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STRATEGIA: A Reflective Strategy Formulation Model for Developing School Excellence through Blueprint-Based Planning

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *This study introduces STRATEGIA (Strategic Reflective Action for Growth and Institutional Advantage), a reflective strategy formulation model designed to support schools in developing context-sensitive and strength-based strategic blueprints for institutional excellence.* ***Method:*** *Employing a design-based research approach, the model was piloted with 19 school principals through a structured training program. Data were collected via pre–post surveys, blueprint portfolio analysis, and reflective documentation to evaluate shifts in strategic thinking and planning competence.* ***Results:*** *Findings indicate substantial improvements in participants' strategic understanding and blueprint development, with score increases ranging from 24% to 53%. Participants rated the model as clear, relevant, and practically applicable in the context of school planning.* ***Novelty:*** *STRATEGIA is distinguished by its integration of Appreciative Inquiry, Resource-Based View (VRIO), SOAR, Organizational DNA, PESTEL, and stakeholder mapping into a five-stage reflective process – Reflective Discovery, Signature Formulation, Strategic Visualization, Roadmap Development, and First-Year Strategic Initiatives. This innovative combination provides a practical and scalable planning framework that is rooted in institutional identity, offering a novel contribution to strategic leadership development in educational settings.*

INTRODUCTION

Meaningful educational transformation cannot be carried out solely in an administrative or technocratic manner; instead, it demands strategic change that is grounded in the internal strengths of the school. Amidst the era of disruption and the complexities of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity), many schools are experiencing strategic stagnation. One prominent symptom is the phenomenon of "strategic fatigue," a condition in which schools pursue too many goals without a focused and impactful strategic direction [7]

Various studies show that the preparation of strategic planning documents in educational institutions still faces substantial challenges, both in Indonesia and in other countries. In the Indonesian context, this includes documents such as the Rencana Kerja Jangka Menengah (RKJM), which are often oriented more toward administrative or accreditation compliance than toward their strategic function in driving institutional quality improvement. In general, the preparation of these documents is more oriented toward fulfilling administrative or accreditation requirements rather than their strategic function in driving institutional quality improvement. Bantilan et al., (2023), through a systematic review of strategic planning practices in education across various countries, found that most educational institutions still have limited technical capacity in strategy

formulation, involve stakeholders minimally, and treat strategic planning documents as mere formalities that are not implemented. In many cases, the resulting strategic documents are thick on paper but do not make any real contribution to the institution's policy direction.

Similar findings were stated by [9], in the context of secondary schools in Tanzania. They showed that stakeholder engagement in the strategic planning process is very low. This limited involvement leads to a lack of ownership of the planning document, making its implementation ineffective. The lack of participation results in weak collective commitment to carrying out strategic plans as instruments of change. Similar conditions were also found by [10] in the context of higher education in Sweden. In their study, strategic planning was treated merely as an accreditation requirement, rather than a reflective and participatory strategic process. The planning documents produced were ultimately neither read nor used substantively by the academic community.

This condition also applies in the context of Indonesia, as shown in a case study at SDN Balerejo, Central Java by Destiyani et al., (2025). The RKJM preparation in this school was carried out in a limited timeframe and lacked in-depth situational analysis. The process was more focused on fulfilling the document format rather than formulating strategies based on the school's real needs. As a result, the quality of the document was low and its implementation was not optimal. Destiyani et al., (2025). also revealed that in many schools, RKJM is compiled merely as a formal document and is not used as an actual reference in institutional development processes. An important finding from research conducted by [12] shows that there are still schools that do not have strategic planning documents, even though such documents are a regulatory requirement set by the government. Even in schools that have developed strategic plans, their implementation is often symbolic only—merely fulfilling administrative or accreditation demands, without being used as an operational guideline in improving school quality.

These findings reinforce the conclusion of Hadji & Osunkunle (2020), who studied universities in South Africa, that strategic planning in many educational institutions tends to lean more toward compliance with national regulations than serving as a tool to shape the future of the institution. This challenge is exacerbated by overly technical document language and the lack of training and time allocated for stakeholders to participate meaningfully.

