

Strategic Planning: A Way Forward for the Management of Primary Education in Southwest, Nigeria

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Abstract

Education is one of the most potent instruments for change, transformation and progress in the political, social, economic, scientific and technological aspects of any nation. Primary education is the basic level of education in the formal system of education in Nigeria. However, it has been posed with several challenges over the years as its management has changed from one person, group of persons or tier of government to another even in the south west region of the nation. Some of these challenges include: teachers strike and poor salary structure, poor infrastructural facilities, problems of competent teachers, poor funding and students' deviant behaviours. Strategy planning which provides potential and opportunity for planners and managers to act proactively

to the future, technology, and the environment as a whole is advocated for the management of primary education in order to achieve its intended goals.

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Introduction

Education is a vehicle for national change and also a great tool for economic, social, political, technological and sustainable development of a Nation. It enables the people to acquire and develop the knowledge, values and skills to participate in decision making about them, individually, collectively and globally (Ekwueme, 2016). Education is also seen as a process by which a country generates the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for its survival and sustenance. It is therefore an agent of development valued by all nations of the world because it has brought total liberation to man. It has also transformed man from ignorance and misery to knowledge and happiness and also made man useful to himself, his generation and beyond (Etor, 2013). Education is the means through which the aims and habits of a people are transmitted from one generation to another. In its technical usage, education is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs, norms and values from one generation to another (Okujagu, 2013). From the above definitions, education can thus be seen as that which deals with the generation, transmission and acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, norms and habits, among others and develops individuals to be useful to both themselves and society at large.

Education usually occurs under the guidance and supervision of educators although learners could also educate themselves. There are three major types of education that exist. They are – formal, non-formal and informal education (Radhika, 2018). Formal education started to occur in an organized education model, structured and administered by laws, rules and norms, and strictly subject to curriculum objectives, methodology and content. This form of education involves the instructor (teacher), learners and the school institution (Albulene & Arif, 2016). Participants in formal education are expected to attend classes, subject themselves to assessment that is meant to take learning to the

next stage and it results in the attainment of diplomas and degrees (Radhika, 2018). Non-formal is flexible in terms of curricula, and methodology but learning in 'these settings' are not by chance, instead it is intentional and organized. Students' needs and interests are placed in the center and the time frame is lacking. Additionally, the contact between students and instructors is significantly less and most of the learning activities happen outside class and institutions. Informal education does not follow a plan, it happens in all settings and learning is unconscious (Albulene & Arif, 2016). In informal education the responsibility for learning rests with the individual. Mistakes are valued and are considered vital to learning, more mistakes mean more learning. This form of education in most cases happens in friendships, families and work environments (Novosadova, Selen, Piskunowicz, Hassan, Mousa, Suoheimo, 2013).

In Nigeria, formal education is divided into three stages: primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. Primary education is typically the first stage of formal education that comes after kindergarten and before secondary education. Furthermore, it is the education given in institutions for children aged 6–11 plus. It is also called elementary education and takes place in primary school. This stage provides basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic in order to establish a strong and solid foundation for learning (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012). The functions of primary education are to bring up or to develop children; inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific, reflective and sound thinking; give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society and molding the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2012; Kolangi, 2014). However, despite the importance primary education plays in the development of Nigeria, it has been observed that there is a great deal of mismanagement even in the south west part of Nigeria (Olaniyan & Obadara, 2008; Adeyemi, 2009; Alaba, 2010 and Oni, 2017).

According to , management is people working together to find, interpret and achieve the objectives of the organization by applying different functions like planning, organizing, staffing, relationship among different stakeholders,

leading and controlling (Lussier, 2019). Management in school is usually a means of setting goals in a realistic way and establishing plans to achieve them, which includes setting objectives, allocation of resources, evaluating the impact and delivering the result in the light of evaluation (Pont, Nusche and Moorman, 2008; Lussier, 2019). Management is a process that typically consists of planning, organising, mobilizing and controlling performance to determine and achieve goals which have been determined through the placement of human resources (Dolechek, Lippert, Vengrouskie and Lloyd, 2019; Aho, 2020). Planning is an aspect of management that involves defining an organization's goals, establishing an overall strategy for achieving these goals, and developing comprehensive plans to integrate and coordinate activities (Aho, 2020). However, for planning to be very effective, it has to be strategic.

