Original Research Article

Trending issues in planning strategies and sustainability of educational system in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper discussed the Trending issues in planning strategies and sustainability of educational system in Nigeria. In recent times, the strategic planning process has undergone relevant modification which the management of educational institutions needs to respond rapidly the changing circumstances. The paper proposes and adopted a new dimensional open-ended approach and therefore insists in raising new and relevant issues in the educational system, the need to integrate human and cultural dimensions which school management has. The merits of this new dimensional approach have been revealed and also the challenges have been outlined. School heads may consider many possible steps in strategic planning process which includes strategic formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation. It should be stated that, strategic planning is the art of creating specific institutional strategies, implementing and evaluating the results considered to be vital to the educational managers that will lead to the achievement of the desired goals. Therefore, the paper made some conclusions and recommendations based on the prevailing circumstances in the system.

Keywords: Issues, Trending, Planning, Strategies, Sustainability, System, Education, Process, Nigeria.

Introduction

Education has been described as the instrument used to stir up the development and growth of any nation. A good or effective educational system stands to accelerate the development of any society. It is of this understanding that planning strategies becomes imperative in ensuring sustainability of quality educational system. Quality education is of crucial important to both private and all round development. According to Williams (2005) that quality education is the education which is productive and relevant to the needs of the individuals and the society. This explains that quality education is an education which is effective and efficient in solving personal and societal ills Igbegiri and Mbagwu (2020:30).

Strategies are ways and means of achieving goals and objective to ensure the sustainability of quality education system, the various stake holders have their role to play namely; the government, the school managers/administrator, the teachers, the student, parent and the society at large, since the schools are required to meet the society needs Igbegiri and Mbagwu (2021:51). The strategy is to ensure that the administrative structure of the school and each individual member of administrative staff are well placed to make an ongoing and highly effective contribution to the business needs of the school and to provide a truly excellent service both internal and external. This boils down to effective teaching and learning in the school system as the continual objective. Anyanwo and Iyagba (2009) opined that the strategy is written on the understanding that policies and guidance document that are available within school system will be incorporated into administrative planning for good practice. Strategies are modalities applied in an administrator or educational experts parting place to ensure excellent service delivery in the educational system. It is a common understanding that the essence of planning strategies in educational system is to bring about effective teaching and learning that is a viable educational system.

Chang (2008) explains that in the recent year the concept in which education planning is conducted have evolved some of which include all education system, in earning degree are subject to rapid changes, most often driven by globalization. IT

development, competition, shifts of traditional values and paradigms. The planning cycle has become shorter and none frequent. This involves the need for planning to be flexible and continuously adjusted the changing demands of the society and individuals.

There is a plethora of plan and programmes in many countries. Frequent changes of government with differing agendas, numerous international and regional initiatives (e.g. MDG, EFA, ESA etc) the search for resources and results and the multiplicity of partnership, to name a few lead to a diversity of the planning processes and subsequently numerous and often fragmented development program.

Education data generally available in Nigeria tends to be inaccurate and unreliable. According to Udoh (2017) that the demographics and the educational data in Nigeria have suffered a tremendous inaccuracy. In the same vein, Ololube (2019) explains that one of the most difficult challenges that are faced in the field of education is the issue of inaccurate statistical data. He further explains that this situation has been one of the major causes of ineffective and inefficient planning and implementation of economic, economics education and education programs and policies in Nigeria in contribution, Okoroma (2016) maintained that reliable data have not been a popular feature in planning. The unavailability of data is affecting the progress and development of Nigeria educational sector because policy makers, school heads, international organization cannot access current data to plan, design policies and support the development of education in the Nation. It is against these backdrops, that the need for strategic planning in order to enhance and sustain the quality of education system in Nigeria becomes imperatives.

Conceptual Clarifications:
Educational System

First and Foremost, education is geared towards sustaining development in society through conscious planning strategies. Education encourages changes in knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to enable a more sustainable and just society for all. Education system generally refers to public schooling. It includes all institutions which are concerned with the education of children, young persons and adults. Education as a system may be viewed as a part of the total social system. It is a sub-system in a social system. It reflects and influences in a social and cultural order of which it is apart. Educational system has a system of status and roles a body of skills, and values and traditions.

