
The Need for Effective Educational Planning in Nigerian Education System

Onanwa Anayo Maxwell

Department of Teacher Education, National Institute for Nigerian Languages, Aba

Abstract: *Over the years, Nigerian educational system has witnessed some criticisms by the various stakeholders. One of the criticism hinges on the ineffective planning system of our education by educational managers and planners. They argue that proper guidelines have not been followed in the planning stages of our educational systems. This has culminated in the purported or touted fall in the standard of our education. This has equally led to the production of half-baked graduates. This work examines the purpose of educational planning, the planning process or steps of planning in education, characteristics effective of education plan, the prospects and challenges of educational planning in a developing nation such as Nigeria. It further proffer solutions to some of these challenges. The writer proffers suggestions on how to improve our educational system through effective planning.*

Keywords: *Education, Effective education planning, Educational planning.*

Introduction

According to Okunnamiri (2010) the modern educational planning has its origin from the educational plans of ancient times. In the ancient Greece, the Spartans around 2,500 years ago planned their education to achieve military, social and economic objectives. In Spartans, Plato in the “Republic” advocated on educational plan to train the right type of leadership for the best state (society), the “polis”. In the time of the Han Dynasties in China and the Incas dynasties in Peru, education was planned to suit the national goals or objectives of the two countries. Subsequent societies used educational planning to change their societies for the better. For examples John Knox circa 1,500 AD planned a national system of education carried at giving the Scots spiritual salvation and material well-being.

Between the late 18th century, and the early 19th century, a lot of plans were put in place to liberalize education. This brought about a number of reforms, for example, the soviet union (Russia) in the time of Lenin in 1923 in its first five year plan used educational planning to change or transform Russia from a backward and savage country of about 2/3 illiterates into a new society and one of the worlds’ most educationally developed countries. Also Japan in the time of Emperor Hirohitto in early forties was revolutionized from its backward and half-wild form into one of the most technologically advanced countries of the world today, with the aid of education.

Educational plans in these countries were able to project the following: students’ enrolments, number of classrooms, teachers, desks and forms, the money needed, sources of funds and how the resources would be distributed. Such projections culminated in proposed budgets for the immediate future school years, and these guided decision making and plan

implementations. In brief, the educational planning before the second world war of 1939-1945 was characterized by the following features:

- a. Short-Range Planning: Educational planning was short range extending only to the next budget year
- b. Fragmentary in nature: Here educational planning was planned in fragments and the sub-systems were planned in isolation of others.
- c. Non-Integrated: Here educational systems were planned in isolation, without explicit links to the evolving needs and trends of the society and economy
- d. Non-dynamic: Educational planning was not dynamic because it retained the features of past years (Coombs, 1980).

However, from the end of the Second World War (1945 to 1970), there came a new era characterized by scientific, technical, economic, political and cultural changes in the life of men on earth, sequel to the American Sputnik of 1942. For examples the Education Act of 1944 of the United Kingdom and the French 1946 and 1951 educational plans brought about a lot of changes in these countries. These changes also influenced educational plans in British colonies such as Nigeria and Ghana

Meaning of Education Planning

Before defining educational planning, it is worthwhile we define the term, planning. Watson (1965) described planning as organized, conscious and a continual attempt to select the best available alternatives with a view to attaining specific goals. Dror (1963) defined planning as the process of preparing a set of decision for future action directed at achieving goals by optimal means. Dror (1963) sees educational planning as the process of preparing a set of decisions for future action pertaining to education.

Coombs (1970) defined Educational Planning as 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 the students and society.

The implementation committee on the National policy on Education observed that:

8. "Educational planning is a continuous process of obtaining and analyzing facts and from empirical base of providing information to decision makers on how well the education system is accomplishing its goals in particular; on how the cost effectiveness of educational programmes and specific projects can be improved (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979).
9. Educational planning is not a goal or an end in its self rather it is an instrument to examine the problems involved in educational change, which compelled the educational planner to look for the social, socio-economic and political factors necessary for the successful actualization of the stated goals (Aghenta, 1993).

From the above definitions, educational planning can be seen as a process of collecting, tabulating and interpreting appropriate data to show how well the educational system has performed its current strengths and weaknesses. On the basis of this understanding educational planning prescribed solutions for its healthier growth.

Framework/Process for Educational Planning

For an effective and functional educational planning, the following guidelines must be observed.

1. Long-Range view: Educational planning should take a long-range view; it should also have a short-range period (1-2yrs), a middle range period (4-5yrs), and a long range period (10-15yrs). Considering the long “lead time” required to increase educational capacity and to alter educational output to enlarge, example, the production of medical doctors or engineers. It is necessary to plan ahead.
2. Comprehensive: Educational planning should embrace the whole educational system in a single vision to ensure harmonious evolution of its various parts.
3. Integrated: Educational Planning should be integrated with the plans of broader economic and social development. If education is to contribute most effectively to individual and national development, it cannot go its own way ignoring the realities of the world around it.
4. Integral part of Educational Management: Educational Planning should be an integral part of educational management. To be effective, planning process must be closely tied to the process of decision making and implementation. If isolated, it becomes an exercise which main effect is to frustrate those involved.
5. Qualitative: Educational Planning must be concerned with the qualitative expansion, bearing in mind that no educational system can rise above the quality of its instructors. Thus it makes education more relevant, efficient and effective (Okunammiri, 2010).