Strategic planning provides potential and opportunity for planners to act proactively to the future, technology, and the environment as a whole. In reality, a primary education improvement strategy should place effective teaching practices as a key strategy for improvement (Yureva, Yureva and Burganova, 2016). Furthermore, in strategic planning, the future of primary education that educators and the government want must be initially defined through the partnership and collaboration of the various networks of concerned educational partners. Then, the learning system for planning such a future can be designed. In other words, the image of the appropriate education system and policy should be provided at the stage, and then an agreement is reached through a consecutive technical analysis and modification and the most important strategic management success key factor in any education is human resources to achieve a successful organization as school (Amoli & Aghashahi, 2016). Through investigation of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) within and outside the primary school organization, strategic planning ideas can be planned (Yaakob, Musa, Habibi and Othman, 2019).

Concept of Primary Education

Primary (or elementary) education consists of the first four to seven years of formal, structured education (Bokova, 2014). They are typically designed to provide young children with functional literacy and numeracy skills and to be guaranteed, solid foundation for most areas of knowledge and personal and

social development to support the transition to secondary school (Olaniyan & Obadara, 2008). In general, primary education consists of six to eight years of schooling starting at the age of five to seven, although this varies between, and sometimes within, countries. Globally, in 2008, around 89% of children aged six to twelve were enrolled in primary education, and this proportion was rising (Bokova, 2014). Primary education begins at around age 3 for the majority of Nigerians. Students spend six years in primary school and graduate with a school-leaving certificate. Subjects taught at the primary level include mathematics, English language, Christian Religious Knowledge, Islamic studies, Agricultural science, Home economics and one of the three main indigenous languages and cultures: Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. Private schools also offer computer science, French, and Fine Arts. Primary school students are required to take a Common Entrance Examination to qualify for admission into the Federal and State Government Secondary schools, as well as private ones (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2012). Before 1976, education policy was still largely shaped by the colonial policy of the British Colonial Period. In 1976, the Universal Primary Education program was established. This program faced many difficulties and was subsequently revised in 1981 and 1990. The Universal Basic Education, UBE, came as a replacement of the Universal Primary Education and intended to enhance the success of the first nine years of schooling. The UBE involves 6 years of Primary School education and 3 years of Junior Secondary School education, culminating in 9 years of uninterrupted schooling, and transition from one class to another is automatic but determined through continuous assessment. This scheme is monitored by the Universal Basic Education Commission, UBEC, and has made it "free", "compulsory" and a right of every child (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2004, Opoh, 2015). Therefore, the UBEC law section 15 defines UBE as early childhood care and education. The law stipulates a 9-year formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skill acquisition programs, and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, girl child and women, Al-majiri, street children and disabled people (Aderinoye, 2007).

Concept of Strategy Planning

Strategy is a pattern in a stream of decisions. It is about shaping the future and is the human attempt to get to desirable ends with available means' (McKeown (2011). Kvint (2009) defines strategy as a system of finding, formulating, and developing a doctrine that will ensure long-term success if followed faithfully. When there is uncertainty in an organization, strategy serves as an organizational compass, pointing the direction to where the organization needs to go without disregarding where they are or they have been. Strategy is an action that managers take to attain one or more of the organization's goals. It is also a general direction set for an organization and its various components to achieve a desired state in the future. On the other hand, planning means defining an organization's goals, establishing an overall strategy for achieving these goals, and developing comprehensive plans to integrate and coordinate activities (Lussier, 2019).

