Strategic Planning Procedure: An Imperative for Effective Management of Higher Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Research reports and observations have indicated the absence of quality planning in the management of higher education in Africa. This appears to be one of the major constraints to the effective management of higher education in majority of the institutions all over Africa. The paper examined "strategic planning procedure as an imperative for effective management of higher education in Nigeria". Two hundred respondents (i.e. 100 lecturers, and 100 administrative officers) from five Federal Universities from south east geo-political zone of Nigeria were sampled and used for the study. Four research questions guided the study. Four point Likert-type rating scale with 21 – item researchers' self-made questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean computation was used to analyzed the research questions. Pearson Product Moment was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. Findings include: low level achievement of higher education goals, identification of seven-item elements of effective management, identification 8-item components of strategic planning procedure and its low level application in higher institutions in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Higher education, Strategic planning, Effective management, Strategic management procedure, Environmental scan.*

Introduction

Higher education in Nigeria refers to education given after secondary education in universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics, including those institutions offering correspondence courses (FRN, 2004). UNESCO, (2005) defines higher education as programme of study or training for research at the post secondary level provided by universities or other educational institutions that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent authorities or through registered accreditation systems. Higher education in Nigeria is designed to achieve the following goals:

- contribution to the national development through high level relevant manpower training.
- development and inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and the society,
- development of intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environment.
- acquiring both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society.
- forging and cementing national unity;
- promoting and encouraging scholarship and community service, and
- promoting national and international understanding and interaction (FRN, 2004).

Attainment of these goals within the higher education institutions in Nigeria and in Africa at large signifies quality out-puts (graduates). And quality graduates implies availability of intelligentsia that can stimulate knowledge and information driven economy, hence national development. Achievement of these higher educational goals is highly dependent on the effectiveness of management provided by the institutions.

Management according to Adesina, (1990) is the organization and mobilization of all human, material and financial resources　in a system for the realization of the identified objectives of the system. Management is the totality of functions and techniques employed by super-ordinates or top-management in the exercise of their responsibilities and authorities in an organization. Management in higher education institutions entails the organization and mobilization of all human (i.e. academic non-academic staff), material (physical plants facilities etc) and financial resources for the realization of the higher education goals. The Vice Chancellor, Senate, Directors Deans, Heads of departments and Professors form the management of higher education institution in Nigeria.

Higher education has been accused of not living up to expectation. Nwangwu (2010) laments that Nigerian economy, science and technology are grossly under-developed because the three levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) are not equipping the beneficiaries with the needed skills necessary for technological development. The Federal Ministry of Education reported that higher education in Nigeria is in a state of decay (FME, 2003). Government seems to be aware that this decadent situation portends danger to the nation particularly as poor quality graduates who are ill-equipped for the world of work are currently being produced. The decay manifests in form of staff and students indiscipline, inadequacy in quality and quantity of academic staff, personnel matters, inadequate funding, inadequate facilities, cultism, absenteeism, tardiness, poor teaching and learning environment, inadequate curriculum, obsolete equipment, absolute management techniques, Crisis in succession of vice-chancellors, strike-actions, sexual-harassment, drug-abuse, poor research culture etc, Adesina, (1990) describes the above ills and inadequacies as the component of management. He also noted that these problems being experienced today in higher education are management problems. Therefore, the achievement of goals of higher education does not require ordinary management tools but an effective management tools.

Effective management refers to a type of management that gears towards achievement of stated goals. Goals are achieved when they are effectively being applied and utilized. Okeke, (2001) sees it as all aggregate of all efforts from top to the lowest rung of the institutional hierarchy gear towards attainment of its institutional goals. Effective management of higher education according to Ghosh, (2005) refers to an ideal systematic process of managing higher education for quality and effectiveness. The effectiveness in the management of higher education seem to be illusive due to the apparent total absence or inadequate application of strategic planning procedure. This could be the reason Babalola and Ayeni, (2008) reported that Nigerian University system is accused of poor strategic planning in its physical development. NUC, (2003) in confirmation of the above report, reported that a large part of capital fund in some Nigerian universities are tied to useless, uncompleted projects that litter the campuses. NUC found out that these projects litter around because the managers or administrators of higher education ideas are over–designed and grandiose or projects started without proper prudent financial planning. This emphasizes the imperative for adoption and application of strategic planning procedure in the management of higher education institutions for effectiveness.

