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Strategic Management in Education for Quality Output

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Abstract

This paper discussed the role of strategic management in promoting quality educational output, by looking at strategic management in education, styles of management and the components of management as tools for effective strategic management of educational resources in order to achieve quality educational output. It enumerated educational resources and outlined the educational process as being three dimensional in nature: input, process/transformation and output. It opined that if the strategic management in education were to be profitable it must employ the management components defined as: forecasting, planning, budgeting, organising, implementing, monitoring and evaluation, feedback and revision for improvement (FPBOIMEFR). Further, it highlighted the constituents of the things for quality output strategic management as the following resources: Students (the basic input), human resource (capital)- workers of all category in the industry, fund management, equipment including communications equipment, learning materials, infrastructure and other facilities and time management and even classroom management. It concluded that strategic management in the education brings about effectiveness and efficiency, culminating in quality educational output. It was recommended that since everyone in the industry was a manager to some degree there should be specialty specific management training.

Introduction

It is imperative to point out from the outset that whether public or private, all educational institutions are in the business of providing quality education in order to turn out quality manpower for national and international utilisation and for the progress of humanity. It follows, therefore, that the management of educational institutions, whether as social capital provision or as profit-making, must be strategically planned. It is in the light of this that Onuka (2004) views management is an every day phenomenon where nobody can be left out since all persons get involved in one form or another, possibly without knowing they are. Management is simply using people to achieve results or organisational goals (Robert, 1996). Strategic management is long term management employing long term management strategies that endure the test of time.

Easterby Smith in Onuka (2004) posits that there is no precise agreement on the definition of management and defines management as *planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting* (POSDCRB). He further states that others see management as *the ability to make right decisions in uncertain conditions that will work within some given constraints rather than seeking for the best in the particular circumstance which may end up fruitless*. Onuka (2004) opines that management *performs the functions of forecasting, planning, organizing, implementing and monitoring* (FPOIM). According to Keith and Gubellini (1975), management should be seen as a process *involving planning, organising, leading and monitoring* (POLM) *which includes supervising, regulating, and controlling*.

Thus, it may be synthesised from the aforementioned definitions that management is *the effective coordination of all organisational activities and material resources with and through other people to ensure that the objective of the organisation is achieved efficiently*. By implication, it is *forecasting, planning, budgeting, organizing, implementing, monitoring and evaluation, feedback and revision leading to improvement* (FPBOIME) (Onuka, 2009). It is, therefore, systematic and dynamic and a continuous process that gives feedback to the system for systemic improvement. This is the reason why management is strategic because whatever is strategic is also dynamic and systematic. It is also noteworthy that management, according to Umoru-Onuka (2001b), is largely a communicative profession and largely information-based.

There are various management styles which can be employed by managers to perform their managerial functions. Among them are: Management by exemption—a situation whereby the top person issues out orders; management by committee, which is a system by which decisions are made and executed through committee system; management by objectives, (which involves making everybody in the organisation to feel being part and parcel of the organisation by involving them in the decision-making process as far as possible and causing them to participate in the execution of the decisions reached). Another important and very effective management style currently in use by various managers worldwide is the total quality management (TQM). This is a style that looks beyond the boundaries of an organisation to extend prominence to the interests of its clientele which constitutes the main benchmark for organisational success as well as the staff being given cognisance in the scheme of things in the organisation/institution (Birnbaum, 2001; Umoru-Onuka, 2003; Onuka, 2006 and Ojo, 2006).

Strategic management in education must employ the best and long lasting management style that will help it to optimise quality output. Meredith and Mantel, Jr. (1995) infer that strategic quality education management involves a *conglomerate of resources, the number per an education programme, systematic and dynamic allocation of the resources or resource scheduling, updating, usage, analysis, planning, costing and financial modelling and analysis*

Resource is something which may be utilised to accomplish institutional goals. Resource can be viewed from various perspectives such as: human, material, money, infrastructure/facility, equipment, space and time. Resource is a means usually combined with others for production of goods and provision of services for specific purposes like the service of education.