Strategic planning may be defined as the process of determining the objectives of the organization and the resources to be used to attain these objectives, as also the policies to govern the acquisition, utilization and disposition of these resources. A strategy is all about integrating organizational activities and utilizing and allocating the scarce resources within the organizational environment so as to meet the present objectives. While planning a strategy it is essential to consider that decisions are not taken in a vacuum and that any act taken by the organization is likely to be met by a reaction from those affected, competitors, customers, employees or suppliers (Blatstein, 2012). Strategic planning provides a blueprint for achieving organizations' goals. When creating a strategic plan, there are certain objectives that the organization is trying to satisfy during the execution of the strategic plan. Understanding the organizational objectives of a strategic corporate plan will help to create efficient plans to guide organizations' growth (Root, 2014). A strategic plan is a document used to communicate with the organization, the goals and actions needed to achieve those goals and all of the other critical elements developed during the planning exercise. However, strategic planning is an organizational management activity that is used to set priorities, focus energy and resources, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes/results, and assess and adjust the organizations' direction

in response to a changing environment. It is a disciplined effort that produces fundamental decisions and actions which shapes and guides what an organization is, who it serves, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future. Effective strategic planning articulates not only where an organization is going and the actions needed to make progress, but also how it will know if it is successful (Rothaermel, 2012).

Importance of Strategy Planning

Strategy planning is a necessary requirement for sustained competitive advantage on organizations. Competitive advantage is that which keeps some organizations ahead of their competitors (Maleka, 2014). It was pointed out that organizations, which have a competitive advantage, tend to perform much better than others. Furthermore, it was stated that some organizations may achieve competitive advantage without a thorough strategic plan but for the most players out there, it is vital to plan strategically, i.e. analyses, create, implement and monitor continuously (Rothaermel, 2012). It is not guaranteed that organizations will ever achieve competitive advantage conducting strategic planning but it is an essential process of the organisations. Strategy planning is used to achieve the competitive advantage and to integrate all the functional areas of the company by facilitating the communication between the managers of all levels. It also assists to view things from a broader perspective (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008). Strategy planning also facilitates collaboration. Other benefits of strategy planning include: defines organization's vision, mission and future goals; identifies the suitable strategies to achieve the goals; improves awareness of the external and internal environments, and clearly identifies the competitive advantage; increases managers' commitment to achieving the organization's objectives; improves coordination of the activities and more efficient allocation of organization's resources; enhances better communication between managers of the different levels and functional areas; reduces resistance to change by informing the employees of the changes and the consequences of them and strengthens the organization's performance (Cox, Daspit, McLaughlin and Jones, 2012; Blatstein, 2012; Maleka, 2014).

Management of Primary Education in Southwest, Nigeria

Management is people working together to find, interpret and achieve the objectives of the organization by applying different functions like planning, organizing, staffing, relationship among different stakeholders, leading and controlling (Lussier, 2019). Management in school is usually a means of setting goals in a realistic way and establishing plans to achieve them, which includes setting objectives, allocation of resources, evaluating the impact and delivering the result in the light of evaluation (Adokiye, 2013). In education management is the organization and mobilization of human and material resources for the achievement of the goal of education. Generally, the goal of education is developing the child's knowledge, skills, habits, abilities, attitudes and other forms of behavior which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. Human resources, in the primary and secondary education systems, comprise men and women, right from the principal, head teacher down to the gardener. The material resources include classrooms, equipment, and all sorts of assets. In order to accomplish the goal of education, the educational resources should be available in adequate quantity and quality (Oni, 2014), members of the academic community engage in meaningful teaching and learning, and the personnel, whose responsibility is to oversee the affairs of the system and ensure enforcement of standard, play their role effectively well (Oni, 2009).