Education system comprises everything that goes into educating the population. Also, in the area of public administration, for example local, state and federal, it is responsible for the definition of levels, curricula, infrastructures construction, among all the areas that compose pre-school education with the prevalence of private administration in some cases, secondary education and higher education with prevalence of private administration also in some cases. Educational process can either be formal, informal. In the formal education the system is consciously programmed, planned and organized. Courses or subjects are well structured to meet with the need of the society and deliver to the society and deliver to the learners in a planned environment through well trained personnel fit to do so. The formal education is delivered in a formal institution called the school. It is delivered through a curricula process. The curriculum is a package that dictates the educational process or system contained in the school environment much of what makes up of the formal education should be left for another work, but suffices us to view the other types of education, informal and non formal education system Mbagwu and Igbegiri (2021:11).

It is worthy to note that informal system of education agrees with the traditional system of education. This system differs from one nation to another. The informal education is not planned or well organized but is carried out randomly. Its process is oral and informal. It is essential to our traditional society as the individual are exposed to certain norms and value of his immediate society before being exposed to the outer society.

The non-formal education system is an educational system operating between the formal and the informal king of education. Though it is targeted towards preparing the individual into becoming useful and functional to the society as the case in all forms of education, yet in its pursuit of this primary goal, the system is not formalized as in the case of the formal education, rather, it is narrowed to being making the individual becoming that which he/she is aimed at achieving within a time line. The system is not programed; neither does it form particular defined system in making the individual attain his/her goals. The non-formal takes place outside the school system, no structured curriculum or time-table guiding its process.

The swimming, gymnastic and other such training can be likened to the non-formal kink of education. But on the contest of this paper, our focus is on formal system of education. This is because according to Abernelty in Igbegiri and Mbagwu 2021. That the prime task of a formal educational system is to impact literacy which broader a person's mental horizons, increasing its capacity and willingness to change the environment.

Strategic Planning

The concept of strategic planning originally became prominent in the 1980s and 1960s and enjoyed commendations and accolades in the corporate world up till the 1980ss when it somewhat fell out of prominent. In 1990s there was elements of enthusiasm for strategic business planning start or the corporate world and till now if remain very imperative especially in the modern business. In the school system, the strategic planning requires careful and diligent thought and planning on the part of school management.

Historically, strategy is derived from the Greek world "Strategos" Status (meaning army and "age" (meaning leading/moving). In the modern times, strategy has taken different dimension in terms of approach to organizational goals achievement. It is all action that school manager/administrators take to attain one or more of the organization goals. It is also a general direction set for the school system and its component to achieve a desired state in the future. This results from the detailed strategic planning process. Strategy is all about bringing together school's activities and teasing and allocating the scare resources (human and materials) within the school environment so as to meet the present objectives. Strategy is a well defined and articulated roadmap of an institution of learning. It connects or explains the overall mission, vision and direction of a school system. The essence of strategy is to maximize school strengths and to minimize the strength of the factors or variables that are inimical to the growth of the school system. Strategy can be seen as the blue print (that is documented) of decisions in a school system that shows its objectives and goal. It defines or explains the business of institutions of learning is to carry on, the nature of human and material resources it wants and the contribution if plan to make to its learners and the society in general. The Oxford Dictionary defines strategy as:

- A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim.
- The art of planning and directing.

Mintzberg in Fuller (2016) identify different ways people, organizations use strategy including:

1. Strategy is a plan, a "how", a means of getting from here to there.
2. Strategy is a pattern in action over time; for.
3. Strategy is position that is; it reflects decisions to offer particular product or services.
4. Strategy is perspective; that is vision and direction

This implies that strategy is a combination or comprises plan, position, pattern and perspective. Furthermore, that strategy is holistic in nature. Is the route or parts by which the gap between means and ends are bridged. Therefore, planning a strategy, it is essential to consider that decisions are not taken in a vacuum and that any act taken by a school management is likely to be met by a reaction from these stakeholders in the business of education.

Planning is so common in daily usage. People talk about planning, virtually in all sectors, big and small organizations. Planning is seen as the first step in exerting any project, be it in family and outside. The society cannot be progressing without planning. As it stands now, planning has no generally acceptable definition. This is because, planning has different dimensional approaches in terms of explanation but the issue is that it all boiled down to one thing, that is, its aims is to achieve the goals and objectives of any individuals, corporate organization and any other group settings.

Agabi in Igbegiri and Idoli (2020) explain that planning is the process of determining in advance, what is to be done, including classification of goals, establishment of policies, mapping of programmes and campaigns and determining specific methods or procedures and fixing day today schedules. This implies that planning is systematic, deliberate and has process and methods. That planning is a holistic process that cut across all the angles within a given system. However, planning could be seen as a process of deciding in advance, the specific future course of action to be adopted with a view to optimizing the use of limited organizational resources towards desirable and specified goal attainment. Agabe in Igbegiri and Idoli (2010), planning intends to accomplish specific aims and objectives in respect of the organization or group.