Thus, it can be concluded that in general, the main challenges in the preparation of RKJM or strategic planning in educational institutions revolve around three aspects: the low quality of strategic analysis, the limited involvement of stakeholders, and the tendency to compile documents only for administrative purposes. Therefore, there is a need for a paradigm shift from a compliance-oriented approach to one that is more strategic and participatory, so that planning documents like RKJM truly become instruments for continuous institutional quality improvement. This condition indicates an urgent need for a reflective, participatory, and strength-based approach to strategy formulation.

It is in this context that STRATEGIA was developed—a reflective strategy formulation model based on the school excellence blueprint, designed to address the disconnection between planning documents and actual institutional transformation practices. STRATEGIA stands for *Strategic Reflective Action for Growth and Institutional Advantage*.

The STRATEGIA model was explicitly developed to strengthen the strategy formulation stage within the classical strategic management framework proposed by [14]. This framework divides the strategy process into three main stages: strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. STRATEGIA focuses specifically on this initial stage—starting from reflective analysis, the identification of a school's unique advantage, to the formulation of strategic direction and first-year initiative plans. The stages of strategy implementation and evaluation are not directly included in this model, but follow-up directions are still designed through the preparation of roadmaps and key initiatives.

STRATEGIA enriches the formulation stage with a strength-based Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach [1], as well as internal diagnosis through the Resource-Based View (RBV) and VRIO analysis [2]. As an alternative to SWOT, the SOAR approach [3] is used to help schools formulate strategic aspirations. For institutional diagnosis, the Organizational DNA framework [4]. is also used. PESTEL Analysis is used to analyze external factors that influence school policies [5]. Stakeholder Mapping is used to map key actors using a power–interest matrix [6]. The principles of focus and accountability from the Four Disciplines of Execution (4DX) [7] and the stages of organizational change according to [15] complete the conceptual framework of STRATEGIA in forming a measurable and contextual formulation process.

This model consists of five main stages: Reflective Discovery, Signature Formulation, Strategic Visualization, Roadmap Development, and First-Year Strategic Initiatives. STRATEGIA was developed through a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach, which combines innovative design processes with iterative real-world testing [16], [17]. The development process began with a national webinar attended by 41 participants, consisting of school principals and school development teams from various regions. Of that number, 19 participants were selected through a participatory process to attend intensive workshop sessions and further model implementation. The initial findings showed that the majority of participants had never developed comprehensive school strategies and only knew RKJM as an administrative obligation.

This article aims to: (1) explain the conceptual framework of STRATEGIA as a reflective strategy formulation approach based on a blueprint; (2) describe the design process and initial testing of the model in the context of school principal training; and (3) evaluate the initial impact of the model on improving participants' understanding and quality of strategic planning.

The STRATEGIA model also refers to the strengthening of school principal capacity as emphasized in national regulations. The Director General Regulation No. 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023 on the School Principal Competency Model states that

principals must be capable of leading institutional development based on reflection, empowering the school community, and managing resources accountably. Articles 5 and 9 of the regulation emphasize the importance of the school principal's role as a leader in strategic and instructional transformation [18]. Thus, the development of STRATEGIA is also aligned with national policy in strengthening principals' competencies in leadership and strategic management.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research design

The STRATEGIA model was developed using a **Design-Based Research (DBR)** approach, a methodological approach that integrates the process of designing educational innovation with real-world testing and refinement [16], [17]. DBR is iterative, collaborative, and focuses on solving real-world problems. In this context, the model development was carried out through a series of stages: exploration of field needs (via surveys and webinars), initial model design, limited implementation in a school principal training workshop, and early evaluation through pre–post surveys, participant reflections, and blueprint document analysis. The aim was not only to develop a new strategy formulation framework but also to assess the model's acceptability, practicality, and potential effectiveness in building the sustainable capacity of school principals and institutions.

Research subjects and context

The subjects in this study were school principals and school development teams from various educational levels (kindergarten, elementary, junior high, senior high) who participated in the training titled *Designing Excellent Schools Based on Strategic Blueprints*. The activity began with a national webinar attended by 41 participants. Out of this number, 19 participants were selected to join the intensive workshop and follow-up mentoring sessions. The study was conducted in three stages between January and April 2025, located on online platforms and culminating in an in-person session held in Surabaya on April 18–20, 2025. Participation was voluntary and accompanied by informed consent.

