



Educational Strategic Planning as a Panacea for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examine the term education and strategic planning. The paper explored the four kinds of strategic planning, thus as strategic Analysis, Strategic formulation, strategic implementation and strategic control. The strategic planning is the application of rationale, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals. The study explained some problems of educational strategic planning that militates its effectiveness such as in accurate data, inadequate skilled personnel, technological problem, political arrangement economic circumstances and inadequate planning, it was however, related to the term sustainable development and indicated the role and relationship of strategic planning to sustainable development in future plan. The paper therefore suggested that the government and planners should have an accurate data, government should also provide enough funds and avoid politicization of policies and decision reached at the outcome of the strategic planning for the future sustainable development.

Keywords: Education, Strategic Planning, Sustainable Development.



Introduction

A very remarkable problem that has tended to inhibit educational production especially in Nigeria over the years is lack of human and material resources. In general, the major problems affecting the school system in Nigeria are poor management and control of teacher education programs, teacher training and retraining, the selection and organization of curriculum content, curriculum implementation and evaluation the development distribution and use of teaching materials and the relevance of the curriculum to the needs or is also a problem with poor motivation and discipline (Adeniyi, 2001) Educational production is the determination of schooling quality as reflected in students' educational performance (see Bishop and Wodmann 2001). They went further to argue that the parameters which influence the level of schooling quality achieved in the model of educational production are mainly driven by the institutional setting in the schooling system.

Scholars like Adeniyi (2001), Nwabueze (1995) and Agi and Adiele (2009) have discussed in their respective works the crises and problems facing education in Nigeria. These problems are not peculiar to developing countries; schools in developed countries still compete for public funds with other sectors of the economy. Educational objectives can be achieved when resources are made available and put into maximum use. Educational planning, Human Resources (HR) training and development have evolved as disciplines to guide the allocation and utilization of educational resources in the school system. This is required to arrest areas of waste of resources to make educational production more effective. In this regard, educational planning, HR training and development have become indispensable tools in the management of the school system in order to achieve the desired goals of education systems around the world.

The output of the planning process is the plan itself, which is a blueprint for action. It prescribes the activities needed for the education industry to realize its goals. Therefore, the purpose of planning is simply to ensure that the educational industry is effective in its activities. In a broader sense, an educational system must develop a plan that ensures that the appropriate products and services are offered to its students. More specifically, planning gives guidance and direction to members of an organization as to their role in the products and services (Peretomodel1991, 1995; Naylor 1999).

Planning is the process of determining a scheme for accomplishing a purpose. Such a scheme of arrangement is to be made beforehand by preparing a purposeful method of achieving the desired objectives (Whawo, 1993). According to Musaazi (1982), planning is a rational process of preparing and coordinating a set of economic decision making for future actions directed at achieving objectives by optimal means. Admittedly, planning is a guide to the actions that are to be implemented at a future date. In other words, planning is futuristic. The rationale for planning is to effectively utilize available resources to attain a predetermined objective. The process involves strategies for manipulating several variables at the time of planning and their projection into the future.

Therefore, in the words of Coombs (1972) and Ololube (2009), educational planning in its broadest generic sense is the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society. The principal focus of educational planning in this definition is to make education more result-oriented for the development of the individual and the larger society. As Adesina (1981) pointed out that educational planning is the process of applying scientific or rational procedures to the process of educational growth and development so as to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational system through a planning mechanism. In the planning mechanism, once feasibility of the proposed service had been established a number of specific actions were necessary in order to ensure that an operational service could become a reality (Robertson, 1991).

The aforementioned characterizations suggest that educational planning is a "process". This means that the outline of activities to be done is drawn up and sequentially arranged for implementation. A plan is described as efficient if the resources put into it are sufficient in meeting the stated objectives. An effective plan is one in which the desired objectives have been achieved. It is essential for educational production to be both efficient and effective if it is to properly



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guide the internal changes in the school as it utilizes the educational resources available. In other words, educational planning provides a foundation for all educational activities (Ololube, 2006). It is the process of outlining the activities that are necessary to achieve the goals of education. Through planning, educational planners determine how education resources are to be allocated and how the activities of the education system will be assigned to individuals and work groups. Therefore, educational planning is a concise and deliberate attempt, through organized and continuous processes to identify the different elements and aspects of the educational industry. It helps us in determining the present state and interaction, hence projecting them throughout a given period of time. This is done by analyzing, formulating, implementing and controlling the actions that have evolved to attain the desired aims and objectives of education (Ololube, 2013). This leads us to focus on enhancing the competitive position and the overall performance of teachers through strategic planning.