Strategic planning is a process in which institutional leaders, managers of educational system determine their vision for the future as well as identify their goals and objectives for the system. Strategic planning in school system is frequently positioned as vital for clarifying future directions providing a coherent basis for decision-making, establishing priorities and improving organizational performance. Shah in Albon, Igbal and Pearson (2016). A strategic plan as a blue print that allows the school system to look at its future. Through visioning, developing a mission, examining core values and setting achievable goals. Strategic planning is a concept which aimed at integrating all the school activities to bring about high level or appreciable performance in a school system. Effective strategic planning aids the school system with governance decision and provides direction for the future. With a plan in place, the school management has a guide by which it can track evaluate and modify to facilitate better administrative decisions and provide direction for the future.

The concept of strategic planning process:

The strategic planning process is critical in any school system. That is because, planning cannot just commence it must take various sequential steps to bring about a high performing school system. Therefore, the five steps or processes in strategic planning of a school system which include: (Lucid chart. www.lucidchart.com).

1. Determine your strategic position
2. Prioritize your objectives
3. Develop a strategic plan
4. Execute and manage your plan
5. Review and revise the plan

Looking at the above steps in strategic planning or process; planning processes must be dynamic, responsive and focused on charges that are successful, sustainable and scalable.

According to Chang (2008) identifies the following three stages of strategic planning which include:
- Sector analysis
- Policy design
- Action planning

Sector analysis: According to him, that this is the first step of sector development planning. Sector review, situation analyses, diagnosis etc. are sometimes used interchangeably. Basically, sector analysis consists in conducting data collection on and critical analysis of the aspect relating to (and surrounding) the education sector. Planners and managers carefully examine both internal and external aspects of the education system. They are:
- Review how the system function (internal dynamics) to meet people needs and economic demand
- Examine various driving forces behind the education system and external conditions (the environment of which education is a part) eg. Macro-economic and socio-demographic situations and developments.

Policy design: He explains that education sector policies represent the government public commitment to the future orientation of the sector. A clearly formulated policy can play an important operational role as a reference for action. It can help to guide decision and future actions in educational development, including the interventions of international and bilateral corporation agencies, in a coherent way. He further buttressed that policy promote the coordination and success of programmes and projects. The formulation of a "goal policy for education" is a necessary step in promoting the emergence and effective implementation of action plan, programmes and projects. He went further to define policy as a set of the goal and purposes (specific, objectives). Often, educations policies are defined along the following threefold dimension:
- Access (access, participation, including gender and equity issues)
- Quality (quality, internal efficiency, relevance and internal effectiveness)
- Management (governance, decentralization, resource management)

Action planning: This he said was the third stage of strategic planning process or steps. He explains that a national policy should establish the framework for its implementation by guiding the main goals and priorities as well as the strategies to achieve them. That human and financial resource is available for carrying out the policy. Action planning in this context is the preparation for implementation. He also explains that action plan aims to translate into operational terms the policy directions that education authorities intend to implement in a given time horizon. It is a tool for "clarifying" to some extent the goals and strategies in relation to the education policy, programming the activities required, establishing the time, indicating the necessary resources, distributing institutional and administrative responsibilities, preparing the budget, etc.

Approaches to strategic planning:

Agabi in Igbegiri and Idoli (2010) identifies some approaches to educational planning.
- Time horizon approach: This is where planning is either a short-term, medium-term or long-term planning.
- Level of specificity approach: This has to do with subdividing planning into operational planning and perspective planning.
- Managerial level approach: This has to do with strategic and management educational planning as the main variants.
- Scope of educational activities approach: This is where educational planning is either comprehensive or specific.
- Scope of the plan approach: This means macro or micro educational planning types.
- Level of public-private participation approach: This has to do with laissez faire, indicative, incentive and imperative educational planning types.
- Time dynamism approach: This is where we have fixed and rolling-term educational planning.
- Mechanism for decision-making approach: This has to do with where educational planning is either decentralized or centralized.

- Levels of institutional change approach: This is a situation whereby educational planning is either functional or structural.
- Resource dichotomy approach: This where we have financial and physical educational planning.

