statistical generalisation. The SWOT analysis was intentionally scoped as a faculty development exercise, focusing on academic and administrative staff to establish a robust internal baseline for institutional alignment. External stakeholder input was therefore limited to secondary data sources, which may have constrained the analysis by omitting direct perspectives from current students, industry partners, and community stakeholders. Future iterations of the strategic planning cycle should expand to incorporate these voices more directly, ensuring that student experience, patient engagement, and community needs are explicitly reflected in curriculum and policy development. Nevertheless, the study offers several advantages from a practical standpoint. It provides a replicable model for other

dental schools or faculties in similar contexts that seek to develop strategic clarity and institutional cohesion. Furthermore, the successful use of a combination of bottom-up and top-down planning approaches illustrates the importance of balancing leadership vision, an increasingly recommended strategy in higher education change management [23].

Looking ahead, several recommendations emerge. First, institutions implementing similar planning processes should consider extending the use of structured stakeholder engagement tools such as focus group discussions, town hall meetings, and real-time feedback platforms. This will ensure that strategic plans are informed by diverse perspectives and have broader community ownership. Second, future iterations of the strategic plan should incorporate long-term evaluation metrics that assess not only output but also impact, such as student learning outcomes, graduate employability, and staff satisfaction. Third, there is merit in conducting comparative studies across faculties or institutions [24], especially those that adopt different planning models to evaluate the relative effectiveness of various frameworks. Finally, there is a need for ongoing capacity-building in strategic thinking and planning within health professions education. This includes leadership development programs, workshops on evidence-based management, and mentorship for early-career academics in administrative roles. By institutionalising strategic literacy, faculties can create a sustainable culture of planning, evaluation, and continuous improvement.

5 | Conclusion

This case study demonstrates the potential of adopting the Issue-Based Strategic Planning Model and SWOT Analysis Framework in a dental academic setting. Through a structured and iterative approach, the faculty has successfully identified institutional gaps, aligned its vision, missions, and priority areas, as well as implemented measurable action plans that fostered tangible improvements in teaching, research, administration, and community engagement. Moving forward, sustaining progress will require continuous stakeholder engagement through structured mechanisms such as town hall meetings, focus group discussions, digital feedback platforms, and alumni consultations. Long-term evaluation should incorporate standardized and transparent metrics, including local and international graduate employability rates, undergraduate and postgraduate student satisfaction indices, faculty retention levels, research publication output across recognised databases, and community outreach participation. This will allow meaningful comparisons across institutions and drive continuous improvement rather than competition. In parallel, capacity-building initiatives, such as faculty development workshops on strategic leadership and data-driven planning, are essential to reinforce institutional resilience and foster a culture of excellence in health professions education.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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