



Functional Strategies and Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

Performance is about creating value, and organizations create value using their productive assets, and institutions of higher learning rely on their ability to make equal or greater value that meets or exceeds their expected value. This research investigated how functional strategies affect the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The study pursued two specific objectives: first, to determine how operations strategy influences the performance of higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC; and second, to establish how internationalization strategy influences the performance of higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC. The study was grounded in two theoretical frameworks, namely systems theory and social exchange theory. Methodologically, it adopted a positivist research philosophy along with a descriptive research design. The target population for the study consisted of 1,059 individuals, made up of the boards of directors of universities, university council members, faculty council members, and departmental council members. To determine an appropriate sample size, the study employed the Yamane formula, which produced a sample of 290 respondents. These respondents were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. Data were gathered by means of a structured questionnaire and were analyzed using SPSS version 27. With respect to findings, the study established a positive and statistically significant correlation between operations strategy and the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The study also found that there was a positive relationship between internationalization strategy and the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the management of higher learning institutions should review their work processes in order to effectively streamline their operations for improved performance. The study further recommends that the management of higher learning institutions should fully implement their internationalization strategy, particularly concerning partnerships, so as to ensure that their students and staff gain international exposure.

Keyword: *Functional Strategies, Operations Strategy, Internationalization Strategy, Performance*

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1.0 Introduction

Higher learning institutions are organizations that are mandated to offer formal post-secondary educational programmes in a country. They may be either public or private entities and may operate as either not-for-profit or profit-based organizations. Higher learning institutions are essential actors in the development of a country as they have a unique capacity to develop skills and foster knowledge, and the potential to mobilize educational resource so as to provide learning opportunities for diverse populations (Abdelaziz, 2022). Public institutions of higher learning carry out their functions within an environment shaped by numerous stakeholders. These institutions maintain ties to external parties, including the ministry of education, the department of education, and various other government bodies as well as private agencies. There are also different players within the higher learning institutions such as staff at different levels and students with each one of them fulfilling their various responsibilities and roles in an endeavor to enhance the academic performance (Supriadi et al., 2021).

In Ukraine, a study by Danyluik et al. (2020) noted that functional strategies such as Human Resource (HR) strategy, production strategy, innovation strategy, investment strategy had a significant influence on organizational performance. The study suggested that organizations should modernize, reconstruct and establish long term investments while retraining employees for improved performance. In Poland, a study by Krzysztof (2019) established that functional strategies helped managers focus on an institution's activities, with the most adopted strategies being financial strategy, HR strategy, marketing strategy, and production strategy. In Argentina, a study by Ferrero et al. (2019) found that functional strategies had a significant and positive influence on performance. The study recommended that institutions should review their functional strategies in line with the organizational goals for better performance. A study by Igbal et al. (2022) in Pakistan noted that the implementation of functional strategies in institutions of higher learning had a significant effect on performance. The study recommended that middle managers should be recognized for their role in the implementation of functional strategies, as they created a link between the corporate level and operational level for improved performance.

In Kenya, a study by Njogu and Kipkorir (2022) noted that functional strategies had a significant influence on performance. The findings indicated that operational, marketing, financial, and human resource strategies had a notable impact on performance, highlighting the need for their enhancement. Another study by Opar and Mwasiagi (2023) established that functional strategies affect the performance of organizations and thus cross collaborations within the organization should be encouraged for enhanced performance. Orwa et al. (2022) also noted that functional strategies significantly influence performance and thus the management should formulate and implement functional strategies to effectively boost performance. Saidi et al. (2021) found that in Nigeria, functional strategies significantly influence performance. The findings suggested that organizations should recognize and prioritize the strategic importance of functional strategies in attaining their objectives. In South Africa, a study by Ooshtuizen et al. (2021) established that functional level strategy requires new technology, fostering a culture of excellence and innovation, and human capital development for enhanced performance.

Public institutions of higher learning in DRC which are divided into universities, higher education institutions and higher technical institutes are governed by the Ministry of Higher and University Education. In addition, they are managed by a management committee made up of a Rector/Director General who is assisted by two General Secretaries (academic and administrative) and a Budget Administrator (Bakamana, 2021). The public institutions of higher learning are

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expected to assist in streamlining the higher education system in DRC which has suffered from decades of war, political instability and Economic decline (Etshim, 2017). They are expected to implement the Education Sector Strategy 2016-2025 which intends to streamline the implementation and evaluation of policies for improved academic performance (Groleau, 2017). According to the sector strategy, three strategic axes have been decided. These are establishing transparent and effective governance, promoting a more equitable education system at the service of growth and employment and creating the conditions for a quality education system. For higher learning institutions, the strategy offers openness to the world and to modern technologies and the strengthening of research (VLIR-UOS Country Reference Framework for DRC, 2024).

