



Achieving the Goals of Secondary Education in Nigeria: The Role of Strategic Planning

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Abstract

Strategic planning is an essential tool for effectively pursuing and achieving set objectives, particularly in education. It is no less a critical component and inalienable tool in the educational sector to pursue and achieve set educational goals and objectives across the different levels of education. In Nigeria, secondary education serves as a bridge between the primary and tertiary levels of education. The extent and strength of the effectiveness of this level of education is critical to the country's socio-economic development. It is in the light of this fact that this paper examines the role of strategic planning in the pursuit and achievement of the goals of the Nigerian secondary education system. In so doing, it explores existing relevant strategies, challenges of their effective involvement and the implications of effective planning in the realization of set goals. Also, it examines the current state of secondary education, highlighting its challenges and opportunities and then the principles and processes of strategic planning; emphasizing its relevance in the context of Nigerian system. Drawing on relevant literature, the paper highlights how strategic planning can enhance the quality, accessibility, and equitability of secondary education in Nigeria. It concludes by pointedly identifying the benefits of strategic planning in enhancing the quality, effectiveness and continued relevance of secondary education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Planning; Strategic Planning; Planning in Education; Secondary Education; Educational Goals.



Introduction

Education is a cornerstone of national development, and secondary education occupies a pivotal role in shaping future leaders and skilled professionals. Secondary education in Nigeria is designed and expected to play a pivotal role in Nigeria's development provides a foundation for the effective pursuit of higher education, equip learners at this level with essential basic skills for the nation's workforce and foster critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. the Nigeria's National Policy on Education (NPE) outlines the objectives of secondary education to include preparation for useful living within society and higher education. The specific objectives of secondary education in Nigeria as captured in the National Policy, include providing opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge and skills for self-reliance, preparing students for further education and training, promoting national unity and integration and developing moral and ethical values (FRN, 2013)

Despite these great and attractive goals for secondary education in the country, the sector faces numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, infrastructural decay, inequitable access, poor teaching quality and a curriculum that may not adequately address the needs of the 21st century. To overcome these challenges and achieve its educational goals, Nigeria must embrace strategic planning as a guiding framework. Strategic planning involves setting objectives, set strategies towards achieve these objectives, and mobilizing resources for effective implementation of the plans. It provides a roadmap for addressing systemic issues such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and teacher shortages that plague Nigerian secondary schools. According to Onyido and Williams (2017), strategic planning is a critical process in education, especially at the secondary school level, as it allows the schools operate efficiently for the realization of the needs of students, educators, and society at large as the process involves setting objectives, identifying priorities, allocating resources, and evaluating outcomes over time.

Desires and Expectations for Secondary Education in Nigeria

The broad goals and expectations for the Nigerian secondary school education are clearly outlined in the Nigeria's NPE (FRN, 2013). These goals and expectation are so well articulated and designed that they may provide meaningful policy basis and framework that the training of young people into useful members of society through this phase of education may be effectively realized and ensured. Below are the primary goals:

Preparation for Higher Education

This goal is outlined in the NPE and reflects the desire to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to succeed in tertiary institutions (e.g., universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education).

Development of Skills for Self-Reliance

The development of skills for self-reliance is a key goal outlined in the NPE in Nigeria. The NPE which was first published in the year 1977 and revised multiple times (most recently in 2013), emphasizes that education in Nigeria should prepare individuals for useful living in society and equip them with skills for self-reliance, entrepreneurship, and national development. This goal is particularly relevant at the secondary school level, where foundational skills for economic productivity and self-sustenance are nurtured. The inclusion of self-reliance as an educational goal is rooted in Nigeria's post-independence efforts to

address unemployment and over-dependence on white-collar jobs. The Ashby Commission Report (1960) presented the need to reform Nigeria's education system to produce skilled individuals who could contribute to national development. This laid the groundwork for the inclusion of technical and vocational education in the curriculum. To enhance self-reliance, several strategies have been adopted which include the inclusion of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) programmes, Entrepreneurship Education and Workshops and Laboratories. It is believed that the goal of self-reliance, when effectively implemented, can reduce unemployment, foster entrepreneurship, and stimulate economic growth. In line with the above, Osalusi (2010) highlighted that skill acquisition at the secondary level equips students with the competencies needed to start small-scale businesses.

Moral and Character Development

Moral and character development is a crucial aspect of education, enshrined in the NPE. The policy emphasizes that education should foster national development by building individuals who are morally sound, respectful of societal norms, and capable of contributing positively to their communities (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Osalusi (2010) asserted that moral and character development is essential to achieving the broader goals of Nigerian education and national unity. This is because, it ensures that students understand their roles as responsible citizens who respect the law and contribute to societal progress. Okonkwo (2014) is of the view that by promoting tolerance, respect, and understanding, education helps bridge ethnic and religious divides in Nigeria. Onyido and Williams (2017) noted that Moral and character development in schools reduces tendencies toward examination malpractice, corruption, and other vices

Promotion of National Unity

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation with over 250 ethnic groups and a history of ethnic and regional tensions, including the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970). In response to these challenges, successive governments have relied on education to foster national cohesion. The 1977 National Policy on Education (revised in 1981, 1998, 2004, and 2013) explicitly states that one of the main objectives of education is to inculcate "the spirit of national consciousness and unity" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Promoting national unity has long been a key goal of Nigerian secondary education, reflecting the country's diversity and the need to foster a sense of shared identity and purpose. This goal is embedded in Nigeria's educational policies and curriculum, recognizing education as a critical tool for bridging ethnic, cultural, and religious divides. Obanya (2014) opined that secondary education remains a critical platform for fostering national unity in Nigeria. Even though major improvements have occurred, addressing existing challenges requires sustained effort, investment, and collaboration among stakeholders. By reinforcing the role of education in promoting unity, Nigeria can build a more cohesive and harmonious society.

