

The Planning Principles of Secondary School Principals for Quality Assurance in Nigeria Schools

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Planning involves the mapping out or charting of activities, aimed at satisfying human wants. Thus, planning is goal directed. This paper c-rayed the concept of planning, stages in planning, process of educational planning. It also considers the importance of educational planning and principles of educational planning, with special focus on the Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely (SMART) principle of planning. It also examined how a secondary school principal can successfully use these principles in administering the school. The paper concludes that planning is essential for long term survival of any organization. It recommends among others, that principals should be trained on how to apply systematic educational planning principle to enhance their administrative performance. This can be done through capacity building, workshops and seminars for secondary school principals. Also, government, through Ministry of Education should try to appoint principals who are knowledgeable in educational: planning, so as to enhance decision making process and effective planning of activities in secondary schools.

Key Words: School Principal, Planning, Administration, Quality Assurance

Introduction

The complex nature of education, the activities of the administrators within the educational system and the highly diffused nature of the goals and objectives of education call for proper planning. Within the intensified compilation of modern technological society, the need for social, political and economic planning arose. Pressures from population exposition, manpower needs, ecology, decreasing natural resources, value definition and orientation, and haphazard application of scientific development call for the need for advance improvement to benefit the individuals and the nation which place demands on educational institutions for solutions and hence the need for educational planning. Since the goals and objectives of education are all embracing impacting upon social, economic and political wellbeing of the society, much is expected from educational planning.

Adequate planning helps to direct and coordinate the actions of education stakeholders in order to achieve maximum effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. Resources to be used in education are limited, therefore, the need arises to determine in advance, a programme of action for the attainment of the goals within a given time. Planning is necessary for administrative decision in educational management aiming at putting into action the roadmap of what educators deem to achieve. Planning occupies a prominent position in the development of educational system of a country. Generally, planning compels educational administrators to visualize the overall programmes of their institutions. It enables members to have a better understanding of their tasks or responsibilities and be better prepared for future events. Through planning, the educational system is in a better position to

respond positively to the needs and aspirations of the students, the society and the nation at large, for growth and development.

The Concepts of Planning and Educational Planning

Planning is a process of establishing priorities for future actions in an attempt to solve economic, social and other problems which arise from the existence of scarce resources. Planning is a rational and intelligent process of preparing or arranging a set of decisions for a future action directed at achieving goals and objectives by the best means possible (Okwori, 2011).

According to Musaazi (1982), planning is a rational process of preparing a set of decisions for future actions directed at achieving goals and objectives by optimal means.

By these definitions, planning is future and goal oriented. Planning does not exist in vacuum, goals and objectives must be set. Planning is also designed to achieve development and as such planning becomes a continuous process. Planning is not only concerned with objectives, but also with how to achieve them, therefore, it is concerned with implementation of those objectives. Similarly, Ovwigho (1991) contends that planning is a process that involves the selection of facts and assumptions that are related to the future with the aim of visualizing and formulating the desired outcomes to be attained. Planning is always concerned with the progress made, with unforeseen obstacles that might arise, and with how to overcome these obstacles, and this can only be achieved through constant evaluation.

Fayol (1949) considers planning as an act of foretelling and preparing for the future. Luther Gulick and Urwick (1939) viewed planning as working out outline or road map of things that needed to be done and methods for accomplishing the goals of an organization. On the basis of the above definitions of planning, one can conclude that planning entails a process of identifying our goals and objectives and working out aims and means of achieving them.

Educational planning involves a consideration of unforeseen obstacles and making provision for possible ways of overcoming them. This implies that educational planning calls for a constant evaluation and modification. If necessary of the related programmes until the anticipated goals are achieved. For example, if you plan to operate a Nursery and Primary school. It is your duty to get it started, and until pupils start graduating from the school, and the school continues to sustain itself and achieve its goals, the process of planning, implementing and evaluation will continue. Adesina in Dare (2008) define educational planning as the process of applying scientific or rational procedures to the process of educational growth and development, to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of educational system. In effect, educational planning deals with the future of the educational system in relation to the past and present trends. As a result, it provides the basis for future decisions and actions on issues related to education.