What is Strategic Planning?

Ghosh (2005) defines strategic planning as the process designed to move educational organization through the steps of understanding changes in the external environment, assessing organizational strength and weakness, developing a vision of a desired future and ways to achieve that mission, developing and implementing specific plans, and motivating the implementation so that necessary changes can be made. Babalola and Ayeni (2008) sees it as an organization's process of defining its strategy or direction and making decisions on allocating its resources to pursue this strategy. Babalola et al also describes strategic planning as the process of setting measurable medium to long-term goals based on the real internal strength and weakness as well as external opportunities and threats in the organizational environment. Relating strategic planning to higher education, it is therefore the process of making decisions on how to use the available higher education resources to take advantage of various opportunities in the face of increasing threats and challenges. This definition agrees with NUC, (2003) draft manual on strategic planning that defines strategic planning as coordinated and systematic process aimed at providing an over-all course and direction for an organization for the purpose of optimizing its potentials. It is therefore the collective responsibility of higher education institutions to develop creative- initiatives that channel resources to fulfill the institutions mission by taking maximum advantage of trends in the internal and external environment.

Strategic Planning Procedure, Imperative for Effective Management

Higher education institutions in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general are mainly public and nonprofit organizations. These institutions are founded by way of grants and donations from government and public trusts. Discretional powers of internal management team are thus subject to the overall regulation of the funding bodies. The personnel of these institutions are committed to their profession than to a cause or ideal. Hence their allegiance to the institution appear weak. Rewards and punishments are not directly tied to performance owing to the intangible nature of services, external funding and professional commitments of employees. The higher institutions are managed much more in a short-term operational sense than in a strategic sense. Strategic planning is now exigent due to pressures created by reduction in government funding, presence of business in the board of trustees, changing environment factors which prompted business enterprise to undertake strategic planning (Babalola and Ayeni 2008). Strategic planning procedure is an imperative for effective management of higher education business:

- strategic planning has become an element of the national strategy for economic empowerment;
- it gives clear definition of the institution's purpose, goal and objectives in view which are sharpened;
- it ensures prudent management of resources which ensures most effective management technique;
- it prepares the institution for changes in the environment and also helps to limit the effect of leadership cycle on the institution plan and programmes;
- it takes care of past, present and future. The past is characterized by accumulated problems, the present by high national priorities accorded to the growth of higher education and the future, a change directed to student centred approach to overall education philosophy.

Strategic Planning Procedure

Strategic planning procedure refers to unique model that fits the specific need of a particular institution. This procedure is described in terms of steps, approaches, techniques, tools components and elements of strategic planning. Babalola and Ayeni (2008) identify five basic elements of strategic planning procedure as the environment, the goal, the strategy, the priority and assessment. Yepwi, (2007) describes the strategic planning procedure as steps which he itemized as vision, mission, environmental scan, gap analysis, emergent strategies, evaluation strategies, strategy issues, strategy programme, bench marking, review of strategic plan, strategic thinking and limitations. Sally and Salva (2007) sees strategic planning procedures as the key component of strategic planning process. The components are the institutional vision, mission, values and strategies while Ron (2010) describes the procedure as the strategic planning process.

Mission

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Objectives

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Situation Analysis

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Strategy formulation

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Implementation

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Control

The summary of the strategic planning procedure that are imperative for effective management of higher education institutions are:

Vision: Vision sets out the reasons for the organization's existence i.e. the ideal state, the organization aims at achieving. It must be long term idealized view that is future oriented. It can be emotive and source of inspiration. For example, an agro-based higher institution might have its vision statement to read, 'A world with food security," this is a kind of dream. This is more of a descriptive picture of future state.