STRATEGIA model development procedure

The development of STRATEGIA was carried out through four main stages in accordance with the DBR cycle:

1. Identification of problems and field needs: through analysis of participants' RKJM/RKS documents, initial surveys, and discussions during the webinar.
2. Initial model design: based on the synthesis of theories (AI, RBV, DNA, 4DX, SOAR, Kotter) and best practices from excellent schools, a five-stage STRATEGIA framework was constructed.
3. Limited implementation of the model: conducted during the intensive workshop, where participants were guided to develop draft blueprints using modules and facilitation.

4. Reflection and revision of the model: based on post-survey evaluations, blueprint portfolio outcomes, and reflective narratives from participants to assess the model's practicality and applicability.

Instruments and data collection techniques

Data collection was conducted using the following instruments:

1. Pre- and Post-Workshop Surveys: to measure changes in participants' knowledge and understanding of the concept of excellent school strategy.
2. Initial Strategic Diagnosis Survey: to map participants' understanding of institutional strategy prior to the training.
3. Blueprint Portfolio: as an artifact representing the implementation results of the model.
4. Participants' Narrative Reflections: collected through open-ended responses after the workshop sessions and at the end of the training.
5. Activity Documentation: including process recordings, online interactions, and participants' presentation outcomes.

The instruments were specifically designed to measure the main variables: model acceptability, implementation practicality, and potential impact on school strategic planning.

Data analysis techniques

Quantitative data (pre–post) were analyzed descriptively by calculating the difference in average scores and the percentage increase in participants' knowledge. Meanwhile, qualitative data from participant reflections and blueprint documents were analyzed using thematic coding techniques to identify patterns of perception, challenges, and strategic insights.

To ensure data validity, triangulation across instruments and peer-checking were conducted by two independent reviewers from the training team. The analysis was carried out in stages and served as the basis for refining the STRATEGIA prototype for further development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Conceptual framework of the STRATEGIA model

The STRATEGIA model (*Strategic Reflective Formulation for School Excellence*) was developed in response to the weak internalization of strategic planning documents such as RKJM in Indonesian schools. This model is rooted in a **strengths-based strategy approach** and institutional reflection, and it is designed to assist school principals in developing an excellence blueprint that is contextual, structured, and sustainable.

Figure 1 below illustrates the STRATEGIA framework used in the training and initial trial. This framework served as a guide for participants in developing a school excellence blueprint, starting from institutional diagnosis, competitive advantage, to the design of an annual roadmap.

