Strategic Planning as a Tool for Managing Nigeria's Tertiary Education for National Economic Development

Odiba, I. A.

Faculty of Education, Kogi State University, Anyigba, Nigeria
E-mail: drisaacao@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This review focused on strategic planning as a tool for managing Nigeria's tertiary education for national economic development. The sole aim of this study was to highlight the major or basic challenges of managing tertiary education in Nigeria. Education in this study was considered as a process that assists in the provision of suitable skills, training for economic, social, cultural and political responsibility. Strategic planning was viewed as the overall planning that facilitates the good management of a process that has a long term effect. The challenges of funding, institutional unrest and staffing were identified as some of the factors hindering the growth of Nigeria's tertiary education. It was hence recommended that tertiary education should be properly and adequately funded by both the government and the private sector in order to enhance it productivity in terms of the quality of skilled labour release into the Nigerian economy.
Keywords: *Tertiary education, national development, strategic planning*

INTRODUCTION

Education consists of an organized activity which promotes learning situation. Education has been described as the foundation of every society and a basic tool for individual and national life. It is a lifelong process and perhaps an instrument of change, a potent equalization of life chances (Odiba, 2007). Education, simply put is a process of learning that assists in the provision of suitable skills, training the youth for economic, social, cultural and political responsibility, transmission and development of social, economic and cultural structure from generation to generation. Education certainly is the reason for affluence and influence, enhancing the basis for knowledge and expertise. According to Odiba (2004), education is a companion which no misfortune can depress, no crime can destroy, no enemy can alienate and no despotism can enslave.

Tertiary education, according to Odiba (2011) refers to all institutions offering post-secondary certificate, diploma and degree programmes. The activities within these institutions gravitate around teaching, learning, research and community service. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), tertiary education is the education given after secondary education in Universities, colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses. Tertiary education in Nigeria, according to FRN (2004) has the following goals:

i.   Contribute to national development through high level relevant man power training.
ii.   Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of individual and society.
iii. Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.

iv.   Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
v.   Promote and encourage scholarship and community service.
vi.   Forge and cement national unity.
vii.   Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

The tertiary institutions are expected to go through the following paths for the realization of the aforestated goals:

a.   Teaching.
b.   Research and development.
c.   Virile staff development programmes.
d.   Generation and dissemination of knowledge.
e.   A variety of modes of programmes including full-time, part-time, block release, day-release, sandwich among others.
f.   Access to training funds such as those provided by the Industrial Training Fund.
g.   Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES).
h.   Maintenance of minimum educational standards through appropriate agencies.
i.   Inter-institutional cooperation.
j.   Dedicated services to the community through extra mural and extension services.

It is believed that the actualization of the goals of tertiary education through the above paths would other things being equal bring about national economic development. Development is a form of enacted change that is planned and is intended to bring about significant changes in how an institution is managed. Norris (2001) posits that unlike coercive change, which is unplanned and takes place through natural course of events, development is intentionally planned to alter organizational structures and relationships. It can also be taken to mean a process for creating and maintaining a work environment in which everyone can be developed and allowed to contribute fully to the life of the nation and its objectives. National development therefore implies a change in all the sectors of the economy as a result of environmental influences, economic, legal, demographic or technological forces.

Conceptualistic planning is prone to ambiguities. Planning connotes to device, to scheme, contrive something to be dove, or to project arrangement in advance of action (Okeke, 1989). Again planning according to Okwori (2011) is a rational and intelligent process of preparing or arranging a set of decisions for future actions directed at achieving goals and objectives by the best means possible. Planning our tertiary education for national development therefore will involve the application of rational methods, systematic analysis through the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in terms of responding to the needs of the students and the society as a whole. The type of planning required should be strategic planning. Therefore, this study primarily focused on strategic planning as a tool for managing Nigeria's tertiary education for national economic development.

Strategic Planning as a Tool for National Economic Development

A strategy defines an overall approach, method and plan. Thus strategic planning is the overall planning that facilitates the good management of a process. Strategic planning of

education for national development is beyond routine activities in education. It entails providing a big picture of the mission and vision of educational policies and programmes. According to Shapiro (2001) strategic planning enables one to answer the following questions:

i.   Who are we as a nation?
ii.   What capacity do we have/what can we do as a nation?
iii.   What problems are we addressing?
iv.   What difference do we want to make?
v.   Which critical issues must we respond to?
vi.   Where should we allocate our resources? Or what should be our priority?