Even though the demand for access to higher education is very high, public higher learning institutions have an outdated curriculum and inherent policies which do not provide graduates with necessary skills and knowledge in order to easily enter the labour market. Yet, education and relevant skills are the main factors of good labour market outcome. In addition, the academia in DRC has not been spared by high levels of corruption which is attributed to a low salary that administrators, senior lecturers, professors and assistants receive from the government (Etshim, 2017). Further, the Congolese higher education system is struggling with the lack of qualified personnel who are crucial in providing good governance to improve the public higher learning institutions performance, as some of the institutions do not meet the standards set by the Ministry of Education (Tshiunza, 2019). This has led to prospective students leaving the country to go abroad in order to pursue higher education, acquire necessary skills, and then come back to help the country towards development (Bakamana, 2021).

Khenge and Kinda (2019) established that there was a positive relationship between functional strategies and performance in DRC. The study also found that regular remuneration, a good working environment, good working conditions, Autonomy in performing tasks and collaboration between colleagues' increases productivity. Another study by Mulumeoderhwa (2023) found that functional strategies significantly enhanced organizational performance. The study also found that the level of education, production system, and membership of employees to a professional body exerted a significant influence on the performance. Kasongo and Ditend (2020) study also noted that in DRC, functional strategies had a significant impact on performance. The study recommended that companies should come up with a strategic matrix that fully exploits their functional potential for better performance. Mokonzi, et al. (2019) noted that there was a positive relationship between functional strategies and performance of academic institutions. The study further showed that beyond the effect of individual characteristics, class characteristics and school characteristics also improved performance. The study suggested that the principal's should undergo training on effective implementation of functional strategies so as to extend their experience to other employees for better productivity.

In another study, Mwenzi et al. (2023) noted that functional strategies influenced the academic performance in universities. The study also concluded that relationships with the teacher, activities academics, the security feelings and equal relations are factors to prioritized as the educational actors would can act intend to bring students to achieve good performance. In addition, a study by Loitilangene et al. (2022) on functional strategies and performance recommended that institutions should integrated their HR strategy with their operational and financial strategy for better performance. The study also suggested that institutions should structure a management control body in its functional organization for improved productivity.

Within any organization, business strategy operates across three primary levels: corporate-level strategy, business-level strategy, and functional-level strategy. Functional strategies sit at the bottom of this hierarchy, working to support and enable the implementation of both business-level and corporate-level strategies. These strategies center on the specific action plans developed by individual functional areas to meet established business goals, since they govern the day-to-day operations within each department. Their purpose is to enhance how effectively an institution's operations run across its different functional units or departments. This is because, typically, functional-level strategies are designed to boost efficiency, enhance quality, renew the business, and respond effectively to customer needs. This is why they are aligned to the higher-level strategies (Grunig, et al., 2022). Functional strategies depend on the organizational units or divisions based on the structure which are meant to achieve its strategic objectives. The methodological approach to a functional strategy involves outlining expectations to clearly define the organizational context for all stakeholders, verifying the business context through the confirmation of the vision and mission, setting goals and objectives, developing an action plan that summarizes the sequence of steps to attain an objective, assessing the institution's capabilities, and setting measures and metrics. Once this is done, an institution is able to implement the strategy as it is clearly articulated for all functions (Asoba & Mefi, 2021).

According to Wardhana (2024), operations strategy refers to the system an organization implements to achieve its long-term goals and mission. It acts as a guiding principle that organizations follow for planning, analyzing, and executing its operations. An effective operations strategy should ensure that people, processes, and products are aligned with the institution's overall mission to promote sustainable growth and long-term success. In higher learning institutions, operations strategy plays a critical role by guiding management in identifying priority areas that require resource allocation and determining the most efficient ways to deploy those resources. Additionally, it enables institutional leaders to detect departments that are underutilizing resources and develop appropriate measures to enhance their efficiency and performance. This enables the departments and faculties to maximize efficiency. Such effective and efficient systems are created according to organizational goals and objectives to identify opportunities for improvement in processes, standards and best practices (Warren & Churchill, 2022).

Internationalization strategy is an approach used by organizations to go global. The two forms of internalization are introjection and integration. Introjection occurs when an individual adopts a value or regulatory process without fully accepting it as their own, whereas integration involves incorporating the regulation into one's core identity, making it consistent with their sense of self. Internationalization strategy has transformed the higher education landscape as it has brought diverse benefits to students, institutions and countries such as student mobility, improved academic quality, internationally oriented students and staff, and national and international citizenship for students and staff from underdeveloped countries (Sika & Othoo, 2022). In addition, internationalization strategy has enabled institutions of higher learning to mobilize talent in support of global research, enhancement of curriculum with international content, knowledge translation and acquisition, fostering intercultural skills, creation of international networks and improved learning outcomes (Akinbod et al., 2023).