Improvement of Scientific and Technological Knowledge

The National Policy on Education identifies the advancement of scientific and technological knowledge as a key objective of secondary education school level of education in Nigeria. This goal aims to cultivate a skilled and innovative workforce capable of driving economic growth, technological progress, and sustainable development. The Nigerian government, as outlined in the 2014 NPE, underscores the significance of science and technology in the secondary school curriculum. The policy sets specific objectives, including providing students with foundational scientific knowledge and practical skills for self-



sufficiency, preparing them for further studies in science and technology-related fields, and promoting the application of scientific principles to real-world challenges. This emphasis aligns with global educational standards, such as UNESCO's recommendation that science education should enhance problem-solving skills and foster innovation to address socio-economic issues (UNESCO, 2021).

Preparation for Work

The Nigerian education system aims to equip students with the relevant skills and knowledge required to contribute effectively to society. One of the key goals of secondary education, as outlined in the NPE, is the preparation of students for entry into the workforce. This goal is rooted in the belief that education should foster self-reliance, skill acquisition, and economic productivity. Okonkwo (2014) noted that the secondary school curriculum in Nigeria has been designed to include both academic and vocational subjects to cater to diverse interests and capabilities as one of the key components include the introduction of subjects such as Agricultural Science, Technical Drawing, Home Economics, and Business Studies at the junior secondary level. At the senior secondary level, more specialized options like carpentry, auto-mechanics, and catering craft practice are offered. However, Adebayo (2018) asserted that preparation for work as a goal of Nigerian secondary education reflects the nation's commitment to economic development and poverty reduction. While notable strides have been made through curriculum design and policy interventions, persistent challenges require urgent attention. Strengthening vocational education, improving infrastructure, and aligning curricula with labour market needs are critical steps toward achieving this goal.

Cultural and Civic Awareness

The Nigerian educational system, as articulated in the NPE, prioritizes fostering cultural and civic awareness among students. These objectives aim to prepare students to become well-rounded citizens who understand and appreciate their heritage while actively participating in developing their society. Cultural awareness is a central aspect of Nigeria's educational goals as a result of the country's vast diversity, encompassing over 250 ethnic groups and languages. In the preservation of cultural heritage, subjects like History, Literature-in-English, and indigenous languages (e.g., Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa) are integrated into the curriculum to teach students about their cultural roots, traditions, and the achievements of their ancestors. These efforts aim to counter cultural erosion in a rapidly globalizing world (Obanya, 2014). In fostering unity in diversity, cultural studies and co-curricular activities like inter-school cultural festivals encourage students to appreciate the traditions of other ethnic groups. This promotes the values of national unity and peaceful coexistence, essential in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria (Obanya, 2014). Civic awareness is another significant goal, designed to prepare students to actively participate in the governance and development of their communities and nation. Introduced as a core subject in 2011, Civic Education fosters knowledge of Nigeria's constitution, democratic processes, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens (Sachs, 2020). Students learn about governance structures, rule of law, and how to engage with institutions. Ogundele et al. (2022) acknowledged that in promoting national development through Social Studies and Government subjects, students explore topics like national integration, patriotism, and economic advancement. This helps them understand the problems and opportunities in nation-building. Ogundele et al. (2022) further reported that schools often encourage participation in extracurricular activities like debates, quizzes, and service clubs (e.g., Red Cross, Boys' Brigade), which instil values of volunteerism and teamwork.



Promotion of Lifelong Learning

The Nigerian Federal Government explicitly articulates the goals of secondary education, as it includes preparing individuals for "useful living within the society" and "higher education." These goals inherently emphasize that by equipping students with critical thinking and problem-solving skills as a core need for lifelong learning, promoting self-reliance and adaptability to the dynamic demands of the labour market and instilling values such as discipline, responsibility, and continuous self-improvement. Lifelong learning is embedded within these objectives to ensure that students remain adaptable and can respond effectively to future societal and economic changes. Adebayo (2018) noted that the promotion of lifelong learning as a goal of Nigerian secondary education is a critical component of the nation's broader education objectives, as outlined in various policies, frameworks, and global commitments. Lifelong learning emphasizes the continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills throughout an individual's life, which is essential for personal development, societal advancement, and economic growth. UNESCO (2016) reported that Nigeria's commitment to lifelong learning is also aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." By integrating this into secondary education, Nigeria contributes to global efforts to equip individuals with the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly complex world. The secondary school curriculum emphasizes technical and vocational education as pathways to lifelong learning, enabling students to acquire practical skills for employment and personal development.