Basically, the task of the educational planner is to ensure that the economic use of the country's educational resources are intelligently planned. Just like any planning, educational planning is future-oriented, drawing enlightenment from the past. To be meaningful,

educational planning must take into account the integration of formal and non-formal education and the training facilities in the country.

Generally, educational planning focuses on the needs, aspirations and prospects of the students and the society. Specifically, educational planning focuses the mind of educational planner or administrator on major issues such as those related to the type of schools required in the society; the level of education that needs to be given priority; courses to be offered, students' enrolment, and other issues on human, material, financial and physical resources of the educational system. For example, the present focus of the Federal Government of Nigeria on Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) and Open University is an indication of the work of educational planners, who must probably will have made these suggestions based on the needs of the country to educate a large percentage of children, and also to make university education to be at the reach of all those who need it respectively. These issues are very important.

Steps and Stages in Planning

Beeby (1969) suggests that in preparing a plan, an administrator uses the following series of steps:

1. **Situational Analysis:** This step involves analysis of past events, current situation and attempts to forecast into future trends.
2. **Identification of Needs:** Needs assessment is a process of delineating "what is" and "what should be". It further involves placing priorities of the two activities.
3. **Derivation of Goals and Objectives:** One derives goals and objectives from the identified needs.
4. **Delineating of Alternative:** As alternatives are usually many, it is necessary to rank them so that those which need immediate attention can be acted on.
5. **Choice of Strategies and Tactics:** It is necessary to select the most convincing alternative while considering the other alternatives that may not be a priority.
6. **Implementation:** After approval of the plan, it is split or handled as a whole to determine the activities that should be undertaken.
7. **Controlling and Evaluation:** Implementation of plans must be continuously monitored.

Planners must monitor the actual performance of various work units according to unit goals and plans. This stage helps identify deviation of actual performance from expected performance. Correction action should be taken when there is a discrepancy.

Educational Planning Process

Adesina (1997) identifies three major steps in the educational planning process. It is important to examine these steps. They are: statement of educational objectives;

identification of various activities needed to achieve the stated educational objectives; and evaluation of results.

Statement of Educational Objectives: The educational objectives must be identified and clearly stated. This will ensure that there is no confusion about the objectives.

- a. Identification of Various Activities: The various activities which are needed to achieve the stated objectives must be clearly identified. Usually, those activities relate to the supply of the human and material resources that are required. This ranges from identifying such institutions such as schools, examination bodies, and so on that would have to be established for the plan implementation and monitoring to the number of cleaners required. They also relate to the identification of the number of staff required, their qualifications and experience and the amount of money required to maintain the system.
- b. Evaluation of Results: Evaluation should be related to the stated objectives. The extent to which a plan meets the objectives it has established for itself can be determined by looking at the implementation in relation to those objectives.

Similarly, Peretomode (2006) suggests that educational planning process involves the following steps:

- (1) Plan survey and deliberations;
- (2) Definition of goals and objectives;
- (3) Programmes design and specification;
- (4) Programme provision;
- (5) Implementation and control and; (6) Plan evaluation and plan regeneration.

Importance of Educational Planning

Educational planning is concerned with the problem of wisely distributing the limited resources and the types of education such as formal, non-formal and so on. The process of educational planning according to Beeby (1969) comprises three main functions.

1. Identification of Objectives and Strategies: By this we mean that educational planning helps in identifying and defining the objectives and the strategies, programmes, procedures, policies and standards which education needs to be more effective and efficient. Through educational planning we are able to clearly identify and define educational objectives, identify and also clearly define various activities which are to be carried out to achieve the educational objectives.
2. Proper Distribution of Scarce Resources: By scarce resources, we mean the limited resources which are available to satisfy our wants (needs). Educational planning helps in seeing to it that the limited resources are properly or wisely allocated to provide the needed level and type of education to the citizens of the country. In order to help in wisely allocating the limited resources, alternative courses of actions are compared and then the one that has great benefits for the citizens are allocated more resources.