Performance is about creating value, and organizations create value using their productive assets (Carini et al., 2019). Institutions of higher learning depend on their capacity to create value that meets or surpasses stakeholders' expectations. Academic performance refers to the qualitative and quantitative results achieved through the learning process, as assessed by instructors using

prescribed objective evaluation methods (Tadese et al., 2022). It is widely regarded as the core focus of the entire education system. In higher education institutions, academic performance is reflected in various dimensions, including student affairs and learning, research, community engagement, financial management, innovation, and development (Chukwemeka, 2020). Furthermore, according to Acevedo-de-los-Rios and Rondinel-Oviedo (2021), the performance of individual stakeholders within higher education institutions comprises behaviours that can either support or hinder the achievement of institutional objectives.

Brandt and Moshonas (2020) noted that the educational decentralization has resulted in an expansion of educational government units and offices in the light of a poorly funded education system. The access to education in public institutions of higher learning has thus been affected as institutions increase funds in an endeavor to fund their activities. Further, the multiplication of legal and institutional frameworks, regulatory confusion, arbitrariness in financial matters and uncertainty have had a negative effect on academic performance of public universities as the budgetary concerns appear irrelevant. According to Rurofum (2020), failure to perform well is a major concern for most higher education institutions in DRC which has led to the low success rates that have shaken higher education in recent years. The academic years have also been regularly interrupted by strikes by students, teachers and non-teaching staff. In DRC, the inefficiency of higher education is much more evident in public institutions of higher learning.

Menga-Mokombi(2020) posited that in DRC, poor implementation of strategies, lack of networking and inter-sectoral cooperation, limited influence of academic and professional associations and lack of public resources allocated to research and development (R & D) as the main challenges affecting performance in public institutions of higher learning. The resources allocated to the education sector constitute merely 1.8% of the national GDP, which itself stands at only 10.9%, rendering this allocation grossly inadequate to support the operational needs of public higher learning institutions and, by extension, to enhance their performance outcomes. Furthermore, given that the majority of online academic resources are published predominantly in English, public higher learning institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) encounter an additional financial burden associated with developing French-language instructional content and materials for their student population. Compounding this challenge is the chronic underinvestment in research and development within the DRC, a situation attributable to severely constrained public budgets that not only undermine staff morale but also impede systemic growth and innovation. It is against this backdrop that the present study seeks to investigate the influence of functional strategies on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to Supriadi, et al. (2021), strategy implementation in higher education plays a pivotal role in the growth of an institution and wellbeing of students as it ensures that the processes and operations in use enable the institution to achieve its set objectives by involving different stakeholders for enhanced performance. However, in DRC, there is a dysfunctional governance system in public institutions of higher learning as those chosen to implement strategies are politically appointed and lack the required skills (Menga-Mokombi, 2020). The higher education institutions structural and governance challenges also threaten to compromise the quality of teaching and research provided by the institutions (Risasi & Sabiti, 2020). Rurofum (2020) also notes that failure to perform well is a major concern for most higher education institutions in DRC. This could be attributed to the use of outdated curriculum and inherent policies which do not provide graduates with necessary skills and knowledge for the current labour market (Bakamana,

2021). It has also been noted that the problem of deterioration in teaching is due to the reduced number of qualified teaching staff (Menga-Mokombi, 2020; Brandt & Moshonas, 2020; Bakamana, 2021; Tshiunza, 2019; and Risasi & Sabiti, 2020).

According to statistics by the Ministry of Education, between 2012 and 2020, the number of professors increased by only 6.4%. As for academic supervision, the ratio of supervisor to student is one to 65, which is a major challenge in producing quality scientific research (Kabuya, 2022). Between 2015-2016 and 2019-2020 only 717 theses were approximately defended in public universities (Ministère de l'Éducation de la RDC, 2022). Despite enrolling many students in public universities in the DRC, statistics show that those who graduate are only 17%, which is a high dropout rate (Enguta, 2020). Research also shows that out of the 9,000 students who graduate yearly from the public universities, only less than 100 manage to get employment (2020). This has been attributed to the academic programs which do not expose the students to internship opportunities which are crucial for professional experience (Balembe, 2020).