The Concept of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning as a systematic process that involves defining an organization's mission, vision, goals and objectives, and developing means and effective pathways to achieving them is critical and indispensable to meaningful organization pursuit and sustainable success and competitiveness (Adeyemi & Oguntimehin, 2019). Strategic planning is a proactive approach to organizational engagement that enables organizations to anticipate future challenges and opportunities, allocate resources effectively, and make informed decisions. It is in view of this understanding that Bryson (2018) affirmed that strategic planning is the methodological process of establishing an organization's direction, establishing objectives and coming up with plans to reach those objectives. Long-term planning and decision making grounded in both internal and external evaluations are enfolded in strategic planning and they exist and serve as necessary components of meaningful and productive strategic planning. In the context of education, strategic planning is used to ensure quality service delivery, optimal resource allocation, and sustainable development in schools. Strategic planning in education involves aligning school policies, practices, and resources with the overarching goals of improving access, equity, and quality of learning outcomes (Gafar et al. (2018). Gafar et al. (2018) further stressed that strategic planning in education includes setting measurable objectives, engaging stakeholders, and monitoring and evaluating progress.

Elements of Strategic Planning in Nigerian Secondary Education

Strategic planning is a crucial process for any learning organization. Learning organizations in Nigeria of which secondary schools are expression are no different. Strategic planning in learning organizations and/or environments involves a systematic approach to setting realistic goals/targets, determining actions or means or pathways to achieving the goals within a realistic timeline, and allocating commensurate or adequate resources

effectively to effectively and efficient pursue and realize the set goals or targets for the overall benefits, success and sustained competitiveness of the learning organizations or schools. Adeyemi and Oguntimehin (2019) identified the elements of strategic planning for Nigerian secondary school level of education. These according to them, include:

Vision and Mission Definition

According to Adeyemi and Oguntimehin (2019), vision and mission definition is not just critical but essential to effective strategic planning. For its importance it is critically needed for effective strategic planning especially for productive in education delivery in Nigeria. Now, a vision statement articulates the long-term aspirations of an organization. It reflects the wish for the future state and reflects a guiding star for decision-making and development. In Nigeria, vision statement typically describes the ideal state of educational outcomes, such as universal access to quality education, technological advancement, or global competitiveness. On the other hand, a mission statement outlines the purpose and primary objectives of an organization. It explains what the institution does, for whom, and how. In Nigerian secondary education, mission statements focus on the delivery of quality teaching, fostering equity, and nurturing holistic student development. The Nigerian secondary education system aims to provide a functional, qualitative, and equitable education to foster human capital development (National Policy on Education, 2014). Strategic plans at the school and state levels should align with this mission.

Vision and mission statements being part and component of the strategic planning framework for Nigerian secondary schools will give them a clear sense of purpose and direction (Akinbote, et al. 2018). Such well thought through statements can be articulated and carefully incorporated in the Universal Basic Education policy direction for example, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programs are geared pursuing and achieving free and compulsory basic education for all children. In this way, specific Schools either at the state, local governments or district levels can align their strategic objectives or goals to this national policy thrust which vision would have been strategically designed to meet the spelt-out target of education for all children in the Nigerian state. The vision and mission of the school especially when well-articulated and effectively communicated can help define the unique identity of the school. For instance, a mission focused on promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education helps a school prioritize STEM-related initiatives and resources. Stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and policymakers, are more likely to support an institution with a clear vision and mission as this alignment fosters collaboration in achieving shared goals (Akinbote, et al., 2001 in Umar (2021). In the same vein, Ogunu (2000), cited in Danladi (2023) affirmed that the vision and mission statements act as a reference point for setting short-term and long-term strategic goals. In line with this, the National Policy on Education (NPE) emphasizes inclusivity and quality education, guiding schools to develop strategies that address gender equity and teacher training. The federal government of Nigeria (2014) stated that a compelling vision can inspire teachers and students to achieve excellence as it is believed that schools with a vision of becoming centres of academic excellence may motivate staff to innovate and enhance teaching practices.

Situational Analysis

This is another element of strategic planning that can be recommended or adopted for effective strategic planning in secondary schools. Situational analysis involves systematically examining the internal and external environments of a system. It identifies factors that



influence its ability to achieve objectives (Bryson, 2018). In relations to Nigerian secondary education, it means evaluating resources, policies, infrastructure, socio-economic factors, and stakeholder roles that impact the education system. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) asserted that situational analysis helps evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies like the *National Policy on Education* and it examines whether policies are adequately addressing issues like access to education, gender parity, and quality learning outcomes. UNESCO (2021) posited that the analysis evaluates available resources, such as funding, infrastructure, and teacher capacity. Many Nigerian secondary schools face challenges like insufficient funding and poor infrastructure, which situational analysis can identify and address.