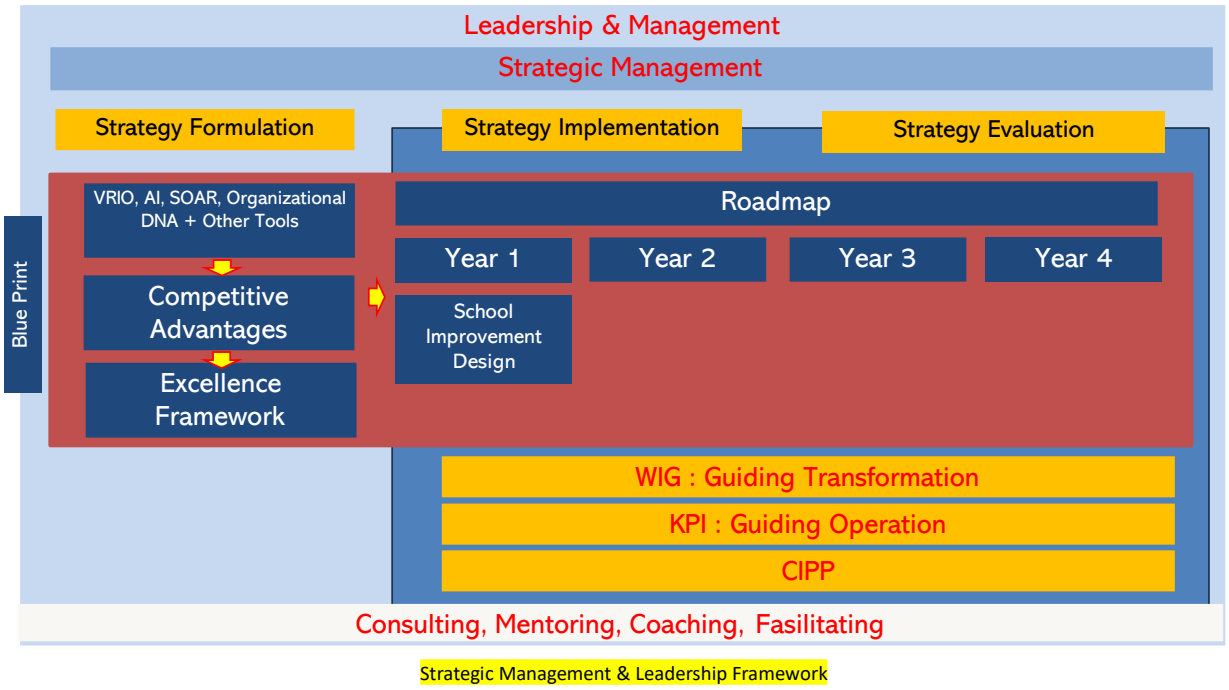

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of STRATEGIA: Reflective Strategy Formulation for Schools Based on Institutional Excellence

The Figure 1 highlights the core structure of the STRATEGIA model, focusing specifically on the components within the red box. These elements represent the essential stages of blueprint development—from institutional diagnosis using VRIO, AI, SOAR, and Organizational DNA, to the design of competitive advantages and school excellence frameworks, followed by a multi-year implementation roadmap. Elements outside the core framework (e.g., WIG, KPI, CIPP, mentoring) serve as support systems for implementation and evaluation, but are not considered part of the core strategy formulation stages.

The model consists of five interrelated core stages:

1. Reflective Discovery

This first stage is a deep reflection process to understand the school's strategic position. It integrates the following approaches:

1. PESTEL Analysis: to analyze external factors (political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, environmental, and legal) that influence school policy directions;
2. Stakeholder Mapping: to map key actors—such as the foundation, parents, teachers, students, and the government—based on their levels of influence and interest;
3. SWOT Analysis: to identify current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, combined with Appreciative Inquiry-based reflection on the school's best achievements and inspirational moments;
4. Organizational DNA: to detect the characteristics of structure, work culture, motivation, and distribution of authority within the school;
5. School Profile & Data Dashboard: as a primary source for initial data-based mapping.

This stage functions to challenge the status quo and cultivate strategic awareness among school leaders. The process is carried out participatively through facilitated workshops and reflective assessments using both quantitative instruments and narrative inputs.

2. Signature Formulation

Based on the reflection results, the school and its team formulate a signature strategy—a formulation of excellence that is distinctive, relevant, and rooted in internal strengths. This process uses the following frameworks:

1. VRIO (Value, Rarity, Inimitability, Organization): to test whether the flagship programs are truly valuable, rare, difficult to imitate, and supported by organizational structure;
2. SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results): to facilitate a future-oriented and positive direction by linking internal strengths with collective aspirations.

This stage results in the articulation of the school's distinctive advantage and differentiated vision, which will serve as the anchor for the entire transformation process.

3. Strategic Visualization

The excellence vision is then translated into a strategic framework (a visualization of the school transformation model). This visualization includes:

1. Main pillars (e.g., academics, character, tahfidz, literacy, or STEAM) that support the excellence vision;
2. Relationships between key variables (Critical Success Factors) and supporting sub-variables;
3. Integration between internal factors (culture, human resources, systems) and external factors (community support, policy trends).

This visualization is designed in the form of a diagram or mind map to facilitate internal communication and collective decision-making.

4. Roadmap Development

The fourth stage is the development of a five-year strategic roadmap that outlines the step-by-step and measurable implementation of the flagship strategy. The roadmap is structured based on:

1. Timeline stages (yearly milestones);
2. Key Success Indicators for each pillar;
3. Required resources;
4. Risks and strategic mitigation;
5. Stakeholder involvement.

Each step in the roadmap follows the SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound), enabling it to function as a reference for implementation and annual performance evaluation.