What are the Purposes of Educational Planning?

Educational Planning serves the following purposes.

1. To provide adequate facilities for students at all levels of educational system: It is the responsibility of educational planning to make projection for the facilities in our schools, such facilities as the number of classrooms, desks, instructional materials: electronic devices like projectors and computers and medical equipments such as drugs, beds and medical personnel. Facilities such as sporting facilities such as play grounds, sporting equipment like football, tennis ball and other indoor games. The educational planners get statistics of the number of these facilities to boost learning.
2. Educational planning provides quality and relevant education: Educational Planning is the hue and pivot of education. It points to the direction all educational system should go. Educational planning projects for the number of teachers that are needed say in the next ten years, the number of medical doctors, engineers and other relevant professionals. It points out what the society needs essentially that would address the total needs of the society.
3. Educational Planning prepares students for the world of work in a technologically growing world without abandoning basic and general education in the liberal arts. It plans for technical education, science education and the liberal arts depending on the emphasis the society places on certain needs.
4. Educational Planning provides in-service training opportunities: Educational planning plans for the training and retaining of the work force of the society. Through this, it helps to increase the productivity of the society and ensure that the entire economic and social systems are relevantly planned.
5. Educational planning provides adequate facilities for non-formal education so as to make the entire society learning and knowledgeable one. Educational planning does not only plan for formal education; it also plans for the non-formal subsector.

6. Educational planning help to widen the scope of education to include all relevant disciplines: emphasis on research in education, economics, technology, sociology, statistics and population as they have a bearing on the success of educational planning.

Educational Planning Process

Ogunnu (2001) classified the process of educational planning into six stages as:

3. Pre-planning,
4. Planning ,
5. Plan formulation,
6. Plan elaboration,
7. Plan implementation, and
8. Evaluation.

Pre-planning Stage

Is the preparation for planning? It begins with the creation of suitable planning organization, the establishment of planning procedures including the setting up of the procedure for the collection, and analysis of data required for the planning.

Planning Stage

This comprises of diagnosis step whereby the educational planner ascertains whether the current educational efforts of the country is relevant and conducive to their achievement. The educational planner would also look at the defects and deficiencies in the educational system and correct them. It also involves costing of the future needs, the establishment of priorities and target testing and finally feasibility testing.

Plan Formulation Stage

Educational planning looks at a set of decisions to be presented to the appropriate authorities for approval and to provide a line-point for action by the various agencies responsible for the implementation of the decision. The authorities and agencies should be informed of what is being proposed in education and how the proposal should be. The expression should be brief, concise and in few words.

Plan Elaboration Stage

The effective educational planner elaborates the plan so that individual action unit becomes more identified. This stage comprises the programming and project formulation. In the programming level, the plan is divided into areas to enable them accomplish their objectives. For instance, what will the primary level of education achieve as specific objective, as well as secondary and tertiary levels respectively. At the project levels, each educational system consists of activities or units. Project level consists of the relevant agencies, costs, time, and schedule for the project.

Plan Implementation Stage

At this stage, resources such as men, money, time and materials, needed for each project are allocated. Such operational details as delegation of responsibilities, line of communication and consultation, assignment of responsibilities, feedback and control mechanism are all developed.

Evaluating Stage

As the education plan is being implemented, the machinery to evaluate the stage of progress and detect deviations is set in motion. While evaluation is a continuous process, the preparation of results may be fixed annually, mid-term or end of the year. Evaluation highlights weakness, inadequate funding, improper phasing etc. It also provides room for re-planning.

Characteristics of effective Education Planning

For Nigerian education system to be effective, whether at the institutional, state or national level, it should have the following characteristics:

1. The plan is based on clearly defined objectives over the years; Nigerian educational system has been characterized by improper definition of objective (Aghanta, 1993). Because objectives are not clearly spelt out, this has led to misapplication of priorities which has negatively affected the educational system
2. The problem selected for planning must have social, political, economic or physical significance to the community. The determination must be based on study. Educational planning should be able to address certain challenges confronting education in particular and the society in general.
3. **Relevance:** Relevance has to be considered first and foremost on the solution of the problem at hand and then the use of appropriate technology and techniques particularly in the consideration of implementation. Nigerian educational system should be relevant to the problem of education
4. **Definiteness:** There is need to identify the maximum number of contingencies to be given prior consideration. Simulation helps to anticipate many contingencies as possible concept of definiteness that helps to minimize the occurrence of unexpected events. This means that before any plan could take off, it has to be tested and experimented.
5. **Adaptability:** Educational plans and indeed any other plan should be dynamic and flexible; undergoing changes as information is fed educational plan but the changes can be narrowed down towards the completion of the plan so as to attain the original objective of the plan
6. **Time:** Time is important in planning factors associated with natural cycles of the subject matter under planning and the immediate need to change undesirable situation. There is limitation of time to predict future.
7. **Monitoring:** This involves the establishment of criteria to ensure that the various components are working effectively. Evaluation is carried out periodically throughout the duration of the plan so that the tolerance limits associated with variance in the plan are given due consideration