Some scholars have postulated that resources often expand and contract in response to the dictates of human wants and human actions and also that resources are not just tangible objects but also encompass functional relationship existing between a people's wants, capabilities and their attitude towards the worth of an environment, whether economic or otherwise. They equally opine that no object can be regarded as resources until human value has been attached to it (Mitchell, 1999; Zimmermann (Fajingbesi, 1999).

Strategic Resource Mobilisation in Education

Fajingbesi (1999) defines resource mobilisation as "a process of, or series of activities geared at generating, accumulating and directing resources in the right form and sufficient quantity for optimal utilisation". This could imply that resource mobilisation is an essential ingredient of strategic management, as we cannot talk of strategic resource management in education if they have not been mobilised. Obviously, therefore, resources must be mobilised, developed and organised for utilisation; all of which are functions of strategic management.

Education could be viewed as the universal means by which knowledge, skills and relevant attitudes are imparted by those who possess them and acquired by those who need them, through interaction between the two parties at some particular place or by some other means. Thus, education involves teachers and learners as well as the acquisition and use of certain resources-both human and materials. Hence, the need to study how strategic resource management in the education enterprise can be efficiently and effectively managed becomes imperative.

Fajingbesi (1999) observes that the concept 'strategic resource management' has multiple dimensions that include resource mobilization, development and ultimately management. Strategic management in education results in the accomplishment of the institutional corporate developmental goals. According to O'Riordan (1971), institutional management manifests in the following decision making by which resources are allocated over time and space according to needs, aspirations and desires within the limit of the available technology, political and social institutions, legal and administrative framework. This portends sound analytical judgment, preference and commitment through which certain desired resource outputs would be sought from certain forecasted resource combinations via choice, among various managerial, technical and administrative alternatives. This view underscores the potency of strategic resource management as a vital tool for national development. Julilian (1999) observes that forecasting and measurement methods facilitate the projection of resource needs and subsequently resources are then mobilised for utilisation to meet these

needs, hence the need for the strategic manager to be analytical as implied by Owolabi (2006).

In essence, strategic management in education involves the ability of the education manager to effectively and efficiently harness the resources and capably utilise the relevant decision-making process or management procedure to realise the set objective. Education provides the greatest opportunity in resource management because it is the bedrock of productive activity as it is the manufacturer and manager of the greatest resource the human capital who is the entrepreneur, the capital mobiliser and user of all resources for human and national and indeed, global development (Onuka, 2004). Thus, educational institutions must be strategically managed, and systematically planned, based on sound research outcome. Above all, it must be logical and sequentially ordered.

Strategic Resource Management in Education

Strategic management in education involves effectively and efficiently long term forecasting, planning, budgeting, organising, implementing, monitoring and evaluating to give feedback to the system and revising plan for improvement whenever feasible, in terms of the following resources in the education industry:

- ❖ Students (the basic input in the education sector);
- ❖ Human resource (capital) a necessary resource for mobilising and utilising other resources for human and national development;
- ❖ Time a resource that is equally given to all and sundry persons, whose only problem is planning and utilising it effectively and efficiently (management) (Onuka, Onyene and Junaid, 2008);
- ❖ Space unlike time is not usually available in the same quantum for all persons or institutions;
- ❖ Fund-a tool for harnessing other resources for effective utilization;
- ❖ Learning/learning materials- these are all teaching aids and other learning materials that facilitate learning;
- ❖ Infrastructure and other facilities; and
- ❖ Learning techniques/methods.

There is no doubting the fact that the education industry has the students as its major input and equally as its main output whose physical nature is never really transformed by the industry but wholly transformed intellectually, character-wise and skill-wise. Thus, its potency to the industry cannot be overemphasised. It must, therefore, out of necessity be prudently, efficiently and effectively managed that is, planned and utilised. The student resource component is the most important as it plays the role of input resource and human capital output. He is managed from the 'cradle' to 'maturity' when he becomes an output from the education industry.

There is also the need to manage very effectively the student-relations by way of ensuring that effective leadership emerges among them, which Onyene (2006) views as a vital tool to effective management.