Furthermore, the situational analysis highlights regional disparities in educational access and quality. For instance, secondary schools in Northern Nigeria often face higher dropout rates and lower enrolment due to socio-cultural and economic factors (UNICEF, 2022). However, it is perceived that tools such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis are critical for understanding internal and external challenges. For instance, the shortage of qualified teachers and high student-to-teacher ratios are weaknesses, while opportunities include leveraging technology to enhance learning outcomes. The implementation of situational analysis informs the construction and rehabilitation of schools. In line with this, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) uses data-driven approaches to allocate resources effectively. Bray and Lillis in Adeyemi and Oguntimehin (2019) stated that by assessing current curricular offerings, situational analysis ensures alignment with global standards and local needs. Bray and Lillis further stated that situational analysis highlights gaps in teacher development, continuously ensuring professional development aligns with emerging challenges.

Goal Setting and Prioritization

Strategic planning in Nigerian secondary education is pivotal for achieving sustainable growth and improving educational outcomes as goal setting and prioritization are essential components of this process, enabling stakeholders to define objectives and allocate resources efficiently (Umaru & Akume, 2021). Goal setting involves defining clear, achievable, and measurable objectives aligned with the overarching vision of the education system. In Nigerian secondary education, this is critical for addressing challenges such as poor infrastructure, teacher shortages, and low academic performance (Umaru, & Akume, 2021). In the same vein, Adeyemi and Oguntimehin (2019) explained that prioritization is the process of ranking goals based on their urgency, importance, and resource availability. In Nigerian secondary education, this helps address pressing issues first while maintaining a long-term vision.

In discussing the features of goal setting and prioritization, Umar (2021) stated that goals must address specific needs, such as improving science education or increasing female student enrolment, goals should have quantifiable targets, e.g., increasing WAEC pass rates by 20% in five years, objectives must align with national education policies, such as the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, goals must have a timeline for evaluation and adjustment, conducting surveys and research to identify critical gaps, such as teacher-student ratios or availability of textbooks, involving policymakers, educators, and community leaders to agree on pressing priorities and ensuring that limited resources, such as funding and personnel, are directed to the most critical areas. Danladi (2023) stated that strategic goals in Nigerian secondary education may include reducing dropout rates, increasing teacher training programs and expanding access to rural areas. Aina and Ajayi (2018) stated that these goals must be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound).



Resource Mobilization

The proper incorporation of this component in the strategic planning for secondary education in Nigeria can play a crucial role in enhancing the performance and sustainability of Nigerian secondary education. Among the key elements of strategic planning is resource mobilization, which ensures the availability of financial, human, and material resources to achieve educational objectives. This element involves identifying, acquiring, and effectively utilizing resources to sustain the education system, improve infrastructure, enhance teaching quality, and promote equitable access to education. Resource mobilization refers to the process of gathering and utilizing resources financial, material, and human that are necessary for implementing strategic plans in education. According to UNICEF (2019), it involves a combination of strategies such as partnerships, funding mechanisms, and capacity building to ensure sustainable growth and delivery of education. According to Akinyemi (2020), the success of strategic planning in Nigerian secondary education depends heavily on effective resource mobilization. This is because of the numerous challenges faced by the education sector, such as inadequate funding, teacher shortages, dilapidated infrastructure, and limited access to modern teaching aids.

Akinyemi further stated that mobilizing resources helps address these gaps by improving infrastructure enhancing teaching capacity and promoting equity and inclusiveness. Adesola (2019) opined that allocating a larger portion of the national budget to education, as recommended by UNESCO's benchmark of 15-20 percent of total public expenditure, is one strategy that can be used to mobilize resources for secondary education in order to implement effective strategic planning. Another strategy is to improve collaboration between the government and private organizations in order to supplement resources. According to Oseni and Eboh (2018), PPPs have shown potential in bridging infrastructure gaps in Nigerian education, engaging local communities and parents through school-based management committees (SBMCs) fosters shared responsibility and resource pooling and leveraging financial and technical assistance from international organizations like the World Bank, UNICEF, and UNESCO has proven effective in resource mobilization for educational development in Nigeria. it believed that resource mobilization is a pivotal element of strategic planning in Nigerian secondary education. Addressing resource constraints through innovative funding strategies, community involvement, and efficient management can significantly enhance the quality, accessibility, and equity of secondary education. To achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4 (Quality Education), Nigeria must prioritize resource mobilization in its educational planning and implementation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Strategic planning plays a vital role in achieving educational objectives by providing a structured roadmap, optimizing resource allocation, and ensuring that policies, programs, and stakeholders work together toward sustainable academic excellence. In Nigerian secondary education, strategic planning is essential for enhancing quality, accessibility, and efficiency within the sector. A key aspect of this process is Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E), which establishes mechanisms to track progress, assess outcomes, and support data-driven decision-making. Obanya (2014) described monitoring as the ongoing assessment of educational activities to ensure alignment with strategic plans, focusing on tracking inputs, activities, and outputs. In contrast, evaluation involves periodic reviews of an initiative's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, emphasizing outcomes and long-term effects. According to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2021), M & E strengthens



strategic planning in Nigerian secondary education by ensuring accountability, fostering transparency, and facilitating continuous improvement. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) (2020) further stated that monitoring ensures secondary education policies align with national objectives, such as those outlined in Nigeria's National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education). Evaluation, on the other hand, measures the extent to which these goals are achieved.