Management of primary and secondary education started right from the establishment of the first set of schools. The Christian Missions, who laid the formal educational foundation in the country, were, indeed, the first set of managers of the education system. All alone, they administered the system for the first four decades (1843 –1882). The primary goal of the Church Missions was evangelism. They only used education to accomplish their goal. The Missions did not pay attention to the quality of the personnel to impart knowledge. Qualified teaching workforce was grossly inadequate. In most cases, the priest, his wife, and their attendants served as teachers. Material resources too were insufficient. The same building, used as a church, also served as a classroom, the most important material resource. Funds were scarcely available resulting in poor provision of reading and writing materials. The curriculum of primary education was heavily religion-biased. Worse still, it was not deep in content. There were no regular school hours, no common syllabus, no standard reading materials for teachers and pupils, no central

examination system, and the supervision of schools was inadequate. There were no official rules and regulations to control the actions of the Missions. Each Mission was just doing what it liked the way it felt it should be done (Fafunwa, 1991; Oni, 2017).

Incontrovertibly, the obvious inadequacies showed poor management style of the Church Missions. Understandably, there were criticisms from the nationalists who called for a change. Government reacted to the public call for improved administration by the enactment of the first Education Ordinance in 1882. The colonial government established its first primary school 17 years later. This clearly was poor management as the Ordinance became obsolete, just five years after it was put into operation, and had to be replaced with the Education Ordinance of 1887. For seven decades; 1882–1952, the colonial government played a prominent role in the management and quality control of the nation's primary and secondary education through the enactment of a number of Education Ordinances, Education Proclamations and Education Codes. The foundation for the nation's basic organizational structure was laid in the Lyttleton Constitution, enacted in 1954. Each of the governments of the Federal Territory of Lagos, and Western Region enjoyed a measure of autonomy. Each government engaged in the management of the primary education systems in its jurisdiction (Oni, 2009). George, Olayiwola, Adewole and Osabuohien, (2013) reported that after attaining independence in 1960, the Nigerian government made efforts to reshape the education system in line with the yearnings of the time. Furthermore, it was observed that Nigeria's government after independence favoured the public school system that would promote a national identity over ethnic and religious differences. Successive government used public education to promote national unity, and build human resources for the exploration of the country's natural resources

The responsibility for the management of primary education involves the Federal, State, and Local Government of the Federation. The Federal Government's role in the implementation of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) is to ensure quality control and maintenance of uniform standards and general coordination of programme implementation. The State Governments have constitutional and legislative responsibility to manage the UBE and get a 2% of the Federal Consolidated Revenue as grants in support of UBE (Federal Ministry

of Education, 2007). In order to ensure effective administration of education and to see that educational objectives are attained, both the federal and state governments established a number of parastatals and institutions charged with the responsibility for various levels of educational institutions. The administration of primary schools is delegated to the local governments. In 1989, the Federal Military Government inaugurated the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC). The National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) ensures that standards in primary schools are maintained and that teachers' salaries are paid as and when due. Any policy formulated by the NPEC is implemented in the primary schools through the State Primary Education Board (SPEB) and the Local Government Education Authority (Peretomode, 2004). Despite the changes that has occurred in the management of primary schools, there are still numerous challenges facing the primary school education in south west Nigeria. The Nigerian educational sector at all levels is plagued by a myriad of problems which has now become a going-concern after years of un-arrested deterioration with the primary sub-sector been the worse hit. There is therefore a need for strategy planning.

Strategy Planning: A way forward for management of Primary Education in south west Nigeria

In education, strategy planning is the design of the direction and constructive change of a school going forward. It consists of words, namely: planning and strategy (Yapandi, 2018). According to the Texas Workforce Commission (2005), planning sets the direction for something and strategies are methods for achieving goals and objectives. Strategic planning is important in management as it allows managers to start with the desired outcomes and work backwards to identify what will produce those results. In addition, it helps schools to make fundamental decisions that guide them to the vision of developing the future. According to Chang (2006), strategic planning is the process of determining what a school wants to achieve and how to direct the school and resources to achieve the goal for several months and years. A strategic plan is a roadmap to direct a school from its present state to a condition in five or ten years. In addition, it is a powerful effort to produce

decisions and fundamental actions that shape and guide what a school (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it (Yureva, Yureva & Burganova 2016)