5. First-Year Strategic Initiatives

The final step is the implementation of first-year strategic initiatives. This is the initial realization phase of the transformation map and an institutional learning opportunity to test the alignment between design and reality.

These initiatives are selected based on:

1. High impact and feasibility of implementation;
2. Stakeholder support and human resource readiness;
3. Relevance to priority issues or urgent challenges.

These initiatives are typically documented in a Strategic Improvement Plan, which includes activity descriptions, achievement targets, success indicators, and the implementation team.

Improvement in principals' strategic understanding (pre–post workshop survey)

The survey results from 19 participants showed a significant increase in strategic understanding after participating in the STRATEGIA model training. This analysis used average scores based on a 1–5 Likert scale. Although this scale is ordinal, mean scores were pragmatically used as an interval approximation, as is common in educational studies and training evaluations (Boone & Boone, 2012). Therefore, the percentage change is presented to illustrate the trend of increased perception.

The following table presents the three key indicators with the highest increases:

Table 1. Improvement in strategic understanding based on pre–post workshop survey (n = 19)

Survey Statement	Pre	Post	Increase (%)
The Blueprint As A Tool to Sharpen The School's Strategic Direction	**2.95**	**4.53**	**+53.52%**
Using Graduate Quality Data to Formulate Institutional Strategic Direction	**3.90**	**4.84**	**+24.16%**
The Blueprint Should Be Reviewed Periodically As Part of The Strategic Management Cycle	**3.67**	**4.74**	**+29.19%**

This table displays the average score increase across three key indicators from the pre- and post-workshop surveys. Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The percentage increase reflects the change in perceived understanding following the STRATEGIA model training.

The most striking increase was seen in the item "The blueprint as a tool to sharpen the school's strategic direction", which rose by 53.52%. This indicates that participants experienced a paradigm shift—from a technocratic-administrative approach to an understanding that the blueprint is a strategic navigation tool rooted in the school's internal strengths.

Participant reflections: perceptions of STRATEGIA

Participant reflections were analyzed based on responses to two open-ended questions in the post-workshop evaluation instrument:

1. What do you understand about the Blueprint Framework for Excellent Schools?
2. Is this framework realistic and applicable in your school?

The analysis revealed a growing understanding of the structure, benefits, and implementation potential of the STRATEGIA model. Three main themes were identified:

a. Theme 1: Blueprint as a Structured Strategic Guide
   "This blueprint helps us to develop a clear framework for school excellence." — Respondent 3
   "The framework provides a logical and structured direction for developing school excellence." — Respondent 0
b. Theme 2: Awareness of Strategic Stages
   "What I understood: 1. School analysis, mind mapping, distinctiveness, roadmap, and flagship programs." — Respondent 4
   "This model framework is a roadmap of what needs to be done to develop the school." — Respondent 8
c. Theme 3: Perception of Realism and Applicability
   "Yes, with stages and details that are easy to understand." — Respondent 3
   "Realistic and God willing, we can implement it in our school." — Respondent 7

Out of 19 respondents, 16 (84%) stated that the model is realistic and implementable, while 3 respondents (16%) indicated that implementation would require additional support, such as ongoing mentoring or enhanced team capacity building.

Quality of school strategic blueprints: portfolio analysis results

An analysis of the blueprints submitted by 10 participating schools indicated that STRATEGIA helped them develop more reflective and structured strategic thinking frameworks. The following is a summary of their achievements according to the five stages of STRATEGIA:

Table 2. Summary of school blueprint quality based on STRATEGIA framework (n = 10)

Strategia stage	Assessment indicators	Key findings
Reflective discovery	Institutional diagnosis & strength visualization	80% of schools conducted an analysis of institutional uniqueness, but only 30% fully included organizational dna data.
Signature formulation	Smart–vrio excellence statement	60% formulated a distinctive advantage, but analysis of rarity/inimitability remains limited.
Strategic visualization	Strategy framework & roadmap	50% developed a logical roadmap and strategy visualization; only 3 schools used models such as ai or ipo.

Strategia stage	Assessment indicators	Key findings
Roadmap development	Tiered program stages	Improvement is needed in indicators, annual scheduling, and identification of pic (person in charge).
First-year strategic initiatives	Operational action plan	Only 2 schools presented detailed action plans; others remained general activity lists.