M & E also helps identify disparities in resource distribution, including funding, teacher placement, and infrastructure development. Obanya (2014) highlighted significant inequalities between urban and rural schools, with monitoring ensuring fair distribution of resources and evaluation assessing their impact on educational outcomes. Additionally, monitoring helps uphold curricular standards, teacher qualifications, and instructional time, while evaluation examines their effectiveness in improving student performance, as reflected in analyses of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) results (WAEC, 2020). Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation generate crucial data that guide strategic decision-making. Data from UBEC and NBS provide insights into enrolment rates, gender parity, and dropout trends, helping policymakers refine strategies for improvement. Overall, M & E is an indispensable component of strategic planning in Nigerian secondary education. By systematically tracking progress and evaluating outcomes, it enhances accountability, promotes transparency, and drives continuous advancement within the education sector.

Role of Strategic Planning in Nigerian Secondary Education

Strategic planning is crucial for achieving educational goals in Nigerian secondary schools. It ensures a structured, goal-oriented approach that enhances efficiency, accountability, and long-term success. It is perceived that strategic planning is a cornerstone for the development and it is more so for secondary education in Nigeria. By addressing issues of access, quality, and resource management, it provides a roadmap for sustainable educational progress. According to Eze and Aja-Okorie (2020), strategic planning ensures the development and implementation of policies that enhance the quality of education. By setting clear objectives, schools can improve curriculum delivery, teacher training, and infrastructure development. Odukoya, Chinedu and Adepoju (2018) believed that a well-structured strategic plan facilitates better allocation of resources, ensuring that funds, facilities, and human resources are directed to areas of critical need. This helps prevent resource wastage while promoting fairness in education. Okebukola (2021) emphasized that effective planning enables the government and stakeholders to broaden educational access, especially for marginalized communities, through initiatives like free or subsidized secondary education. However, addressing challenges such as inadequate funding and policy inconsistencies is essential for achieving meaningful results. Implementing evidence-based strategies and strong monitoring mechanisms will enhance the impact of strategic planning in improving Nigeria's secondary education system. Adesola (2019) discussed the role of strategic planning in Nigerian secondary education to include:

Enhancing Quality of Education

Strategic planning is a vital tool for improving the quality of education in any society and it provide a structured approach to address the challenges in education and achieve long-term objectives (Adesola, 2019). It is no less for secondary education in Nigeria especially if well and properly determined, carefully harnesses and incorporated in the whole process of either pursuing set educational goals/targets or sustaining and maintaining achieved and

cherished educational and/or institutional success. By systematically analysing needs, setting priorities, allocating resources, and monitoring progress, strategic planning ensures that education systems meet the demands of students, educators, and the society at large. Strategic plans that focus on teacher training, curriculum improvement, and technology integration lead to better academic performance. Lock and Latham (2002) argued that strategic planning helps bridge disparities by emphasizing inclusive policies, such as gender equality and support for marginalized groups. Similarly, the World Bank (2018) emphasized that strategic planning serves as a vital tool for improving education quality, ensuring that all students have access to equitable, inclusive, and high-quality learning opportunities. However, its effectiveness relies on collaboration, sufficient funding, strong data systems, and continuous monitoring. By tackling these challenges, education systems can use strategic planning to advance sustainable development goals and better equip learners for the future.

Increasing Accessibility and Equity

By addressing systemic inequalities through strategic planning, countries can ensure that secondary education becomes a platform for empowerment and social mobility. Many Nigerian children, particularly in rural areas, lack access to quality secondary education. Strategic planning can focus on directing resources to underserved areas, promoting a fair distribution of educational facilities and opportunities. According to Adeyemi and Oguntimehin (2019), strategic planning plays a vital role in enhancing accessibility and equity in secondary education. By recognizing obstacles, establishing inclusive objectives, and efficiently allocating resources, it helps ensure that all students have access to quality education. However, its success relies on strong commitment, effective execution, and the readiness of stakeholders to adapt to evolving challenges.

Improving Infrastructure

Strategic planning plays a crucial role in addressing infrastructure challenges and improving facilities in secondary education systems. Effective planning ensures that resources are utilized optimally, aligns investments with educational goals, and facilitates long-term sustainability (Akpan & Etor, 2013). The deplorable state of infrastructure in many Nigerian secondary schools hampers effective learning. Strategic plans can include specific targets for renovating existing structures and building new ones, ensuring a conducive learning environment (Lyons, et al., 2016). According to The World Bank (2020), strategic planning is an indispensable tool for improving secondary education infrastructure. It ensures a systematic approach to identifying needs, allocating resources, engaging stakeholders, and monitoring outcomes. With proper strategic planning, governments and educational institutions can create a conducive learning environment that enhances educational outcomes and drives national development.

Promoting Accountability and Governance

Strategic planning plays a critical role in promoting accountability and governance in secondary education by providing a structured framework to guide decision-making, resource allocation, and performance evaluation. UNESCO (2021) stated that strategic planning helps in budgeting and resource allocation by prioritizing needs and ensuring financial resources are utilized efficiently. This reduces opportunities for mismanagement and promotes transparency. The World Bank (2018) presented that strategic planning aligns school governance policies with national and international education standards. This ensures consistency in governance practices across institutions and enhances accountability. Adesola

(2019) highlighted that strategic plans establish checks and balances by defining clear governance structures and accountability measures. This helps minimize corruption and promotes transparency in school administration. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria has a dynamic and evolving secondary education system. Serving as a link between primary and tertiary education, secondary schools provide students with foundational knowledge, vocational skills, and the necessary qualifications for higher education or employment. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's secondary education system has undergone multiple reforms, shaped by both colonial influences and modern educational policies. The system is structured into two stages: Junior Secondary School (JSS 1–3) and Senior Secondary School (SSS 1–3). Upon completing SSS 3, students take either the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), administered by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), or the Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (SSCE), conducted by the National Examination Council (NECO), to qualify for tertiary education.