Although studies on functional strategies and performance of public higher learning institutions have been undertaken, there is scarcity of documented studies of such a study having been carried out among public institutions of higher learning especially in Kinshasa, DRC which this study seeks to fill. The study by Nfunkwa and Mwenzi (2023) was carried out in the Department of Psychology in University of Kinshasa and the study by Mwenzi (2022) was a comparative study between three private and public universities in Kinshasa. According to the reviewed studies, researchers have looked at various dimensions of academic performance: The study by Nfunkwa and Mwenzi (2023) focused on teaching quality and the study by Mwenzi (2022) focused on student creativity. The current study sought to bridge the gap on academic performance in Kinshasa by looking at the dimensions of efficiency in teaching, research and scientific publication, enrolment rates and number of programs offered in the public institutions of higher learning. The study was also carried out in all the public institutions of higher learning which according to the Higher Education Institutions Ministry enrolled 66.8% of students between 2019 and 2020 and have the highest number of teaching staff at 19.2% (*Cellule Technique Pour less Statistiques de l'Éducation, 2021*).

Further, the reviewed studies have looked at various dimensions of functional strategies: Abdelaziz (2022) looked at the dimension of implementing good governance, Khenge and Kinda (2019) focused on the dimensions of HR strategy, Kasongo and Ditend (2020) looked at marketing strategy and innovation strategy while Mwenzi et al. (2023) looked at innovation strategy. The current study therefore sought to fill the gap on functional strategies in public institutions of higher learning by looking at the dimensions of operations strategy and internationalization strategy.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i. To assess the extent to which operations strategy influences the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC.
- ii. To examine the effect of internationalization strategy on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What is the influence of operations strategy on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC?
- ii. How does internationalization strategy influence the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC?

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Systems Theory

Systems theory was first proposed by Bertalanffy in the 1940s as a means of addressing the growing complexity of global challenges. It conceptualizes interacting processes and examines how they influence one another over time to sustain the continuity of a larger, interconnected whole. Central to this theory is the premise that the whole exceeds the sum of its individual parts; consequently, a system cannot be comprehensively understood merely by examining its constituent components in isolation (Bertalanffy, 1968). The systems model comprises four fundamental elements: input, process, output, and feedback. Process denotes the operational activities through which inputs are converted into the intended outputs, while inputs refer to the essential resources subjected to this transformation. Feedback, in turn, serves as the regulatory or control mechanism within the system (Harney, 2024).

Systems theory states that the complexity characterizing an overall system arises from the interactions among its numerous smaller, constituent subsystems. Each system possesses distinct causal boundaries, is shaped by the context within which it operates, and is defined by its structure, function, and role, all of which are manifested through its relationships with other systems (Newman & Newman, 2020). The theory's underlying objectives are to model the dynamics, constraints, conditions, and interrelationships within a system, and to identify principles, such as purpose, measurement, methods, and tools, that can be recognized and applied across other systems at varying levels of nesting and across diverse contexts, ultimately working toward optimized equifinality. In essence, systems theory is about developing broadly applicable concepts and principles, as opposed to concepts and principles specific to one domain of knowledge (Bertalanffy, 1972).

Despite its widespread application, Systems Theory has been subject to several criticisms. One key concern is that, although it emphasizes that the whole is greater than the sum of its individual components, it offers limited practical direction for managers and organizational leaders. Consequently, managerial roles within the framework remain vaguely defined and overly generalized. Johnson (2019) argues that while the theory successfully challenges the traditional one-way approach to organizational analysis, it fails to propose a sufficiently practical alternative model. Furthermore, critics contend that Systems Theory may not adequately account for an individual's current circumstances in all situations. Its broad and abstract nature can also make it difficult to translate theoretical concepts into concrete and actionable strategies, particularly in addressing cultural and policy-related issues. The theory has also been critiqued for its complexity because while it is useful in analyzing complex systems, it can also be challenging to apply, particularly when there are a large number of system components or when the system is constantly changing (Skyttner, 2006).

The theory was deemed relevant in this study as it supports the operations strategy by showing that by the public institutions of higher learning ensuring that their policies, processes and standards

are aligned to achieving the set organizational objectives they will be able to enhance their performance. The theory also highlights how they can put in place their organizational policies so as to guide their strategy implementation for better performance. The processes in the public institutions of higher learning in Kinshasa can also be streamlined to promote efficiency of operations which will boost the organizational performance. In addition, it highlights the importance of putting in place standard operating procedures in all the departments and faculties as this will enhance the overall performance.

2.1.2 Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory, introduced by Homans in 1958, suggests that individuals make decisions by weighing the potential rewards and costs associated with different courses of action. According to the theory, people are inclined to pursue choices that maximize benefits, such as profits, rewards, and long-term gains, while minimizing costs, negative consequences, and social disapproval. As a result, social interactions often involve complex evaluations in which individuals compare the expected advantages and disadvantages of available alternatives. This perspective provides a useful framework for understanding human behavior, interpersonal relationships, and decision-making processes.