3. Educational Planning Aids Decision making: Educational planning helps decision maker at all levels to reach a better and well informed decision. This is because through educational planning, adequate data are collected on the particular level that we wish to plan for and on the basis of such information available. It is also easier to arrive at better decisions. Educational planning therefore helps to promote speedy and effective administration of the system since the administrators of the system are provided with necessary guidelines to work with. Furthermore, with educational planning, it becomes easy to evaluate the progress made in the educational system.

According to United Nations Development Plan (UNDP) (2009) there are four main benefits that make planning worthwhile:

1. Planning enables us to know what should be done when - without proper planning, projects or programmes may be implemented at the wrong time or in the wrong manner and result in poor outcomes.
2. Planning enables us to mitigate and manage crises and ensure smoother implementation - there will always be unexpected situations in programmes and projects. However, a proper planning exercise helps reduce the likelihood of these and prepares the team for dealing with them when they occur. The planning process should also involve assessing risks and assumptions and thinking through possible unintended consequences of the activities being planned. The results of these exercises can be very helpful in anticipating and dealing with problems.
3. Planning improves focusing on priorities and leads to more efficient use of time, money and other resources - Having a clear plan or roadmap helps in focusing on limited resources for priority activities, that is, the ones most that are likely to bring about the desired change. Without a plan, people often get distracted by many competing demands.
4. Planning helps in determining what success will look like - thus a proper plan helps individuals and schools to know whether the results achieved are those that were intended and to assess the discrepancies. Of course, this requires effective monitoring and evaluation of what was planned. For this reason, good planning includes a clear strategy for monitoring and evaluation and use of the information from these processes.

Principles of Planning

Planning is a dynamic process; it is very essential for every organization to achieve their ultimate goals. But there are certain principles which are essential to be followed so as to formulate a sound plan. They are only guidelines in the formulation and implementation of plans. These principles of planning according to Appleby (1976) include the following:

- (1) Plan should be based upon clearly defined objectives and make use of all available information.
- (2) Plan should consider factors in the environment which will help or hinder the organization in breaching its goals.

- (3) Plan take account of the existing organization and provide for control, so performance can be checked with established standard.
- (4) Plans should be precise, practicable and simple to understand and operate.
- (5) Plans should be flexible, to ensure that if circumstances necessitate change this can be effected without disrupting the plan.

In the same vein, Kimani (2010) identifies the following principles. These principles are based on Gary Dessler's work.

- (1) Keep aims crystallized: The aims and objectives should be attainable, reasonable, solid and clear.
- (2) Develop Accurate Forecasts: Accurate data and events are crucial to any planning process. Where possible, quantitative methods should be used apart from intuitional judgment.
- (3) Involve Subordinates in the Planning Process: This will help in ensuring ownership and acceptance of the plans by implementers.
- (4) The Plan must be a Sound One: An effective plan must be based on correct information and proper assumptions.
- (5) Do not be Over-optimistic: It is important to be objective in planning, being over ambitious will not lead to an effective plan.
- (6) Criteria for Abandoning a Project: The criteria for abandoning a project should be established at the beginning.
- (7) Keep the Plans Flexible: The progress of the plan should be under constant review so that it can be revised of and when the situation requires modification.
- (8) Review Long-range Plans on a Short-range Basis: Long-range plans need to be reviewed regularly. This will ensure that changes that occur over time during implementation are incorporated in the plan.
- (9) Fits the Plan to the Environment: Where environment is comparatively stable, a plan can be rigidly adhered to. In case the environment is volatile, the plan must be highly flexible to accommodate necessary changes occasioned by changes in environment.