Mission: Mission defines the fundamental purpose of the institution. Succinctly describing why it exists and what it does to achieve its vision. It identifies the major goals of the institution. Mission statement of an agro-based institution could read "Education for self-reliance". Mission is an action statement for bringing about what is envisioned.

Values: These are beliefs that are shared among the stakeholders of an organization. Institution values usually drive the institution's culture, and priorities, in providing framework in which decisions are made. Knowledge and skills have been identified as the basic key to success. "If you give me bread, you feed me for a day but if you teach me how to bake, you feed me for life". This exemplifies value. This may set the priorities of self-reliance over shelter or others.

**Goal:** Goal are the desire ends and are less general than mission (the broadest ends),

Objectives: These are concrete goals that the higher educational organizations should seek to reach. Objectives should be made very challenging, stimulating and achievable. They should also be measurable so that the system could monitor its progress and make corrections as needed.

Situation Analysis: Situation analysis is a process that begins with current situation to device strategic plan to each of the stated objectives. Situational analysis exposes changes in environment

which usually provides the opportunities and the new ways to reaching the objective hence the environmental scan.

Environmental Scan: Environment actually refers to the external context that cannot be controlled (eg. Political, economic, social cultural, technological demographical factors etc.) It also refers to internal environment that are within the control of the organization. Examples are institutional culture, image, structure, key staff, access to natural resources, position on the experience curve, operational efficiency, brand awareness, financial resources exclusive contracts, patent and trade secrets.

Environmental Scan Flow Chart
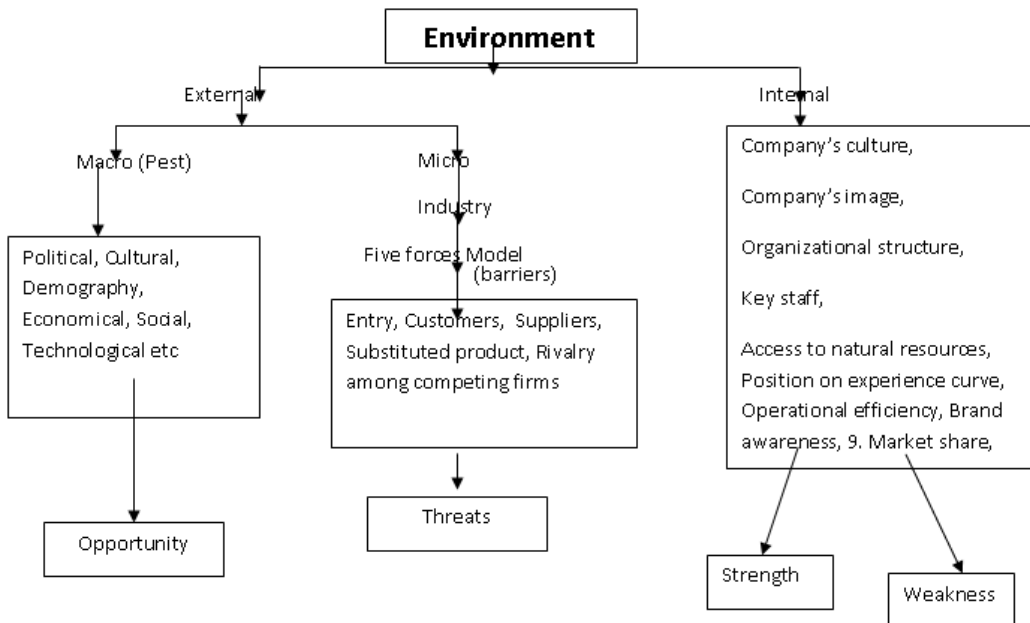
Environmental scan commences once vision and mission statements are clearly identified. This entails the analysis of both external and internal environment of the organization. There are several tools or approaches recommended for this. They are SWOT Analysis (Strength, weakness, opportunities and threat). SWOT are factors that may affect the desired future outcomes of the organization. SWOT has the major role of recommending strategies that could ensure the best link between external and internal environment. External environment posses the opportunities and threats while the internal environment provides the strengths and weaknesses. Other tools include: PEST, EPISTEL, five force model, score-cards analysis.

