

# Development of Strategic Action Plan for School of Pharmacy, Ahfad University for Women, Sudan

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## Abstract

This paper describes the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and the subsequent development of a strategic plan for the School of Pharmacy, Ahfad University for Women, Sudan; using the Project Action Plan (PAP) tool. The SWOT analysis was based on internal self-studies. Strategic objectives were developed into strategies and actions to address weaknesses and threats by effectively leveraging the strengths and opportunities. An operational plan was developed, which includes specific actions, a timeline for relevant activities and those responsible to implement them.

**Keywords:** Strategic planning, SWOT-analysis

## 1 Introduction

Strategic planning is a means of establishing major directions for the university, college/school or department. Through strategic planning, resources are concentrated in a limited number of major directions in order to maximize benefits to stakeholders, those we exist to serve and who are affected by the choices we make. In higher education, those stakeholders include students, employers of graduates, funding agencies, and society, as well as internal stakeholders such as faculty and staff (Paris, 2003).

McConkey (1981) said that the essence of strategy is differentiation. What makes this university or college or department different from any other? Educational institutions, like other service organizations, can differentiate themselves based on types of programs, delivery systems, student clientele, location, and the like. Similarly, a department or administrative unit involved in strategic planning will identify its unique niche in the larger university community and focus its resources on a limited number of strategic efforts, abandoning activities that could be, should be, or are being done by others.

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis provides a framework for educational administrators to focus better on serving the needs of their constituencies (Balamuralikrishna and Dugger, 1999).

The School of Pharmacy at Ahfad University for Women is the newest school in the university; it has been established in 2001. The pharmacy program has been designed in accordance with the international standards and criteria of pharmacy education to serve the goals of the development plans of the university in preparing the graduates to fit in different job sectors within the field of specialization.

Based on the Project Action Plan (PAP), which I developed during my participating in the International Deans' Course (IDC) Africa 2011–2012, the School of Pharmacy carried out a series of surveys (e.g., employers, graduating senior students, and faculty members) to obtain feedback of its constituencies on some key issues related to its pharmacy programs, facilities, and policies. These survey results are used to develop a detailed SWOT analysis for the whole school. SWOT analysis is a simple, easy to understand technique.

An operational plan for the school was developed to identify strategic objectives and strategies to achieve those objectives. The plan includes specific actions, a timeline for relevant activities and those responsible to implement them.

The purpose of the PAP was to develop the School of Pharmacy, Ahfad University for Women, Sudan strategic action plan. The reasons of developing the school strategic action plan were to develop the vision and mission of the school, to perform self-assessment using SWOT analysis and to develop a structured action plan for the period 2012–2016.

## 2 Methodology

To achieve the set objectives, a committee consisting of the programme coordinators (HOD), representatives from School of Medicine, School of Health Sciences and students was appointed to perform the SWOT analysis.

The committee spent six weeks on drafting the SWOT analysis report. The committee first studied the draft format of the Project Action Plan (PAP) already developed by the deputy dean (the PAP is shown in Table 1). They called meetings of staff, professors and programme coordinators within the school. Finally, a SWOT analysis of the school capabilities was done to ascertain our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and obstacles. The main purpose of this analysis was to complement the strategic planning activities, and to help in establishing strategic objectives.

Another committee consisting of programme coordinators (HOD) only was appointed to look on the SWOT analysis report and to design improvements.

## 3 Summary of the SWOT Analysis

### Strengths:

1. Ahfad University for Women being the only university for women in the Sudan enjoys the advantage of attracting female students of good academic standing from both local Sudanese schools and from abroad.
2. The teaching staff at the school whether full-timers or part-timers are academically distinguished in their fields of specialization.
3. The school has established its own local library, which contains an excellent collection of up-to-date textbooks and reference books. The reading room where the library is housed also contains sufficient number of computer sets available for the students.
4. Apart from the laboratories run by Ahfad Center for Science and Technology the school of Pharmacy has established special laboratories which are very well equipped with up-to-date apparatuses. Moreover the School has its own small animal house which provides experimental animals for teaching and research. The technical staff running these laboratories is very well trained.
5. Recently a very highly specialized Biotechnology lab, which is available to serve the community and pharmacists, was established in the school. It is the first lab of its kind to be established in the country.

6. A teaching hospital is also available for training the students in management of hospital pharmacy and clinical pharmacy.
7. The curriculum of the school includes supporting subject such as Business Administration and Nutriceutics to support the students.

### **Weaknesses:**

1. Like most other schools of pharmacy in the Sudan our school is understaffed mainly due to scarcity of qualified pharmacy teaching staff.
2. Although the school has adequate teaching theatres, some of these theatres are rather uncomfortable due to overcrowding and lack of adequate ventilation.
3. Audio-visual and teaching aids are neither sufficient nor satisfactory.
4. Some of the laboratories still need additional equipment.
5. Selection of students to the school needs more scrutiny

### **Opportunities for the school:**

1. The University enjoys good links with other universities in the Sudan and abroad. However these links are not fully utilized by the school of Pharmacy
2. With its presently available laboratory facilities the school of Pharmacy is in a position to offer postgraduate studies for its own graduates and graduates from other universities.