The second most important educational resource is the manpower or personnel. The manpower requirement for any educational institution needs to be forecasted or projected for, planned, budgeted for, organised, recruited, developed, utilised and maintained with the concomitant manpower replacement and expansion planning. This applies to all categories of staff-academic and non-academic alike. They must constantly be exposed to the state of the art development in their various areas of endeavour to enable them cope with the dynamics of an ever-changing world.

Another very important resource in educational management is time, is given to all individuals and institutions. It is then left to the individual or organisation to optimise its use. Thus, in the knowledge industry, someone, that is the manager, who may be the Principal, Class Teacher, Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Rector, Provost, Lecturer, Research Fellow, Art Fellow and the likes must effectively plan the use of time in the institution in relation to what is done at a particular period of time within a specified space. It could be in relation to lecture space or some other things like ensuring that no course or category is given undue advantage over the others. Learning management includes planning and scheduling of teaching and learning time to ensure that all components of a particular course of learning are facilitated by effective teaching at a given time. The outcome of this is often time-table.

Available space vis-à-vis the need for space by the various segments of the institution especially higher institutions where available space is competed for by various departments should be carefully and for. The use of available space should be thoroughly planned that no segment of an institution has surplus space while others are in acute need.

According to Onuka (2009), funds are indispensable tool of educational management. It should thus be carefully sourced, managed and appropriately and honestly utilised. It should be guided jealously, wisely planned for allocated to the various components of the industry contending for the use of funds. Management learning or learning management include forecasting, planning, budgeting, organising, utilising and evaluating as well as improving the curriculum, instruction and instructional materials to engender the necessary development in the sector. This also means that one equally plans for the procurement of the necessary materials, equipment and technology that would facilitate effective learning. Learning or teaching methods must be appropriately employed and the classroom atmosphere properly coordinated and managed for effective learning to take place and the transformation of the learner in intellect, attitude/character and skill achieved.

Learning materials must be properly planned, procured, utilised, maintained and replenished by effectively planning and procuring for the replacement. Therefore, the need for an in-depth planning, budgeting, organisation, utilisation and monitoring of the use and maintenance of these facilities cannot be ignored, if learning were to be achieved and learners holistically transformed into the requisite output. These learning materials may be in terms of communications equipment mentioned earlier as such others as chalks, chalkboard,

e-board, CD's, projectors and computers as well as whiteboard, instructional gadgets, books, board sets, thermometer, and rain gauge (Onuka, 2009). Fund, human capital or time or material resources, infrastructure and ancillary facilities to education need to be properly managed.

Infrastructure/facility management: Management of infrastructural/facilities would involve forecasting, planning, budgeting, organising, utilising as well as replenishing infrastructural and facilities that make such vital educational resources to be constantly and effectively meet the goals for which they were mobilised in the first instance.

The Goal of Strategic Management in Education

Strategic management in the education sector becomes imperative in order to accomplish the purpose of education as social capital and as an economic factor of production. It is also to promote the goal of producing the requisite humanpower for national, individual and global development. It ensures that all requisite resources in the industry are properly harnessed through analytical and systematic forecasting, planning, budgeting and organising; involving purchasing where and when necessary, implementing/utilising these resources as and when appropriate as well as monitoring and evaluating the process of utilisation in order to provide useful feedback for systemic improvement. It equally leads to synergy in the industry optimisation of resource utilisation for quality human capital output. In addition, it is a way of inculcating management virtues in the learners who are prospective managers of the future.

Skills for Strategic Resource Management in Education

The strategic education manager would need analytical skills since he or she is involved in critical and creative thinking as well as being a decision-maker. He or she thus, needs to acquire skills in mathematical and linear programming and modelling, as well as planning techniques, in order to be adequately equipped for task of strategic managing institutions and organisations. He or she must possess operation research and quantitative management techniques skills like decision trees, queuing, games theory technique, programming planning and budgeting systems including capital budgeting to ensure that equipment are timely replaced.