Strategy Formulation: Strategy is a detailed roadmap containing the direction and courses of action that an organization intends to follow in conducting its activities. Babalola and Ayeni, (2008) recommend that strategy can be a single action or a set of complementary actions. Priorities can be established between goals and strategy options. Ajayi (2007) insisted that strategy must consist of combination of competitive moves of master strategies. It is very essential to ensure that the organization is actually going in the direction which is towards the vision. Strategy formulation refers to the specific strategic alternatives that should be developed once the picture of the

environment of the organization is at hand. This is dependent on the situation, since different organizations have different alternatives. General strategies is applied across a wide range of organization. The three generic strategies identified are leadership, differentiation and focus. The master strategies contain institutional philosophy, policies, approaches, programmes, projects etc which administrators employ to motivate staff, compete successful and achieve the institutional goals.

Implementation: This involves translation of the strategy expressed in high level conceptual terms and priorities into more functional polices that can be understood at the functional level of the organization. Functional policies highlight any practical issues that might not be visible at the high level. Functional policies are also translated to specific policies for the functional areas such; research and development, procurement, human resources, information system etc. Implementation phase also identifies the required resources necessary for organizational changes.

Priorities: These are best alternative choices or decisions that are chosen from available strategic options to achieve the vision. They are established between goals and or strategy options.

Assessment/Control: The result of the strategy implementation need to be measured and evaluated in respect to the changes made to keep plans on track. Assessment/control systems should be developed and implemented to facilitate monitoring. Standards, performances are set, the actual performance measured and appropriate action taken to ensure success.

There are other sub-procedure that could be adopted as a support to the above mentioned procedure. They are; gap analysis, emergent strategy, strategy issues, strategy project, bench marks, reviewing of strategy plan, strategy thinking and limitations (Yepwi, 2007). Ghosh, (2005) also recommends the use of strategic tools and approaches as strategic planning procedure for successful strategic management of non-profit agencies. It outlines the use of. **Balanced Scorecards;** which creates a systematic framework for strategic planning.

Scenario planning: Which was originally used in military and recently apply by large organizations to analyze future scenario.

PEST analysis: Which involves the analysis of the political; economic,   social, technological environment

STEER analysis: This is the analysis of socio-cultural, Technological, Economic, Ecological and Regulatory factors.

EPISTEL: Analysis of Environment, political. Informatics, social, technological, Economic and Legal factors.

The problem of the study is that majority of the administrators of higher education institutions, who are at the top management seem not to know much about this procedure and at such rarely adopt and apply the procedure. That could be responsible for poor or low quality result of higher education.

The paper examined strategic planning procedure: an imperative for effective management of higher education in Nigeria. Specifically the paper sought to address the following:

(i)   Need for effective management of higher education
(ii) Strategic planning procedure imperative for effective management of higher education.
(iii) Level of application of the strategic planning procedure

Research Questions:

Four research questions guided the study

1. To what extent do management of higher education achieve the goals of higher education in Nigeria?
2. What are the elements of effective management of higher education?
3. What is the strategic planning procedure that is imperative for effective management of higher Education in Nigeria?
4. To what extent is strategic planning procedure being applied for effective management of higher education in Nigeria

Methodology

Descriptive design was used for the study because it provides appropriate design for perception and opinion. A total sample of two hundred respondents made up of 100 academic staff and 100 administrative staff selected from 5 out of 26 federal universities in Nigeria.

The instrument for data collection was a 29-item researchers self made questionnaire titled strategic planning procedure for effective management (SPPEM). A 4-point Likert-type rating scale was used to measure the respondent opinion to the items. The instrument was validated in terms of face and content validity by two experts in Education Management and Policy from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State of Nigeria. The reliability co-efficient values of 0.79, 0.90, 0.85 and 0.80 were obtained using Pearson Product Moment statistic tool.