Adesola (2016) further stated that strategic planning incorporates equity and inclusivity goals, ensuring that governance practices promote access to quality education for all, including marginalized groups. Accountability is enhanced as schools are evaluated based on how well they achieve these goals. Umaru and Akume (2021) also stated that strategic planning involves setting measurable objectives and timelines. This fosters accountability among stakeholders, including policymakers, school administrators, and teachers. For example, adopting performance-based evaluation systems can ensure that schools meet established benchmarks. Akinyemi (2020) posited that strategic planning serves as a cornerstone for promoting accountability and governance in secondary education. By enhancing clarity, fostering participation, enabling performance measurement, and ensuring equitable resource allocation, it addresses key governance challenges. To maximize its impact, strategic plans must be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changing educational needs and contexts.

Fostering Innovation and Adaptability

It is perceived that strategic planning plays a pivotal role in fostering innovation and adaptability in secondary education by establishing a forward-thinking framework that anticipates change, embraces new ideas, and ensures resilience in educational institutions. Gafar, et al. (2018) opined that strategic planning provides a long-term vision that encourages secondary schools to innovate and remain adaptable to future educational needs. By prioritizing innovation in their mission statements and objectives, schools foster a culture that values creativity and forward-thinking solutions. Johnson, et al. (2015) stated that through environmental scanning and situational analysis, strategic planning allows schools to identify global and local trends, such as technological advancements and evolving pedagogical practices. This proactive approach positions schools to adapt to emerging challenges and integrate innovative practices.

According to UNESCO (2021), Strategic plans often include goals for incorporating digital tools and technologies to improve teaching, learning, and administrative processes. This fosters adaptability by ensuring that secondary education institutions remain competitive in a digital-first world. In the work of Johnson et al (2015), it was reported that strategic planning ensures that innovative practices are not isolated but scaled across the school system. By creating clear guidelines for implementation and evaluation, successful innovations can be institutionalized. In the same vein, Johnson, et al. (2015) stated that in a rapidly changing world, education systems must be adaptable. Strategic planning encourages



innovation by promoting research and development. This can lead to the adoption of new teaching methods, such as competency-based education, that align with global best practices.

Challenges of Strategic Planning in Nigerian Secondary Education

Despite its potential benefits, strategic planning in Nigeria faces several obstacles, including:

Inadequate Funding

Strategic planning in any organization requires adequate resources for successful implementation. For Nigeria, a lack of sufficient funding hinders the development and execution of long-term educational strategies, particularly in secondary schools. According to the Nigerian Education Sector Analysis, poor funding leads to the inability of schools to execute planned reforms or meet educational goals, such as improving teacher quality, upgrading facilities, and increasing access to learning materials (UNICEF, 2021). The government has attempted to implement various strategic plans, such as the National Policy on Education (NPE) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE), which aim to improve access to quality secondary education. However, inadequate budgetary allocations and inconsistent funding levels limit the success of these plans. Schools often struggle to meet basic infrastructural needs, and the failure to maintain consistent funding cycles leads to the collapse of planned reforms. Strategic planning in Nigeria's education system is often not incorporated effectively due to budget constraints. In many cases, secondary schools are faced with challenges such as outdated curricula, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate learning resources due to underfunding.

According to the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), strategic plans for improving educational outcomes are often abandoned or poorly implemented because the funds necessary to carry them out are not available (NERDC, 2020). In the secondary education sector, the lack of funding results in insufficient investment in the professional development of teachers, leading to a poor implementation of educational policies. There is also an issue with maintaining the physical infrastructure of schools, such as dilapidated buildings, lack of teaching aids, and inadequate technology for students to engage in modern learning methods. This situation makes it difficult to create an effective educational environment, even if strategic plans are developed. In secondary schools, the involvement of the government and stakeholders is essential in tackling the challenges caused by inadequate funding. The *Education for All Global Monitoring Report* (2015) highlights that Nigerian secondary schools frequently struggle with low enrolment rates, high dropout rates, and a shortage of qualified teachers, all of which are worsened by insufficient financial support.