The history of strategic planning began in the military. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, strategy is "the science of planning and directing large-scale military operations, of maneuvering forces into the most advantageous position prior to actual engagement with the enemy". Although our understanding of strategy as applied in management has been transformed, one element remains prominent: the aim to achieve competitive advantage. Taking its name and roots from the military model, early formal strategic planning "reflected the hierarchical values and linear systems of traditional organizations, undertaken by elite planning function at the top of the organization, its structure was highly vertical and time-bound. A certain period would be set aside to analyze the situation and decide on a course of action. This would result in a formal document; once this was done the actual work of implementation - which was considered a separate, discrete process could begin" (Wall & Wall, 1995). Although individual definitions of strategy vary between authors, traditionally, theorists have considered planning an essential part of organizational strategy (Ololube, 2009). Educational strategic planning is the process by which the education industry makes decisions and takes action that affects its long-term performance. It is an output of the planning process. It defines both the Teachers in the education system and the students in relation to the teaching and learning process, At this point let briefly take a glance at the various components of the strategic planning process. The feedback process is a mechanism in which educational institutions may need to cycle back to a previous stage in the planning process thereby creating room for adjustments if need be

Educational Strategic Planning

The study examined four different kind of educational strategic planning that are mentioned and discussed below:

Strategic Analysis of Educational System

This is the first stage of the strategic planning process; it aims at evaluating the present condition of the education system. That is, it requires a thorough evaluation of the system's internal operation. The purpose of internal/external Analysis is to identify the educational system assets, skills, and resources that represent strengths, weakness obstacles and threats (SWOT). Strengths are favorable internal characteristics that the educational system can apply to achieve its strategic goals. Weaknesses are internal characteristics that hinder or limit goal accomplishment. Obstacles are features of the environment that will cause the educational system not to realize its goals if it cannot resist or avoid them. Challenges are features of the environment that favor the educational system provided it is able to take advantage of them (Naylor, 1999). The focus here is that analysis looks at the current position of the educational system. The underlying idea here is that an application of SWOT into Nigeria's education system will go a long way in solving the ever-complex strategic management scenario facing educational administrators instead of scavenging for thoughts.

SWOT Analysis is a simple framework for generating alternatives from situation analysis. It is applicable to either the corporate level or business unit level and frequently appears in marketing plans. SWOT (sometimes referred



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to as TOWS) stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. The SWOT framework was described in the late 1960's by Edmund P. Learned, C. Roland Christiansen, Kenneth Andrews, and William D. Guth in Business Policy, Text and Cases (1969). The General Electric Growth Council used this form of analysis in the 1980's because it concentrates on the issues that could potentially have the most impact; the SWOT analysis is useful when a very limited amount of time is available to address a complex strategic situation (ICMBA, 2004).

Lerner maintained that SWOT analysis identifies factors that may affect desired future outcomes of education. The SWOT model is based on identifying the education industry's internal strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the external environment, and consequentially identifying the educational industry's distinctive competencies and key success factors. These, along with considerations of societal and educational values lead to creation, evaluation and choice of strategy, SWOT'S objective is to recommend strategies that ensure the best alignment between the, external environment and internal situation (Lerner, 1999).

The internal and external situation analysis can produce a large amount of information, much of which may not be relevant. The SWOT analysis can serve as an 'interpretative filter to reduce the information to a manageable quantity, SWOT analysis classifies the internal aspect of the company as strengths or weaknesses and the external situational factors as opportunities or threats. Strengths can serve as a foundation for building a competitive advantage while weaknesses may hinder it. By understanding these four aspects of its situation, a firm can better leverage its strengths, correct its weaknesses, capitalize on golden opportunities and deter potentially devastating threats (ICMBA, 2004).