He/she requires skills in some accounting techniques such as ratios, for examples, liquidity ratios-namely:- current ratios (current assets divided by current liabilities); acid test ratio (current assets less stock divided by current liabilities); profitability ratios; use of asset ratios, flowchart, cost-benefit analysis, breakeven analysis and some relatively high level knowledge of mathematics and statistics etc. Time tabling, the art of supervision and how to conduct meetings and human relations are other relevant skills he/she must learn and capable of applying.

The Constituents of Strategic Management in Education

The underlisted naturally form the elements of strategic management in education:

- Man;
- Money; and
- materials and machinery, for example, teaching technology, computer and Internet facilities among others.

The above mentioned resources constitute the elements to be strategically managed in education. Man is the most potent and volatile element for strategic management because it is he/she who determines what and how to select, plan, organise the use of the other resources, implement and evaluate for systemic improvement (Onuka, 2009). In fact, it is volatile as he/she can react and even pose problem for management because he/she can think, act and refuse to act in order to stall progress if things going on in the institution are agreeable to him/her. He coordinates and executes the functions that bring about the realisation of the objectives of the institution.

Man is the labour, the management and indeed the entrepreneur as the market. In the education industry he/she is both the main input and the major output. He/she is the student, the teacher and the support staff. Hence, the need to plan for him/her and manage him/her very well and with extra-ordinary care to ensure that he/she works towards realising corporate goal of individuals, national and global development.

Money is, on the other hand, obviously a very potent resource and indeed ranks only first after the human resource. Its prominence results out of the fact that all other resources are denominated in terms of money. The student as input resource into the education sector has to source some level of money (fund) to be able to get into the system as an input, with the support of parents, philanthropists and public fund otherwise there will not be student input into the system. Money is the means by which all other resources could be acquired. Hence, its importance cannot be overstressed.

Ogunsanju (2006) posits that facility management exercise purview over planning, architectural design and construction which entails choice of site, hiring the architect, builders, engineers and the artisans to be involved in the construction of the building, fitting and fixtures as well as the maintenance of the structures. This portends the purchasing of materials and other logistics required to construct and maintain the building and other infrastructural facilities. It also means that educational manager participates in initiating, planning, budgeting, organising, implementing and monitoring and evaluation which will eventually lead to improvement of facility provision and utilisation (Onuka, 2006).

Market for the industry is termed labour market which could translate to self-employment for those who have acquire the relevant skills in the relevant industries, government and other sections of the public and private sector, non-governmental organisations and inter-governmental organisations. It is at the end point of production efforts whether of services or of goods. The market is made up of all consumers (intermediary and final).

Challenges of Strategic Management in Education

There are challenges in all human endeavours, therefore, strategic management cannot be an exemption. One of such challenges is that it is time consuming and therefore makes decision-taking process longer than should ordinarily have been. This challenge could be overcome if the strategic manager possesses the requisite skills and is able to use people appropriately to achieve objectives through proper coordination. Strategic management could also be fraught with the danger of the inability of the manager to utilise human relations skill to achieve institutional objectives, if he/she does not possess it in the appropriate measure. An education manager who does not separate personal issues from official ones and is vindictive in the way he/she operates may create a chaotic situation which may stall all his/her efforts and thus, fall short of achieving his/her objective(s).

Prospects of Strategic Management in Education

Strategic management in education could count on the underlisted prospects:

Strategic management produces systematic planning which in turn culminates in adequate forecasting of enrolment, staff recruitment plan and development, programme planning and execution, organisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, feedback and revision for the purpose of improving the programme. It also results in proper budgeting, efficient fund mobilisation, allocation and utilisation. Strategic management also possesses the prospects of strategic procurement plan for equipment, infrastructure and their utilisation and maintenance. In addition, it has the merit of replacement or capital budgeting and provision for the replacement of equipment, infrastructure and instructional facilities before they reach scrap. Strategic management carries along with it the prospects of prudence and efficiency in facility and space utilisation, and also results in transparency and accountability.

Strategic management in education portends smooth administration of the school system and the entire education and could result in optimisation of the societal educational objectives. This is so because it may ensure educational systemic effectiveness and efficiency. It can also bring about dexterity in the human capital engaged in the industry with the concomitant result of learning effectively taking place as the appropriate learning environment is there to take advantage of, as it enhances facility and instructional material provision.