The theory is based on several fundamental assumptions about human nature and social relationships. First, it states that individuals are generally motivated to seek rewards and avoid punishments (Homans, 1958). Second, people engage in interactions with the expectation of achieving the greatest possible benefits at the lowest possible cost, guided by considerations of personal gain. Third, individuals are assumed to assess the potential costs and rewards before participating in an exchange. Finally, the theory recognizes that perceptions of value and payoff differ across individuals and may change over time for the same person, depending on circumstances and experiences (Cook & Rice, 2006).

One of the key strengths of Social Exchange Theory is its simplicity, which makes its core assumptions easily understandable and applicable to a wide range of individuals. In addition, the theory facilitates a straightforward identification of the underlying motivations in relationships by emphasizing an economic perspective on social interactions, thereby enabling a relatively rapid understanding of the “bottom line” in interpersonal exchanges. The theory also helps to individuals to have more balanced relationships as they are more aware of their own costs to other people. The disadvantages of the theory are that its assumption that individuals are innately selfish, ready to terminate relationships where the costs outweigh the benefits is not always accurate (Ahmad et al., 2023).

The social exchange theory was applicable in this study as it supports the internationalization strategy where the leaders of public institutions of higher learning can use exchange programs, partnerships and diverse curriculum to be more rewarding to the staff and students as it will have long term benefits which will lead to improved performance. This is because they can take advantage of other global institutions to benchmark and train their staff and students to become better than they would locally, without incurring extra costs.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Operations Strategy and Organizational Performance

Zulfikarijah and Khwarizmi (2023) investigated the relationship between operations strategy and organizational performance within the Indonesian context, focusing specifically on the dimensions of cost, quality, delivery, and flexibility. Drawing on a sample of 150 respondents across six universities, their findings revealed that operations strategy exerted a positive influence on organizational performance.

Similarly, Lee (2021) explored the effect of operational strategies on performance within Korea's manufacturing sector, employing a survey research design. Data were gathered from 222 respondents through questionnaires and analyzed using structural equation modeling. The findings indicated that enterprise resource planning, quality management, ethical management, and productivity management systems each had a positive effect on organizational performance. Based on these results, the study recommended that organizations prioritize the development of operations strategies, particularly enterprise resource planning systems, as a means of strengthening system establishment, standardizing work processes, securing management support, and enhancing user recognition, all of which contribute to improved performance.

Daka and Mwanza (2023) investigated the effect of operations strategy on the performance of Lusaka Business and Technical College, employing a stratified sampling technique to gather data from 150 respondents drawn from top management, middle management, academic staff, regulators, partners, and clients. Data collected via questionnaire were analyzed using regression analysis, revealing that operations strategy had a measurable impact on performance. The study recommended that institutions develop and implement market-centered operations strategies capable of enhancing performance outcomes.

In a related study, Munyiri et al. (2022) examined the influence of operations strategy on the performance of the Media Council of Kenya, adopting a census approach and utilizing interview guides alongside questionnaires for data collection. The findings revealed that funding allocated to the operations strategy budget was insufficient, and that adherence to timelines in executing assigned tasks played a critical role in enhancing performance. The study concluded that operations strategy exerted a significant influence on organizational performance.

Ibrahim and Obuba (2022) assessed the link between operations strategy and organizational performance in the Kenyan banking sector. The study adopted descriptive research design and resource-based review theory. The target population consisted of 95 respondents, comprising branch managers, operational managers, marketing managers, chief accounting officers, and human resource managers. The findings revealed that operational strategies exert a positive influence on organizational performance.

2.2.2 Internationalization Strategy and Organizational Performance

Mehdaoui and Moufdi (2025) investigated the relationship between internationalization strategy and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), adopting an explanatory research design with data drawn from 54 industrial SMEs. Contrary to expectations, the findings revealed that internationalization did not exert a positive influence on performance. However, the study also found that internationalization could serve as a valuable learning opportunity, whereby firms enhance their performance through exploitation- or exploration-based learning activities.

In China, Lyu and Jiang (2023) assessed the effect of internationalization strategies on performance of platform-based companies. The study used panel data from 2012 to 2022. The results indicated that the irregular internationalization was negatively correlated to corporate performance. The study suggested that innovative research and development could help companies expand overseas to improve performance. Aydemir and Alper (2024) explored the link between internationalization strategy and performance of MNCs. The study analyzed 170 samples and 334,855 multinational companies obtained from SSCI and Scopus databases. The analysis revealed a significant relationship between internationalization strategy and firm performance.