Strategic Formulation of Educational Policies

If the strategic analysis is completed and the current position of the educational system is ascertained next step is to look at where the educational system wants to be It now follows that the mission of education system (the rationale for which the education system exists) has to be established. It involves setting goals (the results that the educational system seeks to achieve in the long-term), identifying strategic alternatives as well as evaluating and choosing the strategy that provides the optimum performance of the educational industry in a long term. This idea is in line with what ICMBA (2004) opined when they asserted that "once a clear picture of the firm and its environment is in mind, specific strategic alternatives can be developed. While different firms have different alternatives depending on their situation, there also exist generic strategies that can be applied across a wide range of firms". ICMBA cited Michael Porter who identified cost leadership, differentiation, and focus as three generic strategies that may be considered when defining strategic alternatives. Porter advised against implementing a combination of these strategies for a given product instead arguing that only one of the generic strategy alternatives should be pursued.

Strategic Implementation of Educational Programmes

After strategic formulation comes the implementation stage. The best formulated strategy is useless or rather worthless if it cannot be implemented effectively. If the educational industry is to achieve the best result for which it was established through its strategic planning efforts, it must make sure that its strategy is put into action. The underlying idea here is ascertaining how the education system can get to where it wants to be the strategic planning process is the critical stage in the history of Nigerian education: implementation has been inconsistent and statistical deficiencies. as well as inadequately skilled personnel inhibit the planning process in most cases, However, if a choice has been made on the strategy to use, according to ICMBA (2004), the strategy likely will be expressed in high-level terms and priorities. For effective implementation, it needs to be translated into, more detailed policies that can be understood at the functional level of an educational system. The expression of the strategy in terms of functional policies also serves to highlight any practical issues that might not have been visible at a higher level. For effective implementation of a strategic plan, the



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policies should be translated as much as possible into specific policies for the functional level line staffs in the school system (academic and non-academic) to understand the purpose for which the plan is carried out.

Strategic Control of Educational Process

This is the final stage of the strategic planning process. Strategic control involves the monitoring of the thereby ensuring that it is in line with the expected performance. An effective education control system identifies problems inherent in the process and alerts the policy/ decision makers who then make modifications. The underlying idea here is determining how the educational system will know when it has arrived (Ololube, 2004; 2006).

The reason education production needs planning is vital at this stage of our discussion since there are several problems that face the school system in Nigeria (Nwabueze, 1995). One such problem is of the rising demand for schooling and thus the increasing number of students enrolled. Brint (1998) argues that this rising demand for schooling is necessitated to a significant degree by changes in the kinds of occupations produced by maturing economies. Where once secondary schools prepared elites for higher education and society, now they are, "mass terminal institutions" for white-collar workers and "mass preparatory institutions" for professional-managerial workers though he allows that occupational change is not the most important factor behind the rising demand for schooling.

Problems of Educational Strategic Planning in Nigeria

However nice this might be, educational planning faces many challenges. Some of the problems include:

1. Inaccurate Educational Data

One of the most difficult challenges that educational planners face is the issues of inaccurate statistical data. The quality of technical planning- is in most cases inhibited by statistical deficiencies and inaccurate data. Nigerian education systems has failed to effectively plan because of lack of accurate data, which is because of the use of mediocre to prepare data for use in the planning and forecasting processes.

2. Inadequate Skilled Educational Personnel

Most educational planners in Nigerian do not have complete competence in planning. Qualified planners are the single most significant resource that can lead to greater and efficient planning productivity and performance. In planning, what is needed is the effective utilisation resources by connecting the totality knowledge, skills and talents to achieve planning objectives. The quality of planners should not be nothing less than the basic acceptable standards worldwide.

3. Technological Problem

Another serious problem in the planning of education in Nigeria is the lack of attention paid to emerging technological innovations planning mechanisms. The success of Nigerian education planners depends upon their ability to identify and respond to technological changes in order to elevate their planning output. Over the years, a number of technological changes have taken place that involves the introduction of modern advancements into the planning process and approaches, and understanding emerging issues related to educational planning and development.

4. Political Arrangement

The existing political arrangement has influenced the control over educational planning in Nigeria. Political instability have had its toll on educational programmes. Planning process started by one administration is brutally interrupted by the next and the differences between federal and state government education policies are quite challenging. The inability of the Nigerian political structure does not allow for education planners to be accountable for their wrong doings.

5. Economic Circumstances

The budgetary allocations that are available for educational planning in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. Funds provide for education planning is too small for proper planning to take place The condition of the sector remains a thing



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of concern, Under-funding and systemic corruption makes the matter worse. The insufficient funding of the education planning sector stands as one of the major factors working against effective planning and implementation of education programmes.