Rural secondary schools are particularly affected by underfunding, often receiving fewer resources than their urban counterparts. This disparity hinders the implementation of strategic educational plans, especially those aimed at promoting inclusive education and reducing inequality nationwide. Furthermore, the limited presence of public-private partnerships exacerbates the financial strain, reducing the effectiveness of strategic initiatives designed to improve the education sector. The inadequacy of funding is also reflected in Nigeria's government budget allocation for education, which has historically been below the UNESCO-recommended threshold of 26% of the national budget. In 2020, Nigeria allocated just about 7% of its national budget to education, which is a significant shortfall (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020). This limited funding directly affects strategic planning in the

education sector, as it restricts the ability of educational planners to invest in essential areas like curriculum reform, school infrastructure, and technology integration. It is perceived that inadequate funding is a major drawback to the effective implementation of strategic planning in Nigeria's secondary education system. It impedes the proper incorporation of strategic plans, limits the involvement of stakeholders, and exacerbates challenges related to educational quality and access. For strategic plans to be successful, there needs to be a concerted effort to increase funding to the education sector, with a focus on equity, teacher training, and infrastructure development to meet the needs of secondary schools across Nigeria.

Corruption and Mismanagement

Corruption and mismanagement are significant challenges that hinder the effective implementation of strategic planning in Nigeria, particularly in the context of the secondary education system. These issues affect the quality and accessibility of education, and they directly influence the ability of policymakers and educators to make meaningful progress toward achieving educational goals. It is believed that a large portion of government funds allocated for educational development often ends up being misappropriated by corrupt officials. Instead of reaching schools, this money is funnelled into personal pockets or diverted to non-educational projects (Ademola & Adebayo, 2020). The lack of proper monitoring and accountability mechanisms exacerbates this issue. According to Olatunde (2020), corruption also manifests in the form of bribery for school admissions and examination results. This undermines the quality of education and damages the credibility of educational institutions. This makes strategic planning in education difficult as the system is not focused on merit or improving quality but on personal gain. Decision-making in the education sector often lacks transparency, resulting in policies that do not serve the public interest. This makes it difficult to implement effective educational reforms and strategic plans. Without clear, transparent processes, it is challenging to ensure that funds are used as intended for improvements in the education sector.

The inefficient use of the financial, human, and material resources allocated to enhancing secondary education is thought to constitute mismanagement of resources in the education sector. To guarantee that the appropriate resources are available where they are needed, strategic planning necessitates careful resource allocation. However, money allotted for education is frequently mishandled or even wasted as a result of bad management techniques. For instance, some schools may receive disproportionate funding based on personal or political connections rather than true need, while others may be left without adequate classrooms, technology, or teaching materials (Alabi, 2018). According to Oni (2019), poor administration has resulted in many secondary schools throughout Nigeria having outdated infrastructure and insufficient instructional materials. Educational policies can be strategically planned, but they are ineffective if they are not properly implemented because of poor management. The efficiency of the learning environment is restricted by infrastructure problems, such as packed classrooms, inadequate furniture, and a dearth of instructional resources. Since poor management frequently results in salary payment delays, a lack of opportunities for professional development, and unfavourable working conditions for teachers, it is also thought that teacher quality is another crucial issue. This undermines the strategic planning efforts meant to improve the classroom by resulting in low teacher morale and ineffective teaching methods.

Ogunyemi (2020) is of the view that policies designed to improve secondary education may face inconsistent implementation due to corruption. Educational reforms may

be introduced, but their actual execution might be delayed or altered to benefit specific groups or individuals. This undermines the effectiveness of strategic planning. Adeyemi (2021) presented that effective strategic planning requires continuous monitoring to ensure that educational reforms are progressing as planned. However, corruption and mismanagement often lead to a lack of oversight and accountability. Without proper tracking mechanisms, it becomes impossible to gauge the success of any strategic plan. Furthermore, educational policies are often subject to political influence, where decisions are made based on political interests rather than educational needs. This creates an unstable environment for long-term strategic planning, as leadership changes or political interference can derail plans designed to improve secondary education (Aliyu, 2021). In the light of the foregoing, corruption and mismanagement are two of the most significant barriers to the successful implementation of strategic planning in Nigerian secondary schools. These issues result in the misallocation of resources, undermine the quality of education, and create a system that is more focused on personal gain than educational improvement. To make strategic planning effective, Nigeria must address these issues through stronger governance, increased transparency, and better resource management practices.

Political Instability

Political instability in Nigeria has been a major drawback in the effective implementation of strategic planning, especially within the education sector, including secondary schools. Political instability in Nigeria, characterized by frequent changes in government, corruption, and policy inconsistency, significantly impacts the determination and stability of long-term strategic planning. The unstable political environment hampers the formulation of cohesive and sustainable educational policies. For instance, changes in political leadership often result in new education policies, which may contradict or undermine previous plans. The inconsistency of government priorities leads to a lack of continuity in educational reforms. In 2015, the government of President Muhammadu Buhari introduced a new education policy, which, in many cases, was in direct contrast to the previous policies under the Goodluck Jonathan administration. This inconsistency has undermined strategic planning in education at the secondary school level.

Akinpelu (2017) claimed that the Nigerian education system suffers from a lack of effective strategic planning due to political instability. When political leaders change, so do their priorities, leading to neglect of long-term educational development strategies. Political instability makes it difficult for educational planners to implement cohesive reforms. Consequently, short-term solutions are often prioritized over long-term investments in improving education. The author also affirmed that the failure to sustain the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program initiated in the early 2000s can be attributed to political instability, as different administrations have either altered or abandoned key components of the plan. According to Adebayo (2016), during election periods, politicians have been known to promise improvements in education without concrete plans or follow-through, leading to the temporary elevation of education as a priority without long-term strategic planning.