In strategic planning, the future primary education wants to be defined must be initially defined through the partnership and collaboration of the various networks of educational partners concerned. Then, the learning system for planning such a future can be designed. In other words, the image of the appropriate education system and policy should be provided at the stage, and then an agreement is reached through a consecutive technical analysis, analysis, and modification and the most important strategic management success key factor in any education is human resources to achieve a successful organization as school (Amoli and Aghashahi, 2016). Through investigation of strengths, weaknesses, current opportunities and threats within and outside the organization, strategic planning ideas can be planned. Planning is a primeval aspect of human development as preparing for the future has always been part of man either as an individual, organization or a nation. The preparation for the future often appears in the form of a mental picture of a desired or expected future (Sanubi, 2015).

In school management, vision statements would appear very crucial as motivation towards greater work efforts. Strategy planning in primary school will therefore emphasize or strengthen the vision of the school as it is an essential step in building a political consensus on a broad school development strategy which encompasses the responsibilities, roles and duties of the different aspects in the school (Becky,2007). Every vision provides a compelling and persuasive logic of where a school is heading and everyone is expected to know the direction and the reason for doing so. In effect, the vision of primary education must be a shared vision so that all the stakeholders and members of staff understand their contributory role in its achievement. Furthermore, in strategy planning, the vision of primary education must be concrete and be the desire of all not just that of an individual but one that is developed from the common will, values, norms and beliefs that are shared by all so that everyone endeavours to align his/her goals towards the achievement of the common vision of the primary education (Sanubi, 2015). After stating the vision, strategy planning in primary education management also involves identification of the set goals which is then followed with an analysis of achieving the set goals. In

addition, strategy planning involves the process of identifying the school challenges and designing the strategies and policies needed to mobilise available resources to resolve them in order to move the school towards the desired path of growth and development (Opoh, 2015;Sanubi, 2015). Furthermore, it was posited that for primary education in the south west to be properly managed, the government has to set strategic goals and targets and also organize frameworks for implementing, coordinating and monitoring the plan in which the broad goals and specific targets are pursued through the formulation of policies, articulation of appropriate projects and programmes and the mobilization of available resources (human and material resources) for their effective realization (Obadan, 2004).

Strategy planning for primary education is thus the process of deliberately and consciously developing a blueprint and action agenda for translating the shared vision and goals of primary education into reality. It is the process that school management could use in the transformation of thoughts, ideals, desires, expectations into possibilities through the identification and analysis of how they can be realized while taking into cognizance the social dynamics and available resources present (Sanubi, 2015).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are posed. They include:

1. Management should constantly employ strategy planning in addressing the challenges and problems facing primary education in south west Nigeria.
2. Strategy planning should be carried out to ensure that all stakeholders involved in primary education display unquestionable commitment towards the shared vision and goals of primary education in order to see it become a reality

Conclusions

The management of primary education in Nigeria has been assigned to various tiers of Governments and several commissions. It has also gone through several experiments. Several challenges have faced primary education since its inception. These challenges include: teachers' strike, inadequate human and

material resources, low finances and funding, students' deviant behaviours amongst others. These challenges have nearly destroyed the Nigerian primary education (public school). Even now in the present Universal Basic Education programme, the responsibilities of administration and financing primary education are still shared among the three tiers of government. It is very important for the Nigerian government to find a permanent solution to the problem of instability in the control and management of primary school education. This therefore calls for strategy planning which helps the government and all those involved in the management of primary school education to state the vision, mission, goals and objectives and ensure that they are shared among all the stakeholders in the education process so that they display great deal of commitment towards the desired future of primary education. Strategy planning would also ensure that all hands are on deck in mobilising available human and material resources in a bid to move the school towards the desired path of growth and development and also translating the ideals, beliefs and values of primary education into reality. When strategy planning is done, primary education in the south west region of the Nation will take a great leap in management.

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