It is important to note that strategic planning has four major principles or components. These are:

a)   Planning for a strategic planning process.
b)   Covering the background.
c)   Strategic framework.
d)   Internal implications.

The discussions on the above components shall dove-tail the views of Shapiro (2001).

Strategic planning process: It is important to spend quality time in planning for the strategic process in all the sectors of the economy and that of education specifically, with special attention to tertiary education. A medium term plan is needed for a comprehensive plan effort of our tertiary education. The major ingredients of planning for a strategic planning process include timing, human resources to be involved, the input, preparatory work and planning the agenda or process.

Covering the background: Odiba (2007) opines that present realities are rooted in the past. Thus for strategic planning of our tertiary education to have meaning, there must be a clearly defined background to the development of our educational system. The background data required include the following steps;

STEP 1: Input - discussion.
STEP 2: Clarification of problem analysis.
STEP 3: Review of programmes and the organization as functioning system.
STEP 4: Clarifying the planning parameters.
STEP 5: Identifying critical issues that must be addressed during the strategic planning process.
STEP 6: Synthesising.

Defining the strategic framework: Providing a concise definition of the strategic framework allows for a better understanding of how the entire educational project functions. The strategic framework according to Shapiro (2001) includes:

a)   A clearly stated vision.
b)   Clearly articulated values.
c)   A mission, articulated in a mission statement.
d)   The overall goal of the project.

e)   The immediate objective of the project.
f)   The key result areas on which the project intends to focus.
        The interesting fact about defining the strategic framework is that all the aforementioned elements need to be in alignment. The above views can be diagrammatically presented as:
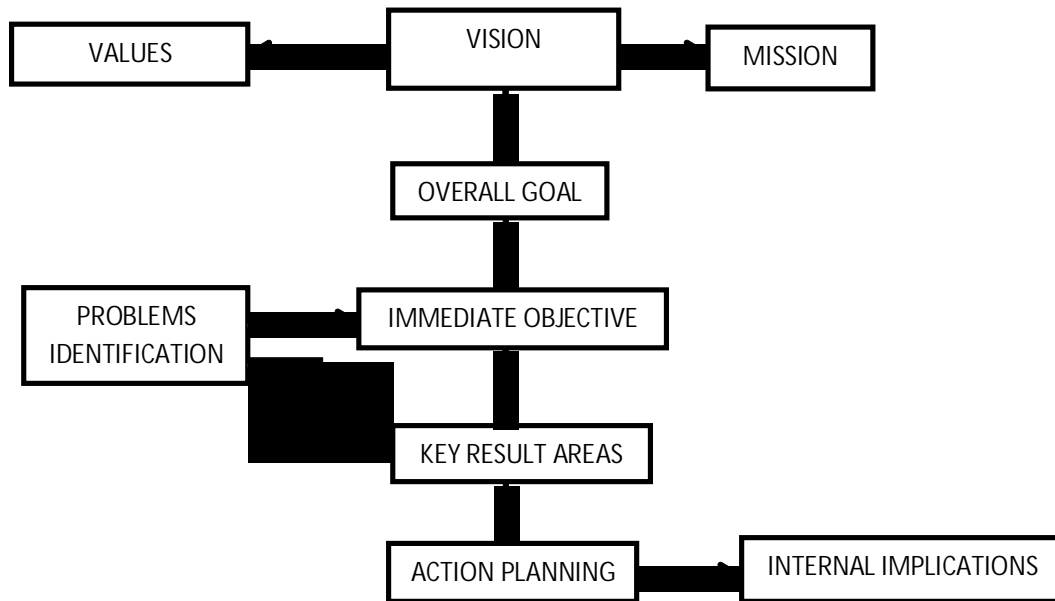
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┌──────────┐        ┌──────────┐        ┌──────────┐
│  VALUES  │◄───────│  VISION  │───────►│ MISSION  │
└──────────┘        └──────────┘        └──────────┘
                         │
                  ┌──────────────┐
                  │ OVERALL GOAL │
                  └──────────────┘
                         │
┌───────────────┐  ┌─────────────────────┐
│   PROBLEMS    │──│ IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE  │
│ IDENTIFICATION│  └─────────────────────┘
└───────────────┘         │
                  ┌──────────────────┐
                  │ KEY RESULT AREAS │
                  └──────────────────┘
                         │
          ┌──────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────────┐
          │ ACTION PLANNING  │──►│  INTERNAL IMPLICATIONS  │
          └──────────────────┘   └────────────────────────┘
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Fig. 1: Strategic planning framework
Source: Adapted from Shapiro (2001) Strategic planning toolkit civicus.