### **Threats:**

1. Students intake for the schools of pharmacy is expected to decrease in the future due to the increase in the number of schools being founded in other universities.
2. The overall job opportunities for the pharmacists are becoming less and more competitive.
3. New technologies, such as gene therapy and biotechnic drugs are expected to replace traditional drugs in not the too distant future. It is imperative that the students should be made aware of these new, rather sophisticated techniques and to be able to cope with them when the time comes.

## **4 Action steps**

Based on the internal strengths and weaknesses of the school the committee recommended for approval the following action steps:

## **4.1 Academic Excellence**

### **4.1.1 Staff development program**

- By the end of the year 2016 the School of Pharmacy aims to appoint 6 PhD holders in different pharmaceutical areas (Clinical Pharmacy, Medicinal Chemistry, Pharmacognacy, Pharmaceutics, Pharmacology and Biochemistry).
- In the year 2012 we will appoint 4 TA.
- In the year 2012 the already appointed 4 TA will be send to do their Masters degrees in Pharmacognacy, Pharmaceutics, Medicinal Chemistry and Biochemistry.
- When the above mentioned 4 TA gain their Masters the 3 existing lecturers will be send to do their PhD degrees by the end of the year 2014.

### **4.1.2 Linkages with other institutions**

The School will seek collaboration with educational, professional and research institutions. Forms of collaboration will include: staff and students exchange, accreditation, joint programmes and joint research.

## **4.2 Research development**

Research is the energy that drives a basic research university forward. Conducting high-quality free research is a prerequisite for educating students at the highest level, disseminating knowledge and commercializing research results. Strong research environments attract scientists and students who are highly qualified, ambitious and full of initiative.

As a small school, we can quickly adapt and promote the integration of research areas throughout the University. We have excellent opportunities to have cooperation on health science, natural science and biomedical subjects with faculties in the School of Health Sciences and School of Medicine. Therefore, we will aim to create and activate research groups.

## **4.3 Improve quality of teaching**

- Establishment of Educational Pharmacy by the year 2014 to improve the quality of teaching and learning of pharmacology.
- Supply the school library with more books and e-journals.
- Rehabilitate the different laboratories with equipment and materials.
- Establishment of seminar rooms.

#### 4.4 Community services

To provide pharmacy-based services and outreach activities to the community, we will:

- Expand the involvement of faculty and students of the School of Pharmacy in University health outreach programs and activities.
- Develop the School's website as a "hub" for the profession of pharmacy in AUW with a web portal of educational materials, including information and resources related to the profession, (for example, continuing education programs, alumni activities, awards, etc.).
- Promoting relationships with alumni via a variety of outreach activities.

### 5 Conclusion

A recent SWOT analysis and the subsequent development of a strategic plan for the School of Pharmacy, Ahfad University for Women, Sudan has been approved by the academic council of the university. Strategic objectives have been developed into actions to address weaknesses and threats by effectively leveraging the strengths and opportunities.

In order to be most effectively used, situations change with time and an updated analysis should be made frequently. If significant changes are detected, adjustments should be made in the strategic planning document.

### References

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<b>Activity A:</b> Create awareness on strategic planning and quality management to students and staff.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Meet with the VP academic affairs and the dean of the school to discuss my PAP.</li> <li>2- Organize two separate meetings one for the staff and the other for the students to Create awareness on QM to address the questions: like what is QM? Why it is necessary? Who should assess the QM test and how? QM in Sudan in general and School of Pharmacy at Ahfad University will be addressed. After these questions are answered, then we will design what to do base on the findings.</li> </ol>
<b>Milestone A:</b> Staff and students were reviewed on quality management
<b>Activity B:</b> To perform self-assessment using SWOT analysis
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Formation of a committee consist of Programs coordinators (HOD), representatives from School of Medicine, School of Health sciences and students to perform the SWOT analysis.</li> <li>2- A one day workshop on SWOT analysis will be organized for the committee responsible for this activity.</li> <li>3- The committee will meet on weakly basis to perform the analysis.</li> </ol>
<b>Milestone B:</b> SWOT analysis was done.
<b>Activity C:</b> To prepare self-assessment report
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- HOD and senior staff members will meet to discuss the SWOT analysis report and the improvements designed by the above committee and prepare self-assessment report.</li> </ol>
<b>Milestone C:</b> Self-assessment report was prepared
<b>Activity D:</b> To discuss the self-assessment report at the school level and at the university level
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- School board meets for the consideration of the self-assessment report.</li> <li>2- The report was endorsed by the VP academic affairs.</li> <li>3- The report was approved by the academic council.</li> </ol>
<b>Milestone D:</b> Self-assessment report was approved
<b>Activity E:</b> Preparation of the school strategic action plan
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Circulate the self-assessment report to the staff members.</li> <li>2- Formation of a committee consists of programs coordinators and senior staff member to prepare the school strategic action plan.</li> <li>3- Discuss the school strategic action plan at the school board and approved.</li> </ol>
<b>Milestone E:</b> School action plan was ready for implementation

**Table 1:** Project Action Plan (PAP)