Two hundred copies of the instrument were administered by the researchers and also with the help of two research assistant. All the copies were returned and used for the analysis.

Mean computation was used for the analysis of the four research questions. The researchers used 2.50 baseline to obtain dichotomy of respondents' opinions on whether to accept or reject the item. i.e. items ≥ 2.50 accept and items < 2.50 rejected

Results

The results of the study are presented in table 1 – 4.

Research Question 1: To what extent do management of higher education achieve the goals of higher education in Nigeria?

Table 1: *Mean responses of lecturers and administrative officers on extent of achievement of higher education goals.*

S/N	Extent of achievement of goals of higher education in Nigeria	Responses		Remarks
		Lecturers X	Admin officers X	
1 2.	Contribution to national development	2.40	2.30	Low extent
3.	Production of high level relevant man power through quality training	2.20	2.00	Low extent
4.	Inculcation of proper values for the survival of the individual and society.	2.00	2.40	Low extent
	Development of intellectual capability of individuals to understand their	1.00	1.00	Low extent

5.	local and external environment.	2.35	2.40	Low extent
6.	Promoting and encouraging scholarship and community Forging and cementing national unity	1.00	1.00	Low extent
	Grand Mean	**1.99**	**2.02**	

Table 1 shows that all the six items have means less than the baseline of 2.50. This implies lecturers and administrative officers generally agree that the goals are achieved at low extent.

Research Question 2: What are the elements of effective management of higher education in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean responses of lecturers and administrative officers on elements of effective management of higher education.

S/N	Elements of effective management of higher education	Responses		Remarks
		Lecturers X	Admin Officers X.	
7.	Clear vision statement	3.80	4.00	Agreed
8	Clear mission statement	4.00	4.00	Agreed
9	Adequate human resource administration	3.90	3.80	Agreed
10	Prudent financial management	3.90	4.00	Agreed
11	Conducive working environment	4.00	4.00	Agreed
12	Adequate control system	3.50	3.60	Agreed
13	Adequate up-dating system	4.00	4.00	Agreed
	Grand Mean	**3.87**	**3.91**	

Table 2 with grand means of 3.87 and 3.91 for lecturers and administrative staff respectively indicate the respondents general acceptance of all the seven items as elements of effective management of higher education in Nigerian higher institutions.

Research Question 3: What is the strategic planning procedure, that is imperative for effective management to higher education in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean responses of lecturers and Administrative officers on strategic planning procedure for effective management.

S/N	Strategic planning procedure for effective management	Responses		Remarks
		Lecturers X	Admin Officers. X	
14	Vision statement	3.00	3.50	Agreed
15	Mission statement	4.00	3.96	Agreed
16	Specific objective	3.60	3.10	Agreed
17	Situation analysis	3.95	2.95	Agreed
18	Environmental scan	2.90	3.00	Agreed
19	Strategy formulation	3.75	2.70	Agreed

20	Implementation of strategy	3.00	3.00	Agreed
21	Control/feedback	3.80	3.95	Agreed
	Grand Mean	**3.50**	**3.27**	**Agreed**

Table 3 with grand means of 3.50 and 3.27 for lecturers and administrative officers respectively indicating agreement with the eight items that they are strategic planning procedure that is imperative for effective management of higher education in Nigeria.

Research Question 4: To what extent is the strategic planning procedure being applied for effective management of higher education in Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean responses of lecturers and administrative officers on extent of application of the procedure for effective management of higher education.

S/N	Extent of application of Strategic planning procedure for effective management in Nigerian Higher institutions	Responses		Remarks
		Lecturers X	Admin. X	
22	Vision statement	2.50	2.50	High extent
23	Mission statement	2.00	2.40	Low extent
24	Specific objectives	2.10	1.60	Low extent
25	Situation analysis	2.20	2.40	Low extent
26	Environmental scan	1.00	1.00	Low extent
27	Strategy formulation	2.00	2.00	Low extent
28	Implementation of strategy	1.00	1.00	Low extent
29	Control/feedback	2.50	2.60	High extent
	Grand Mean	**1.95**	**1.94**	

Table 4 with grand means of 1.95 and 1.94 for lecturers and administrative officers respectively indicate disagreement with the items that they are applied to high extent. This implies general agreement that the items are applied to a low extent for effective management of higher education in Nigeria.