In Nigeria, political instability impacts the involvement of key stakeholders in secondary education. Politicians may not view education as a priority, especially when they are concerned with securing power or addressing immediate crises (Ajao, 2020). This neglect results in the underfunding of secondary schools, inadequate infrastructure, and poor teacher training. Politicians may also manipulate education policies to gain favor with voters, thus disrupting the development of effective strategic planning (Nwankwo, 2019). Political instability in Nigeria undermines the effective implementation of strategic planning in



secondary education. The unpredictable nature of political leadership and policy shifts hampers the development of long-term educational strategies. The involvement of political leaders often prioritizes short-term gains over sustainable reforms, and this instability adversely affects the overall quality of secondary education in the country. To overcome these challenges, Nigeria needs a more stable political environment that prioritizes long-term educational reforms and ensures the consistent implementation of strategic plans.

Lack of Data and Monitoring Mechanisms

The lack of data and monitoring mechanisms is a significant drawback in the implementation of effective strategic planning in Nigeria's education system, particularly in secondary schools. This limitation affects the ability to make informed decisions, track progress, and adjust strategies in response to challenges. Strategic planning in any system, including education, relies heavily on data to identify key issues, set priorities, and allocate resources effectively. However, in Nigeria, the absence of accurate, up-to-date data on the state of secondary education such as enrolment rates, dropout rates, student performance, teacher quality, and school infrastructure undermine the strategic planning process. Without reliable data, policymakers and educational authorities struggle to make informed decisions about what areas need attention, which schools require support, and what interventions will have the greatest impact.

A study by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) highlighted gaps in the availability and quality of education data in Nigeria, which impedes effective policy formulation and implementation. These gaps include inconsistencies in the reporting of school enrolment figures, teacher qualifications, and educational outcomes, making it difficult to assess the true state of education at the secondary level (NBS, 2021). Incorporating data into the education system in Nigeria requires not just the collection of data but also a system for analysis and use in decision-making. Unfortunately, many schools and educational administrators in Nigeria lack the infrastructure and capacity to collect, analyse, and use data effectively. In some cases, even when data is collected, there are no established systems for disseminating this information to policymakers, school leaders, or other stakeholders who could use it to improve educational outcomes. Moreover, monitoring mechanisms, which are integral to ensuring the implementation of strategic plans, are also often inadequate. These mechanisms include tools like school inspections, progress reports, and evaluation frameworks to assess whether the goals of strategic planning are being achieved. However, in Nigeria's secondary schools, monitoring mechanisms are often poorly implemented or non-existent. This leads to a lack of accountability and makes it difficult to assess the effectiveness of strategies once they are in place.

The system's applicability for strategic planning is hampered by problems with data timeliness and accuracy, as well as the fact that not all states have fully implemented it, according to reports from the Federal Ministry of Education (2020). The participation of stakeholders in the secondary education system is also impacted by a lack of data and efficient monitoring. Secondary school pupils' educational outcomes are greatly influenced by their teachers, parents, and local communities. However, these stakeholders frequently lack the necessary information on student performance or knowledge of educational trends to make a significant contribution to the creation or enhancement of instructional strategies. According to Odukoya, et al (2018), teachers find it challenging to modify their teaching methods to fit the needs of their students when they lack data on their academic performance across a range of subjects. Furthermore, parents, who could be important collaborators in the educational process, frequently do not have access



to pertinent data regarding their children's development, which restricts their capacity to provide them with effective support.

According to Ogunyemi (2020), the capacity to successfully execute strategic planning in Nigerian secondary schools is weakened by the lack of thorough data and efficient monitoring systems. Inadequate monitoring systems, inadequate data collection, and inadequate infrastructure for data analysis are some of the issues that lead to inefficiencies in the educational system. In order to ensure that strategic plans are founded on accurate information, close these gaps, and enable prompt interventions to raise the standard of education for all students, Nigeria must develop a secondary education system that is more equitable and effective.

Conclusion

Strategic planning is a critical tool for achieving the goals of Nigerian secondary education. By providing a framework for decision-making, resource allocation, and program implementation, strategic planning can help to improve the quality of education, enhance accountability, and address the challenges faced by the sector. While there are challenges associated with implementing strategic planning, these challenges can be overcome through government support, partnerships, technology, and capacity building. By embracing strategic planning, Nigerian secondary education can be transformed into a system that provides quality education for all students.

Suggestions

To enhance the effectiveness of strategic planning in achieving Nigerian secondary educational goals:

- i. The government should prioritize education in its budgetary allocations and explore alternative funding sources, such as public-private partnerships and international aid.
- ii. Mechanisms Robust monitoring and evaluation systems should be established to track the implementation of strategic plans. Transparency in fund utilization should be ensured to reduce corruption.
- iii. Collaboration among government agencies, private sector actors, and civil society organizations can enhance the planning and implementation process. Stakeholder input should be sought at every stage of strategic planning.
- iv. Training programs should be organized for educational planners and administrators to equip them with the skills needed for effective strategic planning and implementation.
- v. Leveraging technology can improve data collection and analysis, enhance teaching and learning, and facilitate monitoring and evaluation processes.



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