In Indonesia, Nurcholis (2021) conducted a study on the relationship between internationalization strategy and performance in higher education. The study primarily examined ways of enhancing internationalization strategies by considering market characteristics, cultural understanding, and knowledge management. The sample consisted of 198 officials managing 55 universities. The study established that market characteristics, culture understanding and knowledge management did not have a significant impact affect internationalization strategy. Another finding was that management behavior significantly affects internationalization strategy and performance.

Ndengah (2025) sought to find out the effect of internationalization strategies on the organizational performance of emerging multinational enterprises in Kenya. The study specifically focused on the amalgamation strategy, adaptability strategy, and ambidexterity strategy. The study was grounded in the springboard theory of international business and the balanced scorecard framework. Data were collected from 235 respondents through the use of a questionnaire, and the findings demonstrated that internationalization strategies had a positive effect on performance.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The study was informed by the following conceptual framework. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

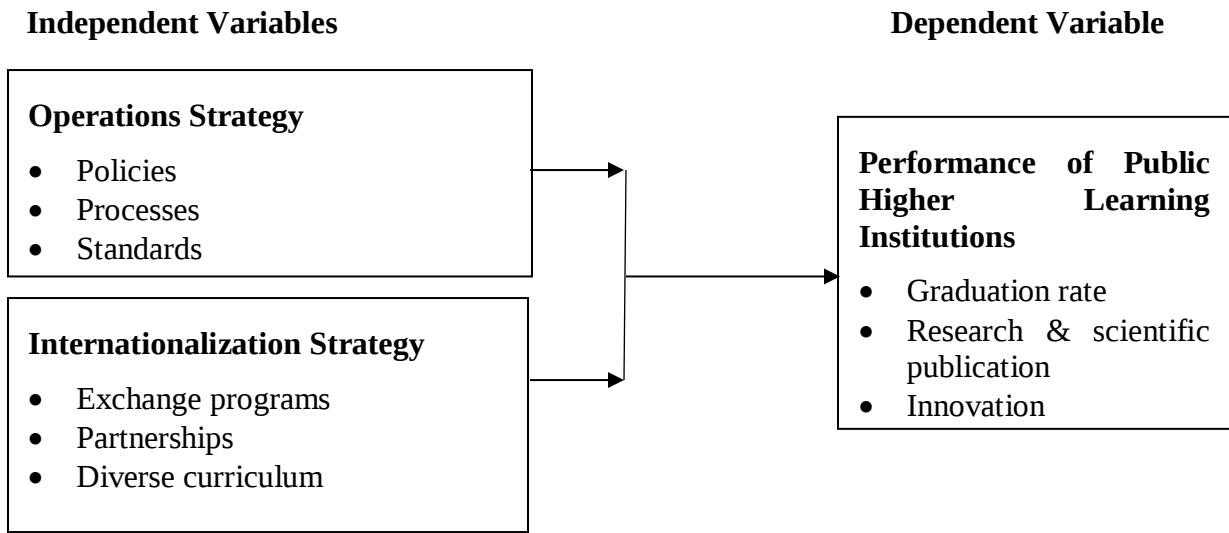


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

According to the conceptual framework, functional strategies under the constructs of operations strategy and internationalization strategy can influence the performance of public institutions of learning under the dimensions of graduation rate, research and scientific publications, and innovation.

3.0 Methodology

The study was grounded in the positivist paradigm, which holds that reliable knowledge is derived from observable and measurable facts obtained through empirical investigation. Positivism research philosophy also states that the researcher is limited to data collection and interpretation in an objective way, and that research findings are usually observable and quantifiable (Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2020). In addition, the descriptive research design was used for this study. This is because the researcher was able to use this approach to get precise answers to who, what, when, where, and how questions related to a given topic (Pawar, 2020). Information about the functional structures and performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC was also gathered using the research design. In addition, using a descriptive research design allowed the researcher to collect, examine, and present data while also assisting others in understanding the necessity for the study (Siedlecki, 2020).

The target population comprised of 1059 board of directors of universities, university council, faculty council and departmental council members. This study employed the Yamane formula to determine a sample size of 290 respondents, with a stratified random sampling technique used to select participants. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and subsequently analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 27.0). Descriptive statistics, in the form of frequencies, were complemented by inferential statistics, including Pearson correlation and regression analyses. The findings were then presented through simple tabulation, with responses organized into frequency tables, while various charts were employed to illustrate the distribution of data.