6. Inadequate Educational Planning

There is a popular saying that “he or she who has failed to plan has planned to fail”. Education planning in Nigeria has always been inadequate in line with the enormous facing our educational system. The lack of effective planning poses a significant obstacles to the advancement of education across the country, The success of any educational system hinges on proper planning. Planning of human and material resources has evolved to guide the allocation and utilisation of educational resources in the school systems. Such planning is required to arrest areas of wasted resources and to make educational production more successful. Consequently, for any educational system to truly develop, effective planning is indispensable as location and planning are essential characteristics for effective education (Ololube, 2013).

Sustainable Development

Kundan as sited in Omonie (2005) believes that sustainable development is only possible or assumed when it is agreed and indeed create steps are taken to raise the level of literacy and numeracy in any society. In another definition by Maclean (2008), sustainable development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individuals’ humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and all potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economy, social and environmental system.

The Role of Strategic Planning in Sustainable Development

In all nations, Nigeria inclusive educational strategic planning remains the instrument for effective natural development which is assumed to have a significant influence. Strategic planning entails the enlightenment of people in their ways of pursuit in life. While, development is associated with positive change in the condition of individuals, groups and communities or even a country as a whole (Omoni 2005). Educational strategic planning and sustainable development are interwoven, intertwined and interconnected.

Conclusion

As enrollment in schools increases daily, the available resources may become over-stressed. The situation becomes even more frightening when a universal education program in Nigeria is been implemented. Therefore, adequate planning of the human and material resources is needed to address the issue of ever-increasing enrollment and the need to provide them with teachers who can help them achieve appropriate educational objectives. Additionally, the rising cost of education leaves some schools with low quality and inadequate material and human resources. This is because there is no cheap education the world over. Thus, the need for alternative ways of utilizing slim resources to attain set objectives makes planning imperative. The complexity of schooling, its constraints, contingencies, and other difficulties also make planning a necessity. The scarce resources in schools may be wasted if their utilization is not properly planned.

According to Meyer (1998), the rapidly increasing school enrollments around the world, in industrial and non-industrial societies alike, cannot simply be explained by occupational changes. At any given level in the schooling process an S-shaped enrollment curve can be traced. At first enrollments increased slowly. When they reach a "tripping point", however, they rapidly level off once near-universal enrollment has been achieved. Thus, even more important than occupation change has been changing expectations about how much schooling is "enough." Some families may begin to see schooling as providing important social benefits, such as the prospect of mixing with a higher class of people while others may see it as providing possible opportunities for economic advancement.



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These families will pursue strategies that allow them to invest more heavily in schooling.

Despite the increasing complexity of schools created by rising enrollments and problems of research, programs of study must be tailored to the ever-more complex needs of the society. Schools are established for the improvement of society and thus, socio-economic planners and educational planners need to cooperate in planning for the benefit of both the school and society.

The need to plan for quality education reform in any nation cannot be over-emphasized, When reform is adequately planned, it accelerates structural integration of a plural society by equalizing economic, social and political opportunities (Alabi & Okemakinde, 2010), Thus, educational planning is concerned with the problems of how to make the best use of limited resources allocated to education in view of the priorities given to different stages of education or different sector of education and the need of the economy (Olambo, 1995;Ololube,2013).

Recommendations

After careful examination of the study, it is the opinion of this paper to make the following suggestion that could remedy the challenges.

1. **Accurate Date:** There is need to have current and accurate data from educational and non educational agencies that comprised the detail of teachers, students, facilities, records and environmental information which is unbiased.
2. **Adequate Skilled Personnel:** Government should ensure the provision of enough and professional man power who are expert in planning and be allowed to execute the planning without disturbance interference and hindrance.
3. **Technological Facilities:** Technological tools are paramount to the planning process with a view to hasten the process to a greater sustainable development e.g A computer base geographical information system in school mapping.
4. **Political Stability:** Instability brings about poor planning it is therefore need for the government to avoid from politicization of educational policies and personal political connections for their selfish interest.
5. **Available Funds:** Educational planning need a lot of resources thereby the budgetary allocation be increased to meet up the financial demands.
6. **Effective Planning:** A successive policy or decision could be from effective planning which posses no obstacles in implementation and evolve to guide in utilization and allocation of resources in the educational industry.

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