Internal implications: A strategic plan put in place will certainly put the policy makers and or the government in a position to perform the following: (a) structure the entire system appropriately and (b) change management. This structure may permit both hierarchical and team elements. The bottom line is that all the organizational participants are involved in actualizing the goal. In fact all the agencies and parastatals responsible for doing one thing or the other are interested in the success of the programme. On the other hand, change is the only constant agent in all works of life. The entire system changing either in terms of the work done or in the internal structuring of the work. Change should be effectively managed by those involved in the system. Shapiro (2001) contended that when change is needed, the following steps should be followed:
a.   Ensure the change is understood and why it is necessary.
b.   Respond to people's ideas and feelings.
c.   Develop a planned process of change.
d.   Implement change.
e.   Consult, support, and give feedback during the change process.
f.   Acknowledge and celebrate successful change.

CHALLENGES OF MANAGING TERTIARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Managing tertiary education in Nigeria is confronted by a gamut of challenges, which if not properly handled would destroy the goal of using the same for national development. Some of these challenges include the following:

Inadequate funding: In adequate funding has been a long standing cancer that has eaten up the entire education system. Education has suffered in inadequate funding since independence. Basically, the current funding of educational institutions is not commensurate with the level of expansion the educational sector deserves. Odiba (2004) contends that the under-funding status of our educational institutions has manifested itself in poor state of infrastructure facilities and materials for teaching and learning. In fact, the budgetary allocation to the educational sector in Nigeria is below the 26% recommended by UNESCO. Poor funding has grossly resulted in:

a)   Having an army or poorly educated school teachers and graduates in varied disciplines.

b)   Most lecturers in tertiary institutions feeling there is nothing dignifying and satisfying without money. The dignity and envy of the ivory tower have been thrown to the dogs. Examination malpractice in sophisticated manners is wide spread in the nation's tertiary education programmes.

c)   Deteriorating facilities, antiquated equipment, battered classroom floors, cracked walls, leaking roofs and windows with wire gauze in place of glass.

Institutional unrest: Tertiary institutions in Nigeria are regular customers to violence; our educational system is constantly a bride of uncertainty and instability. The common violence in schools are cults, examination malpractice and indecent dressing. Printed media are replete with cases of students' violence, for instance, the 1965/66 violence in the University of Lagos over the appointment of the Vice Chancellor. The 1971 students' unrest in the University of Ibadan over what the students tagged "Lukewarm attitude of the University authorities" (Odiba, 2012). Again, Youtya (2009) contends that in 1998, there was a nationwide student's unrest caused by two Principal reasons, one of which was the abolition of Federal Government Scholarship and the other was increase in tuition fee. Secret cult activities and indecent dressing pose serious danger to attaining educational quality in Nigeria. One is in donor, if there exist any tertiary institution in Nigeria that has not witnessed academic disruption by cult activities.

Staffing: No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, as the standard of our teachers invariably affects the performance of the learners. According to FRN (2009) tertiary education in Nigeria is faced with the following staff challenges:

1.   Academic staff shortages across board.

2.   Shortage of very senior lecturers in tertiary institutions. For instance over 60% of academic staff in the Nigeria University System (NUS) is in the category of lecturer 1 and below and less than 40% of academic staff in Polytechnics have higher degrees.

CONCLUSION

The realization of set goals is the desire of any given organization. Goal attainment requires planning and one of the portable and concise methods of managing tertiary education for national development is strategic planning. If the strategic planning is properly funded our tertiary education will improve tremendously. The hands of both the government and the private sector should be involved in the funding process of the tertiary education. It is therefore recommended that Tertiary Education in Nigeria should be properly and adequately funded. Since Government alone cannot adequately fund our tertiary institutions, the private sector should as a matter of priority increase her contribution to the Tertiary Education Trust fund. The Alumni association of the various tertiary institutions should finance infrastructure facilities and equipment. Tertiary education managers should improve their internally generated revenue through the consultancy services of their various institutions.

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