4.0 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Influence of Operations Strategy on the Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The study's first objective was to investigate the influence of operations strategy on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. The corresponding findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Operations Strategy and Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
The policies help the institution achieve long-term goals by guiding day-to-day operations	4.13	0.570
The institution’s policies define the acceptable actions and consequences	4.11	0.666
The processes provide structure for achieving objectives	4.27	0.738
The processes streamline operations by reducing confusion	3.93	0.726
The institution’s standards codify essential practices to ensure high quality outcomes across all departments	4.01	0.631
The standards help the institution meet external requirements	4.07	0.605
Composite Mean	4.09	0.656

From the analysis of the study, operations strategy and performance of public higher learning institutions had a composite mean of 4.09 and standard deviation of 0.656. The respondents

indicated that policies helped the institution achieve long-term goals by guiding day-to-day operations to a high extent (M=4.13, SD=0.570). In addition, the institution’s policies defined the acceptable actions and consequences to a high extent (M=4.11, SD=0.666). The respondents also indicated that the processes provided structure for achieving objectives to a high extent (M=4.27, SD=0.738). However, the respondents indicated that the processes streamlined operations by reducing confusion to a moderate extent (M=3.93, SD=0.726). Further, the respondents indicated that the institution’s standards codified essential practices to ensure high quality outcomes across all departments to a high extent (M=4.01, SD=0.631). The respondents also indicated that the standards helped the institution meet external requirements to a high extent (M=4.07, SD=0.605). This was an indication that the operations strategy had been formulated and implemented highly in the public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC although the streamlining of processes had been moderately implemented to reduce confusion.

4.1.2 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between operations strategy and performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between Operations Strategy and Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

		Performance of public higher learning institutions		Operations Strategy
Performance of public higher learning institutions	Pearson Correlation	1		.476**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N	290		290
Operations Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.476**		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	290		290

A correlation revealed that a positive significant correlation between operations strategy and performance of public higher learning institutions ($r=0.476$, $p=0.000<0.05$). This indicates a statistically significant positive association between the two variables, suggesting that an increase in the implementation of the operations strategy increases the performance of public higher learning institutions.

4.1.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

The researcher used multiple regression analysis to establish the relationship between operations strategy and performance of Public higher learning institutions.

Table 3: Model Summary between Operations Strategy and Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.476a	0.227	0.4224	0.99545

a. Predictors: (Constant) Operations Strategy

The results indicated an R-value of 0.4769, signifying a strong relationship between operations strategy and the performance of public higher learning institutions. Additionally, the R^2 value of 0.227 revealed that 22.7% of the variation in institutional performance could be attributed to the implementation of operations strategy. This suggests that operations strategy implementation played a substantial role in enhancing the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The remaining 77.3% of the variation in performance was attributable to other factors beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA results between operations strategy and performance of public higher learning institutions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	83.754	1	83.754	84.522	.000 ^b
	Residual	285.383	288	0.991		
	Total	369.137	289			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of public higher learning institutions

b. Predictors: (Constant), operations strategy

The ANOVA results showed that the operations strategy was significant in explaining the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The F-statistic of 84.522 was significantly higher than the critical value, indicating that the implementation of operations strategy was a strong predictor of the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The p-value of 0.000 was below the predictable significance level of 0.05. This supported the conclusion that the operations strategy implemented had a significant impact on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The coefficient results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Operations Strategy

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.774	0.156		11.378	0.000
	Operations strategy	0.480	0.052	0.476	9.194	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of public higher learning institutions

The results indicate that the constant term is 1.774 with a p-value of 0.000, suggesting that the baseline value is statistically significant. Furthermore, operations strategy exhibits a positive and

statistically significant effect on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa ($\beta = 0.476$, $t = 9.194$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that a one-unit increase in operations strategy is associated with a 0.476 increase in institutional performance. These findings are consistent with those of Daka and Mwanza (2023), who similarly established that operations strategy has a significant influence on organizational performance.

4.2 Influence of Internationalization Strategy on the Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The second objective of this study was to determine the influence of internationalization strategy on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa, DRC. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Internationalization Strategy and Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation
The exchange programs have broadened the institution’s understanding of educational systems	3.80	0.772
The exchange programs have ensured staff experience new teaching styles	3.63	0.626
Partnerships have fostered collaboration between academia and other entities for mutual benefit	3.93	0.726
Partnerships have offered students global experiences	2.59	1.230
A diverse curriculum has ensured the institution integrates varied perspectives into course content and teaching	3.70	0.755
A diverse curriculum ensures students develop stronger complex thinking skills by engaging in different viewpoints	3.95	0.725
Composite mean	3.60	0.822

From the analysis of the study, the influence of internationalization strategy on the performance of public higher learning institutions had a composite of 3.60 and standard deviation of 0.822. Majority of the respondents indicated that the exchange programs had moderately broadened the institution’s understanding of educational systems ($M=3.80$, $SD=0.772$). The respondents also indicated that the exchange program had moderately ensured staff experience new teaching styles ($M=3.63$, $SD=0.626$). In addition, partnerships had fostered collaboration between academia and other entities for mutual benefit to a moderate extent ($M=3.93$, $SD=0.726$). The respondents indicated that partnerships had offered students global experiences to a low extent ($M=2.59$, $SD=1.230$). It was further established that a diverse curriculum had ensured the institution integrates varied perspectives into course content and teaching to a moderate extent ($M=3.70$, $SD=0.755$). The respondents further indicated that a diverse curriculum ensured students develop stronger complex thinking skills by engaging in different viewpoints to a moderate extent ($M=3.95$, $SD=0.725$).