Evaluation Model for Strategic Management in Education

Any programme or activity that is not evaluated cannot but fail (Onuka, 2009), hence the need to constantly all programmes and activities and even more so management programmes and activities because management is the livewire of all systems, institutions and organisations.

This is why Onuka (2009) designs a Management Evaluation Model for the evaluation of management programmes and activities. It is based on his definition of management and used the components of the definition in question as revised in 2009 as the constituents of the model as follows: **Forecasting** which he based on hindsight, insight and foresight that is, the

study will analysis the terms of operation in the past and present and use it to project the future. This will culminate in a well-articulated **plan** for the future of the organisation with commensurate **budget** estimates hinged on the plan giving rise to **organising** the elements of the budget in relation to human and material requirements. Subsequently, **implementation** follows. At this stage **monitoring and evaluation** of each of the aforesaid process is undertaken to immediately put right whatever had been found to have wrong and improve on the programme through **feedback** from evaluation and **programme revision**. This process continues as long as the education process remains. Building a special evaluation model into the strategic management in education definitely improves the quality of its output and the concomitant quality of individual, national and global development of humanity and its environment. By this process quality of education will be assured and maintained.

A tabular specimen of the model is given below:

MANAGEMENT EVALUATION MODEL

Component	Characteristics/elements	Data Required	Analytical tool(s)	Remarks
Forecasting	Hindsight, insight, foresight, i.e., trends analysis for predicting/projecting for the future	Records, financial status, Curricula, quality of student input and output,	Relevant statistical tools, Management modelling tools, financials ratios as may be required	***
Planning	- Ditto	*	**	***
Budgeting	Estimate of costs & Time	*	**	***
Organising	Putting things together in sequential order preparatory to execution	*	**	***
Implementation	execution of the programme	*	**	***
M & E	Systematically following up each segment of the programmes planning, budgeting organises and implementation	*	**	***
Feedback	Providing useful information to assist improvement of the whole system	-	-	****
Revision	Programme revision for improvement	-	**	*****

Source: Adapted from Onuka (2009)

*The evaluator(s) and the client(s) decide on what constitute the elements of the component to be included for evaluation

**Appropriate analytical tools should be employed

*** Remarks include findings and recommendations

**** Aggregate finding(s)

*****This indicates the final recommendation for revision of the process

Thus, the stakeholders decide what make up each component. The model may also be represented diagrammatically if one so wishes.

Conclusion

Strategic management education is all too important and essential to accomplishing educational goals to be ignored. Strategic management in education is a multifaceted endeavour and as such it is a collage that requires interdisciplinary efforts to succeed. Therefore, it has to be carried out by a formidable and cohesive team. It involves trust, honesty, transparency and delegation of duties, collective responsibility and team spirit. It also requires that the education manager be well groomed in strategic-systematic and analytic management and be up-to-date with the state of art management techniques.

Strategic management in education ensures quality if and only if all resources in the system are properly mobilised, harnessed and utilised as well as constantly evaluated premised on feedback for systemic improvement. If any or all of the requisite resources are not adequately available, then strategic management becomes an absolute mirage detrimental to quality output which endangers individual, national and global development.

It must be noted that the success of strategic management in education depends on the quality of input resources, the quality of the human capital that manage these resources and the type of environment in which such management operates. Thus, it is only this form of management process that can assure quality in the education system and also ensures that the quality of education keeps improving.

Therefore, it is hereby suggested that for strategic management in education to yield quality educational output:

- Stakeholders in the industry must mobilise the requisite resources in terms of students, academic and non-academic staff, materials and infrastructural facilities for the strategic management of education;
- Provide the necessary funds in adequate quantum of the mobilisation of these aforementioned requisite educational resources;
- Qualified strategic education managers be recruited and deployed to all levels of the education system (be it public or private);
- Strategic education managers be constantly exposed to new management techniques and technology to meet up with our dynamic environment; and
- That management style and programme plans and implementation be constantly monitored and evaluated with the evaluation feedback generated into the system being used for programme revision for systemic improvement.

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