Importance of planning

Banghart (1973) highlighted the importance of educational planning as follows:

1. The increase of affluence in the society: The society needs to be re-organized. It is the duty of the educational planner to plan effectively so as to reduce the increase of wealth and the gap between the rich and the poor
2. The rise in social expectations: the society expects certain needs and facilities from the education through proper planning. For instance, the society expects a graduate from the university to give back what he has learnt to the society.

3. Economic problems: Educational planning is a way to address the economic challenges of the society. Educational planning helps to revive poor economies when properly implemented
4. Ecological problems: Educational Planning could be used to solve Nigerian ecological problems by putting appropriate educational mechanism into place.
5. Industrial progress: The needs of industries and business organizations are taken care of through effective educational planning. Such needs as personnel and infrastructure could be produced by education
6. Rural-urban migration: Educational planning could be used to solve the problem of rural-urban migration if the educational system is effectively planned, it could stop the drift to cities by locating industries in rural areas and developing them.
7. Changing attitude to work and leisure: Educational planning is also important because it discourages poor attitude to work. This could be done by planning for an education system that could make graduates develop right attitude to work.

Educational Planning and Challenges

In Nigeria, the following are the challenges of educational planning:

1. **Political Instability:** In Nigeria, educational planning has never seen the light of the day because of frequent interruptions of the political terrain especially by the military juntas. Our governments have not consistently followed plans in education for the time stipulated for it. Uwazuruike (1991) opined that political stability is a prerequisite for any meaningful investment and development of any country.
2. **Inadequate Information:** There is paucity of valid data on which useful educational plans can be based. First, our census figures are not accurate. Secondly, agencies and institutions, hoard vital information for planning purposes
3. **Inadequate Planning Facilities:** This is a serious constraint to educational planning. These facilities include qualified personnel, essential planning equipments such as computer, office spaces, tools etc.
4. **Financial Constraints:** Educational planning no matter how good cannot yield any positive result without proper financing. Finance is a major ingredient for any meaningful project to be executed. It is one thing to plan and another for the government of the day to finance it.
5. **Population Explosion:** There are high birth rates and decreases in infant death rate: This is as a result of improved medication by parents. This has given rise to demand in education industry in excess of the capacity planned for the sector.
6. **Wasteful Imbalances in Education:** In Nigeria, there is no co-ordination between primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. This has made it difficult to get the flow of teachers movement, building, equipment, spaces, textbooks etc.

Solutions/Suggestions to Nigerian Educational System

According to Aghenta(1993) for a successful educational plan to emerge, there should be effective planning and implementation. The following positive factors must be at work to a reasonable degree.

1. Government educational policy with respect to the educational plan, must be clear and consistent and stable throughout the plan period. The plan shall not be used and dumped within a very short period

2. The educational goals to be attained by the plan must be clear and precise. It will not be stated in an ambiguous language
3. The plan must be technically and professionally sound in its contents and from that, experts have to draw up the plan to whom adequate and reliable educational demographic, economic, and other relevant data are to be made available.
4. Adequate resources must be made readily available for implementation. It is one thing to plan and another to finance the plan
5. The implementers must understand the language of the plan and one sure way of doing this is to have some of the planners seconded to the implementation group or committee.
6. A concurrent evaluation of the implementation of the plan as a monitoring device must be undertaken so that if the implementation is going off the track, it can be detected and brought back to track. If these steps are taken, the plan will be successful.

Conclusion

Effective educational planning looks at the entire educational system vertically from preprimary to the university level. It emphasizes the structural relationship between the levels and horizontally with emphasis on the functional relations between the parts from such crucial issues as students flow, drop outs, educational expenditures, success rate etc on educational matters such as curriculum and instruction, student learning, teacher recruitment, training and deployment, job performance, quality control, school management etc. All these attract the attention of the educational planner. The education planner must possess a thorough understanding of the concept of planning with a good dose of planning statistics, skills in research and an unfailing imagination as he possess knowledge of the past to be able to determine the position of the present which will enable him to forecast for the future.

There should be established the institute of educational planning to be sited by the Federal Government. Such an institute should have a broad programme which could accommodate candidates for certificates and diploma programmes to enable those in Ministries of Education and Boards to undergo short and long term training. The Federal Government through this will demonstrate seriousness in moving education forward.

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