4.2.2 Correlation Analysis

The Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted to assess the influence of internationalization strategy on performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa.

Table 7: Correlation between Internationalization Strategy and Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

		Performance of public higher learning institutions	Internationalization Strategy
Performance of public higher learning institutions	Pearson Correlation	1	.477**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	290	290
Internationalization Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.477**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	290	290

A correlation revealed a positive significant correlation between internationalization strategy and performance of public higher learning institutions ($r=0.477$, $p=0.000<0.05$). This indicated a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables, suggesting that as the implementation of internationalization strategy improves, the performance of public higher learning institutions also increases.

4.2.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

The researcher used multiple regression analysis to establish the relationship between internationalization strategy and performance of public higher learning institutions.

Table 8: Model Summary between Internationalization Strategy and Performance of Public Higher Learning Institutions

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.477a	0.227	0.225	0.99517

a. Predictors: (Constant) Internationalization Strategy

The results showed an R-value of 0.447, indicating a strong relationship between internationalization strategy and the performance of public higher learning institutions. The R^2 value of 0.227 further revealed that 2.27% of the variation in institutional performance could be accounted for by the implementation of internationalization strategy, suggesting that this strategy played a substantial role in enhancing the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The remaining 77.3% of the variation was attributed to factors outside the scope of this study. The ANOVA results between internationalization strategy and performance of public higher learning institutions are presented below.

Table 9: ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	83.914	1	83.914	84.731	.000 ^b
	Residual	285.222	288	0.990		
	Total	369.137	289			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of public higher learning institutions

b. Predictors: (Constant), Internationalization Strategy

The ANOVA results showed that internationalization strategy was significant in explaining the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The F-statistic of 84.731 was significantly higher than the critical value, indicating that internationalization strategy was a strong predictor of the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa. The p-value of 0.000 was well below the predictable significance level of 0.05. This supported the conclusion that the implementation of internationalization strategy had a significant influence on the performance of public higher learning institutions. The coefficient results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Regression Coefficients for Internationalization Strategy

		Standardized				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.471	0.187		7.877	0.000
	Cultural practices	0.597	0.065	0.477	9.205	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of public higher learning institutions

The findings revealed a constant term of 1.471 with a p-value of 0.000, confirming that this baseline value was statistically significant. Moreover, internationalization strategy demonstrated a strong, positive, and statistically significant effect on the performance of public higher learning institutions in Kinshasa ($\beta = 0.477$, $t = 9.205$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that a one-unit increase in the implementation of internationalization strategy corresponds to a 0.477 increase in institutional performance. These results align with those of Aydemir and Alper (2024), who similarly found a significant relationship between internationalization strategy and firm performance.

5.0 Conclusion

This study concludes that through the implementation of the operations strategy, policies have helped the institution achieve long-term goals by guiding day-to-day operations. It is also concluded that policies have been used by the institutions of higher learning to define the acceptable actions and consequences. Another conclusion is that processes have provided structure for achieving objectives in the institutions of higher learning. The study concludes that there is moderation in the streamlining of operations through the processes put in place. Further, this study concludes that the institution’s standards codified essential practices to ensure high quality outcomes across all departments and have also helped the institution meet external requirements.

This study concludes that through the implementation of the internationalization strategies, there is moderation in the exchange programs broadening an institution’s understanding of educational systems. Another conclusion is that there is moderation in the exchange program ensuring staff

experience new teaching styles. In addition, it is concluded that partnerships have fostered collaboration between academia and other entities for mutual benefit. It is further concluded that partnerships have offered students global experiences to a low extent. This study concludes that a diverse curriculum has ensured the institution integrates varied perspectives into course content and teaching in moderation. It is also concluded that there is moderation in a diverse curriculum ensuring that students develop stronger complex thinking skills by engaging in different viewpoints.

6.0 Recommendations

1. The management of higher learning institutions should review their work processes so as to effectively streamline their operations for better performance.
2. The management of higher learning institutions should fully implement their internationalization strategy especially on partnerships to ensure that their students and staff gain international exposure.
3. The study suggests that similar studies should be replicated in private higher learning institutions in Kinshasa to compare results.

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