Table 2 displays the key findings from portfolio analysis across the five main STRATEGIA stages. The table highlights the percentage of schools that fulfilled specific criteria, as well as common gaps that can inform future model refinement and targeted support.

As part of the STRATEGIA model evaluation, an in-depth analysis of the blueprints from three schools with the highest strategic planning quality was conducted to assess the extent to which the stages of the model were internalized into their institutional documents. These three schools demonstrated success in designing strategies based on their institutional uniqueness, using a systematic and measurable approach aligned with the STRATEGIA framework.

a. SMAIT Latansa Cendekia

The blueprint document from SMAIT Latansa Cendekia demonstrates a strategic focus on achieving 100% university admission to public universities (PTN). This strategy is formulated through four main pillars: academic strengthening, student mental resilience, alumni service optimization, and the implementation of intensive classes. The Signature Formulation and Roadmap Development stages are particularly dominant, with clearly outlined semester-by-semester steps supporting goal achievement. The model also shows success in aligning long-term vision with measurable indicators based on the WIG–KPI framework, along with progressively involving internal stakeholders.

b. SDIT Al Mumtaz Pontianak

SDIT Al Mumtaz has formulated a Qur'anic Holistic Learning-based tahfidz strengthening strategy as its institutional advantage. The blueprint shows integration between the national curriculum, Islamic learning, and Qur'anic culture, developed across five strategic domains: curriculum, human resources, physical environment, quality management, and digital evaluation. Reflection is particularly evident in the Reflective Discovery and Strategic Visualization stages, as seen in the model's structure and the relationships between variables. The strength of this strategy lies in the institution's ability to position Qur'anic values as valuable, rare, and systematically organized resources, in accordance with the VRIO criteria.

c. **SMPIT KAIFA Bogor**

SMPIT KAIFA has developed an integrative strategy based on STEAM and English literacy enhancement. The institution's blueprint combines thematic approaches to science, technology, and the arts with student engagement in real-world, problem-

based projects. A three-year STEAM-Bilingual program roadmap was designed and validated using VRIO and SMART analysis. The blueprint also reflects adoption of the First-Year Strategic Initiatives principle, with realistic, high-impact, and team-ready initiatives. This strategy represents a 21st-century orientation while still respecting local spirituality and cultural context.

Discussion

The training outcomes and document analysis indicate that STRATEGIA has successfully:

1. Shifted school principals' mindset on strategy: from viewing it as a technocratic document to understanding it as a directional map grounded in institutional strengths.
2. Enhanced the ability to formulate staged strategies, starting from strength identification to first-year strategic actions.
3. Opened opportunities for replication based on local needs, as the model's structure is flexible yet measurable.

This model also demonstrates strong alignment with the principles of Design-Based Research (DBR) as an approach to developing and testing educational models in context [16]. STRATEGIA was not only developed based on theoretical foundations but also tested in practice with positive responses from participants in terms of both acceptance and applicability.

Moreover, this framework aligns with national policy directions such as Director General Regulation No. 7327/B.B1/HK.03.01/2023, which emphasizes that principals are both instructional and strategic leaders [18]. A blueprint based on the STRATEGIA model can serve as a concrete instrument for fulfilling that leadership role.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This preliminary study establishes the STRATEGIA model as a promising reflective strategy formulation framework that significantly enhances school principals' strategic understanding, with score improvements ranging from 24% to 53% across key indicators. The model's conceptual clarity and adaptability were well received, as evidenced by positive participant reflections and contextually grounded strategic blueprints. **Implication :** The findings suggest that STRATEGIA can address gaps in current strategic planning practices by offering a participatory and strength-based alternative aligned with policy mandates, such as the Director General Regulation on principal leadership roles. **Limitation :** However, as an initial implementation, the study is constrained by its limited sample size, short duration, and absence of a control group, making it difficult to generalize the results or assess long-term impact. **Future Research :** Further investigation using quasi-experimental methods across diverse educational contexts is recommended to validate the model's effectiveness, refine its implementation components—particularly in roadmap and first-year action planning—and explore its contribution to leadership development and educational innovation.

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