Discussion of Results

Findings have shown that higher education goals in Nigeria are achieved at a low extent as shown in table 1. This is confirms of FME, (2003) that laments that higher education in Nigeria is in a state of decay. Nwangwu, (2010) reported that higher education has failed on its duty in equipping the beneficiaries with the expected skills as outlined in the goals. This could be the cause of high rate of unemployment, snail rate of national development. FME, (2003) went ahead to describe the out put of higher education as ill-equipped and poor quality graduates for the world of work. These graduates are also seen as half-baked by labour market. The graduates seem to lack the national consciousness and unity which is the number goal, hence the incessant ethnic strife that is currently jeopardizing peace and security in the nation.

Findings from research question (2) identifies seven elements or components of effective management. The findings are not line with the observation and report of FME, (2003) that higher education management is characterized by staff and students indiscipline, visionless, inadequacy of human resources in terms of quality and quantity, poor financial management which implied

decaying environment. This point is in line with NUC's, (2003) report, that observed that so many uncompleted projected abandoned are due to visionless, missionless and poor prudent financial management. Adesina (1990) and Okeke (2001) describe the impediments of achieving higher education goals as components of management.. Elements of effective management outlined in table 2 is a confirmation of Okeke, (2001), who sees effective management as aggregate effort from top to the lowest rung of the institutional hierarchy.

Findings of research question (3) shows strategic planning procedure that modern leaders, managers and administrators of higher education should adopt to achieve effective management. They include vision statement, mission statement, objectives, situation analysis, environmental scanning, strategy formulation, implementation of strategy, and control/feedback. The findings are in line with the findings of Babalola and Ayeni (2008), who described the strategic planning procedure as elements. Ron's (2010) 6- item strategic planning process is also in line with the findings. He recommends the procedure for successful and sustainable transformation efforts and leaders who also wish to know how to manage change should adopt the procedure.

Result in table 4 indicates low extent of the application of the identified strategic planning procedure in the management of higher education in Nigeria. This could have been responsible for ineffective management status that characterized higher institutions. FME (2003) in confirmation of the above, lamented on use of obsolete tool that do not match the trends of events. Ghosh, (2005) and Yepwi, (2007) complained of apparent absence of strategic planning skills in the management of higher education. This is also in line with Babalola, and Ayeni's (2008) report that Nigerian University system is accused of poor strategic planning application in its physical development. NUC (2003) in line with above observation believes that large part of capital fund in some universities is tied to useless uncompleted projects that liter campuses, and gigantic projects that cannot be financed or completed are embarked upon due to absence of strategic planning procedure as management and managerial tool.

Conclusion

Strategic planning procedure as a modern management tool is designed to ensure effectiveness in various organization. Management of higher education should adopt the procedure to overcome the inefficiency and ineffectiveness that characterized higher education presently. The outlines of the procedure as shown in table 3 will equip the management in knowing what it wants to accomplish and being able to create a compelling vision that motivates others. It will provide the understanding of stakeholders and communicating them early enough, consistently and often/ it will also provide the skills of managing the varying levels of support and resistance that would inevitably emerge in response to any change.

Recommendations

Researchers recommend that:

1. Strategic planning procedure should be an imperative in the management of higher education.
2. Every higher institution should uniquely design its own strategic planning procedure that will fit its specific need.

3. NUC should monitor and vet these procedures to ensure that each rhymes with a particular institutions needs/ purpose of establishment.

4. Regular strategic planning procedure up-dating courses should be organized and made accessible to members of the management for the procedure skills acquisition.

5. NUC should ensure that government and other stakeholders help to provide conducive environment for effective development and implementation of the procedure (i.e. in terns of funding, facilities).

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