Similarly, Wikipedia used an acronym "SMART" for planning principles, where S represents "Specific;" M represents "Measurable;" A represents "Attainable;" R represents "Realistic;" and T represents "Timely."

Specific: A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal, you must answer the six "W" questions - Who: who is involved?

- What: what do I want to accomplish?
- Where: identify a location.
- When: establish a time frame.

- Which: identify requirements and constraints.
- Why: specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

Example: A general goal may be "to pass SSC examination. But a specific goal would say, "to pass SSC examination with at least five credit including Mathematics and English."

Measurable: Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress towards the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target 'dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continue effort required to reach your goal. To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as: how much? How-many? How will mi know when it is accomplished?

Attainable: When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, skills and financial capacity to reach them. You begin seeing previous overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals.

You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you build your selfimage. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

Realistic: To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective towards which you are both willing and able to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress.

A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you every accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labour of love.

Timely: A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it, there is no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 Ibs, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a time frame, "by may 1st". Then you've set you unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal. Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similarly in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

T can also stand for Tangible: A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

In line with the above principles, Nwachukwu (1988) opined that, every good plan must be realistic capable of implementation, comprehensive, flexible and should have some economic effectiveness. The plan must provide basis for optimum utilization of available resources for

its implementation. Additionally, a good plan should have a foreseeable period of time in future for its accomplishment as well as the commitment desire for accomplishing the goals. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of activities should be encouraged.

How a Principal of a Secondary School can Successfully employ these Principles

S Taking the "SMART" principles, a principal should ensure that his plans are specific and simple to understand, for example in setting performance objective, the principal should be able to state the expected performance in a precise form, that is, students are expected to score 45% or 50% in their examination. This makes the objective clear to both teachers and students who will have to put effort in place to achieve the goal.

Secondly, the principal should make sure that objectives are stated in “a measurable term.” Example, from the performance objective above, the minimum acceptable performance should be prescribed on the basis of which judgment are based. For example, as a principal you should make your objective clear and make sure the objectives are those that can be measurable.

Moreso, the principal should make sure the objectives set for the school are attainable taking into consideration both the informal and external variables that affect the school systems. For example in making the laws that guide the school, the principal should not state rules and regulations that are impossible for the students to maintain. For example, students must sweep both the classes and the school compound before 7:30am. Another example of this rules and regulations is that students must make sure that they wash the school toilets three times a day. This will surely affect the students’ academic performance in the school. Similarly, the school principal should make sure that the plans are flexible enough to accommodate changes that may occur during implementation.

The school principal must also make sure plans should be in such a way that it should have definite or foreseeable period of time for its accomplishment. For example, the principal can say at the end of academic year, all teachers must finish their syllabus. Another example, principal can give directive that all academic staff should submit their result in two weeks time after examination.

It is of most importance that the principal of a school should put all necessary machineries on ground for monitoring and evaluation of plan. This is to help in identifying in good time the problems that may frustrate the plan.

Conclusion

Planning is essential for long term survival of any organization as it helps to determine the profitable way to allocate resources among competing ends. Effective planning required due consideration of the organizational activities as a blend or integration of numerous diverse subsystems within the super environment. The role of effective information system should not be overemphasized in effective planning. Planners must avail themselves of reliable information within the environment. Educational planners should take cognizance of planning principles in order to make effective plan for attainment of educational goals.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made for improvement of utilizing principles of planning for effective school management.

- 1) Principals should be trained on how to apply systematic educational planning principle to enhance their administrative performance. This can be done through capacity building, workshops and seminars for secondary school principals.
- 2) Also, government through ministry of education should appoint principals who are knowledgeable in educational planning. This will help in decision-making process and effective planning of activities in secondary schools.
- 3) Secondary school principals should always state their policies and objectives in a specific term in order to allow the teachers and students understand the goals and objectives of the school.
- 4) Secondary school principals should not be rigid in formulating rules and regulations. This will help in accommodating changes along the implementation stages.
- 5) Principals should always involve staff and students' representatives in decisionmaking process.

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