Importance of strategic planning in the educational system

Cara Ong. (2016) identified some importance of strategic planning in the educational system which includes:

1) A strategic plan articulates a shared vision, mission and values with a well communicated and executed strategic plan, everyone is informed of their school's goals and how their actions contributing to the achievement of their goals.
2) Strategic planning helps to effectively organizes schools and their staff, by encouraging commitment showing staff member that school succeed.
3) Strategic planning defines how success is measured. That is a school with a strategy can monitor its progress towards key outcome and evaluate where and how it may have gotten off track.
4) Strategic planning aids a school with administrative decisions and provides direction for the future.
5) Strategic planning in a school system increases communization and engagement. This is critical because everyone understand his or her responsibilities and departments or subsystems are effective in coordinating their efforts.
6) It helps to keep everyone in a school from teacher to administrator, connected, hold all staff accountable.
7) School- student's educational achievement is taken care of.

Challenges of strategic planning in sustaining quality education in Nigeria

1. **Educational leadership:** According to Bell and Blanh (2010) that the opinion that a school leader cannot offer leadership on school vision since it is a collective responsibility of all stakeholders. The educational leadership includes the principals, Head teachers, the board of Governors, parent's teachers' association. They give leadership and vision to the organization. Therefore, the school heads, other educational agencies are expected to offer leadership on matters of quality improvement in educational system. School leaders are in a great position to contribute on the strategic planning she further explains that an effective school leader is pivotal in generating alternatives and supporting schools' vision as well as facilitating implementation and review of the strategic plans. Educational system must appoint an executive committee which has a vision and a dream beyond everybody in the school system and which is driven by results. It is believed that for a school system to formulate a strategic plan, these leaders should provide the necessary direction and be very visionary. Most of these educational leaders are not even abreast of the imperatives of strategic planning, some of these leaders are more opportunists who man over their way through the aid of politicians. This boils down to the politicization of educational system.

2. **Man power problems:**
   Agabi in Igbegiri and Idoli (2010) explains that manpower problems have to do with manpower deficiencies and inappropriate placement. This implies that inspite of the far reaching efforts by both national and international organizations in the training of educational planners and administrators, the educational system are still manned by people who have no basic training in such specialized task areas. The issue also is that the few who have acquired the relevant skill and professionalism are inappropriately deployed. The management of school system must by their up to expectation and to ensure the right individuals are the right leadership positions. The "right" individuals include those who will advocate for and champion the strategic plan and keep the educational school on track.

3. **Inability to adapt to change:** The strategic plan must give room for changes. In order word, it must be dynamic as to fit in the currency realities in the educational system.

4. **Statistical deficiencies:**
   This is a situation where the quantitative information or statistical data to make meaningful plan forecast may be inadequate thereby constituting inconsistencies or problems in planning strategy in the system. This also has to do with unreliability of available statistical data. According to Agabi in Igbegiri and Idoli (2010) that the assertion may lead to figures being inappropriately collected and thus, factually wrong and misleading or deliberately falsified to reflect education bias. Therefore, the need for timely, adequate and reliable information for strategic planning educational system can hardly be ignored.

5. **Financial and Material resource constraints:**
   This has to do with inadequacy of fund, human and other material resources that aid strategic planning for planning to be effective all these variables must be made available. It is however, no longer news, that availability and utilization of funds and other resource constitute the most serious problem in strategic planning of educational system. The inadequacy of finance and other educational resources can frustrate strategic plan even the development of the various caliber of educated manpower needed to implement, supervise and monitor the implementation of the plans is seriously hindered.

Conclusion

Trending issues in strategic planning and sustainability of educational system in Nigeria actually suggests that there is need to inculcate new trends, innovations in planning strategies in order to tackle the challenges in planning. It is believed that there is no perfect way to conduct strategic planning. However, what is generic to strategic planning are certain variables such as sector analysis, which is the first stage of the school development planning, policy design, this can play an important operational role as a reference for action and action planning which explains the frame work of strategic planning with regards to its implementation by giving the main goals and priorities as well as the strategies to achieve them. Planning has become complex, especially in Nigeria, involving much diversified and specialized skills and competencies. Managers/administrators of the educational system are required to acquire not only the necessary technical capacities, but also political negotiation and communication skills to effectively engage with finances ministries and other supporting agencies to realize educational objectives and goals.

Suggestions:

The following suggestions are made:
- Government through specialized agencies should embark on regular strategic planning training to school managers to enable them understand current realities in strategic planning of educational system.
- The government should appoint highly experienced persons to take the lead in strategic planning in the educational system.
- Government through specialized agencies should welcome changes and innovation that will enhance strategic planning in the system.
- Political office holders should not interfere in the management of educational system in Nigeria. Only appropriate and qualified persons should manage the system.

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